

A SCRIPTURE MANUAL;
Or
A PLAIN REPRESENTATION
Of
The
ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM.
BY SAMUEL WILSON.

Search the Scriptures—John v. 38.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR.

Written by

Rev. S. H. Cone.

Rev. Samuel Wilson was the first pastor of the Baptist Church meeting in Little Prescott St. Goodwan's Fields, London and served the Church with affectionate fidelity and great success, until the period of his death, which occurred Oct. 6th, 1750. Dr. Gill preached his funeral sermon, in which he makes the following remarks:

“To give you the character of my deceased brother and your pastor, I want the eloquence of the deceased to paint him out in his proper colors, and to

describe him as the accomplished man, the real Christian, and the excellent minister. His natural parts were very quick and strong; he had a great vivacity of spirit a lively fancy and imagination, a retentive memory, a penetrating mind, and a solid judgment; which, with the advantages of literature, and above all, the grace of God bestowed on him, and spiritual light and knowledge given him in the mysteries of the gospel, made him the great man he was. His mien and deportment in the pulpit were grave and venerable, his gesture graceful, his address very moving and pathetic, his language striking, his discourses" spiritual, savory, and evangelical having a tendency to awaken the minds of sinners to a sense of sin and danger, and to relieve and comfort the distressed. He was indeed an eloquent preacher, and a warm defender of the peculiar doctrines of the Christian religion, and in one word, laborious, indefatigable, and successful; not a loiterer, but a laborer in his Lord's vineyard."

It would have; been easy, from the sermon of Dr. Gill, to have multiplied extracts, honorable to the literary attainments and ministerial excellencies of Brother Wilson; but the foregoing will be enough for your purpose. It has been useful and pleasant to find that his indefatigable labors were abundantly blessed; the church under his care was indeed a fruitful bough; a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. His writings, as well as his preaching, were of the first class, and his treatise on Baptism, has been highly esteemed by our English brethren, from the time it was written, in 1745.

PREFACE.

The very extraordinary zeal which has lately been expressed from the pulpit, and the press, for infant baptism, as an ordinance of God, or of unquestionable and divine authority, put me on reviewing the evidence, by which I was formerly convinced of the contrary.

And as I do not remember to have met with any thing on the subject exactly in this form, if it has no other advantage, it may point out a method of inquiry to those who make the word of God the rule of their faith and practice.

There are some few hints taken from modern authors; but the main is the judgment I 'formed of these things at the time referred to.

I have only to add, I am not conscious of a willful misinterpretation of any text, but have faithfully given what I apprehended to be the real sense of the Holy Ghost; to whose influence and blessing I humbly recommend it.

S. Wilson

A SCRIPTURE MANUAL, &c.

That Baptism is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, is admitted by the generality of those who call themselves Christians. That it is of standing use in the church of God, appears from the nature* of the institution when rightly understood, and the promise of the great Head of the Church to his ministers in the administration of it; "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

** A solemn acknowledgement of the divine glories, and a professed subjection to the authority of Father, Son, and Spirit, with a thankful recognition of the burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; in the view of which we desire to die unto sin, and live unto holiness.*

And as this ordinance is distinguished from others, in its limitation to a single administration, without repetition; great care should be taken that we act agreeable to the mind of Christ in it. What is to be done but once in the Christian's life; ought to be done well.

It is certain, men are apt to run into extremes. Some may possibly make too much of baptism; supposing it to be a regenerating, or justifying ordinance ; that it washes away the guilt of original sin, and is always accompanied with the conveyance of grace. Others may think as meanly or, lowly of it as a mere circumstantial ritual, or test of obedience to a positive precept, with little, if any spiritual meaning.

Nor are men, good and learned men, less divided about the subjects and mode of this sacred institution. If this arose from the obscurity or ambiguity of the terms in which it is revealed, it might carry the appearance of some reflection on the wisdom of the lawgiver; it being a duty of common concern, in which the plainest Christian is as deeply interested, as men of the greatest capacity or literature. But if it appears that God has not been wanting in this matter, and that the scripture account of it is in terms of a

determinate meaning, and easy to be understood; whatever darkness may attend our minds, we have no room to quarrel with revelation.

It is now near thirty years since I first examined this matter; and I am sure no one could enter into the inquiry with more earnest desire to find it on the side of the common practice; all my conversation and prospects leaning strongly that way.

