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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BERTHA AND HER BAPTISM ***

BERTHA AND HER BAPTISM.

By the Author of
AGNES AND THE LITTLE KEY;
or,
BEREAVED PARENTS INSTRUCTED AND COMFORTED.

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PREFACE.

This book, and that which is also named in the title-page, were written at the same time, and as one book; but they were afterward separated, as more properly constituting two volumes, the part which was the original of the present volume now being greatly enlarged. Thus the two books grew in the author's mind together, from one and the same root,—the death of a little child.

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BERTHA AND HER BAPTISM.

Chapter First.

PROBABILITIES OF AN ORDINANCE FOR CHILDREN.

'Tis aye a solemn thing to me
To look upon a babe that sleeps,
Wearing in its spirit-deeps
The unrevealed mystery

It is generally believed that, of those who have gone to heaven from this world, by far the larger part have been infants and young children. Born here, they were by one man's disobedience made sinners; born of the Spirit, at their early translation to heaven, they hold an important place in the plan of salvation by Christ. Very beautiful, as well as sublime, is the thought of so large a contribution, to the heavenly world, of human beings in the dawn of their existence, enhancing, as we may suppose, the happiness of heaven by such large admixture of exotic, youthful nature, and illustrating, by their redemption from a helpless state of sin and misery, the unsearchable riches of wisdom and grace.

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Has God done anything, in this world, to mark his regard for that class of the human race constituting, thus far, the greater part of the redeemed? We naturally look for something reminding the world of his interest in these subsidiaries of his kingdom. Has he confined his notice to those that are full-grown, and who have, thus far, the larger part of them, withheld from him the fruit of his vineyard? God has a church on earth, with ordinances, symbols, covenant signs: among them is there not some sign, symbol, or ordinance, recognizing those who, more than any other of the race, have, till now, been swelling the numbers of that church in heaven?

Like those elements of astronomical calculation which require and lead men to expect undiscovered planets in a certain quarter of the firmament, analogy, and the known intercourse of God with mankind, and our moral sense, incline us to look for some symbolic recognition of this earthly constituency of heaven by him who ordained and is redeeming to himself a church from among men. Words of interest and love toward them on the part of God, we all know, are not wanting in the Bible. Acts of loving-kindness, also, proving the sincerity of those words, and reaching even to a thousand generations of them that love God, are everywhere seen in sacred history.

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But is there no great, conspicuous symbol of these things,—no type, no rite? Symbols appear to be inseparable attendants of God's manifested favor to men. He cannot enter into covenant with an individual, much less a people, but there is at least a stone set up, or a threshing-floor is bought for him, an altar is built, or they pour out a horn of oil. He invites Ahaz to ask of him a sign of his promise: "Ask it," he says, "either in the depths, or in the height above;" and, when that man refuses, God gives him a sign. Emblems, seals and types, in the early dispensation, burst forth like images in the waters of everything along the banks, and even of things far off. Everything has its memorial, its rite; are the children, is the parental relation, forgotten?

Here let us consider that God began with the first parents and the first children of the human race to set forth that great law of his administration, the connection of children with parents for good or evil. Every descendant of Adam is an example under that law. Thus it was for nineteen generations,—from Adam to Abraham.

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When, therefore, God reëstablished his church at the call of Abraham, it was no new thing to connect parents and their children in covenant promises and blessings. It had its origin in the very nature of man. Abraham, and the covenant made with him for all believers and their children, are, indeed, a striking illustration of a principle recognized and applied by the Most High; but the principle itself is older than Abraham,—it is coëval with the moral constitution of man. In making a covenant with Noah, God included his children; so with David, making mention of his house, "for a great while to come."

As soon, therefore, as religion was established in the earth, by securing its perpetuity through the conservative influences of one selected line of descent, the child was taken, as being the object of the covenant, and the means of its perpetuation, and received its seal. God designed to perpetuate religion in the earth, thenceforward, chiefly by means of the parental relation; for the parent represents God to the child more than any other fellow-creature, or thing, can do,—more than any instituted influence, whether of prophet, priest, church, or ritual. Setting up his church for all future time, with Abraham for its founder, God included children with parents who covenanted with him, as the objects of special regard and promise, and he appointed a rite to mark and seal that covenant. Thus it was from Abraham to Christ, during three times fourteen generations.

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But the day of types and symbols was succeeded by another era, in which the church of God comes forth with the glory of God risen upon her, and all the nebulous matter of types and ceremonies is gathered together into two permanent sacraments; for human nature was not beyond the need and help of outward signs. Now, in the earlier of the two ages of the church, the child was recognized by a rite of the church; the child, with that rite inscribed on him, was the sign-bearer of the church's perpetuity. Yet, in the age following, the child was as dear to the parent as ever; the Christian parent was as much concerned to have religion flow through his seed, as were his predecessors; the salvation of the child was regarded with the same solicitude, and the principle of perpetuating religion by the family constitution was still the same.

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But did God withdraw from the children of his servants, from the most hopeful of all the sources of his church's increase on earth and in heaven, all token of his regard in any sacramental act? Is parental affection, under the reign of Immanuel, debarred the enjoyment of one of its most valuable privileges, the sealing of the child to be the Lord's by the use of a divinely-appointed symbol? Had no ordinances and symbols been allowed after the institution of Christianity, this

question would not arise; the inference would have been that human nature, under the Gospel, will no more need the aid of rites in religion. But there are Christian rites, expressly and solemnly instituted. Is not that most important relation of a believer's child to God perpetuated; and is it not still to be sealed by the use of one of the Christian ordinances?

In considering this question, and the many interesting topics connected with it, the writer will be allowed to take his own way, following an historical order in the occurrences which may be supposed to have made the subject interesting and clear to the minds of two parents. [Pg 15]

Chapter Second.

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THE GRANDFATHER'S LETTER.

THE NATURE, GROUNDS, AND INFLUENCE, OF INFANT BAPTISM.

If temporal estates may be conveyed
By cov'nants, on condition,
To men, and to their heirs; be not affraid,
My soule, to rest upon
The covenant of grace by mercy made.

GEORGE HERBERT,—*"The Font."*

—No finite mind can fully comprehend the mysteries into which his baptism is the initiation.
—COLERIDGE,—*"Aids,"* &c.

Christian faith is the perfection of human reason.—IBID.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER BERTHA:—I am glad that you think of taking your little namesake to the house of God for baptism. You wish to know my views about it in full. My new colleague having relieved me of many cares and labors, I shall hope to write more frequently; but not often so long a letter as I fear this will be; for I wish to tell you of some conversations which I have had on the subject in question. This will show you the common difficulties, in which, perhaps, you share, and my way of removing them; and also set before you the privileges and blessings connected with the baptism of your child. [Pg 17]

A man and his wife—sensible, plain people—came to our house one evening last July, when the "vines with the tender grape gave a goodly smell," through that trellis which you and Percival have such pleasant reason to remember. We were all sitting there in the moonlight, when this Mr. Benson and his wife came up the door-way, and were welcomed into our little group. After a few words of mutual inquiry and answer, he said:

"Wife and I, sir, thought that we would make bold to come and trouble you a little to tell us about baptizing our boy. He is getting to be four months old, and we are not willing to put it off much longer. Still, we would like to know the grounds of it a little better. People, you know, do not think much about it till it comes to be a case in hand.

"But I do not know," said he, looking round on your mother and the children, "but that we do wrong to take this time for it. It will be rather a dry subject for these young friends to hear." [Pg 18]

Pastor. Not at all. They owe too much to what was done for them when they were little children, to dislike it. Besides, there is nothing dry about it, as I view the subject. It is one of the most beautiful things in religion.

Mrs. Benson. It is next to the Lord's Supper, I always thought, if people take the right view of it.

Pastor. It makes you love God the Father in some such way as the Lord's Supper makes you love the Saviour. I think, sometimes, that the baptism of children is our heavenly Father's Sacrament.

Mr. B. I like that; but there is so much to study and learn about the "Abrahamic covenant," that I feel a little discouraged. I have had books lent me on the Abrahamic covenant, and I began to read them; but they looked hard; so I told my wife that perhaps you would make the thing more clear, and bring it home to our feelings, and that we would come and get your ideas about it.

Pastor. How glad I am that you came! But tell me what you take the Abrahamic covenant to mean.

Mr. B. I suppose it means that God told Abraham to circumcise his children, and infant baptism comes in the place of it, and we must do it if we are Abraham's spiritual children. But I wish to see the use of it. I am willing to do it, but I should like to feel it more; and I want to know how baptism comes in the place of circumcision, and a great many other things. [Pg 19]

Pastor. I think that you may possibly have what may be called some Jewish notions about the Abrahamic covenant, though I trust you are right in the main. That phrase sounds foreign and mysterious, and I never use it except in talking with people who I know have the thing itself already in their hearts.

I called Helen to me, and told her to say the hymn which she had repeated to me the last Sabbath

evening.

She cleared her voice, leaned against me, and twisted her fingers in my hair behind, and, with her eyes fixed there, she said this hymn:

"Begin, my tongue, some heavenly theme,
And speak some boundless thing;
The mightier works or mightier name
Of our eternal King.

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"Tell of his wondrous faithfulness,
And sound his power abroad;
Sing the sweet promise of his grace,
And the performing God.

"Proclaim salvation from the Lord
For wretched, dying men;
His hand has writ the sacred word
With an immortal pen.

"Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness raise
Those everlasting lines.

"He who can dash whole worlds to death,
And make them when he please,
He speaks, and that Almighty breath
Fulfils his promises.

"His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies:
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises.

"He said, 'Let the wide heavens be spread;'
And heaven was stretched abroad.
'Abra'am, I'll be thy God,' he said;
And he was Abra'am's God.

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"O, might I hear thy heavenly tongue
But whisper, 'Thou art mine!'
Those gentle words should raise my song
To notes almost divine.

"How would my leaping heart rejoice,
And think my heaven secure!
I trust the all-creating voice,
And faith desires no more."

Pastor. What a happy man Abraham must have been when the Almighty made this engagement and promise: "I will be a God to thee!" That was the "Abrahamic covenant," in part.

"Does covenant mean that?" said Mrs. B.

"What?" I inquired.

"Why, sir, what you have just said,—engagement, promise?"

"Nothing more," said I. "But what a happy man, I say, Abraham must have been! 'A God to thee!' To have the Almighty say to one, 'I will be a God to thee!' You know that this is everything."

"That is a fact," said Mr. B., wiping his eyes; "for, when I went to my store, the morning after I became a Christian, I went along the street, saying to myself, 'Now I have a God. God is God to me. Thou art my God.'"

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"Yes," said his wife; "Deacon B., the post-master, heard you, as you went by his side-window, and he made an excuse to bring me up a paper, that forenoon, and asked whether you had not met with a change in your feelings on the subject of religion."

"Did he?" said Mr. B. "Well, I did not mean to be heard, and yet I was willing that everybody should know how happy I was in having one whom I could call my God. How I had lived so long without God for my God, amazed me."

Pastor. You make me think of a man who, one night, on reaching his house, after having attended a lecture in a school-room, was filled with such surprising views and feelings, with respect to the greatness and goodness of God, that he saddled his horse, rode three miles, waked up the minister, and, as he came to the door, took hold of each arm, and said, "O, my dear sir, what a God we've got!" He would not go in, but soon hastened back. It was the substance of all that he

wished to say; he desired to pour out his soul to some one who would understand him. He was like a thirsty land when at last the great rain is descending.

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Mr. B. I suppose many people would have thought him crazy.

"I suspect the minister did, at first," said Mrs. B.

"And yet I suppose," said I, "he was never more rational. Just think what it is for a poor sinner all at once to feel that the eternal God is his; that He will be a God to him! We hear of some people dying at the receipt of good news; and I have seen some so happy at this experience, of having a God to love and to love them, that, if the thing itself did not, as it always does, bring peace and inward strength with it, nature could not have sustained it."

"Joy unspeakable," said Mr. B. "And full of glory," said his wife, waiting a moment for him to finish the quotation.

"Now, my dear friends," said I, "that man on horseback, at his minister's door at midnight, had, at that moment, the first part of what is meant by the 'Abrahamic covenant.' How little way do these words go toward expressing the thing itself, and a man's feelings under it! There was a time when God made Abraham far more happy even than he did you on your way to the post-office that morning."

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Helen came along, just then, with a fruit-basket of apples, and I said to her, as she was going round with them, "Say again that verse in your hymn, which has these words in it, 'Thou art mine.'"

So, while Mr. B. was paring his apple, Helen stood before him, and said:

"O, might I hear thy heavenly tongue
But whisper, 'Thou art mine!'
Those gentle words should raise my song
To notes almost divine."

Mr. B. put his apple and knife down, and took his red bandanna handkerchief from under his plate, and, wiping his eyes, said:

"Hymns always make me feel a good deal, especially Watts's. I've read that hymn in meeting before the exercises began."

Pastor. You know, by happy experience, what it is when that heavenly tongue whispers, "Thou art mine."

Mr. B. I do, sir, if I know anything.

Pastor. Now, my dear friends, there is something awaiting you, which you seem not to have experienced, but which is as good as that.

"We would like to hear about it," they both replied.

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"How should you like, Mrs. B.," said I, "to have your little boy become a sailor?"

"O dear!" said she, "I should have no peace from this time, if I thought he was to be a sailor."

"But that," said I, "may be God's chosen occupation for him,—the way in which he will employ him to bring him to himself, and then use him to be a preacher to seamen, for example, and so to scatter the truth in many parts of the earth. We are not our own, Mrs. B., and this dear boy was not given you, as we say, to keep. 'For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.'"

"I want him brought up at college," said Mrs. B., looking at your mother, who, she probably thought, would understand her motherly anticipations about her boy so far ahead.

"Well," said I, "let us send him to college. I suspect that you would feel a good deal the morning he left you, would you not?"

"O," said she, "I should so want him to be good first! If he should not be a good man, I would not have him get learning to do harm with it, and make himself more miserable hereafter."

The little gate, with its chain and ball, swung to at this moment, and a woman and girl came up the walk. It was Mrs. Ford, who used to be your dress-maker, and her daughter Janette, now about thirteen. It was a farewell call from Janette, who was going to the neighborhood of Philadelphia, into a coach-lace manufactory.

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"So Janette is going to leave us, to-morrow, Mrs. Ford?" said your mother.

"Yes, madam, and I feel sorely about it; so young, and such a way off, and all strangers except the foreman, who spoke to me about her coming! O, sir," said she, changing her undertone, and turning to me, "what should we do without that promise, 'I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee'?"

I looked at Mr. and Mrs. B., and we all smiled, while I said:

"Now we have got the second part of the 'Abrahamic covenant.' So now we have the whole of it. Mrs. Ford, when you came in, we were talking about baptizing children, and about the

'Abrahamic covenant.' What do you understand by that covenant?"

"I understand by it, sir," said she, slowly gathering her words into proper order; "why, I think I understand by it, that God promises to be a God to a believer's child, as he was in such a wonderful way to Abraham's people." [Pg 27]

Pastor. Well, that is the substance of one part of it, at least. Did you know, Mrs. Ford, that when you came in we were just entering Mrs. Benson's son at college?

Mrs. Ford. Not this Mrs. Benson, of course. Whom do you mean, sir?

Pastor. This Mrs. Benson;—her little son.

Mrs. Ford. O, I understand! Well, you will send him to P., I suppose, it is so near.

"We had not fixed on the college," said Mrs. Benson, with a laugh.

"Janette," said I, "how do you like the thought of going off so far from us all?"

Janette pulled the ends of her plain cotton gloves, and her heart was full, so that she could not speak for a moment. I was sorry that I had asked the question, and therefore added:

"You will not go where God cannot take care of you and bless you the same as at home, will you, dear?"

She lifted her white apron to her eyes, while Mrs. Ford said for her:

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"I tell Janette that I gave her up to God in baptism; and when her father lay sick, he said, 'That child was given to God in his house; I leave her destitute, and with nothing but her hands, but I leave her to a covenant-keeping God.'"

"Now," said I, "here is a dear daughter going to a strange place to learn a trade. She knows not a soul in the place but the foreman who has hired her. A boy is going to college, another to sea, another to a distant city. Here is a daughter, who receives particular attentions from certain young friends, and the probability is that she will be asked in marriage; and here is a son, who with his parents are in doubt with regard to his future occupation and course of life. God only knows the feelings of parents at such times. What prayers are made in secret,—what vows! One wrong step may embitter life. A right step may lead to prosperity and great happiness. I sometimes wish that we could gather our children together, in some of these emergencies and critical periods of their lives, and offer up prayers and vows, as parents and friends, in their behalf. There would not be many meetings more interesting than these, Mr. Benson. How the parents of such children would love everybody that came at such times to pray for their children; and what prayers would go up to God!" [Pg 29]

"Can we not have some such meetings?" said Mr. Benson. "Every parent would like it, I am sure."

Pastor. Well, we do have some such meetings occasionally, I remember.

"Our minister loves to use parables," said Mrs. Benson, looking at your mother, "so as to make us understand the meaning better, and remember it."

"I must ask you to explain," said Mr. Benson.

Pastor. As often as we bring a child to the house of God for baptism, Mr. Benson, we have such a meeting, if Christians will but understand it so. We come with the parents, and say, "Lord God, here is this dear child, with a momentous history pending upon thy favor and blessing. In all future time, in the critical moments and eventful steps of its life, or in its early death, or in its orphanage, be thou a God to this child." If God should to-night, Mrs. Ford, say to you, "I will be Janette's God," would you not send her away with a light heart? [Pg 30]

"He should have her for life, dear child!" said she; "and I do feel that he is a God to her."

"He is," said I, "if you have really made a covenant with him about your daughter."

"I have, sir," said Mrs. Ford.

Pastor. Did the covenant have any seal? Some good people, you know, think it enough to covenant with God about their children, without using any special act to mark and seal it. Now it is only in consecrating children to God that they omit the seal from the covenant. We practise adult baptism, joining the church, confirmation, and we partake of the Lord's Supper, feeling the propriety and the use of acts and testimonies in the form of an ordinance. What seal had your covenanting with God about your child?

Mrs. Ford. I see it now clearer than ever. As we stood with this child in our arms, we both said, afterwards, we made a public profession of religion anew; and, when the minister said those sacred names over her, I felt more than before that I was having transactions with God about the child. But people used to say to me, "Why not wait and let Janette be baptized when she is old enough to understand it?" How little they knew about it! Just as though, I told them, if I had money to put into the savings-bank for Janette, I would wait and let her put it in herself (it is so pleasant to put it in when you know all about it!), instead of laying it up for her in the funds, and let it count up while she is growing.

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Pastor. Those friends who advised you so, think, perhaps, too much of the ceremony itself, and

not so much of what it signifies. Now the pleasure of being baptized is nothing compared with having God enter into a covenant in your behalf when you knew nothing about it.

Mrs. Ford. They said to me, also, "What right have you to do it, instead of letting her have the choice and privilege of doing it herself hereafter?" I told them that, if we acted on that principle, in the treatment of our children, there would be a long list of useful things, which we do for them, to be postponed.

Pastor. We can benefit another without his consent. The question is, whether it is a benefit to a child for God and its natural guardians to make a covenant together in its behalf.

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Mr. Benson. It surely is so, if God truly is a party to such a covenant. But where is the proof that he is? That is my trouble. They tell me that this covenanting with God for a child, and sealing it with an ordinance, ceased with Abraham, who was a Jew; that it was a Jewish custom, which died out.

Pastor. Abraham a mere Jew! God's covenant with a believer and his children a Jewish covenant! Never was there a greater mistake. Paul tells us expressly it was not so. Get me a Bible, Helen, and bring me a lamp. I read these words: "And the promise that he should be heir of the world was not to Abraham and his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." His relation to the world was independent of dispensations; it grew out of that faith which he had in common with all believers to the end of time. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised." Christ also says: "Moses, therefore, gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers.)" Abraham was not a Jew when God covenanted with him, any more than you, madam, were Mrs. Ford, when, at the age of sixteen, as you have told me, you entered into covenant with God. That covenant had chief respect to your immortal soul, and yet it reached in its influences to all the conditions of that soul while here in the flesh. So God covenanted with Abraham as a believer, not as a mere national ancestor; yet temporal and spiritual blessings came in rich measures upon his immediate descendants. But we read, "So then as many as be of faith are blessed with faithful," that is, believing, "Abraham." "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Can anything be plainer than this?

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Mrs. Ford. My father was a minister, you know, sir, and he used to preach a great deal on this subject.

Pastor. Let us hear your understanding of these passages, Mrs. Ford.

"I am afraid," said she, "I cannot tell you just what he used to say. But my idea of it is this: Though Abraham was the founder of the Hebrew people, he was no more a Jew than a Gentile in his covenant with God, for it was as believer the great believer, that God made a covenant with him. So that he was not circumcised as a Jew, but, as the Bible says, to have a seal of the righteousness which he had by faith. God made a covenant with him as a believer, to be his God and the God of his children, as the children of a believer, not a Jew; so that all believers are blessed with believing Abraham, by having the same covenant extended to them. Then, I take it, God gave him a sign and seal as a pledge, and to remind him of it, and to keep his children in remembrance." She paused, and I said:

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"Please to go on." You remember, Bertha, how you used to make this Mrs. Ford discuss doctrinal matters when she was sewing for you.

Mrs. Ford. I remember that father said that God took the rainbow as a sign and seal of his promise, to Noah and all future generations, that there should never be another universal deluge. So he appointed a children's ordinance to mark his covenant with believers to the end of time. Only there was this difference; the way of signing and sealing the covenant not being coupled with the laws of nature, but conforming to the kind of symbols successively in use, it was changed, at the time that the Sabbath was changed, and the whole of the old dispensation; but father used to say, Is the commonwealth and citizenship broken up because the legislature adopts a new state seal? Does that destroy all the old public documents?

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Pastor. Good! So the United States' mint is from time to time changing its dies; lately it has abolished copper, and substituted equivalent coins of different composition. But money does not perish. A cent is a cent still, red or white. So, whether the seal be blood or water, the great ordinance which it seals remains the same.

"And now I will tell you," said I, "how it seems to me God's covenanting with parents for their children came to pass. He wished to give Abraham a token and seal of his love to him. So he took his child, the thing which he loved best, and would see oftenest, and thought of most, and made the child, as it were, the tablet on which to write his covenant with the father. That was one reason. 'Because he loved the fathers, therefore he chose their seed.' But this is the least of the reasons in the case.

"Here is one of vastly greater importance. God wished to perpetuate religion in the earth. He knew that the family constitution would be the principal means of doing this, parents teaching and commanding their children, and so transmitting religion. Because he knew that Abraham would do this, he gave it as a reason for his love and confidence in him, in not concealing from him his purpose to destroy Sodom. 'Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the ways

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of the Lord.' So, in order to remind Abraham of what was expected by the Most High in making his children the presumptive heirs of grace, and to remind the children of it when they came to years of understanding, God gave him and them this mark and seal."

"Well, then," said Mr. Benson, "it seems to me Abraham was better off than we, if he had God in covenant with him for his children, and we have not. I sometimes wish that I could have God covenant with me about my boy, as Abraham had about Isaac."

"I should like," said Mrs. B., "to hear him say, 'I will be a God to him,' and then tell us to do something of his own appointment that should be like our signing and sealing a covenant together, as the Lord's Supper enables us to do with Christ."

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"If we have no such blessed privilege," said I, "then, as Abraham desired to see our day, I should, in this respect, rejoice to see Abraham's day. I cannot forego the privilege of having God in covenant with me for my children as he was with Abraham for his; and I crave some divine seal affixed to it."

"You said, Mrs. Benson, that you would like to have God promise to be the God of your child, and then command you to do something which would be like God and you signing and sealing it together. But do you think, Mrs. B., that this is necessary? Why is it not enough for God to make a promise, and you make one, and let it be without any sign or seal?"

"People don't do things in that way," said Mr. Benson, with a decided motion, two or three times, with his head. "They call a wedding a ceremony, it is true, and some say, 'So long as people are engaged to be man and wife, the ceremony makes little difference.' But it does make all the difference in the world,—this mere ceremony, as they call it. They never like to dispense with it themselves, at least; because, you see, it makes all the difference between unlawful, sinful union, and marriage. It makes married life; which could not exist, without the ceremony, among decent people. It gives a title and ground to a thing which could not be without it. So, I begin to see and feel, it is with regard to what some call the ceremony of baptism. But excuse me, wife, I took the answer out of your mouth."

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"Well," said Mrs. Benson to me, "I must wait upon you, sir, to answer the question further."

"Mr. Benson has the right view of the subject," I replied. "We make too little of signs and seals, from a morbid fear and jealousy of those which are invented by man and added to religion. But God's own seals are safe and good. We cannot make too much of them."

"God never did anything with men, from the beginning, without signs and seals. The tree of life was one, and so was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve knew better, at first, than to say, 'So long as we love and obey God, of what use are these symbols?' By not regarding symbols afterward, they brought death into our world and all our woe. Even before that, God had appointed a symbol of his authority, and a seal of a covenant between him and man forever, in the appointment of the Sabbath. The mark on Cain's forehead, the rainbow, the lamp passing between the severed parts of Abraham's sacrifice, Jacob's ladder, the burning bush, the passover, and things too numerous to mention, show how God loves signs and seals."

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"There are many good people, at the present day, who say to me, I am willing to consecrate my child to God in prayer, and bring him up for God; but I do not see the necessity of an ordinance. Why bring the child to baptism? I can do all which is required and signified, without the sign."

"What do you say to them?" said Mrs. Ford.

Pastor. I tell them they are on dangerous ground. Will they be wiser than God? He knows our natures, and what to prescribe to us in our intercourse with him. I would as soon meddle with a law of nature, as with God's ordinances. I might as well neglect a law of nature, and think to be safe and well, as to neglect one of God's ordinances, and expect his blessing."

People, moreover, may as well object to family prayer, and say that they try to live in a spirit of prayer all day. Why do they have special seasons for retirement, if they walk with God? Why do they hardly feel that they have prayed if company, or a bedfellow, on a journey, keeps them from using oral prayer? It is a bitter grief, also, when no funeral solemnities lead the way to the grave with a beloved object; yet, where in the word of God are they commanded? As Mr. Benson said, "Who is willing to dispense with the wedding ceremony, except in cases where sadness and trouble seek concealment?"

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People cannot give full evidence that they are Christians unless they make a public profession of religion. They cannot properly remember Jesus without partaking of his body and blood. Depend upon it, my dear friends, God sets great value on ordinances, and our observance of them. God has given us two sacraments, and he who dispenses with them because he undervalues them, or undertakes to say that they are not necessary to him, or to any in this age of the world, is in peril. The only danger from forms and ordinances is when they are of human origin. We must take care and not let our revulsion from Romanism carry us to the extreme of neglecting or setting aside the ordinances of God's appointment. "There are three that bear record on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." A man may, with equal propriety, dispense with the blood, and its symbol the wine, or with the Spirit, as with the water, if God has appointed it with the other two as a witness between him and us. You notice that the Spirit is named with the two inanimate things, the blood and the water. Take care, I say to my friends, lest, in setting aside the water, you shut out that divine Spirit, who, knowing how to deal with our

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nature, chooses the blood and the water to be used by us in connection with our most spiritual religious exercises of the mind and heart. We have no more right to interfere with God's ordinances than with the number of the persons in the Trinity.

"All this affects me so," said Mr. Benson, "that I shall not fail to offer my child to be baptized, if I am allowed to do so. Now, there is my difficulty. Why do you think, and how do you show, that baptism must now be used as God's sign and seal of his covenant with believers for their children? When circumcision was dropped, some insist that the covenant was dropped with it, and, therefore, that there is no warrant in Scripture for baptizing children."

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"Why," said Mrs. Ford, "if the coming in of Moses' dispensation did not abolish the arrangement with Abraham, why should its going out? I am inclined to think that Abraham and his seed are, to Moses and his dispensation, something like that vine to the trellis, running over it to the top of the piazza, bending itself in, you see, to accommodate itself, but having a root and a top, the one below, the other above, the short frame, which only guides it up to the roof. In the eleventh of Romans does not Paul say that Jews and Gentiles have one and the same 'root'? I always supposed that root to be Abraham and his covenant."

I did not quote Latin to my friends, but I thought of the old law-maxim, *Manente ratione, manet ipsa lex*—which, if your scholarship is not at hand to translate it, Percival will tell you, means, "The reason for a law remaining, the law itself also remains." It is used in such cases as the following: When one would insist that a law was intended to be repealed by the operation of another law, not directly or expressly aimed to repeal it, it is a good reply. If the original reason for enacting the old law can be shown still to exist, it is strong presumptive evidence that there was no intention to repeal that law. I explained this, in as simple language as I could, to my excellent friends, and told them, "If God's covenant, which circumcision sealed, were Mosaic, and therefore national, Jewish, we should presume that it ceased with the Jewish nation; or, if it continued, that it was restricted to their posterity. But why should God bestow his inestimable blessing on the father of the faithful, and take it away from the faithful themselves? We love our children, as Abraham did his. It is as important to us that God should be the God of our seed, as it was to Abraham. My heart yearns after that covenanting God in behalf of my children."

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"I will give up thinking of Abraham as a Jew," said Mrs. Benson.

"What was he, then?" said I, "or what will he be to you, from this time?"

"He was the head of believers," said she, "just as Adam was the head of men. As Mrs. Ford said, he was the great believer; and I am persuaded that all who are of faith have his privileges, and more too; but certainly all that he had."

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"But, my dear," said your mother, "you have forgotten the question. Supposing that the covenant still remains, why do you take baptism for the seal of it? The old way of sealing it is given up. What authority do you show for using baptism in its place?"

"I take the initiating ordinance of religion for the time being," said I, "whatever it may be. Is not baptism the initiating ordinance, as circumcision was? When they built our long bridge, and the ferry-boats ceased running, did the town put up a great sign over the gate, saying, 'It is enacted that this river shall continue to be crossed'? Did they add, 'This bridge is hereby appointed as the way of getting over the river'? Or, did not people take it for granted, when the bridge was opened and the ferry-boats were withdrawn, that the bridge was designed to be the way by which they were to pass over the river?"

"Now, suppose so impossible a thing as this, that hereafter baptism should, by divine revelation, be changed for anointing with oil, and nothing were said about children. I would anoint the child with oil, instead of baptizing it with water. We are to use the initiatory rite of the church for the time being."

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"But," said Mrs. Benson, "is there any resemblance between circumcision and baptism?"

"There need be none," said I. "Resemblance does not give it efficacy, but God's appointment of it. If marking the flesh in some way should be appointed to succeed baptism, we need not look for a likeness between it and baptism before we complied with the divine requirement."

