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I.

SOME OBJECTIONS TO THE FEDERAL THEORY OF IMMEDIATE IMPUTATION.

WE will notice the most radical objection first. A distinguished theologian, who teaches immediate imputation, and who would be classed as a Calvinist, objects to the federal theory on the ground that "it is extra-scriptural, there being no mention of such a covenant with Adam in the account of man's trial." What he thinks of the covenant of grace may be gathered from the fact that he makes election logically subsequent, in God's decree, to the purpose to redeem. "The true order of the decrees," he holds, "is therefore as follows: 1, The decree to create; 2, the decree to permit the fall; 3, the decree to provide a salvation in Christ sufficient for the needs of all; 4, the decree to secure the actual acceptance of this salvation on the part of some—or, in other words, the decree of election." Such an order of the decrees is obviously inconsistent with a federal relation on the part of the Redeemer to any particular class of fallen men. It implies that his work had equal reference to all. Election is simply an expedient to save the scheme from ignominious failure. We understand this author to make a square issue. The natural relation is the only one we sustain to Adam: our union with Christ begins when we exercise saving faith. The theory of the covenant being extra-scriptural, he does not employ the terms which belong to it. To use Bishop Butler's distinction, he objects to the evidence rather than to the contents of revelation. We agree with him entirely that the question is one of fact. If the doctrine of the covenants is not a matter of divine revelation, then any

V.

THE RELATION OF GALATIANS III. 27-29 TO INFANT BAPTISM.

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—**GALATIANS** iii. 27, 28, 29.

THIS passage does not appear to be quoted, as it used to be, in proof of the right of infants to be baptized. To leave this out appears to the present writer very much like abandoning the citadel, and then attempting to defend the outworks. That it is left out seems to be due largely, if not entirely, to the fact that the baptism is taken to be the baptism of the Spirit.

If language is to be taken in its simple, ordinary sense, this certainly cannot be. The persons spoken of evidently put on Christ by the baptism. Putting on Christ is their own act. Then, if it is done by the baptism, the baptism is their own act; not, of course, in administering, but in receiving it. They are baptized by their own consent, at their own request. But the Spirit’s baptism is not the act of the subjects in any such sense that they can be said to put on Christ, or *do* anything by it. Robinson’s Lexicon of New Testament Greek gives as the meaning of *enduo*, in this place and Rom. xiii. 14, the only other place in which the words “put on Christ” are used, “to be filled, imbued with Christ.” This is a strange twisting of a word to accommodate it to a theory: “indue” changed to “imbue,” and the active to the passive, and the subject in that which he is said to do, either made passive or represented as doing the Spirit’s work upon himself. In Romans it stands in the midst of an exhortation to outward duties, and would most naturally be taken to mean exhibiting Christ in the outward life. In the passage we are considering, if *enduo* is taken in its ordinary sense, and “baptize” in

the sense in which ninety-nine readers in a hundred who have not been taught otherwise would take it, all is in harmony. Making a public profession of one's faith, taking on the badge of discipleship, may well be spoken of as putting on Christ.

Another reason is found in the language of the twenty-eighth verse, "There is neither Jew nor Greek," etc. This is evidently intended to show a difference between the old and the new dispensations. But if the baptism is that of the Spirit, there were no such distinctions under the old any more than under the new. Whoever had faith was wrought upon by the Spirit, without distinction of race, sex or condition, just as much then as now. But these words do mark distinctions that were made under the old, and removed under the new in applying the seal. The advantage that belonged to the Jew, the profit of circumcision (Rom. iii. 1), are now free alike to all.

The apostle is dealing, here and in Romans iv., with the claim of the Judaizers that circumcision and keeping the law were necessary to salvation. He meets the claim by going back to the Abrahamic covenant, and showing that by it the terms of justification were fixed forever, and that beyond the possibility of change. Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, and all who have faith like him are justified, whether the seal has been applied to them or not.