The method I took was, I hope, in a dependence on God, whose direction I earnestly implored, to collect the whole evidence from scripture, to consider carefully every part separately, that I might know what was his good and acceptable " will in this service.

And whether I should happily attain the desirable end or not, I remember I found great peace in the integrity of the determination. Accordingly, looking up to heaven, I set myself to search the scriptures.

The questions before me were,

Whether believers, or persons professing faith and repentance only, Or believers and their natural offspring, or infants in common, were the proper subjects of baptism?

And whether the manner of administration was by immersion or plunging, or by sprinkling or pouring ? Or whether either might be used indifferently.

Considering that baptism was an ordinance peculiar to the Gospel dispensation, I thought it most natural, to expect an account of it in the New Testament. Accordingly I began with the gospel of St. Matthew, and in the third chapter met with the following description of John's baptism.

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea; and saying Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That, then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. And that when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you, &c. Bring forth; therefore, fruits meet for repentance, and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father, &c.

Here I found that John had a special commission given him, to preach and to baptize.

That the substance of his ministry was the doctrine of repentance, in the view of the near approach of the Messiah: "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."

That his success was very extraordinary, multitudes flocking after him, to hear him preach, and be baptized of him, "Jerusalem and all Judea, and the region round about," &c.

That the place of his preaching was the wilderness; and of his baptizing, the river Jordan—

That the action was baptizing—

And that the disposition of mind required in the subjects was repentance; and such repentance as should be productive of good fruits: and, where this was wanting, a relation to Abraham as their father did not entitle them to his baptism.

This appeared to me to be the sum of the account and I could not help observing, There is no intimation of children being brought by their parents to John—

Not a word of baptizing them:

No recommendation of this to their parents, as a duty to be afterwards performed by them, in consequence of being proselyte to his doctrine :

No hint of pouring or sprinkling; but that John baptized the people in the river Jordan, and that he did this on their repentance, or professing of it.

Thus far the evidence being for adult baptism, I proceeded to consider the baptism of our Lord, as described in the same chapter, verses 13,14,15,16. "Then com eth Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, to John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.— And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water," &c.

Here I observed our Lord did not send to John to come and baptize him, but went himself from Galilee to Jordan, the place where John was baptizing: offered himself as a subject. John, apprehensive of his superior glory, modestly refuses. Our Lord insists on it, as a part of righteousness it became him to fulfill. John baptized him, and as Mark (chap. 1: 9.) expressly says, in the river Jordan: and from the expression of his coming out of the water, I concluded it was by immersion.

I took notice of a difference between this and the former account. Here was no preaching on John's part; no repentance required of or confessed by our Lord Jesus previous to baptism; these the dignity and purity of his person rendered unnecessary. He had the richest unction of the Holy Spirit, and was holy harmless, and undefiled. . However he appeared with great zeal to engage in the duty; and I thought he spoke as the head of the church, and example of his people, when he said, "thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

The next place I consulted was Matt, 19: 13, 14, compared with Mark 10: 13. and Luke 18: 15. " Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

This I had often heard quoted in favor of infant baptism, and therefore, though I did not find the word baptize in the text, I thought it deserved a particular consideration.

And the first thing that came before me, was the desire of the parents or friends of those children, or what they aimed at in bringing them to Christ; and the evangelist Matthew says, it was that he should " put his hand on them and pray." Mark and Luke say, that he might touch them; neither of them give the least hint as to any desire or request that they might be baptized.

I then considered the "conduct of our Lord on this occasion—and the text says," he took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them." This and no more, our Lord did at this time, as I could find by comparing the evangelists.

This led me to consider the reluctance of the disciples that these children should be brought, and our Lord's displeasure, signified by his check of them, " Suffer little children to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

What the disciple's reason was for opposing them, is not recorded; I thought it could not be from an unwillingness that infants should be baptized, had that been the practice of John, or the known will of his master. This they could hardly be guilty of; nor does our Lord take the least notice of it in his reproof. It is likely they were uneasy he should be interrupted from attending to matters they judged of greater importance ; but however this was, I found they stood reproved, and the reason given was,

"Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Here I considered the kingdom of heaven must intend the kingdom of grace, or of glory.