"I do wish," said Mrs. Benson, "that the authority to baptize children were more expressly stated in the Bible, to satisfy all who were not brought up as we have been."

Pastor. The overwhelming majority of those who now receive the Bible as the word of God find it there.

Mrs. Benson. But why did not Paul receive a revelation about it, as he did about the Lord's Supper?

Pastor. Did that make the thing any more authoritative with us than the original appointment? We will not prescribe to God how to teach us. We will not make up our minds how he ought to have made a revelation, but we will take that revelation and try to understand it.

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"I agree to that," said they all.

Pastor. It appears to me that God prefers, on certain subjects, that the world shall reason by inferences. It is a wise way of educating children and youth, to leave some things to be learned in this way, and not by setting everything before them, like too many examples in the arithmetic

wrought out.

We have changed the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day in the week. It gives me a sublime idea of our Sabbath, that by some great, silent alteration, it has come to pass that all the world keep the day of Christ's resurrection, instead of the day which commemorated the work of creation. I feel toward it as I do with regard to the noiseless changes of the seasons, and the conformity of our habits and practices to them. I left New York late in winter for the Azores, and, before I expected it, the warm southern airs came one morning into my cabin window. So the Christian Sabbath, with its beautiful associations, flowed in upon the world without a formal proclamation. I feel thankful to God for so regarding our intelligent natures, as to leave some things, relating to ordinances, modes, and forms, to be inferred, bringing great changes over the moral and spiritual world, and leaving us to adjust ourselves and the administration of the appointed ordinances to them. We can add nothing, we take nothing away from an express, divine command; but, as the first disciples were left to infer that a Sabbath was as necessary after Christ brought in the new creation as before, and adjusted it to the celebration of the Saviour's rising from the dead, so we infer that God's covenant with believing parents for their children is as desirable now as ever; that all the original reasons for it now exist; and, therefore, we take the initiating ordinance of religion now, as the church in former ages did, and apply it to the children. All church-members did it before Christ; all church-members may do it now. God saw fit to make every adult member, at least, of the Jewish family, a church-member; if he has changed and restricted the terms of church-membership now, that is a sufficient reason for not making the sealing of children as universal now as it was before. That is to say, in both cases, it is a church-member's privilege.

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Without detailing the conversation at this point, let me say, I take it for granted that Abraham, as my great spiritual ancestor, my representative before God, my commissioner to receive for me and transmit my privileges and blessings, continues in that relation unless expressly set aside. Christ did not set him aside. How wonderfully he is brought forward under the new dispensation, when it is said to us, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." But, pray, why should Abraham be intruded in connection with Christ, if he with his covenant is like a lapsed legacy, or a superseded act of Congress? Why comes he here, in connection with the Saviour, and tells me that if I am Christ's, then am I his, Abraham's, seed? Hear this: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." Wonderful elevation of Abraham and his blessing, as the great type of all that Christ was to procure for us! If Abraham and his covenant ceased with the Jewish people, how does the blessing of Abraham fully come upon us, the Gentiles? But give me his covenant for my children; then I see that Christ is executor of the testament made with Abraham for his children; and I am one of the heirs; as indeed I am, even if I have no children, but if I have, all of Abraham's privileges and his covenanting God are mine and theirs.

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So that, I said to my friends, I go to the Bible not to say, "Must I baptize my children?" but, "Am I forbidden to baptize them?"

All my predecessors in the church of God, before Christ, had the privilege of bringing their children into the bonds of the covenant with themselves. If they felt as we do about it (and strict usage, and the rich experience which they had had of its benefits, must have made it inestimably precious to them), it is incredible that a sudden and total discontinuance of it, at the beginning of Christianity, should not have occasioned great clamor. The formalists, at least, would have remonstrated at the seeming violation, by this new order of things, of natural affection. For, as Doddridge well observes, "What would have been done with the infants, or male children, of Christians?"—that is, of converted Jews, as well as others. They could not circumcise them; but their teachers, being spiritually-minded men, knew that circumcision was a seal of faith, not merely of nationality, and must not the converts have required some sign and symbol still for their children? Now they had long been used to the baptism of proselytes and their children; so that baptizing their own children, as a substitute for circumcising them, could not have been a violent change with those whom Peter's vision of the sheet had taught that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs. And when he, in one of his first sermons, said to the whole house of Israel, "Ye are the children of the covenant," and "The promise is unto you and to your children," we can account for their utter silence as to any revocation by Christianity of the right and privilege of applying the initiatory ordinance of religion, for the time being, to a believer's child.

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"But," said Mr. Benson, "the Saviour said, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.' The apostles said, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you.' Show us, now, why this does not prove that repentance and faith were not thus made essential to baptism. According to these passages, none could be baptized who had not repented and believed. This would exclude infants. 'Believe, and be baptized;' how do you dispose of that, sir?"

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"Very easily," said I.

Mrs. Benson exclaimed, "O, sir, if you can, all my difficulty is at an end!"

"Well, then," said I, "in the first place, there is no such requirement in the Bible. You see the expression very often, but it is not found in Scripture. But tell me exactly what your difficulty is."

"Why," said she, "my husband has just stated it. People tell us the Bible says, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.' So they insist that no one should be baptized who is not old enough to believe."

I told her that I could remove her difficulty in very few words.

"Suppose," said I, "that Abraham is preaching to full-grown men in Canaan, and is trying to proselyte them from their idolatry to the worship of God. He would say to them, 'Believe and be circumcised,' would he not? for God ordained that certain proselytes should be circumcised."

"Yes, sir," said two or three voices at once.

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"Well, then," said I, "must it follow that children could not be circumcised because Abraham said to men, 'Believe and be circumcised'? How will that reasoning answer? Is it true? No. Little Isaac refuted it, for he was circumcised even when his father was saying to his pagan neighbors, 'Believe and be circumcised.'"

"True enough, all who believed, in Christ's day and the apostles', needed to be baptized, because they were not children, but were grown up, when Christian baptism began. Had an apostle, however, lived to see the jailer's family, and that of Lydia, and of Stephanas, grown up, and any in those families had remained unconverted, and then he had said to them, 'Believe and be baptized,' there would be some force in saying that believing and baptism must always go together."

"One other thing always troubled me," said Mr. Benson, "and that is, that there was no seal of the covenant for any but male children. Now, if the initiatory rite of Christianity be used for the same purpose as that given to Abraham, why not confine it, as formerly, to males?"

"How interesting it is," said I, "and it is full of instruction, to see God paying regard to the world's knowledge and progress, in all his measures, and doing nothing prematurely. There is a very striking illustration of this in the account of the fall.

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"God knew the history of the tempter during his agency in Paradise; for angels had sinned and fallen from heaven. But the existence and agency of fallen spirits had not been disclosed in the Bible,—the time for the disclosure had not come,—and therefore it is said, with beautiful simplicity, 'Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made;' and the narrative has respect only to the external appearance of the tempter, the serpent, because it would have been premature as yet to bring in the story of fallen angels, or make allusion to them.

"So, for reasons belonging to the early ages of the world, woman was included in man, who acted for her.^[1]

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"But, however the arrangement began, God regarded that organic law of society, and, in giving Abraham a seal of a covenant for his children, he restricted it to the sons, they in all things standing and acting as the representatives of the house, according to the existing custom. God did not go far beyond the world's advancement, in his ordinances, but, with condescension and in wisdom, suited the one to the other. But, as things were then generally represented by types, so the male child was a type and representative of the more full and complete form, which was reserved till the fulness of time, and till the world should know the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. For 'in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female.'"

So I discoursed with my visitors till between ten and eleven o'clock, and when they rose to go, we all stood up together and joined in prayer. We commended Janette to her covenant-keeping God, whose name had been inscribed upon her. We remembered the little boy who had been the occasion of all this pleasant conversation, and prayed that his consecration might be accepted, and the sign and seal of it be owned and blessed to him and his parents. As I walked down to the gate with my friends, I said to them, that, when God was covenanting with Abraham, he bade him look up into the heavens, and count the stars, and told him that his seed, like them, should be innumerable. So I told them frequently to look up to those old heavens, and remember that the covenant-keeping God is there, the same who, in blessing Abraham, included his seed; and that, because Abraham was so good a man, God calls his posterity "the seed of Abraham my friend." And so we said good-night.

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In reading over what I have written, there are a few things more which I feel disposed to add, because I know that Percival will make good use of them in talking with others in your congregation.

I feel, more than I can express, that the state of mind in parents which will make them prize and use the ordinance of baptism for their children is the great want of our day. Bringing children to church, and baptizing them, unless the parents are themselves in covenant with God, is as wrong as it was for those earthly-minded Corinthians, whom Paul rebukes, to eat the Lord's Supper. They made a feast, or a meal, of the supper; and some use baptism just to give a child a name,—to "christen" it, as they say,—in mere compliance with a custom. But the abuse of a thing is no valid argument against it. The last supper is the subject of far more perversion; it gives occasion to a vast amount of superstition and folly. The procession of the host, the elevation of the host, the laying of the wafer on the tongue, the solemn injunctions against spitting for a certain time after receiving it, are no valid arguments against the Lord's Supper, and no Christian is led by them to disregard the words of the Lord Jesus, "This do in remembrance of me." Much of the practical benefit of the Supper comes through the feelings which it awakens, the conduct which it promotes. So with infant baptism. The child must be truly consecrated to God, beforehand, and afterwards; and the ordinance must be used as a sign and seal on our part, as it is on the part of God,—an act and testimony, a memorial, a vow. Hannah lent her child to the Lord from the

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beginning, and then brought him to the temple, with her offerings. We must take the child from baptism as though God had placed it a second time in our hands, to be trained up for him.

But, still, the ordinance is God's, and not man's. He has a work to do in us by means of it, while it also helps our feelings, fixes them, makes them vivid, and imposes solemn obligations upon us by its signified vow. So it is with the Lord's Supper. In each case it is God's memorial, and not ours; and its benefit does not consist so much in showing forth the state of our hearts at the time of administration, as in sealing to us the promises of God.

True, our feelings are awakened and strengthened, ordinarily, by the ordinances; but that neither explains nor limits the meaning of them. We are wrong if we suppose that the Lord's Supper has done no good unless our feelings are vivid at the time of partaking. If we were sincere, our act had the effect to engage and seal blessings from God of which we were not aware, and may never be able to trace them back to that transaction. So with regard to baptism.

Some call this sacerdotalism, and are afraid to allow that the sacraments have any influence or use, except as a testimony from us to God. Romanism has driven us to the opposite extreme in our ideas of sacraments. We do not vibrate back again too far toward Romanism, if now we conclude that God employs his sacraments, properly received by us, as seals from him of love and promises. Many Christians derive less comfort and help from the Lord's Supper than they may, because they regard it as profitable only so far as they can offer it to God with vivid feelings on their part; and, when their frames are not as they desire, they conclude that the ordinance is unprofitable. But let us also consider who appointed this ordinance. It is the appointment of Christ, not ours; and at his table we are his guests, not he ours. The Saviour is well represented as saying to us,

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"Thou canst not entertain a king!
Unworthy thou of such a guest;
But I my own provision bring,
To make thy soul a heavenly feast."

There is a divine side to sacraments, as there is a divine side in conversion. While we are active in regeneration, there is a work of God wrought in us, distinct from our faith and repentance, yet inseparable from it. So, while sacraments are vows on our part to God, they are, primarily, gifts, pledges, seals, on his part to us. Therefore, when one says, "I can bring up my children, I can be a Christian, without the use of sacraments," it is a proper reply, "But can God do his part toward your children, and toward you, without them?" For, not only is prayer "the offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will," but there is the additional truth, which is well expressed in those lines of a hymn:

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"Prayer is appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give."

So with sacraments; they convey gifts from God, not primarily gifts from us to God.

He, then, who declines to have his children baptized, on the ground that it is useless, may, in so doing, interrupt the communication of a divinely-appointed medium between God and his child. For he need not be told that the faith of parents brought blessings from the Saviour, when on earth, to their children, nor be reminded that the benefits of circumcision were bestowed on the ground of the parental relation to God.

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One further illustration occurs to me of the power which resides in the sacraments themselves, in distinction from their being a testimony from us to God. Let me call to your remembrance notices which you sometimes see, of young people going, in a frolic, before a clergyman or justice of the peace, to be married, when they intended nothing but sport, and found, afterward, that they had brought themselves into difficulty, and were legally held to be married.

You see by this that covenants do not, by any means, derive all their efficacy from the feelings of a contracting party. Covenants and their seals are the most sacred of all human transactions, and cannot be lightly regarded, or trifled with. God reveals himself often under the name of the God that keepeth covenant. So that we may not set aside the sacraments, nor undervalue them. This leads me to say, furthermore, that children, who doubt whether their parents sincerely and truly offered them to God in baptism, the parents being in an unregenerate state, as it afterward appeared, when they came with their children to the ordinance, may be greatly comforted and encouraged by taking this view of the divine sacrament of baptism as having a force and application in their behalf, by the goodness of God, irrespective of their parents' character. God will not let his sacraments depend, for their efficacy, on the character either of the administrator or of the parents. For, if the character of an administrator affected the baptism, it might so happen that one could never really be baptized, since every successive hand which applied it might prove, in turn, to be that of an unworthy person. If a child is baptized on the profession of parents who afterward show that they were not sincere, the child shall not suffer thereby, if he recognizes the transaction, and makes it his own act. In the case of a converted husband or wife, while one companion remained a heathen, the children were, nevertheless, counted "holy," because the Gospel leaned to the side of mercy, and gave the children the benefit of the believing parent's faith, instead of attainting them through the heathen parent. So, when a child is baptized in error, he shall not suffer, nor even lose anything, if he will accept the covenant with its seal. No one can justly reply to all this, that, therefore, every one even though not of the church, may offer his child for baptism. No; for these are exceptional cases, in which it is true that a covenant,

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even if it be not fulfilled, has force, and things may enure under it which one who does not make the required profession cannot receive. The covenant, if but the outward conditions be complied with, places all, who are in any way related to it, under various contingencies, which sometimes, to some of the parties, may be productive of good. We see illustrations of this in the great tenderness and love which we feel toward a child whose parent has brought a stain upon himself and his family. We find an echo, in our hearts, of those kind words of the Most High, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father;" and, if that son behaves himself worthily, every good man is doubly careful to protect and help him. In this way the broken, or unfulfilled, covenant operates, with God and with man, to the good of some related to it. But shall we, therefore, break our covenant? Shall the unworthy be promiscuously admitted to its privileges? "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"

In speaking of the influence of sacraments, I am aware that we approach enchanted ground. The human heart loves a religion of forms and ceremonies, which professes to renew and save without self-denial, breathing around us the quietism of ordinances, and lulling us to drowsy forgetfulness of duty in the luxurious enjoyment of an irresponsible religion. While, therefore, we cannot too carefully guard against the abuse of ordinances, we must not forget that God, who made man, body and soul, chooses to convey some of his gracious operations to us by the help of the two simple sacraments, and that they are intended to act upon us, in the hands of his Spirit, in the first instance; not merely serving as offerings to God.

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It is not that there are fewer children baptized now than formerly (if such indeed be the case), that awakens sorrow and apprehension; but that parents are deficient in the feelings which make us prize and use baptism. This is the evil sign, and it is greatly to be deplored. One must have intelligent views of the Scriptures as a whole,—of both Testaments,—most fully to understand and value infant baptism; for its roots were planted in the Old Testament. I always feel deep respect for a church-member who comprehends this subject in its wide relations, and is not swayed by the popular demand for an express sign at every step, but can reason inferentially as well as when proofs are demonstrative and palpable; and who has in his mind the whole system of redemption, with its various economies, interdependent, and none made perfect without the rest. When all our church-members come to understand and feel the power of this subject in this manner, what times of enlightened religious prosperity, and a high state of religious culture, it will indicate. I pray and wait for the time when all our Pædobaptist churches, of every name, will conspire to promote spiritual views of children's baptism, holding it forth as the expression of spiritual feelings, and discountenancing formalism in connection with it. Though I was never an Episcopalian in my preferences, and though the appointment of godfathers and godmothers may, like every good thing, relapse into mere form, I honor it for its excellent and pious design of surrounding the parents and the children with admonition and help. For there are sponsors, I am happy to know, who are not mere formalists, but who make it a rule to have an interview with their godchildren on or near their birthdays, or the anniversaries of their baptisms, and, in an affectionate, faithful manner, they endeavor to fulfil the vows which they took upon themselves at the baptism. Blessings on such faithful Christian friends! Happy the children who have them for helpers of their faith and piety. Let us all, as church-members, be sponsors, at least by prayers and a kind interest for it, to every child of a Christian brother or sister, when we witness its baptism. Suppose a church-member, after witnessing the baptism of an infant, its parents, perhaps, entire strangers, goes to his place of private prayer, and, moved with disinterested love toward those parents and the child, supplicates the blessing of God upon them. Could Christian love be more pure than this, or prayer more pleasing to God? In the revelations of eternity such prayers will not only be rewarded openly by Him who saw those doors shut with that secret love and piety, but blessings upon parents and child without measure may be traced to such petitions as their procuring cause. How good it is to perform such acts, knowing that they can never come abroad in this world! Should every Christian who witnesses the baptism of a child, afterward pray for that immortal soul in secret, with special petitions, what an increased privilege and blessing it would be esteemed to offer a child in baptism, and in God's house, before a witnessing church, rather than at home! I hope, my dear daughter, that you and Percival, as private Christians, will do good to your own souls, and to the souls of baptized children, and to their parents, by making it one of your private rules to pray in secret, on the Sabbath, for every child whose baptism you witness.

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The effort to promote and enforce infant baptism, by ecclesiastical enactments merely, is absurd. We must fertilize the soil, not spread glass sashes over the plants. Give Christians right views and feelings about their covenant privileges and duties; disabuse them of their mistakes about the severance of the Old Testament from the New; teach them to look at Abraham, not as a decayed peer, or an old Jew, but as the founder of the church of all ages, to whom Almighty God virtually said, 'On this rock I will build my church,'—Abraham being the first foundation stone, waiting for apostles to be added with him, and, as our great representative, bearing in his hand the covenant made with him for us, as well, as for the other great branch of the family of God; show them that baptism is now the initiating ordinance, and that the old covenant was never repealed, though the seal be changed; let them see what it is to have God in covenant with them to be the God of their seed; and, withal, let us correct, or modify, the intense anti-papal jealousy of the Christian rites, which makes us all, unconsciously, verge to the opposite extreme, thus missing the divinely-appointed intention and use which there is in our two simple ordinances; and then, with the revival of such spiritual views and feelings, and, as a consequence, with greater reference in the prayers of Christians, public and private, to the subject, the practice of children's baptism will increase, as surely as accessions to the Lord's table increase when people come to have Christ in them the hope of glory.

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We, ministers, can do very much to promote a love for the ordinance in many ways. We ought to make it convenient and pleasant by all the expedients within our power. I like the practice which you speak of, in your church, of the mother remaining with the child in the anteroom till the introductory services and the loud organ-playing are over. Does your pastor pour water into the child's face and eyes, and then begin the words of baptism? I presume not; but I have seen it done. We should not touch the child's head till near the close of the baptismal formula; and then so that the child will not see the arm move toward it.

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Much can be done by these simple expedients to promote a quiet and pleasant attendance upon the delightful rite. I like the practice, in your church, of chanting low some appropriate words of Scripture before and after the baptism.

I am constrained to say, though with diffidence, that I fear some of my good brethren give erroneous impressions by what they say of the church-membership of children. They push it to extremes. They discuss the question, What shall be done with baptized children, who, on arriving at years of understanding, refuse to enter into covenant with God? Church censures are asserted by some to be proper in such cases, even to excommunication, or interference in some judicial way by the church. So long as I believe in regeneration by the Holy Spirit, I cannot feel that baptized children, as such, are, in any sense whatever, in which the term is generally received among men, *members* of the church of Christ; while, in another and most important sense, they do belong to the church, hold a relation to it, and are a part of it. Strictly speaking, and in the highest spiritual sense, they are not even "the lambs of Christ's flock;" for lambs have the nature of sheep; but the children of believers are, by nature, children of wrath, even as others. And yet, in another sense, they hold a most important relation to the flock of Christ, as no other children do. In its most important sense, they are not to the church even what they are to the state; they have no place whatever in the invisible church,—the church which is saved,—till they are born again. If children are regenerated by the act of baptism, of course it is otherwise; but, not believing this, I am clear that the baptized child of a believer differs from any other unregenerate child, who is not baptized, only in this: that God looks upon it with peculiar interest and love, and that it is surrounded with special and peculiar privileges, opportunities, promises, and hopes, with regard to its being brought to repentance and saving faith in Christ; and by baptism it is initiated into special relationship to the people of God. The church also has special duties with regard to it. Some of my brethren give great occasion to those who resist children's baptism, to argue against it as Romish in its nature and effect, by not discriminating clearly in using the words *members* and *membership* in connection with children. Read almost any modern book against infant baptism, and you will find that its main force is directed against the practice as a "church and state" institution, and as making persons members of the church by means of sacraments. Let us who are really free from such imputation, assert the truly spiritual nature and object of this ordinance. I wish to see it divested of all that does not belong to it, made eminently spiritual, expressed in terms which cannot easily be misunderstood, and appealing to the natural affections, the understandings, the consciences, of spiritual men and women, as, in its sober and legitimate use, God's great appointment, from the call of Abraham to the millennium, for the increase and perpetuity of his church.^[2]

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You are aware that the great question, which has made most of the trouble in the Christian church from the beginning, relates to the meaning and use of sacraments and ordinances, or what we call Symbolism. The tendency of the human mind, even in Paul's day, as indicated by him, with other things belonging to it, under the name of "the mystery of iniquity, which doth even now work," was, to increase the number of sacraments and ordinances, and make them bear an essential part in the work of regeneration. The right to multiply or extend them, and the claim that they possess a saving efficacy, characterizes one great division of the professed Christian church, while those who are called Protestants and the Reformed, regard them chiefly as signs; though of these, some seem to have much of that appetency after undue reliance on forms which Paul seeks to correct in the Epistle to the Galatians, while others go to an opposite extreme, and undervalue the two divinely-appointed sacraments, which they think have no efficiency as used by the Spirit of God, but only as signs used by us to represent something.

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Between these divisions of the Christian church lies the battle-ground of great ecclesiastical controversies from the beginning, as the Netherlands were, for a long time, the battle-field of Europe. Archbishop Leighton seems to strike the balance between formalism and sacramental grace in ordinances, as well as any writer, in commenting on these words of Peter, "The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us." He says:

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"Thus, then, we have a true account of the power of this, and so of other, sacraments, and a discovery of the error of two extremes. (1.) Of those who ascribe too much to them, as if they wrought by a natural, inherent virtue, and carried grace in them inseparably. (2.) Of those who ascribe too little to them, making them only signs and badges of our profession. Signs they are, but more than signs merely representing; they are means exhibiting, and seals confirming, grace to the faithful. But the working of faith and the conveying Christ into the soul, to be received by faith, is not a thing put into them to do of themselves, but still in the supreme hand that appointed them; and he indeed both causes the souls of his own to receive these his seals with faith, and makes them effectual to confirm that faith which receives them so. They are then, in a word, neither empty signs to them who believe, nor effectual causes of grace to them that believe not."

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Let me make the distinction very clear to your mind, for it is of great practical importance. The "mystery of iniquity" in Paul's time, and since his day, did not, and does not, consist in making too

much of God's ordinances in their purity and proper use. That cannot be done, any more than you can intelligently love the Bible too much, or the Sabbath. But, to pervert them, or to make additions to them, or to rely upon them wholly, is Romanism. But can men make too much of having a seal on a deed? Is the deed good for anything without the seal? Can they make too much of having three witnesses to their wills? Those three witnesses, instead of two, make an otherwise worthless writing, a man's last will and testament. Thus, a true sign, ordinance, or seal, among men, has inherent efficacy of some sort. Shall we deny it to the ordinances and seals of Heaven? He who lays claim to the covenant, but rejects the seal, deceives himself. They must go together.

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But will you not think me older even than I claim to be, because I am so garrulous? I have many things to say, but will not say them with pen and ink, hoping to see you shortly. Farewell, my dear daughter, to you and your beloved husband, with abundant kisses for your little namesake, who, I pray, may be spared to you, if God has any work for her to do on earth. Dedicate her sincerely and entirely, beforehand, to God, and then in his house, with baptism, before the assembled brethren in Christ; and let your subsequent treatment of her be a repetition of the whole. Baptizing a child, with right views and feelings, leads to much prayer for it. Renew the consecration of your child daily, in little, sudden acts of prayer, as well as in more deliberate offices of devotion. Thus surround it with an atmosphere of faith and consecration, not forgetting the public transaction in which you covenanted with God, before many witnesses, for the child, and He, my dear daughter, with you, in its behalf. For, a covenant implies two parties; and God is one, and you are the other; and Jesus is the mediator, who said of children, "Of such is the kingdom of God." "He that came down from heaven," had seen, in heaven, how largely that world is peopled with them. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Peace be with you. All send love.

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Your affectionate Father.

Chapter Third.

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BERTHA'S BAPTISM.—CHANTING AT BAPTISMS.—PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BAPTISMS.—WEEK-DAY BAPTISMS.—A DAUGHTER'S LOVE.—BAPTISM OF A DEAF-MUTE INFANT.—FIDELITY OF A BAPTIZED CHILD.—SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.—THE MODE.—IMPROBABILITY OF IMMERSION, IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.—ON BEING BURIED IN BAPTISM.—NEW VERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES.—OUR DIVISION INTO SECTS.—A MOTHER'S PLEA FOR INFANT BAPTISM.

Where is it mothers learn their love?
In every church a fountain springs,
O'er which th' eternal Dove
Hovers on softest wings.

O, happy arms, where cradled lies,
And ready for the Lord's embrace,
That precious sacrifice,
The darling of his grace!

KEBLE.

We took Bertha to church when she was two months old. The minister, being fond of music, had, for some time, requested the choir to chant select passages of Scripture at baptisms.

So, as we came up the aisle with the child, the choir breathed out those words, "And I will establish my covenant between thee and me, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." "And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." And, as we turned away from the font, they added, "So shall he sprinkle many nations." "The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children." "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments, to do them."

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How I loved that choir, and the congregation! for, many a face did I see bathed in tears, and others beaming with smiles and love, as, with respectful, half-turned looks, they seemed to give us their blessing.

"Do you not think, more than ever," I said, to the beloved grandmother of my child, after church, as we watched the little sleeper in her cradle, "that people lose very much in having their children baptized at home?"

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"It makes a different thing of it," she replied. "I felt that all the congregation loved Bertha and you. How many prayers you obtained for her and for yourselves, which you would have missed by a private baptism!"

"Besides," I remarked, "'God loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.' I think that for that reason, and on the same principle, namely, that he is more honored, he regards our

public dedication of children with more favor than a private baptism, except, of course, where sickness makes the public service impossible. But it is some trouble to mothers, and no doubt many shrink from it."

"The trouble is more in anticipation than reality," she replied. "That pastor's room, where they stay till the introductory services are over, makes it more convenient and agreeable. But all the trouble, even if it were far greater, is nothing compared with the satisfaction of having taken your offering and come into His courts. You have paid your vows unto the Lord, in the presence of all his people. You will remember those prayers, those words of Scripture which were chanted, and your feelings as you took the child into your arms to be presented to God, and as you heard those adorable names pronounced upon her and then received her back into your arms, as it were, from the hands of God."

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"What do you think," said I, "of the practice of having children baptized in the church on a week-day? It enables the parents to attend meeting on the Sabbath with more composure than when they bring their children on the Sabbath."

"But O," said she, "what is that, compared with the privilege of bringing the child before the whole church of God, in his house, on the Lord's day, and so identifying its baptism with the most solemn acts of public worship? I do not like those week-day baptisms. Where they have the communion lecture in the afternoon of a week-day, there may be reasons of convenience for bringing the children for baptism then, rather than on the Sabbath; but there is a great loss of enjoyment, and also of impressiveness, in the ordinance, in doing so, I think. I was at a place, several years ago, when fourteen children were baptized on a Wednesday afternoon, in the church. I went to see it, but it was not solemn at all. I could not help thinking what an impressive and useful sight that would have been on the Sabbath, before all the people, and how much more good, probably, it would have done the parents, even if they had given up half the Sabbath in going and returning with the children."

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"If people," said I, "thought more of the spiritual meaning and privileges of baptism, and viewed it as they do in times of sickness and death, they would think less of inconveniences and discomforts, and see that the ordinance is something more than giving a child a name."

Some time after this, I called upon a cousin of ours, a young married lady of our congregation, who, within a year, had come to us from another place, she having been married to an educated, intelligent member of another congregation, and who, from his great love for her, had come with her to our place of worship from another denomination, this having been made a condition of their marriage. For she felt that she could not be debarred the privilege of sitting at the Lord's table with her mother, three sisters, and brother, as she would be if she united herself with her friend's church. The idea of going to any table of Christ on earth where they could not come, thus seeming to disfranchise her whole family whom Christ had gathered into his fold, and some of them into heaven, did violence to her feelings. At one time, it seemed likely that the engagement of marriage would be terminated, on this ground alone. Some one of the gentleman's persuasion, who thought that she "ought to follow Christ in ordinances," and "take up her cross" in this instance, whispered to her that she was, perhaps, in danger of denying Christ, from love to her kindred, and he said to her, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." This had the opposite effect from that which was intended, for it showed her, in the strongest light, the error of supposing that love to Christ could ever require her to separate from herself, at the table of Christ, such friends of Jesus as the members of her dear Christian home,—a home which had been like that of Bethany to many of the Saviour's friends. She felt more sure of being actuated by right motives in giving up her marriage, and not withdrawing fellowship from her mother and the family, than she would be in sacrificing that fellowship to gratify a new affection. Her next younger sister was baptized after the father's death. She was a deaf-mute. The mother was a very beautiful woman. She had borne severe trials for her religion with a spirit of patience and Christian propriety which won the love and esteem of the community. She went to the altar of God, a widow, with the little deaf and dumb child, and presented it for baptism. It was as though the impending calamity of its father's death had shut up some of the senses of the child, and God had placed it in the mother's hand as a silent memorial to her, for life, of his chastising love. She left her fatherless flock in the family pew, and went with her nursling, not merely to give it to God, but to receive for it the seal of his covenant, bowing submissively to his inscrutable appointment, and imploring the God of Abraham to be still her God, and the God of this her seed. That scene had not failed to make deep impressions upon the other children; and now it was proposed to one of them that she should, by connecting herself in marriage, disavow her mother's right to cling, in those hours of anguish, to that asylum of the fatherless, infant baptism,—that very present help in trouble, the covenant of God with believers and their offspring. The little child, moreover, had become a Christian, and had sat with her sister, side by side, at the communion-table, for several years. "Forbid it," she prayed with herself, "that I should go where I cannot be allowed to follow Christ till I have separated this dear one from my side."