There are two things brought out in the discussion with which we are especially concerned. The first is that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith. Romans iv. 11 expressly says that it was so to Abraham; but Baptists—some Baptists, at least—say that it was not so to his seed. God, in the covenant, promises to be a God to his seed as well as to himself, and the seal is to be applied to his seed as to himself. This promise is a promise of imputed righteousness (among other things) to his seed, and how can the seal be less than a seal of that promise? We might quote several passages from Paul bearing upon the question, but for our present purpose one is sufficient. In Galatians iii., after showing, by several statements, that all who have faith are children and heirs of Abraham, he illustrates the unchangeableness of the inheritance by comparison with a man's

covenant. He appeals to a familiar business principle. A man who has put his seal to a contract, and had it confirmed according to the law of the state, cannot go back on it to annul or alter it. Paul would not have us understand that God's "word is not as good as his bond," yet God has condescended to give us this assurance of the perpetuity and unchangeableness of this covenant promise. He has put his seal to it, and he could not go back on it to make the keeping of the law a condition of justification. This assurance is just as good to-day as when these words were written. It is just as much impossible that God should have made baptism a condition of justification as it was that he should make the keeping of the law such a condition. All such claims are squarely in the teeth of this covenant. And circumcision, the seal of the covenant, is the assurance that God has given to all believers that the promise is unchangeable.

The second thing is that Christ is the seed of Abraham—the Seed, as emphatically as though there was no other. There is no other except in and through him. Christ is the Son of God, and to belong to him is to be a son of God. So he is the Seed of Abraham, and to belong to him is to be Abraham's seed. It is not that the promise is to Christ; it was made to him, and from the beginning it was as true as it is now, that none were true seed of Abraham except through connection with Christ, *the Seed*. It was as true of Isaac and Jacob as it is to-day of any Gentile believer. The Jews arguing with Christ claimed that they were Abraham's seed. Christ shows them that, though his seed according to the flesh, he was not their father, else they would do his works. Though of Israel, one cannot be Israel (Rom. ix. 6), except by union with the Seed. The chief significance of circumcision to the Jews was that it showed them to be Abraham's seed, and heirs of the covenant, and the lack of it showed that one was not Abraham's seed. Though they had not learned to look upon the coming Christ as the Seed, it was none the less true that circumcision was a sign and seal of union with him.

The claim of the Judaizers was abundantly answered. But showing the insufficiency of a reason for not doing a thing is not giving a reason for doing it. No reason has yet been given for

leaving off the practice of circumcision. A reason is given for not continuing to observe the ceremonial law: it was intended to be transient—added until Christ should come. The question concerning the law and that concerning circumcision were very different. The law covenant was conditional, "If you will obey, I will be your God," etc. The covenant itself and all the promises connected with it were on condition of the people's obedience; and when, by a long course of disobedience, they had forfeited all rights under it, there was nothing in the way of its abrogation, and a new covenant being substituted for it. But the Abrahamic covenant was unconditional and everlasting. The statement concerning a man's covenant may be applied with greater force to the seal: no one removeth the seal. If the seal is gone, the covenant is of no force. There are those who say that the Abrahamic covenant is not now in force. If the seal is gone, have they not reason to say so? What would we think of the promise that the earth shall not be again destroyed by a flood if the rainbow should disappear from the clouds? The authority of God is to be pleaded for it, of course, but God does not do things that he himself tells us he cannot do. Does not his word give us good reason to say that a seal is inviolable? The manner in which the seal of the Abrahamic covenant was given seems designed to show that it was to be as truly everlasting as the covenant. After the promise of the covenant, it is said, "This is my covenant which ye shall keep. . . . Every man child among you shall be circumcised." And again, "My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." Surely we have good reason to say the seal of the covenant could not be removed. It has been said that the Jews were to continue to circumcise. The only Scripture quoted in evidence, as far as I know, is the account of the circumcision of Timothy. But this, with the reason given for it, if it proves anything, proves just the contrary. We may be very sure that if Paul had regarded the command to circumcise all males of Jewish birth as still in force, we should not have been told that he did it because of the Jews that were in those quarters. Paul did not make obedience to God's commands a matter of expediency. It is manifest that it was done in pursuance of his

purpose of being made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.