And first I began with the kingdom of grace, and presently saw, that must be the invisible church or general assembly of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, or particular churches constituted in gospel order: For I could have no notion of a national church, under the New Testament dispensation. Accordingly I brought infants to each of these, endeavoring to come at the truth. As to the invisible church, consisting only, as I could see, of the election of grace, I thought whether all, or who among infants are a part of it, could be only known to God ; and this being a matter wholly unrevealed I could not see how it could give them a right to baptism.

As to particular churches, it did not appear that infants were claimed or treated as members ; nor could I understand their capacity for membership; which seemed to be founded in the New Testament, on a declared agreement of the saints in principles and experience.

I then considered the kingdom of glory, consisting in the beatific vision, and enjoyment of God. And here I presently found my wishes out run revelation; and in the issue was obliged to leave infants to the Sovereign mercy of him who is the judge of the earth, and will do nothing but what is right. Nor could I see on the supposition of their being all admitted to that kingdom, of which I could find no scripture assurance, that their right to baptism was evinced without a special order from the Lawgiver of the church, or some

necessary connection between that ordinance and eternal life Musing on these things, I looked a little farther, and soon found the difficulty removed, and the expression cleared up— " Of such is the kingdom of heaven ;" that is, as our Lord adds, " Verily, I say unto you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein or, as Luke has it, "in nowise enter therein."

It now appeared that our Lord was speaking of the temper, and not merely of the persons of children; and what greatly confirmed me was a parallel passage, Mat. 18: 2, 3. Jesus called a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. And adds, "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Here I compared the expressions of receiving Christ, and receiving one of these little ones, making profession of his name, and these little ones believing in him, with the dreadful nature of the threatening in offending them; and I could not see how these could be applicable to mere infants — but were all adapted to younger or weaker Christians.

Upon the whole, after the strictest search, I could find in these texts, nothing relating to baptism. Nor could I help thinking, had it been the intention of our Lord that infants should be baptized, he would have omitted the practice, or some discourse about it, on occasions which seemed so naturally to lead him to it.

Failing of my hoped for discovery of infant baptism here, I hastened to the commission recorded, Mat. 28: 18, 19, 20. compared with Mark 16: 15, 16. "All power is given to 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."

Struck with the supreme authority of a risen Jesus, I concluded from the solemnity of the introduction it must be a heinous affront, to add, alter, or

take away from the sacred commandments. And with a mind, I trust, possessed with reverence of his majesty, I entered into a meditation on the precept. Here I found the persons charged with the commission were the apostles who notwithstanding the eminence of their character, and peculiars of their after unction, were not to make, but publish and explain the laws of Christ. That and only that which they received of the Lord were they to declare to the church. And from the nature of the duty enjoined, and the reach of the promise even to the end of the world, I judged all Gospel ministers to be included in the commission.

The duty enjoined, or service to be performed, was to "teach and baptize. Or, as I understand it, to make disciples by teaching for I could not think of any other way — and then to baptize them.

The subjects of instruction and baptism, were all nations: or, Mark has it, all the world, and every creature, Gentiles as well as Jews; not every individual, for the absurdity of that was most glaring; but such as were capable of receiving the doctrine; and making a profession of it, in order to baptism. The time of baptizing, according to the evangelist Mark, seemed to be when they believed; or as Matthew has it, when they were taught or made disciples. And the manner in which, when I considered the principal, most common, and natural sense of the word baptism, with the use of in John's baptism, appeared to me by immersion. And I was the more confirmed in this from John's choosing a place to baptize in, where there was much water. John 3: 23. I tried, and tried again, to bring in infants under the general term of all nations but Mark's believeth and is baptized, with Matthew's teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you, obliged me to conclude it must be confined to the adult.

Thus far the balance seemed to be on the side of the Antipadobaptists; but having determined when I set out, to examine the whole evidence, I pursued the inquiry, and being thoroughly satisfied that the apostles could not mistake their master, I thought if I was mistaken in my apprehensions of his will, in the commission, I should be set right by their conduct, and I began with Peter's sermon, Acts 2.

The point, the apostle aimed at, I found in verse 36. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." In this he asserts the glory of the

person crucified, he was Lord of all, and charges them directly with his murder; they had crucified, or with wicked hands had slain him.

The effect was, "they were pricked in the heart, and cried out, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Upon which Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." It is added, ver. 41. Then they that gladly received the word were baptized, and the same day were added to them about three thousand souls. And they continued in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." And Ver. 40. All that believed were together, and had all things in common." &c.