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She once wrote a letter on the subject to the gentleman, which he showed, after their marriage, to some of his friends. There will be no impropriety in its appearing here. It ran thus:

"MY DEAR MR. E.: Though I am not willing to deny that Roger Williams was, as you say, raised up to illustrate some important principles, and to help on the general

cause of truth, I must say that he strikes me as a very unreasonable man in much of his behavior. Our puritan fathers did not come to this wilderness with French, atheistic, idolatrous love for a goddess of liberty. They came here, it is true, for liberty of conscience and freedom to worship God. With a great sum they purchased this freedom. But infidels could as well claim to be absolved by the laws from all recognition of God, under the plea of liberty, as Mr. Williams and his friends could make his demands for toleration. To insist that our fathers, in their circumstances, should have opened their doors wide to every doctrine, and to the denial of everything professed by them, is unreasonable. They came here with an intense love for certain truths and practices, which persecution had only served to make exceedingly precious to them. To have proclaimed at once universal toleration of every wind of doctrine, would have proved them libertines in religion. Because they did not so, reproach is cast upon them by some, who seem to me to be free-thinkers on the subject of religious liberty. If other men wished to found a community with doctrines and practices adverse to those of the New England fathers, the land was wide, and it would have been the part of good manners in Mr. Williams to have gone into the wilderness at once, to subdue it and to fight the savages, all for love and zeal for his own tenets, instead of poaching upon the hard-earned soil of those who had laid down their all for what they deemed to be the truth. It seems to me unphilosophical in some of our historians to reflect, as they do, upon our forefathers for not being so totally indifferent to what they deemed error, as to allow it free course. Their strict, and, if you please, rigid ways, were the necessary defences of their principles, which were just taking root here. They did right in passing stringent laws to protect them; and religious liberty was no more violated in doing so than is the liberty of our town's people here, who, by the law of the State protecting game, cannot take fish, or kill birds, during certain seasons.

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"Besides, I never saw any proof that Mr. Williams was himself the great apostle of toleration. I remember reading to father, during his sickness, some remarks of the late John Quincy Adams, in which he vindicates the New England fathers for banishing Roger Williams as a 'nuisance.'^[3] Mr. Adams surely cannot be accused of bigotry, nor of being an enemy to the cause of freedom; and his remarks seemed to me more just than the eulogies, by historians and orators, of Mr. Williams. Father once showed me an old book of Mr. Williams's, which we have now, called 'George Fox digg'd out of his Burrowes,' in which Mr. W. inveighs against the Quakers for their want of 'civil respect,' and for using 'thee' and 'thou,' in addressing magistrates and others. He says, on the two hundredth page, 'I have therefore publicly declared myself, that a due and moderate restraint and punishing of these incivilities (though pretending conscience) is as far from persecution, properly so called, as that it is a duty and command of God unto all mankind, first in families, and thence unto all mankind societies.'—It is also a matter of history that the colony settled by Mr. Williams refused their franchise to Roman Catholics, though even then the Roman Catholics of Maryland were tolerating people of his own faith, and Quakers also. Mr. Williams always seemed to me like one of our pious, zealous 'come-outers.' He even forsook his own denomination in three months after he had been baptized, and for forty years denied the validity of their sacraments, and the scripturalness of their churches and ministry. Such a man would even at this day be excommunicated by every society, unless it were some association for the encouragement of radical notions of liberty. I no more see in him the impersonation of religious freedom, than in some other good people who go or stay where they are not wanted. I am not disposed to deny that you and your friends, with their principles, of which you, erroneously, I think, claim Mr. Williams as the great exponent, 'have a mission,' as you say, to perform; but I do not feel called upon to join in it. Some of your writers seem to me—shall I say it?—a little too sure of having just the right pattern and patent-right in ordinances, and somewhat too complacent in not being liked by other denominations, and perhaps a little disposed to look for persecution. Now I was pleased with a remark of Matthew Henry's, on Mark 10:28, that 'It is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr.' But we were brought up under different associations, and cannot see just alike in all things. I cannot, however, contradict, by any step which my feelings would incline me to take, the Christian citizenship of those who are dear to Christ, and are so precious to me. As much as I love you, I think you should feel perfectly free to leave me in my happy home, if you cannot allow me to retain my fidelity to my own conscientious convictions of truth, and to the sacred rights of those whom nature and grace have conspired to make inseparable from my own Christian hopes and joys."

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The gentleman agreed to allow her the largest liberty, and they were married. He knew that she had a mind and heart that were more precious than rubies, and that the heart of a husband could safely trust in her. The sequel will show, however, how good it is to be matched as well as mated, and, in the conjugal relation, to be "perfectly joined together in the same judgment."

The object of my call, that evening, was to rejoice with her, and to be the bearer of some congratulations at the recovery of their infant, whose death had been expected for some time.

The child was now perfectly restored.

As I stood in the entry, not having rung the door-bell, and was hanging up my hat and coat, some one in the parlor said:

"What good can it do the child or us to sprinkle a little water on its head?"

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"Good-evening, Mr. M.," said the husband, as I went in. I was interrupted in my expression of a fear that I had intruded upon their conversation, by their assurances to the contrary. "I am glad you came in," said Mr. Kelly, "for perhaps you can help us. You heard, I suppose, what I was saying as you came in. If I am not mistaken, Mr. M., you yourself are not very strenuous about infant baptism, for I have heard of your making inquiries on the subject."

"Not only have all my doubts been removed," said I, "but the baptism of my child has been the source of the richest instruction and comfort."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Mrs. K.

"But," said Mr. K., "you do not, of course, derive your warrant for it from the word of God. That is our only guide, you know. There is no more authority in the Bible for baptizing children than there is for praying to saints. You are probably aware that the practice originated in the third century of the Christian era."

Mr. M. It originated with a man by the name of Abraham, I believe, sir, two or three thousand years before Christ.

Mr. K. O, then, you go to Judaism for it!

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Mr. M. Judaism comes to me with it, and hands it over to me. There was something good in Judaism, we all think. Judaism was not a Mormonism, as certain ways of speaking of it not unfrequently would make us think it to have been; it was not an exploded folly, but the form which the church of God bore for two thousand years. But it began before Judaism; it is older than Moses. Judaism received it from Abraham. It is like a great river rising in a desert place, and seeming to lose itself in a lake, but flowing out again into another lake, and thence to the sea. So Judaism was only a great lake, which took and seemingly held this river of baptism for a time, but its current went on and flowed into another lake, the Christian dispensation. But you cannot say that a river which makes a chain of lakes, rises, for that reason, in the first lake. No, its head spring, in this case, was antecedent to the lake.

Mr. K. Did Abraham or the Jews baptize children, Mr. M.?

I answered, "Every male child of Abraham's descendants, who should not receive the sign of consecration to God, was to be cut off from among the people. Proselytes of the covenant and their children were baptized, very early."

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Mr. K. But where is the command to apply baptism to children?

Mr. M. Where, my dear sir, is the command to discontinue that which was enjoined upon the founder of the race of believers for all time? I believe in the perpetuity of Abraham's relation to us as the father of the faithful, as I believe in Adam's relation to us as the representative of the race, and in the Saviour's relation to us as our representative. God seems to love these federal headships, as we call them. Abraham did not receive circumcision being a Jew, but, as the apostle says, "as a seal of the righteousness which is by faith, which he had while he was yet uncircumcised." We have Scripture for that, Mr. Kelly. And "the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after," did not disannul that covenant "that was confirmed before of God in Christ." How can you call circumcision a Jewish ordinance, when the Bible so explicitly denies it to be of Jewish origin?

Mr. K. O, I do not understand this Abrahamic covenant. I take the New Testament for my guide.

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Mr. M. You think well of the book of Psalms, I presume, as a help to prayer and pious feelings?

Mr. K. Yes; but in all matters of faith and practice, the New Testament, like the doings of the latest session of the legislature, is the rule for New Testament believers. You might as well have tried to govern the ancient Jews with the New Testament, as enforce the laws of the Old Testament on us.

Mr. M. Is the privilege of having God stand in a special relation to my child an Old Testament ordinance, in the same sense with ceremonial observances?

Mr. K. Not exactly that, but it is a superstition to baptize children, now that circumcision is done away, and believers' baptism is enjoined.

Mr. M. Believers' baptism is enjoined, but children's baptism is not therefore prohibited.

Mr. K. But where is it enacted?

Mr. M. If the original form of dedicating children is essential, why is not the original form of the Sabbath essential, the very day which was first appointed? How dare we change a day which God himself ordained from the beginning, until he makes the change as peremptory as the institution itself? Have we any right to infer, in such an important matter? Where is the express, divine command,—not precedent, example, usage, but where is the enactment,—making the first day of

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the week the Christian Sabbath?

Mr. K. So long as we may keep the thing, observing one day in seven, it makes no difference which day we keep, if we can all agree on one and the same day. We do not all agree to retain circumcision in any way.

Mr. M. So long as we may retain the thing signified by circumcision, it makes but little difference what form is used to express it.

Mr. K. The apostles, who changed the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day, knew the mind of Christ.

Mr. M. And so the men, who first practised infant baptism, knew the minds of the inspired apostles, and they knew the mind of Christ. But to go a step further back, the only ground for inferring that the Sabbath is rightly changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, is the incidental mention of Christ's meeting his assembled disciples a few times after his resurrection on the first day. On that slight ground we are all content to rest our present observance of the Sabbath. Now, I say that the mention of the baptism of households eight times, in one form and another, is as good a warrant for infant baptism, as those two or three Sabbath-evening meetings were for the institution of the Lord's-day Sabbath. [Pg 94]

Mr. K. I cannot agree with you, Mr. M., in putting circumcision on the same level with the Sabbath.

Mr. M. I myself see a resemblance in the changes made in the two cases. I have no wish to proselyte you to my views. I have only answered your polite inquiries.

Mr. K. O, I know that; we shall be good friends still; but I see no grounds for baptizing children on the faith of their parents.

Mr. M. We look at the thing from different points of view. I see it as clearly as I see that the church of God is essentially the same in all ages, with its variety of forms. This matter of children's baptism is with me a spiritual thing, and is independent of dispensations. You know that a river may have, in one district of the earth through which it flows, one name, and in another district another name, while it is the same river. Now, the divine recognition of believers' children, as standing in a special covenanted relation with God, is the headspring of infant dedication by the use of a rite. The object of this recognition is, that He may have a godly seed. God does not perpetuate religion directly by natural descent, it is true, but he seeks to promote it by descent from a pious parentage, and he therefore endows that parentage with special privileges and promises. The inclusion of children with their believing parents has been the great means of perpetuating religion in the earth. It is a stream which washed the shores of Judaism under the name of circumcision; now it washes the shores of the Gentiles under the name of baptism. For the Saviour or the apostles to have reappointed infant dedication, with the use of the cotemporary initiating ordinance, would, to my mind, be as superfluous as for the allied powers to have agreed that the Danube should still run through Austria. [Pg 95]

Mr. K. Your principle of interpretation, Mr. M., has brought in all the darkness which has covered the earth in the Romish apostacy. There will be no end to human inventions in religion, if this principle prevails. [Pg 96]

Mr. M. But, my dear sir, there certainly has been an end at the very beginning; for what inventions in Protestant worship have non-prelatical Pædobaptists made? Surely that practice has not been prolific of superstitions. I often hear this alleged, Mr. K., and we are called Romish and Popish because we baptize infants. But will it not be best for Christian sects to allow each other entire liberty of conscience, and not accuse each other of tendencies to Romanism, when all are zealously Protestant? Here is a piece, which I cut from a newspaper lately, which describes the baptism by immersion of some females and others, one Sabbath in January, the thermometer below zero, a place being cut through the ice for the purpose, and a boy watching with a pole to keep the floating ice from the opening. Shall I call this Romish, superstitious, fanatical? Shall I say, How can we, consistently with such practices among Protestants, say anything about the doctrine of penances? No. I prefer to think that those who do these things are as good Protestants as myself, and I will not impeach their rigid adherence to their belief, by imputing Romish tendencies to their modes of worship and their ordinances; for no people are further from Romanism in their principles than they (unless it be some of us Pædobaptists, Mrs. Kelly). [Pg 97]

Mr. K. Well, there is no quarrelling with you; but let me say that when another sect sees you employing an ordinance which has no warrant in the Bible,—sprinkling water upon people, on proper subjects and improper subjects for baptism, when we know that the word *baptize* means to *immerse*, and that believers only are properly baptized,—how can we be silent? Would you be silent if Episcopalians should set up Latin prayers, or the confessional; or the Methodists turn their love-feasts into the old Passover?

Mr. M. We must tolerate the mistakes and errors of those who, in the main, are confessedly good, and are conscientious in what we deem their errors. When the noble array of great and good men in the Episcopal Low Church, and among the Methodists, fall into such mistakes as you have specified, there will be opportunity for other Christians to express themselves. But you are rather rhetorical in your reasoning, to compare the practice of infant baptism by Owen, and Watts, and Doddridge, and Leighton, and Baxter, and all like them, with Latin prayers and a return to the [Pg 98]

Passover.

Mr. K. There is not a case of sprinkling in the New Testament. You are too well-informed to deny this.

Mr. M. Mr. K., there is not one instance of baptism, in the New Testament, where there does not appear to me to be an improbability of its having been administered by immersion.

By this time Mrs. K., who had been called away to attend to her child, returned, and hearing my last remark, said, with a significant look at her husband:

"We shall require you to prove that, Mr. M."

"Most willingly," said I. "Do you think, cousin Eunice, that the multitudes who came to John and the apostles to be baptized, brought changes of raiment with them?"

"No," said she; "and there were no conveniences for making a change of dress in those places, I presume."

Mr. M. Were they immersed in the clothes which they had on? [Pg 99]

Mrs. K. That does not seem probable. Some of them, at least, had valuable garments, we may suppose, and few, if any, would wish to have their apparel wet through, or to keep it on them, if wet.

Mr. M. They were not immersed without clothing, of course, promiscuously, and, therefore, I believe that they were all baptized by sprinkling or pouring, their loose upper garments allowing them to step into the water, or very near it; and John, standing there (and the apostles, also, when they administered baptism), and laying on the water with his hand, or, which is not impossible, with the long-accustomed bunches of hyssop. The Episcopal mode of administering the Lord's Supper, enables me to conceive how baptism by sprinkling could be administered rapidly. As six or more people are kneeling, the Episcopal minister gives each his portion of the bread, and repeats the formula, not to each one, but once only while his hand is passing over the six. So, I imagine, John repeated whatever form he had (and the apostles theirs) to companies, while, in rapid succession, he applied the water to them. It is impossible to account for the performance of such incredible labor as John must have undergone, unless we adopt some such supposition as this, or confess that John's baptism was, throughout, a miracle. But "the people said, John did no miracle." If the apostles sprinkled three thousand in this way, by companies, in one day, as they could easily have done, we can see how the same day there could be "added unto them about three thousand souls," even if "added" meant being baptized. That the apostles had assistance in administering baptism at this early period, is not probable. They had not yet proposed to have helpers in taking care of the poor, much less to share with them the first administration of Christian baptism. If any church were to require me to believe, before admitting me to the Lord's table, that the apostles immersed three thousand people at the day of Pentecost, after nine o'clock in the morning, in the midst of necessary labors, and at that driest season of the year, or in tanks, I could no more believe it than I could confess that the earth is flat. [Pg 100]

Mrs. K. But "John was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there."

Mr. M. "Much water," in those countries, was on a smaller scale than in North America. They would have needed all the lake-shore or river banks that could be found, to witness the baptisms, and to pass in and out of, or to and from, the water, conveniently, while John stood to receive them in or near the water. A fountain or small body of water would not have accommodated those multitudes; not because the water would not suffice, for a small running stream would be enough, and would have afforded "much water;" but think what inconvenience there would have been in baptizing a crowd around a small stream. Baptism by immersion, among us, though a few gallons of water only are needed, is more conveniently done where there is "much water;" because the spectators can spread themselves along the banks, and then there is no confusion. The most convenient and rapid way of baptizing multitudes by sprinkling would be, for the administrator to stand in the water, and let the people pass by him. Besides, those multitudes who came to John's baptism needed "much water" for themselves and their beasts. [Pg 101]

Mrs. K. But the Saviour went down into the water, and came up out of the water. [Pg 102]

Mr. M. So did John, in the same sense; and so did "both Philip and the Eunuch;" but John and Philip did not, therefore, go under the water. But Mr. Kelly will tell you that *down in* to, and *up out* of, might as well have been translated to and from, in the case of the Eunuch. If you insist that going down into the water involves immersion, it follows that Philip went under the water with the Eunuch, and there baptized him.

Mr. K. We shall set those matters right in that new version of the Bible which you were complaining of the last time I saw you. Down into, and up out of, are required by the word baptize, which means immerse.

Mr. M. No, my dear sir, not always, even in the New Testament. The word had come, even in the Saviour's time, to signify purification, or consecration, irrespective of the mode. The Pharisees, in coming from the market-places, except they wash, eat not. The word is baptize. But they did not bathe at such times; they "baptized" themselves by washing their bodies. We read of the baptism of beds, which was merely washing them. The Israelites were baptized unto Moses. There the

word means, simply, inaugurated, or set apart, with no reference to the mode; for, they were not immersed, but bedewed, if wet at all; they were not buried in that cloud, for the other cloud that led them was in sight; they were not buried in the sea, which was a wall to them on either hand.

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There is a good illustration, it seems to me, of the change in words from their literal meaning, in the passage where Christ is called the "first-born of every creature." He was not *born first*, before all men, but he has the "preëminence" over all creatures, as the first-born had among the children. Here is an illustration, from the New Testament, of the way in which *baptism* may cease to denote any mode, and refer only to an act of consecration.

As to that new version of the Bible, Coleridge says, that the state ought to be, to all religious denominations, like a good portrait, which looks benignantly on all in the room. So the Bible now seems to look kindly upon all Christian sects; and, for one, I love to have it so. But, some of you, good brethren, who are in favor of this new version to suit your particular views, are trying to alter the eyes of the portrait so that they shall look only on you, and to your part of the room. We think that you ought to be satisfied with the present kind look which you get from them. There is one comfort—you will make a new picture to please yourselves, and we shall keep the old portrait.

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"Please do not be too severe on my husband for that mistake of his," said Mrs. K.; "I think that he is getting better of it, in a measure."

Mr. K. I will make you a present of the book when it arrives, and, perhaps, you will agree with me. But I am surprised to hear you say that you do not believe the Saviour to have been immersed by John.

Mr. M. It was not Christian baptism, at any rate, if he were; for the names of the Trinity are essential to Christian baptism, and those names had not been thus applied.

Besides, John could not have plunged and lifted those thousands without superhuman strength and endurance, which we know he did not possess. The same reasoning applies, in the baptism of the three thousand at the day of Pentecost, both as respects what I have said of raiment, and the time and strength of the apostles.

The baptism of the Eunuch was, to my mind, most probably by sprinkling, making no change of raiment necessary. "See, here is water,"—a spring, or stream, by the road-side, quite as likely (and, travellers now say, more probably) as a pond. Yes, sir, Philip went down into the water just as much as the Eunuch did, if we follow the Greek literally. I think that *down* refers to the chariot, the act of leaving it to go to the water. But the English version, as it now stands, makes strongly for your view of the case in the mind of the common reader.

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Saul of Tarsus was baptized after having been struck blind, and while he was in a state of extreme exhaustion from excitement, without food; for, during three days, "he did neither eat nor drink." He was baptized before he ate; for, we read, "And he arose and was baptized; and, when he had received meat, he was strengthened." It does not seem to me probable that they would have put him into a river, or tank, before giving him food. But it seems to me natural and suitable for Ananias to draw nigh, and impress the trembling man with the mild and gentle sign of Christianity, the rite giving a soothing and cheering efficacy to the words of adoption, and in no way disturbing him in body or mind. I have always regarded the baptism of Saul as a strong presumptive proof with regard to baptism by affusion.

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So with the midnight scene of baptism in the prison at Philippi. The preparation of one or more large vessels, to immerse the household, is not congruous with the circumstances narrated, as I read them. But the quiet and convenient act of baptism by sprinkling, falls in harmoniously with the other parts of the transaction. For my part, I have always wondered how any one can fail to see that there are so many improbabilities of immersion in every case of baptism, in the New Testament, as to counteract any weight which the word baptize carries with it, more especially since the word and its derivatives are employed, in the New Testament, in cases where the mode of using the water is evidently not intended.

Mr. K. "Buried with him in baptism." *Mr. M.*, you will confess that this is an impregnable proof-text. You have never been "buried with him in baptism."

Mr. M. But I am "risen with him," *Mr. K.* With all humility and tears, I must say to you, "If any man trusteth to himself that he is Christ's, let him also think this with himself, that as he is Christ's even so also we are Christ's." Your application of the passage, just quoted by you, disproves your interpretation of it. If we must be buried in water, when we are baptized, then no one is risen with Christ who has not been immersed. You thus disfranchise four fifths, to say the least, of God's elect. No, my dear sir, being buried with Christ in baptism does not mean immersion. People in the frozen ocean, the sick and dying, who are sprinkled with water in the name of the Christian's God, are "buried with Christ in baptism into death;" that is, profess to be dead and buried to sin, as Christ was dead and buried for it. Besides, follow out the passage, and there is no allusion to the form of baptism, as I can perceive, but to something else. "Buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised,"—from the water?—yes, if water baptism be now in the writer's mind; but no,—"like as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." The word buried, therefore, in this passage, refers to the completeness of the Saviour's death for sin (as we say intensively of a deceased person, he is dead and buried), and of the completeness of our renunciation of it. We are dead and buried to sin, as Christ was for it; and we rise to newness of life, when we profess to

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be Christians, as Christ rose from the dead, not from the water.

Mr. K. How is it with infants? Are they dead and buried to sin when they are baptized? If being buried, in this passage, means being dead and buried to sin, then infants are regenerated by baptism.

Mr. K. gave his wife a pleased look, as though he had placed me in a dilemma.

"Mrs. Kelly," said I, "how do you suppose that nursing children ate the first passover?"

"I suppose that they ate it through the faith of their parents," said Mrs. K., looking narrowly into the stitches of her crochet-work, to control a smile.

"That passover, however," said I, "was the means of saving those children, who, many of them, were the first-born in their respective families. Yet they were saved by the passover through the faith of their parents. Do not understand me as urging the comparison to an extreme; I only say that there we have an example of parents acting for the child in a matter of faith. The infant child was incapable of believing, and even where the first-born was grown up, the parent acted for him in the ordinance, by sprinkling the door with blood. I do not prove infant baptism by this, but I use it to show that parents may use an ordinance for their infants. *Mr. K.* asks if baptized infants are buried with Christ in baptism into death,—that is, die unto sin and rise to newness of life. The parents profess by the baptism that they will use means to effect this in their children, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. I should like to ask *Mr. Kelly* if he believes that every person who is immersed, is buried into death, spiritually, with Christ, or is actually dead to sin forever; or, whether it is only a profession of one's hope and intention. For we have all known some, who had been buried in water, that did not prove to have died unto sin."

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Mr. K. Of course it is a symbol; and all we insist on is, that Paul must have had immersion in mind, as the form of baptism, when he spoke of being buried by baptism.

Mr. M. When Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ," do you suppose that the idea of a cross was in his mind? Did he intimate that sanctification is effected by a piece of wood, with a transverse beam, used as a gibbet? Or did he simply mean, I am dead to the world, and the world is dead to me, yea, and put to death (not merely dying in a natural way), through the power of the Saviour's sufferings and death on my behalf? The burial of Christ, following his death for sin, and so completing the idea of dying, is enough to have suggested the figure, I think, of our being not only dead with Christ, but buried with him, by a Christian profession; that is, we utterly cease from the world and sin, professedly, as Christ not only died, but went into the tomb. But what does "risen" refer to in that passage,—the water or death?—"from whence also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God."

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Mr. M. Why, how do you understand it?

Mr. K. I prefer, if you please, that you should answer. Many understand it thus: "You are buried in water, to denote death to sin; you are lifted up out of the water (as Christ was lifted up by the Baptist), to live a new life." If this be so, what is "the operation of God," which is spoken of there? Does it need any such "operation" for an immersed person to rise out of the water? No, my dear sir, our interpretation makes plain and thorough work of the whole passage. Our idea of that controverted passage (your great proof-text) is this: You, Christian professors, were, all of you, baptized, on profession of your faith;—when you made a Christian profession, you signified by it your dying unto sin, as Christ died for it, so that, I may say, you were dead and buried to sin. But, as Christ came to life again, so you rose with him, not to sin, but to live a new life. Hear *Dr. Watts* on the passage:

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"Do we not know that solemn word,
That we are buried with the Lord,
Baptized into his death, and then
Put off the body of our sin?"

"Our souls receive diviner breath,
Raised from corruption, guilt and death;
So from the grave did Christ arise,
And lives to God above the skies."

I do not believe that the mode of baptism is alluded to at all in this text.

Mr. K. I cannot agree with you, sir. The contrary is perfectly clear to my own mind.

"*Mr. M.*," said Mrs. Kelly, "do you think that you and *Mr. K.* would ever think alike on this subject?"

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"Never," said I. "People almost always end where they began, when they discuss this topic; only they do not always leave off in such good-nature as *Mr. K.* and I intend to do. I never knew a person to change his views to either side, unless he began as an inquirer, and not as an advocate."

"What is the reason," said Mrs. K., "that good people are left to differ so about unessential things in religion, when they all hold to the same way of being saved?"

"I suppose," said I, "that, as poor human nature is, for the present, more is effected, on the whole,

by letting us divide into sects, and giving us each some external or speculative discrepancies to excite our zeal. It is a sad reflection upon us, if this be so, and our sectarian behavior illustrates that hardness of our hearts, in view of which, perhaps, God suffers us to divide as we do. But, still, you see how wisely God has ordained that good people shall not differ about essential things—that might be fatal to the success of his truth; but they are left to divide about forms, and ordinances, and some doctrinal matters which do not involve the question of the way to be saved. In that they all agree."

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Mrs. K. How pleasant it would be if they would all think alike!

Mr. M. Perhaps it might not be best at present. They should tolerate each other's views, meet and act together where they may; but I do like to see a man heartily attached to his own denomination, without bigotry. I have not much partiality for those schemes of union which require and expect each sect to give up its peculiarities, and which seek to amalgamate us. It is unnatural. Let each be thoroughly persuaded of his own faith;—different temperaments and habits of thought are suited by different modes and forms;—but let us treat each other as Christians, and with urbanity and kindness. That is the most sublime spectacle of union. It comes nearer to fulfilling the prayer of Christ, "that they all may be one," when we differ strongly, and yet keep the unity of the spirit. I am doubtful whether, even in heaven, there will not be such innocent diversity of views about things successively beyond our knowledge or comprehension, as to stimulate inquiry and discussion; but that we shall ever be capable, as we are here, of alienation, in consequence of these varying opinions, is impossible.

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Mr. K. Do you not think, Mr. M., that we shall all think alike about baptism in the millennium?

Mr. M. I suppose that you expect that we shall all give up infant baptism. But my expectation is that, as we approach that day, the last prophecy of the Old Testament will be as truly fulfilled as it was at the coming of Christ, and that the hearts of the fathers will be turned to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers. Parental piety and discipline will be greatly promoted, and an attendant of it will be, I suppose, a greater use of the ordinance of infant baptism, demanded by the pious feelings of parents, as pious feeling in the regenerate craves the ordinance which commemorates the love and sufferings of the Redeemer. The feelings of pious parents will require the ordinance of infant baptism, as an expression of their earnest desire to have fellowship with God as the God of the believer and his offspring, the covenant-keeping God. It is to the increase and prevalence of this feeling that I look now for an increasing observance of infant baptism; for, without such feeling, the ordinance is an empty name. Where that feeling exists, it soon modifies the speculative views of a parent. As our conscious need of an atoning Saviour soon dispels the former difficulties about the doctrine of the Trinity, so a longing desire to have special covenanting with God for a dear child, makes the subject of God's everlasting covenant with Abraham, as the great believer, and the father of believers, plain.

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Now, before I forget it, please let me tell you of an objection to infant baptism, which I lately met with, drawn from the effect of the prevalent practice of it in a community.

The objection is, it prevents us, in a measure, from fulfilling Christ's command, "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them." For, going into the Roman Catholic or Greek churches, or an Armenian country, and making converts, the missionaries cannot baptize them, for, alas! they were baptized in infancy, and to re-baptize is against the law of the countries.

Now, this seems to me no great calamity; for if the converts themselves recognize their baptism, and adopt it as profession of their faith, it is like a man's acknowledging the hand and seal on an instrument, made irregularly at first, but now, under competent circumstances, declared to be equivalent to his own act and deed at the date of this declaration. He would not need to re-write the document, nor to use wax or wafers again, except in witness of his acknowledging the original act. "Though it be but a man's covenant, yet, if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto."

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But, however it may be in such countries and communions as I have named, certainly it cannot be a calamity if the practice of infant baptism becomes such a spiritual and practical thing, that young persons are generally converted, so that adult baptisms disappear. I love to notice, when several persons join our church, how few of them receive baptism, showing that their baptism in childhood has been followed by conversion. The fewness of adult baptisms, with us, compared with cases of infant baptism, is a good sign. They will be fewer and fewer, in proportion as our parents make and keep covenant with God for their children.

Mr. Kelly was at this moment called out, but requested me to remain and finish the conversation with Mrs. K. She resumed it, saying:

"Had I better read any more on the subject? My feelings lead me strongly to take our little one to church. I feel that I should be strengthened by the solemn act of doing what the covenant of your church says, 'avouching the Lord Jehovah to be your God and the God of your children forever.' I do wish to feel that I have done something like bearing testimony before God, in a special way, that I give my child to him, and engage God to be his God."

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Mr. M. I should candidly examine whatever Mr. K. wishes you to read or hear on the subject, and not be afraid of the truth, let it lead where it may. But what first made you think of baptizing your little boy?