Why did, or how could, God command that the seal was not to be applied? Remember that the great question under discussion was concerning circumcision. The passage we are considering stands just where an answer to this question is to be looked for; and it is a question which if not answered will always press for an answer. There is not a greater puzzle in the Scriptures.

We have to say, in the first place, that if the baptism of the text is that of the Spirit, there is in it no answer, at least no direct answer. Underlying the whole discussion is the fact that whosoever has faith is Abraham's seed and heir. With faith always goes the work of the Spirit, and in this view, the text only explains how those who have faith become Abraham's seed. By faith they are Abraham's seed *de jure*; by the work of the Spirit they become his seed *de facto*. As to any answer to the question concerning circumcision, it leaves it just where it was before. Important as the truth may be in itself, it is a lame conclusion of the argument concerning circumcision. In fact, it makes it look as though Paul saw the necessity of an answer, and being puzzled as to what it should be, had given us what is really no answer at all.

But if the baptism is water baptism, then it answers the question. It answers it by showing the identity in all but outward form of baptism and circumcision. The seal of the covenant is not removed. The device of the seal is changed, but it is none the less the King's seal, and means the same things it always meant. Baptism is a sign and seal of the same things that circumcision was: of union with Christ, the seed, and of that which goes with the union, the promised imputation of righteousness. But it is not merely that the same things are sealed to us; they come to us in the same way, by inheritance. We are heirs of the promise. The promise especially referred to is, of course, that of which the whole chapter treats, viz., justification by faith. But it is a promise of the covenant, and if one of its promises comes to us by inheritance, then we are heirs of the covenant as a whole, and baptism is the seal of it.

The theory that the baptism of the text is the baptism of the Spirit does not rob us of all that we contend for in this passage. We may say, in the first place, that whatever the baptism of the Spirit does, water baptism signifies and seals. Then, since the Spirit baptism makes us Abraham's seed and heirs of the covenant, water baptism is a sign and seal of the transaction, and thus fills exactly the place of circumcision.

Again, the language of verse 29 taken by itself, independent altogether of what has gone before, is enough to prove the same thing. To be Christ's is to be Abraham's seed, and an heir under the covenant. The converse is equally true—to be Abraham's seed and an heir of the covenant, is to be Christ's. The two are inseparable; we might well say are one and the same. That which is a token and seal of one is necessarily a token and seal of the other. Thus, again, baptism is shown to be indetical with circumcision.

The puzzle of the missing seal, then, is solved, however we read the text; but if Paul wrote this with the thought of the Spirit baptism only in his mind, it places him in the light of having solved the puzzle for us without knowing that he was doing it.

We have thus abundant proof in this passage that baptism is now the token and seal of inheritance in the Abrahamic covenant.

Perhaps some one may ask, "If this is true, why was it not more distinctly stated?" Those to whom the Apostle was writing, and especially those against whom he was contending, did not need anything plainer. If we had been in the thick of the fight, and as much excited over the question of what was to become of the practice of circumcision as they were, we should not have been in any doubt of the meaning of it. And we would hardly have given to the meaning of *enduo* a twist that deprived this passage of all direct bearing on the question under discussion.

The same circumstances that called for the change of the device of the seal called also for an enlargement of the sphere of its application. There was nothing in the nature of the case to prevent this, that all who inherit the benefits of the covenant

should enjoy also the benefits of the seal. But the logic of the entire situation goes to show that those upon whom the gift of the privilege of the seal was once conferred could not be deprived of it. The gift was unconditional and unlimited. Even if it were in its own nature forfeitable, it was conferred on those who could not, by any act of their own, forfeit it—infants eight days old. Infants, seed of believers, have an inalienable right to have placed upon them the seal of the covenant.

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