Mrs. K. I always loved the ordinance. But, when I thought that Henry was going to die, I was

watching him all night, and, as I was praying, it occurred to me that I wished I could see the church praying for him; and that led me to think of the church praying for a child when it is brought into the house of God. I felt that night that, if I could speak to the pastor, I would ask him to request the prayers of the church for him as for one who, if he got well, should be brought into the house of God, and be publicly consecrated, and I with him, again, as his mother, to the Lord. I had given him and myself to God; but I felt the need of some more special act, on which I could fall back in my thoughts, and of which God would graciously say to me, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me."

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Mr. M. How kind it was in God to remind Jacob of that pile of stones, and to call himself the God of Bethel! O, how he loves marked exercises of consecration and love!

Mrs. K. My husband always said, "Let him offer himself for baptism when he grows up, and understands the meaning of it." I told him that when I was admitted to the church I was not baptized, but I had this pleasant feeling, that I had a baptism in infancy by my dear good mother to think of now, and to seal by my own acknowledgment. If Henry had died without being baptized, or should now be hindered from it, I should never cease to grieve.

Mr. M. You think, however, that he would be saved, nevertheless.

Mrs. K. O, saved! that is not all. I do not think merely of his getting into heaven. Though we are saved wholly by grace, is there not something implied in "washing our robes, and making them white, in the blood of the Lamb?" I do not believe in justification by works nor by sacraments, yet I do believe in their wonderful effect, through grace alone, upon our character and future condition. I do believe, *Mr. M.*, that there is a difference between children whose parents, impelled by love to God, make public offering of their children to him, with solemn vows, and daily perform their vows, treating their children as baptized in the name of the Trinity, and children whose parents either carelessly baptize them, or feel no such spiritual desires for them as to seek the use of any public ordinance, nor any special private consecration. I believe that God regards them differently. He has placed his mark on the baptized. I must go with my son to God's house, as Hannah did, and with her feelings. How strange! She prayed for that son, and then, as soon as he was weaned, she gave him away to God; for it is beautifully said, you know, "And the child was young." Well, I think I understand that. I could leave Henry in the temple, if the service of God's house required him; for, when he was sick, I gave him up to God, and as long as he liveth he shall be the Lord's. How did cousin Bertha feel about the baptism after your little boy died?

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Mr. M. It was often the chief topic of her conversation. Her father wrote a full statement of his views, which helped her greatly. We have read it over since we lost our child. I will send it to you, if you wish. You can read it, with *Mr. K.*'s books, and I wish you to show it to him if he cares to see it.

All this was done. Kind feelings prevailed; there was not much discussion, and, one Sabbath morning, little Henry Kelly was brought to church. But the mother was without the father. He was called to a distant place on business; but he allowed his wife to act her pleasure in the case during his long absence. More of this in its place.

Chapter Fourth.

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IS THERE ONLY ONE MODE OF BAPTISM?

Were love, in these the world's last dotting years,
As frequent as the want of it appears,
The churches warmed, they would no longer hold
Such frozen figures, stiff as they are cold;
Relenting forms would lose their power, or cease,
And e'en the dipped and sprinkled live in peace;
Each heart would quit its prison in the breast,
And flow in free communion with the rest.

COWPER.

Opening my entry door, on my return, several faces looked out to welcome me, all in the house having waited till a late hour, with surmises as to the cause of my long absence, and then all dispersed, except the venerable, and not yet aged, grandmother of little Bertha. With her it was always pleasant to talk.

Mr. M. Have you had no company this evening? I was in hopes that the Moores would come in, as they promised to do.

Mother. They have been gone nearly an hour. *Mr. Moore* wished to read husband's letter, so Bertha lent it to him.

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Mr. M. Father will be glad to know how much good his letter is doing. Cousin Eunice would be glad to see it, and I wish to read it again, for I find that I am likely to need more instruction, if I am to discuss the subject as I did this evening with *Mr. Kelly*.

Mother. Was he at home? I hope you did not get into a controversy about baptism; for, of all things, nothing dries up religious feelings like that.

Mr. M. The subject has taken too practical a hold upon my feelings to have that effect. I find myself more and more led to believe that God gave his church an appointed form of baptism, and that that form was sprinkling; for I search the New Testament in vain for a single case where immersion seems to have been practised. I believe that, under the operation of early tendencies, of which Paul writes to the Thessalonians, the church began to prefer immersion as more sensuous, making a stronger appeal to the passions. But I believe, with the New Testament for my guide, that immersion was not practised by the apostles themselves. The word baptize had, even in the Saviour's time, to go no further back, come to mean a thing done irrespective of the mode. How would it sound, "I have an immersion to be immersed with, and how am I straitened?" &c. "Are ye able to be immersed with the immersion that I am immersed with?" I believe that sprinkling was the original mode of Christian baptism. And it seems to me unlikely that God would appoint an ordinance, and not appoint, by precept or example, the mode of it. I believe that the mode of baptism was appointed, as well as the rite itself, and I see no instance of baptism in the New Testament by immersion. Pouring, whether more or less copiously, has this probability in its favor, in addition to the impression which the narratives make, viz., The Lord's Supper typifies the death of Christ. Burying in baptism, then, would be superfluous; it is more likely that the form of this other sacrament would represent something else, and that is, the Holy Spirit's cleansing influence, because Christ speaks of being "born of water and of the Spirit," thus associating water with the Spirit. We moreover read of "the water and the blood," water thus being distinguished from blood. Now, the Holy Spirit is always named in connection with being poured out. We are baptized with, not in, the Holy Ghost. It would do violence to our feelings to hear one speak of our being immersed in the Holy Spirit. So that I fully believe in sprinkling as the original New Testament mode of baptism. And, still, I am inclined to agree with your friend, the professor, who spent New-year's evening with us, and has just published a book on baptism.

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Mother. What ground does he take?

Mr. M. He writes somewhat in this way: As to the mode, I believe it to be unessential; for it seems to me contrary to the genius of Christianity to make a particular form of doing a thing essential to the thing. What else is there in Christianity, if we are to except baptism, in which modes are regarded or made essential? It is not so, he says, with the Lord's Supper, surely; the upper room, night, sitting or reclining, unleavened bread, a particular kind of wine, and all such things, are not regarded by any as necessary to the ordinance. It is very interesting, he says, to notice, that, whereas the old dispensation prescribed the mode of every religious act, minutely, and a departure from it vitiated the act itself, Christianity threw off everything like prescriptive modes altogether. Considering the attachment of the human mind to forms and ceremonies, he knows of nothing in which Christianity shows its divine origin and supernatural power more, than in its sublime triumph, so immediately, in the minds of great numbers, over forms and ceremonies. We can hardly conceive, he says, what a revolution a Jew must have experienced in giving up Aaron, and altars, and times, and seasons, and all the minute regard for his religious ceremonies, at once. Even if it were the original practice to baptize only by immersion, he cannot think that Christianity could have enjoined it as the only proper mode of applying water, in signifying religious consecration. Bread and wine, eaten and drunk decently and in order, in any way whatever, constitutes the Lord's Supper; water, applied to the person, by a proper administrator, in the name of the Trinity, constitutes Christian baptism; but, had the New Testament required us to recline, and lean on one arm, and take the Lord's Supper with the other arm, insisting that this posture is essential to that sacrament, or had it specified the quantity of bread and wine, he thinks it would have been parallel to the uninspired requirement of a particular mode in applying the water in baptism.

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"Baptize," he further remarks, it is said, means immerse. Suppose that it does. Supper means a meal; therefore, one does not "eat the Lord's Supper," unless he eats a full meal; for, if baptize refers to the quantity of water, supper refers to the quantity of food and drink in the other sacrament. He then seems to exult, and says, "I am glad that I am not in conscientious subjection to any mode of doing anything in religion, as being essential to the thing itself."

Mother. What answer can be made to this?

Mr. M. It is a very common ground, and a convenient one, to answer the argument from *baptizo*, and the early practice of immersion in the Christian church after the apostles. No doubt the early Christians satisfied themselves with this reasoning, in departing from the apostolic practice of sprinkling. But I prefer to adhere strictly to the New Testament model. There is no immersion there. Now, is it allowable to depart from the original mode? This could not be done in the first initiating ordinance of the church,—circumcision. A departure from the prescribed rule would have vitiated the ordinance. But, does not Christianity differ essentially from the former dispensation in this very particular, that it does not make the mode of doing a thing, essential? Yet, it may be said, Human ordinances are all strictly binding in the very forms prescribed. For example: "Hold up your right hand," says the clerk, or judge, to a witness; "you solemnly swear —." Let the witness, instead of holding up his right hand, if he has one, and can move it, capriciously say, "I prefer to hold up the left, or to hold up both. I wish to show that modes and forms are unimportant." He would be in danger of contempt of court. If so small a departure from the mode of swearing would not be allowed, much less would he be permitted to kneel, or to lie on his face, unless he were some devotee. No; there is a prescribed form, and he must yield to it. It is also said, that, if there were cases in the New Testament in which it were doubtful, at least,

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whether immersion were not practised, we might argue in favor of mixed modes. But immersion is baptism, in my view, because a person who is immersed is sure to get affused; and, affusion with water is all of the baptism which seems to me essential. Leaving those who first departed from the apostolic mode of baptism by sprinkling, to answer for themselves, no one, of course, will deny that those who conscientiously think that they ought to be baptized by immersion, are acceptable with God, as well as others who are of a contrary persuasion. Paul speaks of "divers baptisms." There began to be such in his day. He speaks also of the "doctrine of baptisms" (plural), showing the same thing.

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But I came near forgetting one thing, which I wished to say, which is, that, in reading the Bible last evening, I found a new encouragement in taking infants to the house of God.

Mother. I should like to hear anything new on that point. I thought that everything had been exhausted which referred to that subject.

Mr. M. I mean that it was new to me. Luke says that the parents of Jesus brought him to Jerusalem "to present him to the Lord," and that, arriving there, they brought him into the temple to do for him after the custom of the law. Now, I always carelessly thought that this meant circumcision.

Mother. Of course it does; I always thought so.

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Mr. M. No; for he had already been circumcised, when he was eight days old. "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, they called his name Jesus." Then the next verse speaks of a subsequent act: "When the days of her purification were accomplished they brought him to Jerusalem." Mary could not have come to Jerusalem on the eighth day; but, on the second occasion, she was present; for Simeon addressed her. So that we have the example of the infant Saviour, in bringing our infants into the temple; and, if we are scrupulous as to following the Saviour in ordinances, we may as well begin by following him into the temple, with our infants.

Mother. It is beautiful to think of Jesus, even in his infancy, as an example, and that he was forerunner to the infants of his people, while yet in his mother's arms.

Chapter Fifth.

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SCENES OF BAPTISM—HENRY KELLY.—THE YOUNG PARENTS AND THEIR BABE.—THE LOST MARINER'S FAMILY.—THE FEEBLE-MINDED YOUTH.—THE REASONABLENESS, POWER, AND BEAUTY, OF CHILDREN'S BAPTISMS.—HUSBANDS SHOULD COME WITH THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN.—MOSES IN THE INN.

Since, Lord, to thee
A narrow way and little gate
Is all the passage; on my infancy
Thou didst lay hold, and antedate
My faith in me.

GEORGE HERBERT.

The parent pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That He, who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide,
But chiefly in their hearts, with grace divine, preside.

BURNS.

In all men sinful is it to be slow
To hope: in parents, sinful above all.

WORDSWORTH.

In a few Sabbaths from this time we had a most interesting scene at our church.

Little Henry Ferguson Kelly was brought, and offered up in baptism by his mother. We all felt deep respect for her as a woman of decided character, and a devoted Christian. We saw that she wept much during the service. The father was not there. She held the little boy upright on her arm, and he turned his face over her shoulder, looking all about the church, above and below. He then undertook to apply his little palm to his mother's cheek, with several decided strokes, to rouse her usual attention, which he seemed to miss. She took his hand in hers, and held it, and he then rested his cheek, and his chin, alternately, upon her shoulder.

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A sweet little girl, two months old, was also brought by a young couple to be baptized. Few things are more interesting than the sight of a young couple, with their first-born child, standing before God. A world of thought and feeling passes through their minds in those hallowed moments. Not

much more than a year had gone since they stood before God to take the vows of marriage from those same lips, perhaps, which now lead their devotions, and bless them out of the house of the Lord. The little child is an offering which gathers about itself more of rich joy and gratitude, recollection, present bliss, and anticipation, than any gift of God; it is itself an ordinance, a little rite, a sign and seal of covenants and love to which earth has no parallel. The light of nature almost teaches us the propriety of infant dedication, in the use of the prevailing religious rite. The only wise God manifested his goodness and wisdom, in establishing his covenant with the children of those who love him, as really as in creating a companion for Adam.

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There were other sights, on this baptismal occasion, besides Henry Ferguson and his mother, and the young couple with their child.

A woman, in the habiliments of the deepest mourning, went up the aisle, leading with her finger a little boy between two and three years old, followed by a noble son of fifteen, and his sister of twelve. Our pastor's rule, as to the limit of age within which children may be admitted to baptism, is this: So long as a parent, or guardian, or next friend, has the immediate tutelage of a child, so as to direct its instruction and government, and thus continues to exercise parental authority, he may properly offer the child for baptism; and therefore, as children differ as to degrees of maturity within the same ages, no express boundary of time can be prescribed to limit those baptisms which are by the faith of another.

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The father of these three children had been lost at sea on a whaling voyage. The seaman's chest had come home, and so the last star of hope as to his return had set. The mother had become a Christian; she felt the need of a covenant-keeping God for her children. There she stood, a sorrow-stricken woman, and her household with her, to receive for them the sign of the covenant from the God of Abraham.

There was another sight in that group: A man and woman, honest, good people, in humble circumstances, had had bequeathed to them, by a widowed sister of his, who was not a professor of religion, a feeble-minded youth of about ten years; and this uncle and aunt had adopted him as their child. They also came, the husband leading the boy along, with his arm over the boy's shoulder to encourage his hesitating steps, and the wife behind them. He was a member of a Sabbath-school class; by no means an idiot, yet deficient in some respects. He was entrusted with affairs about a farm which did not require much responsibility.

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Little Henry Ferguson began to coo and crow, as they came successively and stood, in a half-circle, round the table with the silver basin upon it. The feeble-minded youth was mostly occupied with the actions of Henry, who, on seeing his face covered with uncontrollable expressions of interest in him, began to reach after him, and respond to his pleased looks; nor did he cease his efforts to go to him, till he felt the minister's hand upon his forehead from behind, when he turned his large, beautiful eyes into the face of the minister, with silent wonder at being apparently spoken to with so unusual a manner and tone. A hush went through the congregation.

The young couple next presented their little Alice, and gave place to the widow's household. Was there a dry eye in the house? Signs of weeping came from all sides. Mortimer was led by his arm in his mother's hand, and was baptized. Sarah loosened her straw bonnet, and let it fall back from her head, to receive the simple rite; when the widow lifted the little boy, who had never known a father's love, and the pastor, after waiting a moment to control his emotions sealed him in the name of our redeeming God.

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After an involuntary pause for a few moments, owing to the deep emotion in the congregation, poor Josey was led forward. Minister and congregation seemed to make but slight impression upon him; Henry Ferguson was the charm throughout; he even turned his head, while the minister's hand was on it, to smile at the child. The promise was not only to those believing parents, all of them, and to their own children, but to him that was afar off; his new parents having availed themselves of the large covenant of grace, to invoke its promised blessings upon him, on the ground of their faith. "May these parents," said the pastor in his prayer, "remember, in all times of solicitude and trouble with this dear dependent child, that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, in whose name he is baptized, can have access to his mind, 'making wise the simple;' and may that blessed Spirit make him his care."

Part of the time, while the hymn following the baptism was read and sung, I found myself pursuing some thoughts which the interesting scene just witnessed had suggested.

Why, I asked myself, could not these parents have been satisfied with dedicating these children at home, without this public and special act of consecration?

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I was at no loss for an answer. The same reason applies as when one seeks admission to the church of Christ, by a public profession of religion, either by appearing before a congregation and assenting to a covenant, or to be confirmed, or to be immersed in water. Offering a child in baptism is making a public profession of religion with regard to it. Some say to us, What need is there of joining a church? Why may I not be a Christian by myself? We know what we say, in reply to such questions. We are aware how much the public act helps the private feelings and conduct, besides being required by our feelings when they are deep and strong. I thought of this illustration: In the wakeful moments of the night, upon a lonely bed, one feels a special nearness to God. He can think of God, as he lies upon his pillow, both with prayer and meditation; but suppose that he rises from his bed and kneels at the bedside, and, with oral prayer, prevents the night-watches, and cries? His voice at that midnight hour affects his mind; the darkness and

stillness impress him with a sense of the presence of God, and though his ejaculations on his pillow were acceptable, has he not probably done that which, through Christ, is peculiarly acceptable to God, and is profitable to himself as his child? He who was always in communion with the Father, the man Christ Jesus, nevertheless, sometimes withdrew into a mountain, and continued all night in prayer, and, rising up a great while before day, he went into a solitary place, and there prayed. These special acts of worship, no true Christian needs to be told, are good and acceptable to God, and profitable for men. We do not refrain from them, pleading that they are nowhere commanded in the New Testament, or, that, so long as we pray at stated times, or strive to live in a praying frame, these special devotions are superfluous. So, while it is our duty and privilege to dedicate our children to God in private, it is acceptable to him, and profitable to us, if we take them, and bring an offering, and come into his courts.

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The baptism of the feeble-minded youth furnished me with an illustration of the suitableness of parents and guardians doing for children, in religion, that which they are constantly doing for them in common things, that is, conferring privileges and blessings upon them without their consent. There seemed to be such an illustration of the riches of free grace, in the baptism of this poor child, such a comment on that passage, "I am found of them that sought me not," it corresponded so much with the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man, that we all felt instructed and softened by it, and, at the same time, we all had feelings toward that helpless boy, such as we, perhaps, never could have had but for his baptism. Never will a member of that witnessing congregation see him, without a feeling of tenderness and something bordering on respect; he will not be merely "Silly Joe" to them; that element of truth in the heathen superstition, which leads heathens and pagans to regard an idiot as something sacred, will have its verification with regard to him; the children of that assembly will be restrained from rudeness and cruelty, in their sports with him, by that transaction, while the prayers offered for him at the time, and the many ejaculations which the sight of him will occasion in the hearts of good people, will make his baptism one of his richest blessings. O, what a loss it is to have a child baptized at home, or anywhere and at any time except among the public services of the Sabbath in the sanctuary of God! Necessity, indeed, controls our choice, many times, in this thing; and we are accepted of God irrespective of time and place, in yielding to his providence.

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Since my mind has been deeply interested in this subject, leading me to converse with parents and with ministers, and to make observation with regard to it, I have seen and heard many things relating to the providences of God, in connection with the baptism of children, which, while we ought to be slow in confidently interpreting providences, make us do as Mary is said to have done, in regard to things relating to her child,—she "kept these things and pondered them in her heart." We cannot say, for example, that the death of that little girl, whose father refused to let his wife enjoy the privilege of going, alone, with the child, to the house of God for baptism, or to invite the pastor to his house for the purpose, was a judicial consequence of his conduct; but we know that his own thoughts trouble him, and that he has a sorrow bound upon his heart, which he will carry with him to his grave.

Neither is it certain that the little one, who was raised to life from a sickness which baffled the physicians, was spared to her pious mother for her Christian behavior, in taking it, a few months before, to the house of God, and offering it in baptism, with no help from her husband, but with many sad thoughts that the father of the child—he on whose arm she and the child needed to rest—refused her gentle and affectionate pleadings with him, to support and cherish her at an hour so precious to her heart. Nor will we say that the kind and obliging husband, not a professor of religion, who served his wife so manfully, and with such a cheerful spirit, on such an occasion, would not have acquired, in other ways, the respect and love of the people, or that he could trace to it, absolutely, great prosperity in business, through the assistance of prominent members in that church. Sure we are that no such motive influenced him; but it is equally true that we cannot link ourselves to God's service, nor to his friends, in any way, without receiving his blessing. "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." "Blessed is he that blesseth thee." In the eyes of estimable people, and of all whose good opinion and best wishes are most desirable, the man who overcomes any little pride, or sensitiveness, or fear of man, and goes with his pious wife and child to the house of God, and offers the child, for her, to be baptized, is more of a man than before, gains reputation for some desirable qualities, excites respect for self-reliance, the quiet performance of a duty from which certain feelings might lead him to shrink, and in the increased love and esteem of others, to say no more, he has his reward.

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God was angry with Moses for delaying, if not neglecting, to circumcise his child. His wife was a Midianite; her associations with the ordinance were not like those of Moses, and perhaps he had yielded too much to her known feelings. At least, the child had not been circumcised, and we are told, "The Lord met him in the inn, and sought to slay him." Some accident there, or a sudden and alarming illness, made him feel that God had a controversy with him. Zipporah was not slow to interpret the providence. If Moses had said with himself, So long as I consecrate my child to God by prayer, the seal of the covenant cannot be essential, God taught him his mistake. As soon as the rite had been performed, we read, "So he let him go." It may be noticed, here, that the unworthy manner in which Zipporah performed the rite, did not make it invalid. They who fear that their baptism was not solemnized, in all respects, as it should have been, may draw instruction and comfort from this narrative.

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There have been instances, within my knowledge, in which one or both of the parents of a child have yielded to some untoward influences, and have withheld the child from being baptized. While I cannot, and would not, interpret certain events connected with this omission, on the part

of some from whom better things might have been expected, nothing has ever impressed me more than the dealings of God with such parents. I have been made to think by such coincidences, more than once or twice, of Moses in the inn. It will not be amiss to say, that those who are neglecting to bring their children for baptism, within a suitable time, unless providentially hindered, will do well to examine their feelings and motives, with that quickened conscience, which the solemn providences of God toward them may be intended to excite. He is "a jealous God;" and he keepeth covenant "to a thousand generations."

Chapter Sixth.

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TESTIMONY OF THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS

HOUSEHOLD BAPTISMS.—"PÆDOBAPTIST CONCESSIONS."—THOMAS SHEPARD'S VIEWS. BAPTISM OF HIS CHILD. THE FATHER'S RECORD.—GREAT INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY RELATION IN HEATHENISM AND PAGANISM.—THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF AMERICA.—DISSUASIVE FROM ALTERCATION.—QUESTIONS TO A MINISTER ON HIS PRACTICE IN BAPTISMS.—LIBERALITY.—PAUL AN EXAMPLE.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.—Ps. 90.

The Lamb hath but one bride, the one church of all times.—ANON.

That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.—THE APOSTLE PAUL.

Schoolmen must war with schoolmen, text with text.
The first's the Chaldee paraphrase; the next
The Septuagint; opinion thwarts opinion;
The Papist holds the first, the last the Arminian;
And then the Councils must be called to advise,
What this of Lateran says, and that of Nice;
The slightly-studied fathers must be prayed,
Although in small acquaintance, into aid;
When, daring venture, oft, too far into 't,
They, Pharaoh like, are drowned, both horse and foot.

FRANCIS QUARLES.

Being determined to possess myself of suitable information on the subject of baptism as practised by the early Christian fathers, I called the next evening to see my pastor, when the following conversation took place:

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Mr. M. I wish, sir, to know the plain and simple truth about the evidence from ecclesiastical history with regard to infant baptism. The internal evidence, confirming the scriptural argument, fully satisfies me, yet, as a matter of interesting information, I should like to know how it was regarded in the age next to that of the apostles. You know we often read, and hear it said, that infant baptism is an error which crept into the Christian church about the third century. Now, did it creep in; or did the apostles practise it?

Dr. D. If infant baptism crept into the church, and if it be an unauthorized innovation, one thing seems very strange, that, in this Protestant age, when we are all so jealous of Romish and all human inventions in matters of religion, the ablest and soundest men of all Christian denominations but one, are firmly persuaded of its scriptural authority, and are increasingly attached to it. In the great reformations which have arisen from time to time, this practice would have been swept away, had it been an error. It is more than we can believe that Protestant denominations should all, with one exception, adhere to an unscriptural practice, at the present day especially.

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Mr. M. Well, sir, leaving the scripturalness of the ordinance out of question, what support does the practice get from church history? How far back to the times of the apostles can we trace it? Did any practise it who could have received it from the apostles, or have known those who did?

Dr. D. You must come with me into my study, and we will examine the authorities.

I will not burden your attention and memory with many citations. Two or three indisputable witnesses are better than a host. I rely chiefly on the testimony of ORIGEN for proof that the practice of infant baptism was derived from the apostles, though I will show you that his testimony is confirmed by other witnesses.

ORIGEN was born in Alexandria, Egypt, A.D. 185, that is, about eighty-five years after the death of the apostle John. To make his nearness to the apostles clear to your mind, consider, that Roger Williams, for example, established himself at Providence in 1636, say two hundred and twenty years ago; yet how perfectly informed we are of his opinions and history. But Origen, born eighty-five years only after the death of John, knew, of course, the established practices of the apostles, which had come down through so short a space of time. "His grandfather, if not his father, must have lived in the apostles' day. It was not, therefore, necessary for him to go out of his own

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family, to learn what was the practice of the apostles. He knew whether he had himself been baptized, if we may judge from his writings, and he must have known the views of his father and grandfather on the subject. He had the reputation of great learning, had travelled extensively, had lived in Greece, Rome, Cappadocia, and Arabia, though he spent the principal part of his life in Syria and Palestine."

I would place implicit reliance on the testimony of such a man, under such circumstances, to any question of history with which he professed to be familiar, even if I differed from him in matters of opinion. But such a man would not state, for veritable history, that which the world knew to be false.

Now, what is Origen's testimony as to the fact, simply, of the apostolic usage with regard to infant baptism? [Pg 147]

In his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Book v., he says:

"For this cause it was that the church received an order from the apostles to give baptism even to infants."

In his homily on Lev. 12, he says:

"According to the usage of the church, baptism is given even to infants, when, if there were nothing in infants that needed forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would seem to be superfluous."

In his homily on Luke 14, he says:

"Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins."

It was the practice, then, in Origen's day, to baptize infants. He tells the people of his day, to whom he preaches and writes, why it was that the church had received a command from the apostles to baptize them, not proving to them the fact of history, but, taking that as well known, explaining the theological reason for it, as he understood it.

It is now 1857. Eighty-five years ago, the length of time after the apostles to the birth of this man, brings us back to 1772. There is good Dr. Sales, who was born in 1770. Suppose that he should say that steamboats came from England at the time that the Hudson river was discovered, and that they had plied there ever since? [Pg 148]

No man in his right mind (not to say a scholar like Origen), however singular his opinions, would assert, for veritable history, that which was as palpably false as such a fiction respecting steamboat navigation upon the Hudson would be. Yet Origen asserts that the practice of infant baptism was received directly from the apostles. Everybody could contradict him if he were in error.

Mr. M. But we know that he was in error in saying that forgiveness of sins was a consequence of baptism.

Dr. D. Very well. The erroneous opinions, or practices, of men, with regard to the shape of the earth, did not prove that there was no earth in their day. On the contrary, their theories and speculations are proof, if any were needed, that the earth then existed, surely. A man who boldly advocates a theory, fears to assert for fact that which all the world knows to be false. [Pg 149]

Mr. M. If infant baptism were then practised, and had been received from the apostles, why should Origen assert it in his books, and in preaching, since everybody must have known it sufficiently. Does not this prove that it was not generally believed?

Dr. D. Why, my dear sir, am I not every Sabbath telling how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures? People do not need to be informed of it as a truth of history, but they need to be reminded of it, and to be exhorted in view of it. So of every doctrine, and everything connected with religion. We tell the plainest, the most familiar, truths to our church-members, continually; and the common repetition of those truths is, rather, a proof of their general acceptance than otherwise.

Mr. M. In a court of justice, such testimony as that of Origen would certainly be conclusive, in the case of a patent-right, or maritime discovery. But you said that there were other testimonies of equal weight.

Dr. D. TERTULLIAN was born at Carthage, not far from A.D. 150, that is, about fifty years after the apostles. He wrote, therefore, within a hundred years of the apostle John. But he was a man of peculiar views, extravagant in his opinions, an enthusiast in everything. He proves that the practice of infant baptism was established, by arguing against the expediency of baptizing children, and unmarried persons, lest they should sin after baptism. His argument, with respect to both these classes of persons, is the same. His language is, "If any understand the weight of baptismal obligations, they will be more fearful about taking them than of delay." He argued that baptism should be deferred till people were in a condition to resist temptation. These are his words: [Pg 150]

"Therefore, according to every person's condition, and disposition, and age, also, the delay of baptism is more profitable, especially as to little children. For why is it necessary that the sponsors should incur danger? For they may either fail of their promises by death, or may be

disappointed by a child's proving to be of a wicked disposition. Our Lord says, indeed, 'Forbid them not to come to me.' Let them come, then, when they are grown up; let them come when they understand; let them come when they are taught whither they come; let them become Christians when they are able to know Christ. Why should their innocent age make haste to the forgiveness of sins? Men act more cautiously in temporal concerns. Worldly substance is not committed to those to whom divine things are entrusted. Let them know how to ask for salvation, that you may seem to give to him that asketh.

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"It is for a reason no less important that unmarried persons, both those who were never married, and those who have been deprived of their partners, should, on account of their exposure to temptation, be kept waiting," &c.

As these extracts prove that the institution of marriage existed in Tertullian's day, so they prove the existence then of infant baptism. Nothing can be more conclusive. How pertinent and useful to his object would it have been, could he have assailed the practice of infant baptism as a human invention! He would not have failed to use that line of attack, had it been possible. Now, as certain articles in the newspapers, in a distant part of the country, remonstrating against the street-railroads, for example, prove that street-railroads exist there, so does Tertullian's argument against infant baptism prove that it was practised within one hundred years after the apostles.

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Mr. M. Is not this stronger, if anything, than Origen's testimony, being so much nearer the apostolic age?

Dr. D. For that reason it may have more weight; but Origen's testimony, being direct and positive, is most easily quoted. He was near enough to the apostolic age for all the purposes of credible testimony.

There is another historical testimony, if you wish to hear of more, which has great weight.

THE COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE, one hundred and fifty years after the apostles, and composed of sixty-six pastors, has given us full testimony on the subject. A country presbyter, by the name of Fidus, had sent two cases for their adjudication. One was, "Whether an infant might be baptized before it was eight days old?" Here is the answer:

CYPRIAN, and the rest of the presbyters who were present in the council, sixty-six in number, to Fidus our brother, Greeting:

"— As to the case of Infants: whereas you judge that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they were born, and that the rule of circumcision is to be observed,—we are all in the Council of a very different opinion." "This, therefore, was our opinion in the Council, that we ought not to hinder any person from baptism, and the grace of God. And this rule, as it holds for all, is, we think, more especially to be observed in reference to infants, even to those who are newly born."

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This was written, within a hundred and fifty years from the time of the apostles, by sixty-six ministers of Christ, some of whom, we may suppose, must have had grace enough to show a martyr-spirit in resisting so gross an invention as the baptizing of infants would have been, if apostolic example had restricted baptism to those who were capable of faith. Did Paul reprove an abuse of the Lord's Supper, among the Corinthians, and would he not have given an injunction against so Jewish a superstition as the baptizing of children in place of the antiquated circumcision would have been, if it were not commanded, had the churches in his day seemed inclined to practise it?

Mr. M. All these things amount to a demonstration, in my view.

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Dr. D. You would like to hear something from AUGUSTINE, whose "Confessions" you have read with so much interest.

In his writings, on Genesis, Augustine says, about two hundred and eighty-eight years after the apostles, "The custom of our mother, the church, in baptizing infants, must not be disregarded nor accounted useless, and it must by all means be believed to be (apostolica traditio) a thing handed down to us by the apostles." "It is most justly believed to be no other than a thing delivered by apostolic authority; that it came not by a general council, or by any authority later or less than that of the apostles." He also speaks of baptizing infants by the authority of the whole church, which, he says, was undoubtedly delivered to it by our Lord and his apostles.

Augustine was a man of distinguished piety and learning, whose testimony is every way worthy of implicit confidence. But, connected with his history, we have another substantial evidence with regard to the subject. He conducted a famous controversy against the Pelagians, who denied original sin. They were confronted with the argument from infant baptism. "Why," it was said, "are infants baptized, if they need no change of nature?" It would have been a triumphant answer could they have shown that it was an unscriptural practice, not countenanced by Christ or the apostles. But Pelagius said, "Men slander me as though I denied baptism to infants, whereas I never heard of any one, Catholic or heretic, who denied baptism to infants." Pelagius and his friend Celestius, who was with him in the controversy, were born, the one in Britain, the other in Ireland. They lived for some years in Rome, where they knew people from all parts of the world. They had also lived in Carthage, Africa. One finally settled in Jerusalem, and the other travelled among all the churches in the principal places of Europe and Asia. But they had never heard of

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the man, not even a heretic, who had denied infant baptism.

Here is another interesting proof. Irenæus, Philastrius, Augustine, Epiphanius, Theodoret, wrote catalogues of all the sects of Christians which they had ever heard of; but, while they make mention of some who denied baptism altogether, and with it, according to Augustine, a great part of scripture, they mention no denial of infant baptism by any sect whatever.

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Mr. M. I suppose, then, that the only way of disposing of this argument is by rejecting all testimony except that of the New Testament. Some say they can prove anything from the fathers; so they insist that the Bible alone must be our guide.

Dr. D. They are right in making that the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice. But how do these good people and the rest of us know that the books of the Old Testament, as we have them, were the very books to which Christ and the apostles referred as the word of God? If infidels refuse to receive the Bible, saying, 'There is no proof that these are the identical books known to Christ, and quoted by him and the apostles,' What shall we say? The Bible itself gives us no specific direction how to prove its genuineness. It is interesting to observe that we go to uninspired men to prove that we really have the Bible as Christ and the apostles sanctioned it. We go to Josephus, neither inspired nor even a Christian; to the Talmud, to Jerome, Origen, Aquila, and other uninspired men, to find a list of the books which we are to receive as given by the inspiration of God. And, as to the New Testament, we go to Eusebius and other uninspired writers, and find that the Christians of their days regarded these books as of divine authority. It is on such evidence as this that we rely for the authority of those sacred writings, which tell us what are the doctrines, precepts, and rites, of religion. Now, we see from this that uninspired testimony to divine things has its use. It is neither wise, nor any proof of intelligence, to refuse a proper place to such testimony. We do not ask Josephus nor Eusebius how to interpret these books for us, nor does their erroneous opinion with regard to matters of faith disparage their testimony as to the existence and authenticity of the sacred canon. Neither can we properly say, "The early Christian fathers had wrong notions, some of them, about infant baptism; therefore they cannot be allowed to testify whether infant baptism was practised." However heretical they may have been, they could not alter the well-known facts of history, in the face of enemies and friends.

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Mr. M. Are you not accustomed to rely much, in your scriptural argument for infant baptism, on the baptisms of households by the apostles?

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Dr. D. I am; and that reminds me of an interesting passage, which I will read to you from this book:^[4]

"Have we eight instances of the administration of the Lord's Supper? Not half the number. Have we eight cases of the change of the Christian Sabbath from the Jewish? Not, perhaps, one fourth of the number. Yet those services are vindicated by the practice of the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament. How, then, can we deny their practice on the subject of infant baptism, when it is established by a series of more numerous instances than can possibly be found in support of any doctrine, principle, or practice, derived from the practice of the apostles?"

But you will ask him (said Dr. D.), how he proves that there were infants or young children in the households baptized by the apostles.

This is his answer:

"Is there any other case besides that of baptism, where we would take families at hazard, and deny the existence of young children in them?"

"Take eight families in a street, or eight pews containing families in a place of worship; they will afford more than one young child."

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Mr. M. How does he make out eight cases of household baptism by the apostles?

Dr. D. Let us examine his list:

1. Cornelius.

2. Lydia.

3. The jailer at Philippi. "Thus the church at Philippi, just organized by the apostles, and consisting of but few members, offers two instances of household baptism."

4. Crispus. "Compare Acts 18: 8, and 1 Cor. 1:14—16, by which it appears that this Crispus was baptized by Paul separately from his family, which was not baptized by Paul. Yet Crispus 'believed on the Lord with all his house.' If his house believed, it was baptized. It was, then, a baptized household. But if we believe that the family of Crispus was baptized because we find it registered as believing, then we must admit the same of all other families which we find marked as Christians, though they be not expressly marked as baptized." He is not proving, here, you notice, that there were children in any of these households; he thinks he proves that elsewhere, by the doctrine of chances. He is now showing the grounds for supposing that certain "households" were baptized. He applies his argument respecting Crispus to

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5. Aristobulus's household.

6. Onesiphorus's household.

7. Narcissus's household.

8. Stephanas's household. This household was baptized by Paul separately from its head, who was not baptized by Paul; this case being just the reverse of that of Crispus.

"Eight Christian families, and therefore baptized." Now comes the question of probability as to there being children in those households not capable of faith.

Begin anywhere, in any congregation, on the Sabbath, and count eight pews, the proprietors and occupants of which are the heads of families; and the chance of there being no minor children in them is almost too small to be appreciated. Should we read, in a secular paper, that a foreign missionary had baptized eight households in a pagan village, the general belief would be that it was a missionary of some Pædobaptist denomination, and that children were baptized in those families.

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I must read to you (said Dr. D.) something on the other side of this argument. I found the following, not long since, in a deservedly popular and useful Dictionary and Repository, written and signed by a gentleman of excellent character and standing. He says:

"Infant baptism was probably introduced about the commencement of the third century, in connection with other corruptions, which even then began to prepare the way for Popery. A superstitious idea, respecting the necessity of baptism to salvation, led to the baptism of sick persons, and, finally, to the baptism of infants. Sponsors, holy water, anointing with oil, the sign of the cross, and a multitude of similar ceremonies, equally unauthorized by the Scriptures, were soon introduced. The church lost her simplicity and purity, her ministers became ambitious, and the darkness gradually deepened to the long and dismal night of papal despotism."

"Probably introduced about the commencement of the third century, in connection with other corruptions." Recall what I read to you from Origen, born A.D. 185; from Tertullian, who flourished within one hundred years after the apostles; from Cyprian and the Council of Carthage; from Augustine and his antagonist, Pelagius, who expressly said that he had never heard of any one, not even the most impious heretic, denying baptism to infants.

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In contrast with such a passage as the one just read to you, I am reminded of the host of writers, on our side of the question, who, almost all of them, make such candid and full concessions, that they furnish their brethren of the opposite side with many of their arguments against us. I remember reading a book of "Pædobaptist Concessions," containing a formidable array of points yielded by our writers, so that a common reader might ask, What have you left as the ground of your belief and practice? But the thought which arose in my mind was, Notwithstanding all these concessions, they who make them are among the firmest believers in baptism by sprinkling, and in infant baptism. That cause must be affluent in proofs, and deeply rooted in the scriptural convictions of men, which can afford to make such concessions to its antagonists. These refuse facts, which we afford to others for so large a part of their foundation, show how broad and sufficient ours must be.

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The quotation which I read to you, speaks of Popish tendencies as having already begun. This is true; and more may be added. In the second epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul tells us that the mystery of iniquity was already at work. On the subject of religious days and festivals, the first Christians very soon began to be superstitious, incorporating heathen festival days into Christian observances, under the plea of redeeming and sanctifying them, with some such feelings and reasoning as that with which people, now, would transfer secular music to sanctuaries, saying that the enemy ought not to have all the best music. It is true that this sensuous, and, afterward called, Romish, tendency, corrupted everything. The pure stream of apostolic doctrine and practice was like the Moselle, which you saw from the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, pursuing its unmingled course distinctly for some distance in the turbid Rhine, till at last it yields to the general current. Infant baptism, as we learn from ecclesiastical authorities with one consent, proceeded from the apostles; yet soon it began to be practised with many superstitious absurdities; and, moreover, immersion, making such powerful appeals to the senses, suited the taste of the age far better than sprinkling, so that not only did it become the common mode, but the subjects were completely undressed, without any distinction, to denote the putting off the old man and the putting on of the new, and the putting away of the filth of the flesh.^[5] Public sentiment finally abolished this practice. After a considerable time affusion, or sprinkling, returned, and became the prevailing mode, without any special enactment, or any formal renunciation of the late mode. The Eastern church, however, retained immersion, while the Greek and Armenian branches use both immersion and sprinkling for the adult and child. But the sick and dying were always baptized by sprinkling, which is sufficient to prove that sprinkling was regarded as equally valid with immersion. It is natural to say that it was superstitious to baptize the sick and dying, by sprinkling, if we hold that only immersion is valid baptism. The sick and dying cannot be immersed; now, is it superstition for a sick person, giving credible evidence

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of piety, to be admitted into the Christian church, and receive the Lord's Supper? In order to do this properly, the subject must be baptized; hence, we derive one powerful argument that sprinkling is valid baptism. Our Lord would never have made the modes of his sacraments so austere rigid, that the thousands of sick and feeble persons, ministers in poor health, climate, seasons of the year, times of persecution and imprisonment, and all the stress of circumstances to which Christians may be subjected, should be utterly disregarded, and one inconvenient, and sometimes dangerous, form, of applying water, be insisted on, inflexibly, as essential to the introductory Christian rite. If the early Christians baptized the sick by sprinkling, they of course

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supposed that it was valid baptism. If it was valid at all, and in any case, of course it was Christian baptism, even if other modes were most commonly used.

Mr. M. I suppose, then, that you would not object to administer baptism in any other mode of applying water than sprinkling, or pouring.

Dr. D. One mode was, I believe, practised at first; and the New Testament teaches me that this was affusion. The application of water in any way, by an authorized administrator, to a proper subject, in the name of the Trinity, may be valid baptism; but I prefer the New Testament mode, as I understand it, and am happy to allow others the same liberty of judgment which I enjoy. It would be an extreme case which would lead me to administer the ordinance in any other way than by affusion. [Pg 166]

But, said Mr. D., you began by inquiring respecting the practice of infant baptism in the early ages. I presume that your mind is settled with regard to the connection of the practice with God's everlasting covenant with believers and their offspring. I lately read a statement of this point, which pleased me much, in the writings of the famous Rev. Thomas Shepard, the early pastor of the church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He says:

"There is the same inward cause moving God to take in the children of believing parents into the church and covenant, now, to be of the number of his people, as there was for taking the Jews and their children. For the only reason why the Lord took in the children of the Jews with themselves evidently was his love to the parents. 'Because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed.' So that I do from hence believe, that either God's love is, in these days of his Gospel, less unto his people and servants than in the days of the Old Testament,—or, if it be as great, that then the same love respects the seed of his people now as then it did. And, therefore, if then because he loved them he chose their seed to be of his church, so in these days because he loveth us he chooseth our seed to be of his church also." [Pg 167]

Though the title of the treatise from which I read is called the Church-Membership of Children, to which expression I have very great objections, and feel that it has done harm, yet this good man held the doctrine of infant church-membership in a sense which is free from all reproach of making people members of the church otherwise than by regeneration. His belief on this point comes out under the following illustration:

"These children may not be the sons of God and his people really and savingly, but God will honor them outwardly with his name and privileges, just as one that adopts a youngster tells the father that if the child carry himself well toward him, when he is grown up to years he shall possess the inheritance itself; but yet in the meanwhile he shall have this favor, to be called his son, and be of the family and household, and so be reckoned among the number of his sons." [Pg 168]

One of the chief reasons which brought this excellent man to New England, was that he could not in Old England enjoy the ordinance of infant baptism in its purity. Let me read the following, addressed by him to his little son, who afterward became pastor of the church in Lynn, Massachusetts, and was a burning and shining light. His words will show you that he had no superstitious notion about the church-membership of children, though he represented the common belief at that day, and that he did not count baptism in infancy a saving ordinance; yet you will see how he uses it to plead with his son to be reconciled to God. He writes:

"And thus, after about eleven weekes sayle from Old England, we came to New England shore, where the mother fell sick of consumption, and you my child was put to nurse to one goodwife Hopkins, who was very tender of thee; and after we had been here diverse weekes, on the seventh of February, or thereabout, God gave thee the ordinance of baptism, whereby God is become thy God, and is beforehand with thee, that whenever you shalt return to God he will undoubtedly receive thee; and this is a most high and happy privilege; and therefore blesse God for it. And now, after this had been done, thy deare mother dyed in the Lord, departing out of this world into another, who did lose her life by being careful to preserve thine; for in the ship thou wert so feeble and froward, both in the day and night, that hereby shee lost her strength, and at last her life. Shee hath made also many a prayer and shed many a tear in secret for thee; and this hath bin off her request, that if the Lord did not intend to glorify himselfe by thee, that he would cut thee off by death rather than to live to dishonor him by sin; and therefore know it that if you shalt turn rebell agaynst God, and forsake God and care not for the knowledge of him, nor to beleve in his Son, the Lord will make all these mercys woes, and all thy mother's prayers, teares, and death, to be a swift witness agaynst thee at the great day." [Pg 169]

The practice of infant baptism, and a belief in what is called the church-membership of children, surely had no injurious effect upon a parent who could speak thus to his child. Yet Shepard took as high ground as any with regard to this subject. He derived appeals from baptism to his child, which were both encouraging and admonitory in the highest degree. [Pg 170]

O, said Dr. D., what a people the descendants of Abraham might have been forever, had they kept that covenant of which circumcision was the seal. Had they remembered only this, and had they adhered to it, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee," and had they been a covenant-keeping people, their peace, as God says to them, would have been as a river; an endless, inexhaustible tide of prosperity and blessedness.

And now, if Christian parents will but lay hold on that covenant as they may, that Abrahamic covenant, still in force for them who are Christ's, and so Abraham's, seed, and heirs according to the promise, we should soon see, in family religion, in the early conversion of children, and in

their large Christian culture, those promises of God fulfilled which have respect to the great increase, chiefly by this means, of his church in the latter days. This is one thing which makes me love and prize infant baptism so much; its being an expression and exponent of parental love, faithfulness, and zeal, in those with whom it is preceded and followed by the entire consecration of their children to God, their feelings and conduct toward them agreeing with the covenant made for them with God.

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But, in saying this, let me guard you against the erroneous notion that infant baptism is primarily a parent's covenant, an expression of his feelings toward God. No, it is God's covenant, an expression of his feelings toward the children of believers. That is the chief thing which gives it value. For, it is not because parents love their children, that God commands that they be offered in baptism; but because God loves them, and has promised to be a God to them, as he is to their parents. People, however, sometimes treat the ordinance as though it were their act toward God, and not primarily his act toward them. They, therefore, are liable to use it with far less effect than if they were receiving in it, and by it, God's own transaction with them and the little child.

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Mr. M. In thinking of Pagan and Mohammedan nations, lately, at the Concert of Prayer for Foreign Missions, I was struck with this thought, how error has been transmitted from father to child, and what an awful power for evil lies in transmitted family influence, when it is corrupted. This led me to think whether God did not have this in mind when, in establishing his church in Abraham, he connected children with parents in his covenant, and gave a sign and seal to be affixed to their children as a constant admonition to parental faithfulness. All his former dealings with the world seem to have failed, because of its great wickedness,—fire, plagues, good examples, great riches, and power conferred upon the good; and then he added, as a special means, the family constitution, and by it he secured a seed to serve him to an extent sufficient to keep the world from extinction, and to be the repository and source of divine knowledge. I began to think that, if we would keep religion from dying out, we must fall in with God's great plan; for Satan makes use of it, and holds generation after generation in bondage by means of the family constitution. So I set myself at work to find out ways by which we might promote family religion; and I could find no better plan than the old one, of promoting scriptural and spiritual views of the dedication of children. Then I thought how much discredit has been cast upon that ordinance, which is intended to be the great sign and declaration of parental piety and faithfulness; and that family religion had, proportionably, declined, with the indifference of Christians to this powerful means of promoting the eminent zeal and efforts of parents in behalf of their children's spiritual good. Youths of fifteen to twenty-one years of age are, in a large proportion, the causes of prevailing wickedness,—Sabbath-breaking, profaneness, and other things. They need just what the ordinance of baptism, properly observed and fully carried out by covenanting parents, would do for them. But, in being present at the formation of new churches, I have mourned to see that, instead of declaring infant baptism to be the duty of believers, as was formerly done in our older churches, a compromise with modern lax views is made, by merely permitting infant baptism, saying, in the confession of faith, that, "Baptism is the privilege only of believers and their children."

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But the idea of getting up a zeal in favor of infant baptism, or a public sentiment in the churches which should enforce it as a duty, seemed to me unprofitable; but it occurred to me, whether something could not be done to interest Christian parents in the subject, by showing them the infinite privilege of having God for their God, and the God of their seed, and then the naturalness and propriety of using an ordinance to express and to assist it. People need instruction on the subject; instruction which will commend itself to their Christian feelings. We cannot legislate them into a spiritual observance of the Lord's Supper, much less of baptism.

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Dr. D. No; and I trust that our denominations who practise infant baptism, will never urge it otherwise than in connection with parental piety, and as a helper of parental obligations.

Mr. M. But ought we not to stir ourselves up with regard to parental duties? and, if so, must we not necessarily insist on the dedication of children to God, and upon baptism as the acceptable way of signifying it, and the powerful means of helping us to perform our duties?

Dr. D. Surely we ought; and in doing it we have the satisfaction to know that we are laboring for something more than to establish a mode of applying an ordinance. In urging the baptism of children, if we do it not for the sake of the ordinance, but for the things which it signifies and promotes, we advance the cause of piety in the parents.

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Mr. M. Would that some one would blow a trumpet in the churches on this subject. I do feel that if parents would appreciate the influence of such a state of heart as would lead them to offer their children to God in baptism, as an expression of their previous and subsequent views and feelings toward their children, we should see a new state of things in the rising generation. How striking it is that the Old Testament closes with such a passage as that last verse of Malachi. It is the promontory of the Old Testament, looking across the coming ages, yearning toward the new dispensation, and, as it were, making signals, concerning the forerunner of that new era, with those words: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." May we not conclude that this is God's most acceptable way of effecting the revival of religion from one period to another?

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Dr. D. I have no doubt of it.

Mr. M. I spoke to our good Deacon Goodenow about it, lately; but he said he had a great horror of a controversy about baptism, and he was afraid that, to say much upon this subject, would

involve us in one. I told him that I would not be for reflecting upon other denominations; that my motto, with regard to them and us, is, "Live, and let live." I would only appeal to our own people, and encourage them to take up the subject afresh, in a spiritual manner; that is, to dwell upon the privilege and duty of being in covenant relations, with our children, to God, baptism being the ordinance of ratification, and its memorial.

Dr. D. Your reference to controversy about baptism makes me think of one which I listened to in a rail-road station, last winter, while waiting in a snow-storm, several hours, for the cars. Two students of divinity, as I took them to be, were discussing their respective tenets with regard to baptism. I was reading a book, but could not help hearing what they said. One was decrying infant baptism as a "rag of Popery," "the last relic of Rome in Protestantism," "a device of Satan to fill up the church with unconverted members," and much more to that effect.

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His friend, in reply, undertook to give his impressions of immersion. He spoke of India-rubber bathing-dresses;—a tank in which he saw two or three men and as many women, one of them a young lady, immersed, to his apparent disgust;—of Elder some one breaking the ice at some cape on New Year's Sabbath, and immersing several carriages full of females, who went back dripping wet, to the carriages, and rode an eighth of a mile to the vestry;—of several females immersed, in a southern State, going into a creek with white garments, and with white fillets about their heads, and coming out yellow; and he asked his fellow whether infant baptism could be any worse than such things.

Mr. M. What did his friend say?

Dr. D. O, it was the common talk on both sides, painful and revolting. I could not help saying to them, as the cars were coming up, and we were parting, "But, if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

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Mr. M. They probably left each other as little convinced of the opposite opinions, respectively, as when they began.

Dr. D. More confirmed and set against each other's views, I have no question. There has been far too much of this. Ridicule and sarcasm are Satan's favorite weapons. Good people ought not to use them against each other, whatever be the temptation. Perhaps, as human nature chooses variety, and we are differently affected by different presentations of truth, men must be divided into sects; but intolerance, bigotry, exclusiveness, in us or in others, cannot stand before the spirit of the age. We may work better, divided into denominations, forbearing with one another, and loving one another in Christ, and for his sake.

Mr. M. Are you often called upon by persons who are troubled on the subject of baptism?

Dr. D. I do not spend much time in discussing the mode. When a young person is troubled on the subject, I am always careful, first of all, to find out whether there is any secret bias, for any reason, toward another denomination; in which case, I pause at once; for you might argue forever in vain. There is iron on board the ship, which controls the needle in the compass. I always make it easy and pleasant for such to follow their evident inclination and wishes.

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Mr. M. Are they generally ready to go?

Dr. D. No, they say they do not like strict communion; but I cannot help them. I will not be a sectarian, even for infant baptism.

Mr. M. Are you in favor of admitting people to our church who do not believe in infant baptism?

Dr. D. Young people, who say that their minds are not made up on the subject, or those who have not had their attention directed to it, cannot be required to signify their cordial assent to it; but it is enough if they are not opposed. In the case of parents who steadfastly decline to practise infant baptism, after waiting a proper time to instruct them, I advise them to join another denomination more in accordance with their views. We do better to be apart, and it is no reflection upon either side to say this. A Pædobaptist church ought to maintain its principles by requiring assent to its standard of faith; yet, where there is no church of a different denomination, within convenient distance, I surely would not exclude a child of God from the Lord's Supper for differences of opinion and practice about baptism. I would admit, by special vote, to occasional, or even to stated communion, in such a case.

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Mr. M. Do you ever re-baptize?

Dr. D. Where a person was baptized with water, in the name of the Trinity, by an authorized person, of any denomination, I would not re-baptize. The alleged heterodox or immoral character of the administrator, at the time of baptism, does not invalidate it; otherwise, one might be baptized many times, and, the administrators proving unworthy, the subject could never get baptized. Christ would never let his ordinances depend thus upon uncertainties. Let a person but recognize his baptism, if performed in infancy, by entering publicly into covenant with God, and that will be sufficient. I endeavor to show people how wrong it is to lay undue stress on the ordinance, forgetting whether they have that which is signified by it, and which alone gives it value.

Mr. M. True, sir, but it has its importance, and stress is to be laid upon the due observance of it.

Dr. D. I mean that where I find the conditions of valid baptism complied with, I try to turn away

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the thoughts from any superstitious or ceremonial dependence upon the sacramental act. You remember the answer in the catechism to the question, "How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?"

Mr. M. How I used to say that, at my mother's knee, with my hands folded behind me, to keep them still: "The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his spirit in them that by faith receive them."

Dr. D. I was thinking, the other day, and not for the first time, by any means, what a noble man was Paul. He was unwilling that people should call themselves after him, as their leader, and therefore he was glad to leave the act of baptizing to his associates. Some, however, infer from this that he disparages baptism. "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Baptism, in its place, has its importance, and so has preaching; but whether he should be the baptizer, or delegate the administration to Silas, or Mark, was not of so much consequence as that he should preach. How he put things in their right places, according to their proportions, exalting the great, vital things, sinking others to their subordinate, though useful, spheres, and becoming all things to all men to save them. With his contempt of formalism, I hardly know of a greater trial of patience than he must have had in consenting to circumcise Timothy. He there shut the window-shutters, and lighted an exhausted lamp, for a time, though he knew the sun was up, to gratify some who had not opened their eyes to the morning. How far from a contentious, ambitious spirit, was he, even with his intense convictions. There are many good people, in all communions, who are longing for the time when all the old walls of separation between true Christians will have as many gates in them, at least, as heaven has,—on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. But I rejoice even in our liberty, if we choose to exercise it, of separation, without molestation, though we lose much good to ourselves, and much influence, and, in times of general religious interest, it leads to early discussions about modes and forms. How many times have I seen a growing attention to religion in a community checked by debates and discussions as to ordinances.

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Mr. M. If more pains were taken to instruct our own people as to the oneness of the ancient and the Christian church, and to show them how the consecration of children is a part of religion, as reestablished by the Most High, it seems to me great good would follow.

Dr. D. If you will draw out your thoughts on the subject, and let me see them, we may prepare something which may be useful. You view the subject on the popular, practical side. Let us see what the results are to which you have come.

Having agreed to make the effort at my leisure, I may report hereafter as to my success. And now I will ask my reader's attention to an interesting letter, which, on my return home, I found awaiting me.

Chapter Seventh.

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TERMS OF COMMUNION.

Him first to love, great right and reason is,
Who first to us our life and being gave;
And after, when we fared had amisse,
Us wretches from the second death did save;
And last, the food of life, which now we have,
Even He himselve, in his dear sacrament,
To feede our hungry soules, unto us lent.

Then next to love our brethren, that were made
Of that selfe mould, and that self maker's hand,
That we;^[6] and to the same againe shall fade
Where they shall have like heritage of land,^[7]
However here on higher steps we stand;
Which also were with selfe-same price redeemed
That we;—however of us light esteemed.

SPENSER.—"An Hymne of Heavenly Love."

—PRAIRIE,—, 185-.

MY DEAR BROTHER: Here we are, at our journey's end. We have had a most romantic journey, arriving in health, though wayworn, much of our ride having been in wagons. My wife says, Give my love to brother, and tell him of the scene at "the hill Mizar." Your letter, which we found awaiting us, made her think that you would be deeply interested in the story. This, by and by.

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As we were leaving C., one morning, in the great mail-wagon, a man and his wife, with an infant in her arms, took seats with us, bound far beyond our own home. The parents had been delayed by the birth of the child during the journey from New York. They proved to be truly excellent people, and they made our journey with them very agreeable.

The father, Mr. Blair, had been greatly tried during his stay at the hotel where his wife was sick. There was only one church in the village. The administration of the Lord's Supper occurring while he was there, he went to avail himself of a stranger's privilege at the table of Christ. He found, however, that the ordinance was not to be administered till the afternoon, and, moreover, the hymn-book, and some things in the sermon, disclosed to him that the church was one which closed its doors against communicants who had not been baptized by immersion, on profession of their faith.

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He was strongly inclined to partake of the ordinance, without saying anything respecting his baptism. But, on the whole, he concluded that it would be respectful to intimate his situation to one of the church, peradventure they had a rule favorable to such a case as his, or, at least, had agreed to shut their eyes, and ask no questions, in such circumstances.

He, therefore, introduced himself to a venerable man, who, he inferred, was a deacon. He frankly told him who he was, and that he wished to partake of the Lord's Supper.

The good man said to him, "I am sorry that you said anything about it; but, so long as you have, I don't see how I can consistently encourage your partaking of the ordinance."

Stranger. On what ground, sir?

Deacon. Why, we do not hold you to have been baptized.

Stranger. I was baptized in infancy, by believing parents, and have been a professing Christian fifteen years.

Deacon. That is not believers' baptism, as we view it. The Lord's Supper, in our communion, is for baptized persons only. We hold to no baptism but by immersion.

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Stranger. I certainly would not intrude, and I will not ask you to act inconsistently with your principles. But I am a wayfaring man. I have not had the opportunity to partake of the Lord's Supper for several months. The life and health of my wife have been remarkably preserved in this village. Here is the birthplace of my first-born, a place never to be forgotten by us. I wish to make a Bethel of it. I wish to come to my Saviour's table with my thanksgivings, and pay him my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. I rejoiced when I heard that this was your sacramental Sabbath.

Deacon. Your church would not admit an unbaptized person to the Lord's table, however much he might plead for admission.

Stranger. O, my dear sir, how unfair that reasoning is. This is placing me on a level with one who rejects baptism. I profess to have been baptized to the best of my knowledge, and to have fulfilled the requirements of Christ. Should a man come to our church, and say, I have reason to believe that I have been baptized, though I cannot bring evidence to satisfy you, except so far as you have confidence in me, his case would be parallel with mine. Such a man we would not exclude.

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Deacon. Perhaps we shall not agree, if we continue to discuss the point. I am sorry that our rules operate to your inconvenience. We wish to see everybody on New Testament ground, and we think that the surest way to bring them there is to stand there ourselves. By departing from the literal command to immerse, and by baptizing infants, the church of Christ became corrupted with traditions and human inventions. We are at the antipodes to all this; we refuse everything which is not in black and white on the surface of the Bible, and so we are the more consistent Protestants.

"Considering the day and the occasion," said my friend to us, "I forbore to argue, or to press the good man by asking him if the 'seventh-day Sabbath' people had not the advantage of him as to greater consistency in their Protestantism; or, whether the church-membership of females was anywhere in black and white on the surface of the Bible. As to his going to the antipodes, to get clear of Romish principles and practices, I was strongly tempted to say that, to avoid being one of the acids, it surely was not necessary, nor best, to become an alkali. But having often reflected how God uses one and another sect, and its set of principles and practices, to correct evils, by their sharp antagonism, and to restore a balance to ecclesiastical disorders by allowing some to go, for a while, to an opposite extreme, I did not find it in my heart to inveigh, nor to upbraid. It also seemed good to be in a land of liberty, where even Christians could, from a sense of duty to Christ, if they chose, fence out their acknowledged brethren and sisters from their table. There are great inconveniences, and, now and then, hardships, resulting from it; but our friends, of course, suppose that greater good, on the whole, than evil, is the consequence, apart from considerations of duty. But I know of a congregation, in a small place, who have had public worship for several years, but have not had the Lord's Supper administered, because they cannot agree as to terms of communion."

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"Well," said I, "tell us what you did in the afternoon."

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"In the afternoon," he continued, "I went to meeting, and, when the ordinance was to be administered, I took a seat in a pew alone. I watched to see which aisle the good deacon would serve, and concluded to sit there, so as not to seem clandestinely seeking from another deacon, who would not know me, my inhibited bread; for I wished to be honorable in the transaction, and, besides, I desired that my friend should see me, and, if he had changed his mind, give me the symbols. So I sat where he would pass, in a pew by myself, but he did not look at me."

"How did it make you feel?" said I.

"In some respects," said he, "I never enjoyed my thoughts more at the administration of the Supper. I had no feeling of resentment or ill-will. The exclusion of four fifths of the Christian family from the Lord's table by one portion of it, for such a reason, seemed to leave me in such good company, that I said to myself, 'They that be with us are more than they that be with them.' I rejoiced in Robert Hall, John Bunyan, and others like them. I thought of that interesting piece in Bunyan's works, 'Water Baptism no Bar to Communion.' I questioned whether this church and its sister churches would not hear a mild reproof from the lips of Christ,—'I was a stranger, and ye took me not in.' Certainly they could not say with Job, 'If I have eaten my morsel alone.' Using the table of Christ for a wall or bars against acknowledged Christians,—that table, that Supper, which, of all places and scenes, is most suggestive of communion and fellowship,—seemed to me so great a mistake, that I could not in charity regard it as a sin, because, as such, it would be so criminal. I always believed, before, that the mode of baptism was not essential to Christian fellowship; but that afternoon I saw it, I felt it; I worked out the sum myself, and saw the demonstration, I felt very happy in belonging to the great host of God's people who can commune together, however much they differ."

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"While I was sitting there alone, put aside, one might say, by my brothers and sisters, whom I had, as it were, run in so cordially to meet, one thought came over me, as they were feasting with Christ, which made me weep. I thought of the possibility of being set aside in the great day. I said, to myself:

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'I love to meet thy people now,
Before thy face with them to bow,
Though vilest of them all;
But, can I bear the dreadful thought,
What if my name should be left out
When thou for them dost call?'"

"This did me good. Yet, while I was sitting there, I seemed to see the Saviour approach me, with a smile. His look seemed very significant, as though he would say, 'I understand it.' Those words came to my mind: 'Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and, when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.' I surely said and did this."

"Never before," said he, "had I such views of the condescension and gentleness of Christ toward us, erring creatures. Here was a church erring, it seemed to me, in a point which must peculiarly wound the heart of the Redeemer, whose last discourse with his disciples had this for its burden, that ye love one another. And yet there were, in that church, many with whom Christ was communing with a love that seemed to them unqualified. So he treats us all. I never had a greater flow of charity toward all my fellow-Christians than on that occasion. I resolved that I never would be a sectarian in anything, while I also felt more strongly than ever attached to my own views, and confident of their truthfulness, and in love with their beauty."

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When he had finished his narration, his wife asked me what I thought with regard to her husband's proceedings. I asked her to state particularly what she had in mind. She then expressed a doubt whether it were proper for us to intrude upon fellow-Christians, when we know that their principles forbid their communing with us. She said that she remonstrated with her husband, as soon as he told her that the ordinance was not free to all evangelical Christians, and that she tried to dissuade him from appearing to obtrude himself. She did not view it as uncharitableness, but only as a denominational rule.

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I asked her what her husband said in self-defence;—for we loved to hear her conversation.

She said that he turned it off by saying, "Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry."

She said that soon they experienced the utmost kindness from the members of that church, who, learning the occasion of their sojourn in the village, poured upon them their hospitality. Several wished to remove her to their dwellings. They had a "Busy Bee," and made up everything in an infant's wardrobe for her. She opened her travelling-bag, and took out a white enamelled paper semi-circular box, containing a pin-cushion, made of straw-colored satin, in the shape of a young moon, with these words tastefully printed in pins: "Welcome, little stranger!" She held it up to us in one hand, while with the other she wiped her eyes. Never, she said, had kindness affected her so much;—she believed that it hindered her in gaining strength, her feelings were so continually wrought upon by ingenious devices of loving-kindness. It became known that the husband had proposed to commune, and what the issue had been. This only served to make them all the more generous. They felt it deeply, and bore it as a necessity which they evidently regretted; but, with much self-respect, they refrained to make any apology, or explanation; "and, for this," said the wife, "I respected them." There was one elderly maiden-lady, however, who once was so far excited when the subject was alluded to, while several of them were sewing in the wife's room, that, after moving about in her chair, evidently struggling with her emotions, she ventured at last to say, "O, if I could get hold of that old fence, how I should love to shake it!" They all smiled; and one sensible and well-educated woman immediately gave a pleasant turn to the conversation.

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I fully agreed with the wife in her very dignified and proper view of the whole subject. Is there

not something extremely charming in the highly lady-like sentiments and expressions of a Christian woman, as contradistinguished from those of a gentleman? He, with all his urbanity, is apt to show the smallest possible vein of testiness, or, at least, the clouded look of high-bred sense of honor. It seems to me there is no power which woman exerts over us, in softening and humanizing our feelings, more beautiful and effectual, than in her delicate forbearance and charity in taking the kind view of an irritating subject, without compromise of principle, but just the view which reflection, and gentler moods, and the softening hand of time, invariably present. She arrives at it at once, by intuition; our slow and phlegmatic sense goes through a process of mistake and rectification, to reach it.

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It occurred to me to test this good lady's feelings a little further, by reading to her an item from a newspaper, which I had met with in the cars a few days before, and which I had transferred to my pocket. It had disturbed my equanimity a little. It was an extract from the annual circular letter of a conference of ministers to their churches, in one of the New England States, in 1855, in which mention was made of "the monstrous and soul-damning heresy of infant baptism."

I asked the lady how we ought to feel at such a demonstration. She said, "I presume I know how you gentlemen would be likely to feel and act under the impulse of the moment; but the true way to regard and treat it, as it seems to me, is, with pertinacious forgetfulness." She would not let it disturb her feelings; and she quoted George Herbert:

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"Why should I feel another man's mistakes
More than his sicknesses, or poverty?
In love I should; but," &c.

Susan said that she was reminded of visits made to her mother's house, by some who would persuade her mother that she belonged to an "unbaptized church;" thus seeking to put in fear the children who were about to make a profession of religion. Her mother replied to these visitors, that there was far more apprehension in her own mind whether they themselves were properly baptized, if but one mode is valid.—As to Mr. Blair's effort to commune at that table, she said that she would never seek nor receive as a boon from men, that which her Saviour had purchased for her, and for them, with his own blood.

Our conversation was here interrupted by the exclamation of my wife, "Do look at that beautiful sight, that cascade, on the hill."

Chapter Eighth.

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THE ROAD-SIDE BAPTISM.

How beautiful the water is!
To me 'tis wondrous fair;
No spot can ever lonely be,
If water sparkle there.
It hath a thousand tongues of mirth,
Of grandeur, or delight,
And every heart is gladder made
When water greets the sight.

MRS. E.O. SMITH.

Sweet one! make haste, and know Him too;
Thine own adopting Father love;
That, like thine earliest dew,
Thy dying sweets may prove.

KEBLE.

We were about to turn a corner in a defile of the mountains, and a large perpendicular buttress of the ridge stood out, so as nearly to close up the road. It presented a surface of about twenty feet directly in front, as we drove up, and, from the top, which was nearly a hundred and twenty feet from the ground, a cascade fell into the air for about forty feet, and, without touching anything, became dishevelled, and disappeared in mist.

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It was one of the most beautiful objects which I ever saw. It was pure white, relieved against the wet and very black rock. It waved to and fro in the air like a streamer; it had a slow pulse, lifting it and letting it drop, like the appearance of a waterfall seen from the window of a car in motion, only this was irregular and quite slow; it was soft and fleecy; it made no audible noise; it looked dangerous to see it fall from so great a height; but it was caught in the air, to your relief, as one who falls in his dream lights upon his soft bed. The lines of Gray, in his Bard, were suggested by the sight of this mountain, though not by any close resemblance:

"Loose his beard; his hoary hair
Streamed like a meteor to the troubled air."

The ladies had other images suggested by it. One said, "It is a beautiful hand, waving Godspeed

to us on our journey." That brought tears into the eyes of some of us, reminding us so of meetings and partings at home, and chording well with our pilgrim condition. We concluded to make response; and we tarried there.

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The rock seemed to be full of water, oozing out from the seams, dripping over rich mosses, with jets, here and there, leaping into the light with a bound of a few inches, and quietly expiring among the thick weather-stains and lichens, as if satisfied with their brief existence. The little things made me think of the sweet souls of infants passing into time, and then immediately out of it. As we listened, we heard what Addison describes in his version of the twenty-third Psalm:

"And streams shall murmur all around."

The ladies took off their bonnets, and we our hats, and we stood under the cascade, looking up, and feeling, or fancying that we felt, the cool spray on our heads and faces. We drank of the rock, and we thought of that Rock which followed Israel. It seemed good to have such an image of Jesus as such a rock, with the strength of the hills in it, and with its inexhaustible springs, its beautiful entablature, its cool shadow, following a company through a desert. What thoughts and feelings did it give us respecting our adorable Immanuel, God with us. Dear Susan, looking up, said, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

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After invoking the blessing of God, and refreshing ourselves from our little store, our friends wandered away by themselves, and left us to enjoy the opportunity for prayer, which we supposed they also sought in withdrawing from us.

As they returned, the father had the little boy on his two hands, and, approaching me, he looked up to the cascade, and said, "'See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?'"

I was at no loss to understand the quotation and the request.

"Would you like to have the little one baptized here?" said I.

"We should," they both exclaimed. "We are going into a destitute place at the West, and there is no church, you tell us, within several miles of where we expect to live. It is very uncertain about our being able to procure baptism for the child there; and where could we enjoy the ordinance more, or make it more impressive upon our hearts, than here, so long as we have no house of God, which we remember, however, from 'the hill Mizar'?"

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I told them that the experience of Philip and the eunuch, in the desert, was, just as likely as not, the same as ours. "See, here is water." The probability of its being a road-side spring, in a rock, or out of the earth, was greater than of its being a pool in the desert, large enough to immerse a man in it, leaving out of view the inconveniences of being bathed along the way. We have both gone "down out of the chariot," said I—(you would have smiled to see our great, strong, muddied wain)—and we have done what the literal Greek says they did, "went down *to* the water;" and when we start, we shall "come up *from* the water." But let us read 'the place of the Scripture' which the eunuch was reading when Philip joined him.

Susan took from her bag the blue velvet-covered Bible, which you gave her, unclasped it, and turned to the fifty-second chapter of Isaiah, at my request, and began to read. O, how soft and sweet was the sound of a female voice, repeating words of inspiration in that beautiful, solitary spot! The Scriptures had not been divided into chapters and verses for the eunuch, as for us, but we noticed that the last verse of the chapter preceding "the place of the Scripture which he read," not divided from it in his copy of Isaiah, was, "So shall he sprinkle many nations;" which, we thought, proved that the eunuch had had the idea of baptism suggested to him by those words; and quite as conclusively proving it, as "buried with him in baptism" proves immersion.

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However, being agreed on all these points, we made no long discourse about them, but dwelt upon the Son of God as the Redeemer of Abraham's seed, and in whom all the promises of God, including those made to Abraham, are yea, and in him amen.

I said to my friends, "The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are about to write their several and joint names on this child's forehead.

"As a lamb has the owner's mark upon his side, this child is to be claimed by them, to be brought up for the service and glory of its redeeming God.

"You are to give him away, to be disposed of by the Most High. You are to be, for Him, what the mother of Moses was for Pharaoh's daughter—nurses to your own child. This dear child lay helpless and exposed, with all of us, to destruction; the Redeemer passed that way; he heard its cries: he had compassion upon it; he saved it from the condemning sentence of divine justice; and now he calls you, and says, 'Take this child, and bring it up for me, and I will give thee thy wages.' He does not commit the child to church, nor pastor, nor Sabbath-school, but to its own father and mother, who may and will avail themselves of all the appointed and the useful helps for its nurture and admonition in the Lord; but he looks to you, as having the chief and principal responsibility, to bring up this child for God.

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"You covenant to lay your plans for this child, so that he may, by the surest means, live for God. To this end you will pray with him and for him; teach him what was done for him in baptism, and before, and afterwards; how God was beforehand with him, and was found of him who sought him not. He is to be trained up as a Christian child, with a view to his early conversion, and your great concern is not to be, how he may promote his private happiness, or yours, but how he may

best serve God.

"To this end, you will, from the first, watch over all his moral faculties, and instil into him the principles of truth and uprightness; not letting him run loose among the vanities of the world, and feed upon its miserable, corrupted sentiments, and choose worldly and godless persons for his intimate associates, his manners and his habits being like a garden which runs to weeds, and his whole nature left to the perils of sin, trusting to some sudden act of conversion to bring him right; but you will rather be diligent to 'fill the water-pots with water,' and wait for Christ to turn it into wine. You intend, and you promise, that you will educate this child from the beginning with all that strictness of Christian principle which you would expect of him were he, in his infancy, to be a professing Christian, his duty being the same, and, consequently, yours toward him, whether he is regenerate or not,—one and the same law of God being our rule, irrespective of conditions.

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"In all times of sickness and peril, you are to feel that this child is the Lord's, to be disposed of by him, without consulting you. If called to die and leave him, you will remember that you received him from God, that he belonged to God at first, and when he was placed in your care; and that God, who thus has the most perfect claim to him, will perfect that which concerns him, even if his parents are in the grave.

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"And while you thus covenant with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, covenant with you, and with the child through you, to be the God of your seed, affording you special help in training the child, bestowing special blessings upon it tending to its spiritual good, having a particular regard for it as something lent to him, and belonging to you; while, in another sense, it is lent to you, and belongs to him; and he and you are to regard the child agreeably to this beautiful transmutation of ownership and loan. The baptism itself cannot save the child, any more than the Lord's Supper can save you; but it is among the first of means to promote the salvation of the child, not merely through its effect on you, or its remembered grace and goodness when the child can be made to appreciate it; but above all, and through all, and in all, it seals that covenant of a covenant-keeping God, assisting your efforts and those of the child,—that promise, I say, 'I will be his God, and he shall be my son.'"

We named the little boy, PHILIP, as a memorial of the road-side baptism. We stood under the shadow of that great rock, and worshipped Abraham's God. "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." The voice of prayer was joined by chimes and symphonies from trickling rills, and the freshening breeze in a silver-leaved maple, leaning at an angle of thirty-five degrees, just above us in the rock, all as quiet as the dear infant's breathing; while, now and then, the sudden flapping and rushing of birds' wings made the monotone around us more soothing.

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From a little jet of water, that formed an arc of about an inch, as it burst into life and then disappeared in a great moss-bed, I caught my palm full, and laid it upon the unconscious head.

The little hands were suddenly lifted and dropped, as though a slight shock had been experienced, then a smile played round the mouth, and the sleep seemed deeper.

And will God in very deed dwell on earth? Will the adorable Trinity be present at such a scene as this? Present! "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." He will not appoint this ordinance, and fail to be present; the God of redemption is a party to that transaction by which an immortal soul, with an existence commensurate with his own, is consecrated to him by its natural guardians, acting in the place of God, and for the child, and joining them in covenant.

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"Shall we ever forget this?" said the husband to his wife, as we were riding along that beautiful afternoon.

"Never," said she; but she added, sensible woman as she was, "the beauty and sentiment of the place seemed to me nothing, compared with the privilege of covenanting with God, and having him covenant with us for the child. After all," said she, "I would have been glad to have had the baptism in our little church at home, and to have secured good Mrs. Maberry's prayers, and those of our church, for the child, at its baptism. I must write to her, and get her to tell the Maternal Association about it, and ask them not to forget little Philip."

"What would you have named it," said my wife, "had it been a girl?"

"O," said she, smiling, "I was thinking on the hill, that, if it had been a girl, I should have called it Candace, for the Ethiopian queen."

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"And Canda, for shortness and sweetness, I suppose," said her husband, his eyes twinkling and sparkling with love, as he looked at her, and from her upon us.

"He's a sweet little thing, you know he is," said the mother, burying her face in the child's bosom, and giving it something between a good long smell and a good long kiss, or both; a thing which mothers alone know exactly how to do.

"Suppose," said I, "that, instead of little Philip, it had been you, sir, and Mrs. Blair, who had needed to be baptized.

"Here you are, on a journey. You do not know that you will be able to avail yourselves of religious ordinances, in your new home, for a long time to come; and, besides, regarding baptism not

merely as a profession of religion, but as an act of Almighty God, sealing you with his appointed sign of the covenant, you have strong desires to receive it, here in this 'way unto Gaza, which is desert,' from my hands.

"See, here is water,' in rich abundance. But, alas! there is no pond, nor pool, no lake, nor river!" [Pg 210]

"Even if there were," said my wife to Mrs. Blair, "I should shudder to have you venture into untried waters, in this lonely place. Fear, at least, would prevent any peace of mind, or satisfying enjoyment."

"What doth hinder me to be baptized?' you would properly say to me," I continued. "'O,' my reply could be, 'the water is not in an available shape. Had we time to scoop out a tank in the earth, or make a stone baptistery in the rock, then you might be 'buried with him by baptism into death.' But it is impossible. This living fountain of waters in the mountain, full and overflowing though it be, does not allow of Christian baptism. Besides, as to suitable apparel, and all the necessary arrangements for comfort, not to say propriety,—you see that baptism, here is out of the question."

"Do you think," said Mrs. Blair, "that the Head of the church has appointed any such invariable mode of administering baptism,—one that cannot be applied in numerous cases?"

I said to her, "I cannot believe it. The genius of Christianity seems opposed to it. Let all who will, use immersion; we love them still, and rejoice in their liberty, but I cannot agree that it was the New Testament method. Even had it been, I should expect that the rule would be flexible enough to meet cases of necessity." [Pg 211]

"I was thinking," said Mr. Blair, "that, at least, four fifths of all the people of God have gone to heaven unbaptized, if immersion is the only valid mode of baptism. This is rather a serious thing, if the solemn words, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved,' look only to baptism by immersion. It seems to me," he added, "that the providence of God would have brought in some great reformation from so calamitous an error in the church, if it were an error. Some Luther, or Calvin, or Knox, or some John Baptist, would have been raised up, as in other emergencies, to bring the church back to her duty."

"How clearly," said I, "does that seem to prove that all the people of God have, as Paul says, 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism,' however variant their modes of worship and administration may be."

"How many baptized children, from Christian families," said my wife, "are gathered together in heaven! I cannot think of them as the unfortunate subjects of a superstitious or corrupt observance, at the hands of the ministers of Jesus, in all ages of the world. There must seem to them, as they increase in knowledge, a beautiful fitness in their having had those adorable names inscribed upon them, with God's own initiatory seal of his covenant. What loving-kindness it must appear to them, that God gave them the ordinance of baptism, and became their God! How it will stand out before their minds as a principal illustration of being saved by grace!" [Pg 212]

"And then, again," said Mr. Blair, "think of the millions of children in heaven who were not baptized,—saved, the most of them, from heathen and pagan lands. How 'the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.' Baptism is not an austere law. There is nothing austere or rigid, in any sense, connected with it; but it makes me think of the water itself, scattered in so many beautiful and pliable forms all over the earth, in fountains, water-falls, dew, rain-drops; and, when it cannot 'stand before His cold,' it comes down softly upon us, in crystal asteroids and all the geometrical forms of snow. I love to think that God has associated that beautiful element, the water, with religion. And now it does not seem accordant with the works and ways of Him, of whom we say, 'How great is his goodness, how great is his beauty,' to make one obdurate mode of bringing the water in connection with us essential to an ordinance, whose element seems everywhere to shun preciseness." [Pg 213]

"Water is certainly a beautiful emblem of open communion," said one of the ladies. "It must be conscious, one would think, of violence done to its ubiquitous nature, to be made the occasion of separating beloved friends, at the Table whose symbolized Blood has made them one in Christ."

But we had to part. I told them that my wife and I would certainly be sponsors for little Philip, in the best sense; we would make a record of its history, thus far, among our family memorials; tell our children about him, and charge them in after life to inquire for him, and lose no opportunity of doing him good. Though, as to that, I could not help saying, no one knows in this world who will be benefactor or beneficiary. [Pg 214]

"Our children will always be interested in each other," said his wife, "for their parents' sake."

"Can we not sing a hymn?" said the husband.

We found that our voices made a quartet. Susan was ready with her beautiful contralto, Mrs. Blair sung the soprano, Mr. Blair the tenor, and I the base.

THE BAPTISMAL HYMN.

"Lord, what our ears have heard,
Our eyes delighted trace—
Thy love, in long succession shown,

To Zion's chosen race.

"Our children thou dost claim,
And mark them out for thine;
Ten thousand blessings to thy name
For goodness so divine.

"Thee, let the fathers own,
And thee, the sons adore,
Joined to the Lord in solemn vows,
To be forgot no more.

"Thy covenant may they keep,
And bless the happy bands
Which closer still engage their hearts,
To honor thy commands.

"How great thy mercies, Lord!
How plenteous is thy grace!
Which, in the promise of thy love,
Includes our rising race.

"Our offspring, still thy care,
Shall own their fathers' God;
To latest times thy blessings share,
And sound thy praise abroad."

We saw them and their baggage on board the wagon that was to take them over to the river; we waved our farewell, and sent our kisses; and, just as they were turning a corner which hid them from our view, the father stood up in the wagon, and held little Philip as high as he could (the mother, of course, reaching up her arms to hold them both fast), as though to catch the last benediction. The long, flowing white dress of the child gave the picture a waving, vanishing effect, reminding us of our first sight of the cascade, which, with the whole transaction to which it gave occasion, has taken a permanent place in our sleeping and waking dreams.

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Chapter Ninth.

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THE CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH.

Go, now, ye that are men, and serve the Lord.—PHARAOH.

We will go with our young, and with our old, with our sons, and with our daughters.—MOSES.

Hosanna to the Son of David.—THE CHILDREN IN THE TEMPLE.

The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.
—PSALM 102:28.

The reader will now be introduced, in imagination, to a seat in the window of a country parsonage, with honeysuckle-vines trained over an arched lattice-work that spans the window. There are several large maples in the yard, which is a grass-plot, where six gentlemen are enjoying pleasant conversation, and are seated at their ease, some in chairs, and the rest on a sofa, which, at the suggestion of a kind lady, they had lifted from its place in the parlor to the yard.

They are all of them pastors of churches, met, for social intercourse and friendly counsel, at the house of one of their number, with their wives, who are also together by themselves, in a pleasant room on the north side of the house, and into whose sayings and doings these husbands will, no doubt, be disposed to make, in due time, suitable inquiry.

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Those wonderful little elves, the humming-birds, are frequent visitors to those honeysuckles, under which I have placed my reader to be a listener. How many vibrations those little wings make in a minute, how so long a bill can have subtractive force sufficient to get anything from the flower, how, when obtained, that product is conveyed to the throat, and where these creatures build their nests, and whither they migrate, are questions which will, perhaps, divert attention from everything else for a time, especially if the reader has escaped for a season from a large city, and is one of those who there "dwell in courts." Perhaps, therefore, he will choose to refresh himself, in silent contemplation, in this arbor; and I will make true report of all that transpires in the yard.

One of these pastors, Mr. A., has been reading to his brethren, for their judgment as to the soundness of his views, a sermon, not yet preached, on the relation of baptized children to the church. We will call him, and two of the ministers who agreed with his views, by their initials, respectively, which consisted of the first three letters of the alphabet; while the three who dissented from them had, as initials to their names, letters remote from these. Neither Messrs.

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A., B., and C., nor Messrs. R., S., and T., had had any previous concert or comparison of views on this interesting subject; but they found themselves thus arrayed on different sides of the question.

Omitting the sermon that gave occasion to the discussion which follows, a few lines only will put us in possession of the whole subject. I give the opening paragraph:

"It is held by all who practise infant baptism, that the children of believers have a peculiar relation to the church. That relation is very generally expressed by the word membership. We have treatises, by the most orthodox divines, on the church-membership of the children of believers; which children they freely call members of the Christian church; and, in catechisms and confessions of faith, the church of Christ is declared to consist of such as are in covenant relations with God, and their offspring."

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The sermon being finished, Mr. R. was first called upon by the chairman, Mr. C., for his remarks. The question, as stated by the chairman, was, Are the children of believers, in any sense, members of the church? If so, what is it? and, if not, what relation to the church do they sustain?

Mr. R. I presume that brother A. does not wish us to take up time with criticisms upon his style. He seeks to know our views with regard to the subject of the sermon. I am compelled to say, at once, that I differ from the views expressed by the reader, if he means by the terms, *members* and *membership*, which he employs, all which they would convey to the majority of hearers. But I noticed that when he, and those excellent men whom he quotes, come to define what they mean by members, and membership, in this connection, they make explanations, and qualifications, and also protestations, showing that no one can be, in their view, a member of the spiritual, or, what is called the invisible, church of Christ, without repentance and faith. Rightly understood, therefore, they are free from any just imputation of making unscriptural terms of membership in the kingdom of Christ. And, perhaps, when those of us who dissent from some of their propositions, fully understand the limitations which the writers themselves affix to their use of terms, no great discrepancy will be found to exist.

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It admits of a question, therefore, in my view, whether the terms *members* and *membership*, as applied to children, really mean that which these writers themselves intend to convey by them; for certainly they do not mean all which their readers at first suppose. The terms in question require a great deal of explanation, which a term, if possible, ought never to need. And, after all has been said, a wrong impression is conveyed to the minds of many, while opponents gain undue advantage in arguing against that which, for substance, all the friends of infant baptism cordially maintain.

If Br. A. is asked, "In what sense are children members of the church," he resorts, for illustration, to citizenship, and to the sisterhood in the church itself, to show how children and females may be members of the community, and, in the case of females, may belong to the church, while yet their privileges and functions are limited. So, he says, the children of believers are a component part of God's church, not entitled to the use of all its privileges till they are renewed by the Spirit of God, yet so related by the sovereign appointment of God to those who are members, as to be, in a subordinate sense, a part of the church.

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Could the friends of infant baptism agree on some term, which would express their common belief with regard to the relation of believers' children to the church, better than *member*, I think it must have a happy effect in promoting harmony of views and feelings, and take away from others the grounds of several present objections.

It was here agreed that, instead of the question going round to each in turn, the conversation should be free, subject to the rule of the chairman.

Mr. A., the reader, then said that he should be glad to learn from his Br. R. precisely what his views were of the relation of baptized children to the church. "Let us see," he said, "how far we are agreed as to the actual nature of this relation."

"Well, then," said Mr. R., "I will begin with this:

"They are the children of God's friends. We all know how God reminds Israel of their relation to Abraham, his friend, tells them they are beloved for the fathers' sakes, and he remembers his covenant with those friends of his, their fathers, when provoked by the children's sins. Toward the child of one who loves God (not merely a church-member, but a friend of God), I suppose there are affections on the part of God, of which our own feelings toward the child of a dear Christian friend are a representation. This love to the child of his friend, I always thought, is the great element in that arrangement of the Most High which we call the Abrahamic covenant; for he who made us, knew how much a love for our children, on the part of others, draws us together, and what bonds are constituted and strengthened between men through their children; and that one great means of promoting love to Him would be, his manifesting special love and care for the offspring of those who love him. God has a people, friends; and the children of such are the children of his dearly-beloved friends. In this we are all agreed."

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"Certainly," said Mr. A., "but you will go further than this, I presume."

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Mr. R. Yes, Mr. Chairman. One thing more is true of them:

They are the principal source of the church's increase. The selection of Abraham, with a view to make of his lineage, the banks, within whose defensive influences grace should find helps in

making its way in this ungodly world, had reference, I believe, to that power of hereditary family influence, which has not ceased, and will not cease, to the end of time. It is beautiful and affecting to see that recognition of our free agency, and that unwillingness ever to interfere with it, which leads the Most High to fall in with the principles of our nature established by himself, in placing his chief reliance on the natural love of parents for their offspring to contribute, by far, the larger part of those who shall be converted. In this arrangement and expectation do we not find the deep roots of infant baptism? which thus appears to be neither Jewish nor Gentile, but grows out of our nature itself, which also requires, which demands, some rite, a symbolic sign and seal. God made the children of Adam partakers with him of his curse; so that the parental and filial relation was, from the beginning made a stream to bear along the consequences of the first transgression. No new thing, therefore, was instituted when God, in calling Abraham, appointed the parental and filial relation to bear, on its deep and mighty stream, the most powerful means of godliness in all coming generations. How little do we think of this, Mr. Chairman, and brethren; how apt we are to neglect this great arrangement of divine providence and grace,—the perpetuation of the church, chiefly by means of the parental and filial relation. But, if such be the divine appointment, and the children of believers are therefore the most hopeful sources of the church's increase, of course they may be said to belong to the church, in a peculiar sense, but without being "*members*."

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Mr. A. I think you are coming on very well toward my ground. I certainly agree with you thus far.

Mr. R. If I am not taking up too much time, Mr. Chairman, I should like to proceed a little further, in order to do full justice to my views. If I am found to agree with Br. A., it will be just as pleasant as though he agreed with me.

Chairman. Please to proceed. Two things which are equal to the same thing, are equal to each other.

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Mr. R. I will, then, say, once more:

The children of believers are the subjects of preeminent privileges and blessings. Special promises are made to them from love to their parents; great advantages are theirs, directly and indirectly, from their relation to those who are the true worshippers of God; forbearance, long suffering, the remembrance of consecrations and vows, prevail with God, oftentimes, in their behalf when they have broken their father's commandment and forsaken the law of their mother. No words of tenderness, in any relation of life,—said Mr. R., turning to the Psalms,—surpass those, in which are described the feelings of God toward the rebellious sons of Abraham: "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath." "For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant." God still remembers Abraham, his servant, in the person of every father and mother who loves him, and is steadfast in his covenant; and "the generation of the upright shall be blessed." Mistakes in family government, growing out of wrong principles, too great reliance upon future conversion, and the neglect of that moral training which is essential to the best development of religious character, and, indeed, without which religious character is often a melancholy distortion, or sadly defective, may be followed by their natural consequences; and we cannot complain,—for God works no miracle, nor turns aside any great law, in favor of our misconduct; yet it remains true that all who love and serve him, and command their children and households to fear the Lord, enforcing it in all the proper ways of government, discipline, example, and the right observance of religious ordinances, public and private, may expect peculiar blessings upon their offspring.

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One of the youngest of the company, the father of one young child, here inquired, if the speaker would have us infer that the conversion of such children is to be looked for as a matter of course.

Mr. R. Ordinarily, they will grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to be followers of Christ; the proportion of persons baptized on admission to the church, will become small; a healthful tone of religious feeling will pervade our churches; less and less reliance will be placed on startling measures, on splendid talents, on novelties, to promote the cause of religion; but Christian families will extend like the cultivated fields of different proprietors, whose green and flowering hedges, instead of stone walls, mingle all into one landscape. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places." "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Such, I believe, is sure to be the manner of the church's prosperity, and therefore the children who are to be the subjects of these inestimable blessings must be said, in some sense, to *belong* to the church, they being the objects of special regard with the church and with God. Br. A. agrees with me in all this, I presume.

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Mr. A. Entirely; or, rather, you agree with me.

"Now, Br. A.," said an earnest man of the company,—who, however, immediately checked himself, and bowed to Mr. R., and said, "I dare say, Mr. Chairman, that Br. R. was going to put the very question which I intended to ask."

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Mr. R. Proceed, Br. S. I owe an apology for speaking so much.

Mr. S. Will Br. A., Mr. Chairman, please to tell us why he feels obliged to call these children "*members* of the church?"

For, we all know, that, notwithstanding all these glorious things, which are spoken of them, to which Br. A. has also referred, not one baptized child of a true believer can be, really, a member of the church, in regular standing, till he, like the unbaptized heathen convert, has repented of his sins and believed on the Lord Jesus. All the promises and privileges appertaining to his relationship as a child of a believer, promote, and make more certain, his repentance and faith; and therefore, if asked, "What profit, then, hath circumcision, and its substitute, infant baptism?" we can reply, "Much every way;" but it never stood, and never can stand, in the place of justification by free grace through the personal exercise of faith in the Redeemer.

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Mr. C. But I wish to ask, in the name of Br. A., and for my own sake, what objection there is to retaining the name, *member*, in this connection?

Mr. S. My answer is, it is the occasion of great stumbling to those who reject infant baptism, and are confirmed in rejecting it, by misapprehending the views and feelings of many who use the term in an objectionable sense.

The discussion now became animated. Mr. S. said that he had a further objection. It leads many, who use it erroneously, into perplexing and fruitless positions. Assuming that the children are members of the church, they discuss the question, as the sermon has stated, Of what church are they members? Some reply, Of the church to which their parents belong. Others say nay, but of the church universal. Then they feel it incumbent upon them to provide some means of discipline for these so-called members. In case they grow up, and neglect to come with their parents to the Lord's Supper, must they not be disciplined? Some insist that discipline, in some of its forms, must be administered, and, in certain cases, excommunication must take place.

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Mr. T. I know it, and I wonder at it. I should like to ask, who has deputed to any church the power to say when the divine forbearance with a child of the covenant has come to an end? Does it terminate at the age of twenty-one in the case of male children, and at eighteen in the case of females? David, when a full-grown man, plead the covenant of God with his mother: "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid." Or, does it cease on the child's leaving the parental roof for another place of residence? Or, on entering upon the married state? Or, upon the commission of some great act of outward transgression, shall we pronounce the covenant to be dissolved? Do we not see that we are meddling with a divine prerogative, if we assume to act in such cases? Expostulations, warnings, entreaties, from parents, pastor, brethren of the church, may always be in place; but further than these we cannot proceed.

"Perhaps, too," said Mr. R., "if discipline were to fall anywhere, it might more justly descend on the parents of such a child."

Mr. T. The seeming mockery of a church punishing a youth for the neglect of that which he himself never promised to do, would most likely have the effect to drive him to a returnless distance from the church, extinguishing the last ray of hope as to his conversion. A fit parallel to such proposed church-discipline of children, is found in the practice, which was not uncommon, twenty-five years ago, in a region of our country where great religious excitements prevailed for some time, when it was publicly recommended, in preaching and from the press, that parents who had labored in vain for the conversion of children, should, in certain cases, punish them, to make them submit to God.

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Mr. D. Is it possible?

Mr. T. Yes, sir; and the records of those times furnish instances in which this was done. Of such means of grace, I am happy to say, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

Mr. S. Nor shall we probably ever see young people disciplined by the churches, for not repenting and believing the Gospel. It is insisted on as theoretically proper, but they have never ventured to carry it out in practice.

Mr. C., the chairman, said, "Brethren, there is strong authority in favor of the sermon. Since you have been talking, I have been looking over Dr. Hopkins's works, to find this passage, which, if you please, I will read. Dr. Hopkins says:

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"Though under the milder dispensation of the Gospel, no one is to be put to death for rejecting Christ and the Gospel, even though he were before this a member of the visible church, yet he is to be cut off, and cast out of the visible kingdom of Christ. And every child in the church, who grows up in disobedience to Christ, and, in this most important concern, will not obey his parents, is thus to be rejected and cut off, after all proper means are used by his parents, and the church, to reclaim him, and bring him to his duty. Such an event will be viewed by Christian parents as worse than death, and is suited to be a constant, strong motive to concern, prayer, and fidelity, respecting their children, and their education; and it tends to have an equally desirable effect upon children, and must greatly impress the hearts of those who are in any degree considerate and serious."

Again: "When the children arrive at an age in which they are capable of acting for themselves in matters of religion, and making a profession of their adherence to the Christian faith, and practice, and coming to the Lord's Supper, if they neglect and refuse to do this, and act contrary to the commands of Christ in any other respect, all proper means are to be used, and methods taken, to bring them to repentance, and to do their duty as Christians, and, if they cannot be reclaimed, but continue impenitent and unreformed, they are to be rejected and cast out of the church, as other adult members are who persist in disobedience to Christ."^[8]

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"Such words, from such a source," said Mr. C., "are entitled to great consideration."

"But," said Mr. S., "here is a passage from his own theological instructor, President Edwards:

"It is asked,' he says, 'why these children, that were born in the covenant, are not cast out when, in adult age, they make no profession.' He replies, 'They are not cast out, because it is a matter held in suspense whether they do cordially consent to the covenant or not; or whether their making no profession does not arise from some other cause; and none are to be excommunicated without some positive evidence against them.'"

"My dear sir," said Mr. A., "Mr. Edwards is there speaking of those who merely refuse to own the covenant, without being guilty of scandalous sin." [Pg 234]

Mr. S. It is evident, nevertheless, that Hopkins goes further than he, and requires that those who, at years of full responsibility, refuse to own the covenant, shall be cut off. Modern writers on this subject, while insisting on the church-membership of children, draw back from this position, and are more in harmony with what, it seems to me, may be said to be the general sense of the churches on this subject. I feel glad, when reading such passages as those from Hopkins, that we have liberty of opinion, and are not compelled to swear by the words of any master. I bow to such a divine as Dr. Hopkins, but he fails to satisfy me that he is right in these views of church-discipline for children.

Mr. R., who was the oldest man of the company, now returned to the discussion, and said: "It is clear that one cannot be dispossessed of that which he never possessed, except as in the case of a minor, who may have his claim to a future possession wrested from him. Of what is a child of the covenant, allowing him to be, while a child, a member of the church,—of what is he in possession? Not of full communion, not of access to the Lord's table, not of the right to a voice in the call and settlement of a pastor, nor in any other church act. From what, then, is he turned out by being cut off? He has never arrived at anything from which he can be separated, except the covenant of God with him through his parents, and its attendant privileges of watch and care. If, then, we excommunicate an unconverted child, we can only declare the covenant of God with him, henceforth, to be null and void,—an assumption from which, probably, Christian parents and ministers would shrink. The same long-suffering God, who bears and forbears with ourselves, we shall be disposed to feel, is the God of this recreant child, and no good man would dare to pronounce the child to be separated from the mercies of 'the God of patience and hope.' One who, being in a church, breaks a covenant to which he assented, may be a just subject for discipline, even to excommunication; but, all the promises of God to the child being wholly free, conditioned, at first, upon his parents' relation to God, all the disability which the child seems capable of receiving, is, that the promises made to him he must fail, by his own fault, to receive. Who will declare even his prospect of their fulfilment to be terminated at any given time? Much more, who will undertake to divest him of things which he never had? The church-membership, from which you profess to expel him, does not yet exist in his case; he has not reached it. All the church-membership of which, if any, he has been possessed, is, his hopeful relation to God and his people through a parent. To excommunicate a child from this would be a strange procedure." [Pg 235]

Mr. A. That is the strongest thing which I have heard on that side. I must confess (said he, rising and leaning against one of the maples) that I am a little staggered.

But *Mr. B.* came to reinforce his faltering brother.

"Here," said he, "is the Cambridge Platform. You will all be willing to hear from that source."

"Let us hear," said two or three voices.

Mr. B. read as follows:

"The like trial (examination) is to be required from such members of the church as were born in the same, or received their membership, and were baptized in their infancy or minority, by virtue of the covenant of their parents, when, being grown up unto years of discretion, they shall desire to be made partakers of the Lord's Supper; unto which, because holy things must not be given to the unworthy, therefore it is requisite that these, as well as others, should come to their trial and examination, and manifest their faith and repentance by an open profession thereof before they are received to the Lord's Supper, and otherwise not to be admitted thereunto. Yet those church-members that were so born, or received in their childhood, before they are capable of being made partakers of full communion, have many privileges which others, not church-members, have not; they are in covenant with God, have the seal thereof upon them, namely, baptism; and so, if not regenerated, yet are in a more hopeful way of attaining regenerating grace, and all the spiritual blessings both of the covenant and seal; they are also under church-watch, and consequently subject to the reprehensions, admonitions, and censures thereof, for their healing and amendment, as need shall require."^[9] [Pg 237]

Mr. R. Now, please, *Br. B.*, what does all that prove? [Pg 238]

Mr. B. Why, it proves that, in the judgment of the Cambridge Platform, the children of church-members are members of the churches.

Mr. R. It shows that the Cambridge Platform calls them members; but it gives us no proof that they are properly called members. A great deal in that extract, I undertake to say, will command the cordial assent of all who practise infant baptism, if we except the use of the term members. It shows that, as to coming into the company of true believers, and being one of them, the only way

is through repentance and faith,—a way common to the unbaptized. The only advantage, but one which is exceedingly great and precious on the part of the believer's children, being, that they "have many privileges," and "are in a more hopeful way of attaining regenerating grace." But the term membership does not express their relation to the church before they are converted.

Mr. B. (After a pause.) I do not know but you are right.

Mr. C., the remaining advocate of the sermon, said, "Let me refresh your memories with the famous case quoted in Morton's New England Memorial. He says: [Pg 239]

"The two ministers there (Salem, 1629), being seriously studious of reformation, they considered the state of their children, together with their parents, concerning which letters did pass between *Mr. Higginson* (of Salem) and *Mr. Brewster*, the reverend elder of the church of Plymouth; and they did agree in their judgments, namely, concerning the church-membership of the children with their parents, and that baptism was a seal of their membership; only, when they were adult, they being not scandalous, they were to be examined by the church officers, and upon their approbation of their fitness, and upon the children's public and personally owning of the covenant, they were to be received unto the Lord's Supper. Accordingly, *Mr. Higginson's* eldest son, being about fifteen years of age, was owned to have been received a member together with his parents, and being privately examined by the pastor, *Mr. Skelton* (the other minister of Salem), about his knowledge in the principles of religion, he did present him before the church when the Lord's Supper was to be administered, and, the child then publicly and personally owning the covenant of the God of his father, he was admitted unto the Lord's Supper, it being there professedly owned, according to 1 Cor. 7:14, that the children of the church are holy unto the Lord, as well as their parents." [Pg 240]

Mr. R. stood up, and, with an animated look and manner, but with a very pleasant voice, said:

"What, now, my good brother, did these good ministers do, with this youth, more or less than we all do for the children of our pastoral charge?

"Of what practical use was his so-called infant 'church-membership,' in addition to his being, as we all hold, a child of the covenant?"

They made no reply for a little while, till at last *Mr. A.* said:

"Well, *Br. R.*, what names would you substitute for *members* and *membership*?"

Mr. R. "THE CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH;" for you have it in the last sentence of the extract which you read from Morton;—the true, the most appropriate, and, in every respect, the best name for those who are so ambiguously called *members*.

Mr. B. There is great beauty and sweetness in that name, I confess,—"*the children of the church,*" "*the church's children.*" [Pg 241]

Mr. R. A father never, except for concealment, says, "a member of my family," when "a child" is meant. The term *members*, besides being equivocal, and requiring explanation, is not so good as "*children of the church,*" an expression which includes and covers all that any would claim for "*infant church-members.*"

Mr. C. I confess, I like *Br. R.'s* views and proposition. If, by calling the offspring of believers, "*the children of the church,*" we, by implication, abridged any of their privileges, or if, by calling them church-members, we believed that they acquired rights and privileges not otherwise appertaining to them, we ought to prefer the words member and membership; but it is not so. No one of the writers cited,—and the proofs we all know could be extended by quoting from other authors,—claims the right of a child to full communion, except upon evidence, in his "*trial and examination,*" that he is regenerate. Indeed, the only use to which the terms member and membership seem to be applied, is, in furnishing some ground for urging the discipline and excommunication of the child. This, though urged by some, is urged in vain. [Pg 242]

Mr. R. Other terms, in connection with members and membership, have been proposed, such as members in minority, members in suspension, future members; but all in vain. The children of believers are certainly the children of the church, and such I devoutly hope and pray they may come to be called.

Mr. A. Seeing that the use of the term *member* keeps before our minds a theoretical, hard necessity, from which every one shrinks, I think I will alter my sermon so far as to dismiss the term, and, with it, all sense of inconsistency in neglected obligations as to disciplining these young "*members.*"

"Well, *Br. A.*," said *Mr. B.*, "I will join you in submission."

"So will I," said *Mr. C.* "How good it is to be convinced, and to give up one's own will; is it not?"

"It ought to be," said *Mr. A.*, "to those whose great business it is to preach submission. But I think we did not differ at first, except as to the use of terms." [Pg 243]

Mr. T. I wish to make a confession. Though I have always been of *Br. R.'s* opinion, I have felt it to be invidious, and, for several reasons, disagreeable, to call a meeting of "*the children of the church,*"—making a distinction between them and the other children of my pastoral charge. Am I correct in such views and feelings?

"Come, Mr. Chairman," said Mr. A., "we have not paid you sufficient deference, I fear; for we have hardly kept order, in addressing one another, and not through you. Now, please to speak for us, and tell us what you think of Br. T.'s difficulty."

Mr. C. I have sinned with you, as to keeping order, if there has been any transgression; but I have been so much interested and instructed, that I forgot my preëminence over you. But to Br. T., I would say, There is a church; and it means something, and something of infinite importance. All our labors have this for their end, to make men qualified for worthy church-membership, on earth, and in heaven,—the conditions of admission here and there, as we hold, being essentially the same. This church, which we thus build up, has children, call them what we may, the objects of God's peculiar love. On that topic I need not dwell. We ought to pay some marks of special regard to these children, for God has done so. As to its being invidious, it is not more invidious than to address our congregations as partly Christians, and partly unconverted; or to invite the unconverted to meetings especially designed for them. Meetings of the children of my church, called by me, and addressed by me, never fail to make very deep impressions upon the young, upon their parents, upon other children, and upon the parents of those children. Another form of effecting the same desirable ends, is, to call meetings of parents in the church, and their children, and to address the parents and the children in sight and hearing of each other. In doing so, if there are any parents in the church who are withholding their children from baptism, we have the best of opportunities to conciliate their feelings to the ordinance of baptism. We all know how little is effected in our minds by abstract reasoning upon any subject, where the feelings are deeply concerned; close argument, invincible logic, absolute demonstrations, and all measures seemingly intended to coërcé the will, excite resistance, and confirm us in our prejudices. But open to a parent, who has doubts on the subject, its inestimable benefits to all concerned, and he will be more disposed to see the grounds for it, and the abundant proofs of its divine authority, which the atmosphere of pure reason had not sufficient power of refraction to make him apprehend.

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Mr. S. I thank the chairman heartily for those remarks. May I add a leaf from my observation? I have noticed that in such meetings of parents, in the church, and their children, good influences sometimes reach those who are pursuing the mistaken course of withholding their children from baptism, under the plea that they can consecrate their children to God as well without baptism, as with it. They need to learn the spiritual power which God has vested in the sacraments of his own appointment, and to be disabused of the notion that the baptism of a child is, from beginning to end, merely a human act, of which God is only a spectator;—they need to feel that baptism is something conferred upon a child by God; and not merely a sign, but a seal.

"Yes," said Mr. R., "it is an ordinance of God, and the neglect of it is not merely a failure to obtain blessings, but a disregard of a divine ordinance; not merely the withholding a sign of allegiance, but the loss of a seal,—the government seal, not ours, which God would affix to the intercourse between himself and our souls. If we, pastors, feel this deeply, and so perceive the design of God in bestowing baptism upon the children of his people, we shall convey to the hearts and minds of doubting Christian parents, persuasive influences, which will succeed where arguments and appeals, based on mere proofs and obligations, have failed."

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Mr. A. It is gratifying, now, to think that these things, and others like them, may be done without calling the children "members of the church." Except discipline, it is obvious that everything in the way of watchfulness may be done for them as children of the church, which it would be proper, or even possible to do, if they were counted as members.

Mr. R. I am aware of the analogy which many, who plead for the term members, seek to carry out between the Old and the New Testament church, making children members of the Christian church, because the church in ancient days included the children. But it seems to me that there is the same difference, now and formerly, between the relation of children to the church, that there is between the relation of the whole religious community, now and formerly, to the church of God. Formerly, all the members of the religious community were, by their association under the same belief and worship, members of the church. To make the case with us parallel, our whole Christian community ought to be members of the church. No examination or discrimination should be used; to belong to the Christian community should constitute church-membership.

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But this, we know, is not the case. God chooses now to make up his visible church not as formerly, but of those who give credible evidence of regeneration. They who worship with us, but do not profess to be Christians, are hopeful subjects of effort and prayer, whom we expect to receive hereafter to the visible church, on profession of their faith.

As the Christian church is constituted differently from the Jewish church, in this respect, discrimination and separation taking place between the members of a Christian congregation, have we not analogical reason to infer that it may also be thus with regard to children?—who once, indeed, were members of the church of God, but, under the dispensation of the Spirit, they fall, with other unconverted members of the congregation, out of membership in the church.

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Mr. C. And yet, Br. R., the fall is not far, nor hurtful. They are entitled to all the privileges, and they enjoy, or should enjoy, all the care and effort, which they would have under a different name. Only they do not come to the Lord's Supper, as a matter of course, as they did to the Passover.

Mr. S. Suppose that the legislature should incorporate a fish-market, and cede to the proprietors

fifteen square miles of the sea, within which they should have the privilege of taking fish. All the fish, within those fifteen miles of salt water, might be said to *belong* to the market; yet every one of them must be taken by hook and line ere his belonging to the market is of any practicable value. So the children of the church may be said to belong to the church, and are to constitute her chief resource. Rivers, and other distant or neighboring waters, would also send fish to that market, even if they were "far off;" but it is from the bay at her doors that the market would derive her principal supplies. I do not see that children are members of the church, any further than those fishes belong to that market. Go there when you will, you see the stalls filled from those adjacent waters; supplies are continually coming in; they are, in a sense, secured to the market by a covenant; yet every fish is caught and handled, before he has anything like membership in that market, as really as though he swam and were caught in Baffin's Bay;—only he is now far more likely to be caught, and, in a sense, he already belongs to the market by the seal of the state.

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Mr. A., the reader of the sermon, not having much ideality, but much plain good sense, yet taking everything literally at first, and from his own honesty supposing that all figures of speech are to be cashed, as it were, for what they purport on their face, immediately challenged his brother to carry out the illustration. He asked him whether the constant passage, in and out, of fishes from and beyond the ceded fifteen miles, allowed of any resemblance, in the migratory creatures, to the children of the church, who are born and remain in the limits of the church, and are designated, individually, by virtue of their parentage.

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Mr. S. replied, that he did not mean to make a comparison to satisfy all the points of the case, and he hoped that the brethren would take it with due allowance.

Mr. T. said that he had thought of this illustration: "All the young male children of the Levites might be said to be members of the priesthood. They certainly 'belonged' to the priesthood. But no one of them could officiate till he had complied with certain conditions, nor if he was the subject of certain disabilities. He believed that the children of God's people have, by the grace of God, as really a presumptive relation, by future membership, to the church of Christ, as an infant Levite boy had to sacred offices; prayer, with the child, as well as for it, and faithful training, with a spiritual use of God's appointed ordinances, constitute, he was persuaded, as good reason to hope that the child of a true believer will become a Christian, and that, too, early in life, as that the young son of Levi would minister in the levitical office."

"O," said Mr. B., "how many cases there are which seem to disprove that. You will be obliged to reflect severely on some good people as parents, if you take so strong ground."

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Mr. T. I do not despair of a child whose parents, or parent, has really covenanted with God for him, even though the child be long a wanderer from the fold.

But it is the same now with Abraham's spiritual seed as it was with his natural posterity,—neglect on the part of parents may work a forfeiture of the covenant promises; failure in family government, above all things, may frustrate every good influence which would otherwise have had a powerful effect in the conversion of the child. The sons of Eli were not well governed; Esau was evidently of an undisciplined spirit. With regard to the children of several good men, in the Bible, it may be inferred, that the public engagements of the fathers hindered them from bestowing needful attention upon their sons. The only thing derogatory to the prophet Samuel, of which we are informed, is, that his sons were vile. With regard to certain cases of mournful wickedness, on the part of the children of eminently good men, it will be found that some of these men, occupying, perhaps, important stations of a public nature, such as the Christian ministry, were so engrossed in their public duties as not to give sufficient time and attention to their own families; which is a great shame and folly in any father of a family. In vain do we plead the covenant promises, if we neglect covenant duties. Grace is not hereditary in any sense that compromises our free agency; its subjects are born "not of blood;" there are many of the children of the kingdom who will be cast out into outer darkness, but among them, we may venture to say, will not be found those whose parents diligently sought their moral and religious culture in the exercise of a strict, judicious, affectionate, prayerful, watch and care, praying with them in secret, which, it seems to me, is, perhaps, the most powerful of all the means which a parent can use to influence the moral and religious character of a child.

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"Is it not a mournful inconsistency," said Mr. R., "for us to be laboring and spending our strength and lives for the conversion and salvation of others, and not be equally zealous for the souls of the children whom God has given us?"

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Mr. C. Our habits of seclusion and study may operate to make us reserved, moody, and so repulsive, to our own children. We ought to be interested in their every-day affairs, and watch for opportunities to form their opinions, on moral as well as religious subjects, and be as kind and assiduous to them, certainly, as we endeavor to be to other children.

What more could these good men have said, with regard to the subject, had they concluded to adopt the terms "member" and "membership," to express the relation of children to the church? They were not conscious of omitting or diminishing one privilege or blessing to which the children of the church are entitled; everything which the most strenuous advocates of "infant church-membership," so called, mention as accruing to them, they claimed in their behalf. Did

infant church-membership admit to the Lord's Supper, as it did to the passover, the children would now, with propriety, be said to be "members of the church." But, inasmuch as, under the Christian dispensation, they cannot come to the sacrament which distinguishes between the regenerate and the unregenerate, without a change of heart, they, and all those who are associated with the church in general acts of worship, and in Christian privileges, but are not converted persons, are, alike, under the Christian system, removed from outward membership—only, that the children of the church have privileges and promises which go far to increase the probability of their future church-membership, and directly to prepare them for that sacred relation.

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"THE CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH," then, is the sufficient name by which it seems desirable that the children of believers should be designated. And, instead of using the term "church-membership," applied to them, we shall include everything which is properly theirs, we shall lose nothing, we shall prevent great misunderstanding, and liability to perversion, by substituting the "Relation of Baptized Children to the Church," whenever we wish to express the peculiar and most precious connection which they hold, in the arrangements of divine grace, with the covenant people of God.

Chapter Tenth.

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MATERNAL ASSOCIATIONS.

The mother, in her office, holds the key
Of the soul; and she it is who stamps the coin
Of character, and makes the being, who would be a savage
But for her gentle cares, a Christian man.
—Then, crown her Queen o' the world.

OLD PLAY.

The pastors now adjourned their session under the maples, and repaired to the room where their wives were sitting. The ladies had finished their deliberations, and had been strolling in the woods. But they, too, had been engaged, like their husbands, in conversation about their children, and the children of the church. "Maternal Associations" had been the chief topic. They had discussed their advantages, and had considered objections to them. The result was, that they had unanimously agreed to promote such associations in their respective churches. Their influence on young mothers, in helping them to train their children, affording them the results of experience gained by others; the privilege of stating difficult and trying cases for advice, of praying together for their children, of having those mothers, during the intervals of their monthly meetings, pray for the children of their sisters, and sometimes, specially, for a child in peculiar need of prayer, commended these associations to their judgment and affections. One lady referred to the possible disclosure of family secrets, at such meetings, which it was unpleasant to hear, and to the undesirableness of revealing the faults of a child. They agreed that these things should never be done, and that it was easy to avoid them by employing a friend, if necessary, to state the case, hypothetically, so as to conceal its connection with any member of the circle. The ladies had gone so far as to adopt a little manual, for their respective circles, which they submitted to their husbands for criticism. One of the gentlemen read it, as follows:

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"MATERNAL ASSOCIATIONS.

"Maternal Associations are designed for mutual instruction and consultation, in connection with united prayer. Subjects for reading and discussion relate chiefly to the physical, mental, moral, and religious training of children. Some individual is usually prepared at each meeting to give method and tone to the conversation, which might otherwise become desultory. The faults of children who are known to the members are *not* made the subject of remark; but cases of difficulty are so presented as to avoid individual exposure. Associations conducted on these principles are found to be greatly beneficial.

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"CONSTITUTION OF—CHURCH MATERNAL ASSOCIATION.

"Impressed with a sense of our entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit to aid us in training up our children in the way they should go, and hoping to obtain the blessing of such as fear the Lord and speak often to one another, we, the subscribers, do unitedly pledge ourselves to meet at stated seasons for prayer and mutual counsel in reference to our maternal duties and responsibilities. With a view to this object, we adopt the following constitution:

"ARTICLE I. This circle shall be called the 'Maternal Association of—Church;' any member of which, sustaining the maternal relation, may become a member by subscribing this constitution. Other individuals, sustaining the same relation, may be admitted to membership by a vote of two thirds of the members present.

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"ART. II. The monthly meetings of this Association shall be held on the—of the month.

"ART. III. The quarterly meetings in January, April, July, and October, shall be held on the last Wednesday of the month, when the members shall be allowed to bring to the place of meeting such of their children as may be under the age of twelve years, and they shall be considered

members of the Association. The exercises at these meetings shall be such as shall seem best calculated to instruct the minds and interest the feelings of the children who may be present.

"ART. IV. At each quarterly meeting there shall be a small contribution by the children for benevolent purposes.

"ART. V. The time appropriated for each meeting shall not exceed one hour and a half, and shall be exclusively devoted to the object of the Association. Every monthly meeting shall be opened by prayer and reading a portion of Scripture, which may be followed by reading such other matter as relates to the interests of the Association, or by conversation tending to promote maternal faithfulness and piety. These exercises may be interspersed with singing the songs of Zion, and with humble and importunate prayer, that God would glorify himself in the early conversion of the children of the Association, that they may become eminently useful in the church of Christ. It is desirable that the last meeting in the year be spent in reading the Scriptures and in prayer.

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"ART. VI. Every member of the Association shall be considered as sacredly bound to pray *for* her children daily, and *with* them as often as circumstances will permit; and to give them from time to time the best religious instruction of which she is capable.

"ART. VII. It shall be the duty of every member to qualify herself, by daily reading, prayer, and self-discipline, to discharge faithfully the arduous duties of a Christian mother; and she shall be requested to give with freedom such hints upon the various subjects brought before the Association as her own observation and experience may suggest.

"ART. VIII. When any mother is removed by death, it shall be the special duty of the Association to regard with peculiar interest the spiritual welfare of her children, and to evince this interest by a continued remembrance of them in their prayers, by inviting them to attend quarterly meetings, and by such tokens of sympathy and kindness as their circumstances may render proper.

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"ART. IX. Every child, upon leaving the Association, at the prescribed age, shall receive a book from the mothers, as a token of their affection, to be accompanied by a letter, expressive of the deep interest felt in their temporal and spiritual welfare.

"ART. X. The officers of the Association shall be a 'First Directress,' a 'Second Directress,' a 'Secretary,' and a 'Corresponding Secretary,' who shall be appointed annually in September.

"ART. XI. The duty of the First Directress shall be to preside at all meetings, call upon the members for devotional exercises, and regulate the reading. In the absence of the First Directress, these duties shall devolve upon the Second Directress.

"ART. XII. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to register the names of the members, and of their children, and to supply each of the mothers with a list of the same, together with a copy of the constitution. She shall also keep a record of the proceedings of each meeting, and, as far as may be convenient, of the topic discussed, and of the remarks elicited by it. This record shall be read at the commencement of the next subsequent meeting. She shall likewise receive the contributions of the children, keep an account of the same, and pay it according to the vote of the Association.

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"ART. XIII. It shall be the duty of the Corresponding Secretary to write the letters addressed to the children upon leaving the Association, to conduct the general correspondence, receive the contributions from the mothers, and purchase the books to be given to the children.

"ART. XIV. Any article of this constitution may be amended by a majority of the members present at any annual meeting.

"It is recommended to the members of the Association to observe the anniversary of the birth of each child in special prayer, with particular reference to that child. May He who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not, ever preside in our meetings, and grant unto each of us a teachable, affectionate, and humble temper, that no root of bitterness may spring up to prevent our improvement, or interrupt our devotions. The promise is to us and to our children; we have publicly given them up to God; his holy name has been pronounced over them; let us see to it that we do not cause this sacred name to be treated with contempt. May Christ put his own spirit within us, that our children may never have occasion to say,

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'What do ye more than others?'

No criticism was made upon this production, but the pastors commended it, and rejoiced in the good which an increased attention to the subject would be sure to accomplish. They promised to preach on the subject, and, in their pastoral visits, to encourage mothers in the churches to join the Associations.

One of the ladies said that she had a paper, which she had thought best to read, if the company pleased, when they were all together, and she had therefore reserved it until the gentlemen came in.

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It was a paper in the handwriting of a Christian friend, which was found in her copy of the "Articles and Covenant" of her church, after her decease. This lady had been in the habit, as it seemed, of reading over those articles and the covenant, on the Sabbath when the Lord's Supper

was to be administered; and the religious education of her children, being identified with her most sacred thoughts and moments, she read these questions at the same time.

The lady who read them said that it was proposed by some to append them to the little manual already presented for Maternal Associations.

"QUESTIONS TO BE THOUGHT UPON.

- "1. Have I so prayed for my children as that my prayer produced an effect upon myself?
- "2. Have I realized that to train my children for usefulness and heaven is probably the chief duty God requires of me?
- "3. Have I realized that, if I cannot eradicate an evil habit, probably no one else can or will?
- "4. Have I granted to-day, from indulgence, what I denied yesterday from principle? [Pg 264]
- "5. Have I yielded to importunity in altering a decision deliberately made?
- "6. Have I punished the beginning of an evil habit?
- "7. Have I suffered the indulgence of an evil habit through sloth or discouragement?
- "8. Have calmness and seriousness marked my looks, tones, and voice, when inflicting punishment?
- "9. Was my convenience, or the guilt of the child, the measure of its punishment?
- "10. Has punishment been sufficiently private, and have I tried to affect the mind more than the body?
- "11. Do my children see in me a self-command which is the effect of principle?
- "12. Have I, in my plans, my heart, and conduct, sought first for my children the kingdom of God?
- "13. Have I commended God to my children, and my children to God?
- "14. Have I aimed to govern my children on the same principle and in the same spirit which God adopts in the government of his creatures?
- "15. Have I, in pursuance of the above resolution, acted in the spirit of that prayer in God's word, 'Them that honor me, I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed'? [Pg 265]
- "16. Have I aimed to secure the love and obedience of my children?
- "17. Have I remembered that it is full time to make a child obey when it knows enough to disobey?
- "18. Do I realize that the fulfilment of covenant promises is dependent on my fidelity? Gen. 18: 19.
- "19. Have these resolutions been undertaken in the strength of Christ, remembering 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me'?
- "20. Have I labored to convince my child that its true character is formed by its thoughts and affections?
- "21. Do I daily realize that each of my children is a shapeless piece of marble, capable, through my instrumentality, of being moulded into an ornament for the palace of the King of kings?
- "22. Do I, by my conversation and actions, teach my children that character, and not wealth or connexions, constitutes respectability? [Pg 266]
- "23. Do I realize what circumstances are educating my children;—my conversation, my pursuits, my likings, and dislikings?
- "24. Do I realize that the most important book a child can and does read, is its parents' daily deportment and example?
- "25. Do my children feel they can do what they like, or that they must do what they are commanded?
- "26. Have I felt that a timid child is in great danger of being insincere?
- "27. Do I, as an antidote to timidity, cultivate the fear of God and self-respect?
- "28. Do I realize that I must meet each child at the judgment-seat, and hear from it what my influence over it has been as a mother?
- "29. Do I realize that it is in my power to exert such an influence that Christ shall see in each the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied?
- "30. Do I realize that my children will obey God much as they do me?

"31. Do I impress on my children that little faults in Christian families may be as dangerous to the soul, and as evil in their tendencies, as larger faults where there is no Christian education?"

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"32. Do I realize the danger of retarding or hindering the work of the Holy Spirit, by evil habits, worldly pursuits, or companions?"

"33. Do I make each child feel that it has a work to do, and that it is its duty and happiness to do that work well?"

The paper having been read, one of the pastors stated that he knew the lady who had been referred to; that she died leaving a large family of children, all of whom, he had learned, were now members of the church of Christ except the youngest, of tender age. He hoped that the Questions would be printed in the Manual for the Maternal Associations.

"I was struck with the remark in some old writer," said Mr. R., "that 'God had clothed the prayers of parents with special authority.' It made me think that, as the Saviour promised the apostles, for their necessary assurance and comfort, that they should always be heard in their requests, while engaged in establishing the new religion, so parents are encouraged to think, since family religion, the transmission of piety by parental influence, is so important, in the view of God, that they will have special regard paid to all their petitions for aid, as God's vicegerents in their families."

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But the repast was now ready. It was a goodly sight, when that company of ministerial friends and their wives were sitting round that table. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." There is a mysterious charm in eating together. It is well known that associations designed for social acquaintance and conversation, have, very generally, fallen to pieces soon after the relinquishment of the repast. Our great ordinance, for the communion of saints, is appointed to be at a table, where it originated. The flow of kind feeling, which had prevailed during the afternoon among these friends, seemed now to be in full tide, and many were the entertaining and gratifying things which were there said and done. All possible ways in which the products of an acre or two of well-cultivated land could be prepared to tempt the appetite, were there. Br. S. was informed that those fried fishes swam in Acushnit brook no longer ago than when he was rehearsing his parable of the fishes. The strawberries had been kept on the vines a day or two, for the occasion, and were in perfection. Eggs figured on the table in every shape into which those most convertible things could turn themselves; and, being praised, the lady of the house said that she must tell them of Ralph, a boy of fourteen, whom her husband had taken to look after his horse and garden, giving him his tuition in Latin and other branches, for his services. Ralph was a great amateur in fowls and eggs. No sooner did a hen cackle, but he resorted to the nest, and, with his lead-pencil, wrote the day of the month upon the egg. The lady rung her table-bell, and called him to her, telling him to bring his egg-basket. He brought in an openwork, red osier basket, with a dozen and a half of eggs in it, laid on cotton batting, each egg as duly inscribed as the specimens of a mineralogist. Ralph was highly praised.

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"I suppose you think, my son," said Mr. R., "that an egg, like reputation, should be above suspicion."

"It is best to be safe, sir," said he.

"Ralph," said Mr. S., "do you know who baptized you?"

"You baptized me yourself, sir."

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"Do you remember, Ralph, how you reached out your hands, at that time, and took my hand, and put my finger into your mouth, and tried to bite it with your little, new, sharp teeth?"

Ralph blushed, and smiled.

"You do not remember it, Ralph. Well, I do; and now, Ralph, you must come and preach your first sermon in my pulpit."

"It will be a long time first, sir," said Ralph.

"Your dear mother told me, when she was sick, that she thought she left you in the temple, like Samuel, when she offered you up in baptism."

"Be a good boy, Ralph," said another of the pastors; "we will all be your friends." He retreated slowly, feeling not so much alone in the world.

The company did not separate till two of their number had led in prayer, seeking, especially, the blessing of God upon their own children, and that they, as parents and ministers, might be warned by the awful fate of the sons of Aaron and of Eli, and not feel that the ministerial office gave them a prescriptive right to the blessings of grace for their children, but rather made them liable to prominent exposure and calamity, if they suffered public duties to interfere with that first, great ordinance of God, family religion.

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The horses were now coming to the door. Farewells and good wishes were intermingled, the joyous laugh at some pleasantry or sally of wit made the house and yard alive for some time, the pastors had arranged their exchanges for several months to come, visits and excursions were

planned and agreed upon, till one by one the vehicles departed, leaving the parsonage silent, while its occupants sat down to rest a while, and talk over the events of the day, in their pleasant window under the honeysuckle.

Chapter Eleventh.

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BAPTISM OF THE SICK WIFE AND HER CHILDREN.

In having all things, and not Thee, what have I?
Not having Thee, what have my labors got?
Let me enjoy but Thee, what further crave I?
And having Thee alone, what have I not?
I wish nor sea, nor land; nor would I be
Possessed of heaven, heaven unpossessed of Thee.

QUARLES.—"*Emblems.*"

He whom God chooseth, out of doubt doth well.
What they that choose their God do, who can tell?

LORD BROOKE (London, 1633).
—"*Mustapha.*"

A lady with whom we spent a summer at a watering-place, and who was then an invalid, and with whom we had formed an intimate acquaintance, was now very sick, with cancerous affections, which threatened to end her life at no distant period.

She had become established in the Christian faith, during her illness, and, being a woman of great intelligence and cultivation, it was instructive to be in her company. Many a lesson had I learned from her, in the freshness and ardor of her new discoveries as a Christian, the old themes of religious experience being translated by her renewed heart, and discriminating mind, into forms that made them almost new, because they were so vivid. She was fast ripening for heaven; she had looked in, and her face shone as she turned to speak with us.

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A lady, a friend of hers from a distance, was visiting us, and, knowing that she was sick, requested me to call with her upon the invalid. Hearing that I was in the parlor, she sent for me to come up and sit with her and my friend, after they had seen each other a little while. She was in her easy-chair, able to converse, and was calm and happy.

The door opened suddenly, as we were talking, and in rushed a little boy of about six years, his cap in his hand, a pretty green cloth sack buttoned close about him, his boots pulled over his pants to his knees, and his face glowing with health and from the cold air.

"O, mother!" said he, before he quite saw us,—and then he checked himself; but, being encouraged to proceed, after making his salutations, he said, in a more subdued tone, holding up a great red apple, "See what the man, where we buy our things, sent you, mother. He called me to him, and said, 'Give that to your mother, and tell her it will be first-rate roasted.'"

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As the mother smelt of it, and praised it, with her thanks, the boy hung round her chair, and wished to say something.

"Well, what is it, my son?"

He spoke loud enough for us to hear, with his eyes glancing occasionally at us, to be sure that we were not too intently looking at him, and, with his arm resting in his mother's lap, he said:

"Do, please, let me go with my sled on the pond. It is real thick, mother. Gustavus says that last evening it was as thick as his big dictionary, and you know how cold it was last night, mother. Please let me go; I won't get in; besides, if I do, it isn't deep—not more than up to there; see here, mother!" putting his little mittened hand, with the palm down, as high as his waist.

His mother looked troubled, and knew not what to say to him, but remarked to us, "O, if I were well, and about the house, I could divert him from his wish; but," said she to him, "if you will ask Gustavus to take care of you, and bring you home when he comes, you may go."

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Off he went, making fewer steps than there were stairs, and we heard his merry voice without announcing his liberty.

"Here I am," said she to us, "with those three children, who come home from school twice a day, and there is no mother below to receive them. With the best of help, things sometimes go wrong, and the young woman who sews for me cannot, of course, do for them what a mother could. Nothing has tried my patience, in suffering, more than to hear the door open, and my children come in from school, and to feel that I am separated from them, within hearing, while I cannot reach them."

She controlled her feelings, and helped herself to conceal them by turning to rock a cradle which stood behind her, though we perceived no need of her doing so; yet we must all distrust our own ears in comparison with a mother's. The child was a boy seven months old.

"Do you know," said she to me, "that I am thinking of joining your church? I have had a very trying visit from my own pastor, and he says that I am too sick to be baptized by immersion, and that it is, therefore, too late for me to receive Christian baptism. It is not necessary, he says, in order to being accepted of God. I was born and brought up in that Communion, and never thought much of the subject of baptism till I hoped that I began to love God, here in my sick-room. If baptism is so important as our ministers tell us it is, in their preaching and by their practice,—for you know how important they deem it, in times of religious attention, to have people baptized in our way,—I cannot see why it is not important to me. If it is man's ordinance, and merely for an effect on others, very well; but if God has anything to do in it, I feel that I need it as much as though I were in health. So my husband asked your minister to come and see me, and he did; and he is to baptize me and my children on Saturday afternoon, and administer the Lord's Supper to me after church the next day."

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I asked her what ground of objection her pastor had in her case.

Mrs. P. My minister tells me it is superstition to be baptized on a sick-bed, and that they are careful not to encourage such Romish practices.

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"But, O," I said to him, "Mr. Dow, I am afraid it is because your form of baptism will not allow you to baptize the sick and dying, so you make a virtue of necessity." He colored a little, but said, pleasantly, though solemnly, "We see how important it is, Mrs. Peirce, to attend to the subject of religion in health, when we can confess Christ before men, and follow the Saviour, and be buried in baptism with him."

That made me weep, though perhaps it was because I was weak; but I said, "God is more merciful than that, Mr. Dow. I know that I have neglected religion too long, but God has brought me to him, by affliction, and now I do not believe that the seals of his grace are of such a nature that they cannot be applied to people in my condition. I feel the need of those seals, not as my profession to God, but as his professions of love to me. I believe you are wrong, Mr. Dow. You seem to make baptism our act toward God, chiefly; now I take a different view of it. My sick and weak condition makes me feel that in being baptized, and in receiving the Lord's Supper, I submit myself to God's hand of love, and take from him infinitely more than I give him."—"O, that is rather a Romish view of ordinances," said he, smiling.—"No," said I, "Mr. Dow, I am not passive in the ordinances, any more than in regeneration; my whole soul is active in receiving their influences. But there is something done for us in the ordinances, as there is something done for us in regeneration, while we actively repent and believe. Are you not so afraid of Romanism, and of 'sacramental grace,' that you go to an opposite extreme? for it seems to me a morbid state of feeling. I wish for no extreme unction, but I do believe that, in being baptized, and in receiving the Lord's Supper, something more is done for us than helping us to take up and offer to God something on the little needle-points of our poor feelings. I should feel, in being baptized, that God has adopted me, and not merely I him; and, in the Lord's Supper, that it is more for Christ to give me his body and blood, than for me to give him my poor affections." He asked me if I had not been reading the Oxford Tracts. I told him that I read the Oxford Tracts, and other Puseyite publications, in their day, and that I saw through their errors, and had no sympathy with their views.

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But I told him I was satisfied that the human mind, in that development, was craving something more supernatural in religious ordinances, to make the impression that the hand of God is in them, and not that we are the principal party. So, instead of taking enlightened, spiritual views of ordinances, the Tractarians sought to improve the quality, by multiplying the quantity, of forms; and others are following them into the Roman Catholic church in the same way.

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"There always seemed to me," she said, "to be a grain of truth in every great error. Is it not so? Even among the Brahmins of the East, and among savages, each superstition, and every lie, retains the fossils of some dead truth. When a new error breaks out among us, I feel that the human mind is tossing itself, and reaching after something beyond its experience. It seems to me," she continued, "that, at such times, it is good for ministers and Christians to reëxamine their mode of stating the truths of the Bible, to see how far they can properly go to meet the new development, and, by preaching the truth better, intercept it. The cold, barren view, which many take of ordinances, makes some people hanker after forms and ceremonies; whereas, if we would present baptism and the Lord's Supper as divine acts toward us, we might meet the instinctive wants of many, and hold them to the side of truth."

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"But I told Mr. Dow that I was no formalist, nor did I believe in compromising the truth to win errorists. Clear, faithful, strict doctrinal views commend themselves to men's consciences."

I came near saying to the good lady, that, if she were able to talk in such a strain, and to say so much to her minister, he, surely, could not have deemed her so enfeebled in mind as to be incapacitated for admission to the Christian church.

"I told him, also," she added, "I was satisfied that his unvarying mode of baptism was not ordained by Him who sent the Gospel to every creature.—Why, said I, Mr. Dow, what do you make of the apostles' baptizing the jailer, 'at the same hour of the night,' and 'before it was day?' It could not have been for any public effect. What need to have it done just then? Was it superstitious and Romish? No; it was to comfort the soul of the poor, trembling convert, with a sense of God's love to him. How it must have soothed and cheered him to receive God's hand of love in that ordinance, before he himself fully knew what the making of a Christian profession implied! I want that same hand of love here, in my prison of a sick-chamber,—And, I never

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thought of it much before, but, I said then, it seemed so clear to me that they would not have gone to all the trouble, that night, and in the prison-house, and after the terrors of the earthquake, to put a whole family into bathing-vessels. To take people from sleep, ordinarily, and immerse them in water, would be a singular act; much more when they are weak and faint, as the jailer's family must have been, from fear and excitement. In my own case, I could not be immersed, even at home; it would probably cost me my life. Sprinkling came to me as so sweetly harmonious, in that scene of the jailer's baptism, that I believed it to be the apostolic mode of baptizing, and I told Mr. D. that I should imitate the jailer; and that I should send for a minister who could imitate Paul and Silas."

"But," said I, "what brought you to believe in the propriety of baptizing your children?"

Mrs. P. Your minister enlightened me on that subject. I told him my heart yearned to have it done; for I took the same view of it which I have mentioned with regard to my own baptism—that it is something which God does, to and for the children, primarily, and it is not merely a human act. He said that it was like laying "a penal bond" on children, to baptize them, and oblige them to do or be anything without their consent. O, how many such "penal bonds" I have laid on my children, already!—the more the better, I told him. "A penal bond" to love and serve God!—I mean to add my dying charge to it, and make it as binding as I can. How imperfect such a view of baptism is! It is God coming to us with his seal, not we coming with our own invention to him. I wished to have God enter into a covenant with me, who hope I love him, to be a God to my children forever. I felt that I could die in peace, if I might feel some assurance of this; and, it seemed to me that, to have a sign and seal of it from God himself would make me perfectly happy.

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She handed me a book, which her pastor had lent her, and she asked me to read a passage, to which she pointed. It was an argument against baptism in sickness. Speaking of the penitent thief, the writer says:

"The Saviour did not, as a Papist would have done, command some of the women, that stood by bewailing, to fetch a little water; nor the beloved disciple to asperse the quivering penitent."

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Remembering the view which the mother of little Philip took of such things, I merely said, that the writer seemed to me to asperse a large part of the Protestant world, under the name, Papist. Christian baptism, I remarked, had not been instituted when the Saviour and the thief were on the cross.

I received an invitation from the husband, a day or two after, to be present at the baptism of his wife and children. The husband was not professedly, nor in his own view, a regenerate man, but one of the best of husbands and fathers, destitute, however, of the one thing needful.

The wife had on a loose cashmere dressing-gown, but was sitting in bed for greater support and comfort.

The pastor read to her the articles and covenant of the church. She assented to them; whereupon, at his request, I laid the church-book of signatures before her, gave her a pen full of ink, and she wrote her name among the professed followers of the Lamb.

The pastor then declared her to be admitted, by vote of the church, into full communion and fellowship, after she should have received the ordinance of baptism.

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He rose, and read, "And Jesus came unto them, and spake, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

He continued: "My dear Mrs. Peirce, God is your God. He will have his name written upon you, by its being called over you, with the use of his own appointed sign and seal of baptism. The name in which he has chosen thus to appear to you, is not God Almighty, nor his name Jehovah; but those names which redemption has brought to view, and which impress upon us the acts of redeeming grace and love. Do not feel, chiefly, that you give yourself up to God in this transaction, though this, of course, you do, and it is essential that you do so; but feel that the Father, Son, and Spirit, come to you, and own you in the covenant of redemption, in consequence of your accepting Christ, by faith, which itself, also, is the gift of God. Professing repentance of your sins, and faith in the Lord Jesus, you are now to receive, from the Sacred Three, a sign and seal, confirming to you all the promises of grace, adopting you as a member of the whole family in heaven and earth, and engaging God to be your God.

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"And now, as you are, yourself, a child of God, your children God adopts to be, in a peculiar sense, his. This is the method of his love from the beginning. Had Adam remained upright, doubtless his children would have been confirmed in their uprightness; but, inasmuch as he fell, and, by his disobedience, they were made sinners, God reestablished his covenant with Abraham as the father of all believers, under a new church-organization, to the end of time, promising to be the God of a believer's child."

He then read this hymn; and certain expressions in it never struck me with such force and sweetness as in that baptismal scene:

"How large the promise, how divine,
To Abraham and his seed;

I'll be a God to thee and thine,
Supplying all their need.

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"The words of his extensive love
From age to age endure;
The angel of the covenant proves,
And seals, the blessing sure.

"Jesus the ancient faith confirms
To our great fathers given;
He takes young children to his arms,
And calls them heirs of heaven.

"Our God, how faithful are his ways!
His love endures the same;
Nor from the promise of his grace
Blots out the children's name."

"And now," said he, "as you belong to the church of Christ, so your children, in a certain sense, and that a very important and precious sense, *belong* to the church. Your little, unconscious babe belongs, in that sense, to the church. You will not, you cannot, misunderstand me. These are the children of a child of God. All your brethren and sisters in Christ count them in their great family circle. They covenant with you to pray for them, to watch for their good, and to rejoice in it, to provide means for their spiritual prosperity, and to seek their salvation. But, above all, God will ever have special regard to them as the children of his dear child.

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"Receive now," said he, "the divine ordinance of baptism, whereby God signifies to you, and seals, all that is implied in being your God."

He drew near the bed, with a silver bowl, from which he sprinkled water upon the head and forehead of the dear believer, whose countenance expressed the peace of receiving, rather than the effort of giving, while her lips moved now and then during the quiet scene.

They brought Edward, the first-born, and he stood, with his hand in his mother's hand, and was baptized. There were almost tears enough shed by us for his baptism, had tears been needed. Lucy came next, and then the rosy-cheeked Roger, who had been persuaded to leave his new sled, a little while, that Saturday afternoon.

But now the little boy was coming in from his cradle. His mother raised herself in the bed, and received him in her arms. He had been weaned, but, on coming to his mother, he began to make some solicitations, which, beautiful and affecting though they were, some of us endeavored not to see, but turned to smell of some violets, and to open a book of engravings. The mother smiled, and held him off, but immediately put two fingers, one on each eye, and wept;—the marriage-ring on one of those fingers,—ah, me! how had the finger shrunk away from it. The nurse took the child and diverted its attention. The husband sat far on the bed, put one arm under the pillow that supported his wife, and held her hand in his. Recollections and anticipations, we knew, were thronging, unbidden, into that mother's soul. She had been reminded of fountains of love sealed up, and yet there were opening within her living fountains of water. She grew calm, beckoned for a little book on the table, opened it, and pointed her husband to a stanza, which she had marked, and he read it for her:—

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"When I can trust my all with God,
In trial's painful hour,
Bow all resigned beneath his rod,
And bless his sparing power;
A joy springs up amid distress,
A fountain in the wilderness."

That was her profession of religion, and her signal to the pastor to proceed. The father took the little boy in his arms, held him over the bed, before his wife; the pastor reached from the other side, and baptized Walter, in the name of the covenant-keeping God. The father held the child for the mother's kiss, and then took him away, fearing a repetition of the previous scene. But the wife drew her husband back to her, and left a kiss on his own cheek, amidst his tears.

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"And now," said the pastor, after prayer, "God has been in this place, and has himself applied to you and your children the seal of his everlasting covenant. Do not make your faith in it to depend on the degree of equanimity or vividness in your feelings; but remember what Elizabeth said to Mary: 'And blessed is she that believeth, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.'"

"O," said Mrs. P., "is it possible that I live to see this day? I almost forget my sickness, my separation from my husband and children, in the thought that God is my covenant God, and the God of my children. My baptism is to me a visible writing and seal from God; and my children's baptism is the same. I always used to think of baptism merely as a profession on our part. O, how much more there is in it, besides that! It is God's covenant and testimony toward me. Blessed names!" said she, soliloquizing,— "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! sweet society of the Godhead! They come together; they are like the three that came to Abraham's tent. Each has his precious gift and influence for my soul. Why was I allowed to see this day, and enjoy this?"

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The pastor said, "This is just one of those things which make us say, 'His goodness is unsearchable.' There seems to be no way of accounting for this rich, free, sovereign love."

"Can I fear," said she, "to leave my children in such hands? No. God of Abraham! 'thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.' Faithful God! 'a God to thee and thy seed after thee;' what power the seal of the covenant has to make you believe it; yes, and seemingly to hear it read to you. Do speak to all our dear mothers, and tell them in health to make far more, than many do, of baptism for their children."

"And have you no blessing for me?" said the husband, as the pastor rose to go.

"Dear sir," said the pastor, "they seem to have left you alone."

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He had been sitting, somewhat out of sight, at the foot of the bedstead; but, it was evident, from several signs, that his feelings were deeply moved.

The pastor took his arm, and, bidding the wife an affectionate but hasty adieu, he went with him to the sitting-room below.

"I need no arguments," said the husband, "to satisfy me, further, that you are right. You have a system of religion which, I see, is good for everything, and for everybody, and for all times, and places, and circumstances. Sir, I have been sceptical; but I must confess that a religion which can come into a family, like mine, and do what it has done, through you, sir, to mine, and to me, must be from God. Sir, I shall always respect our pastor for his consistency with his principles, and for many other reasons; but I prefer principles like yours, which can go to the sick and dying, and to little children whose mother——"

Here he began to weep. The pastor said, "To take a mother from a young family of children, like yours, Mr. Peirce, is just the thing which we should prevent, could we have the ordering of affairs."

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"I feel," said Mr. P., "that God's hand is upon me. Passages from the Bible, which I learned at sea, from love to my mother, come to me now. She put a Bible in a box, and covered it up with a dozen pairs of woollen hose, knit with her own hands. I have been saying to myself, in the chamber, 'Behold, he cometh with clouds.' It is growing dark over my dwelling; God is descending upon us in a cloud. 'Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, what doest thou.' O, you never lost a wife, my dear sir, nor looked on a motherless family, as I begin to do. God help me, for I shall lose my reason."

"No, my dear sir," said the pastor; "think what has just taken place up stairs. You now seem to say, as Manoah did, 'We shall surely die;' but his wife said, 'If the Lord were pleased to kill us,— he would not have showed us all these things.' God has bestowed on your children, through their believing mother, his covenant, to be their God.—You are a Notary Public, I believe, sir."

"I am," said Mr. Peirce.

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"Then," said the pastor, "you know the importance of seals."

"O, yes," said Mr. P. "A gentleman, last week, came near losing the sale of a large property, situate in one of the Middle States, because he had had some papers executed, here, before a court not having a seal. I told him, beforehand, that he was wrong; but he wished to know of what possible use a seal could be, when the judge and the clerk used printed forms, and the blanks were filled under their own hands. The papers came back, and he had to do his business over again, and before a court having a seal."

"But he was perfectly honest, at first, I presume," said the pastor, "only the form was defective."

Mr. P. Yes, sir; but the form, in such a case, is the warranty. You know that the power to have and use a seal is one of the things specially conveyed by a legislature.

"God has seals," said the pastor. "One is baptism. It used to be circumcision. But, as the old royal seal is broken at the coronation of a new king, God appointed a new seal, baptism, to mark the new dispensation; as he also changed the Sabbath of creation in honor of his Son's reign, and removed the memorial of his deeds of greatest renown, the Passover, for one that signifies still greater deeds, the Lord's Supper. Thus God has his seals. He attaches great importance to them. He binds himself by them. Your wife, being a child of God, it is his arrangement, from the beginning, to enter into covenant with her in behalf of her children. He stands, now, in a special relation to them, and has placed the beautiful seal of Heaven upon his promise to that dear sick mother, 'I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee.'"

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"Is it necessary that the father should be left out?" said Mr. P., covering his face with his handkerchief. "They are mine, and God holds me responsible for them. I am to be left alone with them in the world. Is there not mercy for me, too? O, I had such a gleam of hope in the chamber! As I saw the water descending from your hand upon those dear heads, I thought, How much like a divine act such baptism is,—something from God. I always thought of baptism as a cross, to which I must submit; now I see that it is a token of love, bestowed upon me. So I thought of those words: 'I am found of them that sought me not.' God seems to have come to me in that baptism. I was expecting that, if I ever became a Christian, I must, in token of my submission, be buried in the waters of baptism. I would be willing to be, still, if necessary; but that gentle baptism, coming to me and mine, seems like God being beforehand with me, doing something with me and for me."

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It made me think of Christ inviting himself into the house of Zaccheus, to save his soul. I always felt that I must obtain religion wholly of myself; now I feel that God has begun the work in me. I am sustained and borne on. That baptism was the most powerful appeal that ever reached my heart. It seems to me, in its connection with the gospel, like a beautiful symphony of instrumental music in an anthem, which strives to interpret the words. It proved an overture to me, indeed, in the best sense. But, my dear sir, how near we came to losing all this which my wife has enjoyed."

The door opened, and little Lucy came in with two plates and two silver knives, and that great red apple which her mother had received a few days before. "Mother sends her love to you, sir, and begs that you and father will eat this."

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They looked at the apple for a few moments, when the husband said, "I do not feel like eating it. Do oblige me by taking it home with you."

The pastor took it home with him, placed it on his mantel-piece in his study, where, for several days, it gave such an odor as to attract the notice of every one that came in. The hand that sent it to him, in less than a week had finished its work on earth. The apple then became a hallowed thing. There it remained till it wilted, grew soft, and finally turned nearly black.

A little, unceremonious visitant to his father's study would often climb into the chair near the shelf, and express his wonder, and repeat his questions, at the seeming mystery,—first, of not eating the apple, and suffering it to be wasted; and then, of letting it remain when it ought to be thrown away. It was not long, however, before the apple was buried in a pot of earth. In due time green shoots appeared. And when the pastor saw them, he said with himself, "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."

How it grew in the pastor's study, a little sacramental emblem of hallowed scenes, and of infinitely precious truths,—how a place was selected, and afterwards prepared, for it, near a garden-wall which separates the wife's little garden from her grave,—and how the husband came alone, one Sabbath, and joined the church, receiving the seal of baptism from the same hand that sprinkled the water upon the heads of his wife and children,—I cannot tell you now, nor, after so long detention, would you be willing at present to hear.

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FOOTNOTES

- [1] A curious reason for this, in the minds of some, appears to be that, when man was created, woman was included in him. For, they say, in the first chapter of Genesis, and in the account of the sixth day, before woman was made, the plural word *them* is used: "male and female created he them." They say that the blessing was pronounced on the man and woman in Adam. For they think it improbable that Moses would anticipate his history so much as to bring in woman, and, withal, her blessing, too, at the sixth day, when the narrative teaches that she was made some time afterwards. Hence, they say, it was that woman was for ages treated as included in man. There is something pleasing in this fancy, but it seems like one of Origen's allegories, he being the father of allegorical interpretation. It had its origin in an ancient Rabbinical sentiment.
- [2] This subject is discussed by itself, and more at large, in another part of this book.
- [3] "Can we blame the founders of the Massachusetts Colony for banishing him from their jurisdiction? In the annals of religious persecution is there to be found a martyr more gently dealt with by those against whom he began the war of intolerance; whose authority he persisted, even after professions of penitence and submission, in defying, till deserted even by the wife of his bosom; and whose utmost severity of punishment upon him was only an order for his removal as a nuisance from among them?"—*Discourse before Mass. Hist. Soc.*, 1843, pp. 25-30.—[ED.]
- [4] Taylor on Baptism.
- [5] See "Coleman's Ancient Christianity," chap. xix., sec. 12. He refers to Ambrose, Ser. 20. Chrysostom, Hom. 6. Epistle to Col., &c., &c.
- [6] As we.
- [7] The grave.
- [8] Hopkins's Works (1852), vol. ii., pp. 158, 176.
- [9] Cambridge Platform, chap. iii. 7.

THE END.

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