Here I observed how Peter understood his commission; he began with preaching or teaching—waiting for the success of his labor. Nor did I find a word of baptism, till they were, pricked in their hearts; then indeed, and not before, he says. Repent and be baptized, in the name of the Lord Jesus ; which I understood after this manner: If you are indeed grieved and ashamed of your conduct towards this Jesus whom you have crucified ; if you are convinced by the spirit of God, he is the promised Messiah, the great Redeemer, and King of his church, and have a fiducial dependence on him for salvation; then you are to be baptized in his name, and may hope for a comfortable evidence in your baptism, of the remission of your sins, and that you shall receive the gift of, the Holy Ghost. And for their encouragement he adds, " for the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Now I thought the evidence of children's right to baptism began to open, especially as I had often heard this verse mentioned as an incontestable proof of it. But being willing to see with mine own eyes, I considered what this promise might be; the text indeed I found if not wholly silent, yet not directly expressive; but, on close reflection, I thought it must be either—The great promise of the Messiah, as the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations should be blessed; or, of the remission of sins for his sake; or, of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Accordingly I brought infants to each of these; and presently saw as to the first the great honor which was done to the Jews and their offspring, that Christ should be allied to them according to the flesh; but found no reason to

conclude, that all Abraham's natural children, were the children of the promise, as to the spiritual part of it; nor could I see how the general promise of the Messiah, as the seed of Abraham, could give them a right to baptism, if impenitent and uncalled, anymore than the Gentiles, or those afar off.

As to the promise of the remission of sins, I saw not how this could be claimed, but by believers. And as to the gift of the Holy Ghost, if it was of the same kind with what had been lately poured out on the apostles the thing spoke for itself; there was no room to expect it in a state of infancy.

By children, then, I apprehend, must be meant their offspring, when called; and then I could easily apply the promise to them, in any or all of the foregoing senses.

Upon the whole I found, Peter preached.

The people repented, and gladly received the word—were baptized—added to the church—and walked in fellowship ;—and encouragement was given to their offspring, that with the same experience, or when called, they might look for the same privileges.

I could not but think, had the apostle intended to express their right, as infants, to baptism, it was strange, very strange, that no notice should be taken, either then or afterwards, of the administration of it.

The next account of baptism I met with, was Acts 8:12. “But when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus, they were baptized, both men and women.”

Here I found the evangelist agree with the apostle, and both keeping close to the commission. Philip begins with preaching the gospel, “or the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Christ,” the people believed; and when they did so, and not before, he baptized them. And they are said to be men and women; a phrase I took to be expressive of the extent and limitation of the ordinance; not men only, but men and women; not men, women, and children, but men and women only.

And, indeed, I thought it could not be otherwise, if a personal, faith, and a profession of it, were prerequisite to baptism. And these I found were

insisted on by this evangelist, in the case of the eunuch, recorded in the same chapter: the account of which stands thus. Verses 26, 27, 38, &c.

“The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, &c. And he arose and went; and behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch, &c., had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning; and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, how can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.—The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, &c. The eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee of whom spake the prophet this, &c. Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him; and when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more ; and he went on his way rejoicing.”

This appeared to me to be a plain and expressive account of the subjects and mode of baptism. Philip begins with teaching, or preaching Christ as Saviour and Sovereign. The eunuch desires to be baptized, Philip insists on a confession of his faith. The eunuch gives him satisfaction; they both go out of the chariot, and Philip baptizes him. And I could not help observing the peculiarity of the phrases; they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and when they were come up out of the water, &c., which strongly impressed my mind, that the baptism of the eunuch was by immersion; and must be designed to describe something more than barely going to the side or brink of the water.

The next instance of baptism was that of Cornelius, recorded Acts 10. And of him it is said, v. 2. he was a devout man, and one that feared. God with all his house. Which I understood not of mere babes, if he had any: but of those who were in some measure grown up capable, under a divine influence, of forming some apprehensions of the glory of God, and their obligations to

revere and serve him. By the direction of an angel, he sends for Peter.— Peter begins with preaching. God owns his ministry. The Holy Ghost falls on all those which heard his word; and Peter asks, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized."

Here I found the commission strictly regarded and kept up to, and an exact conformity with the aforementioned instances of baptism; and comparing the expressions of "fearing God with all his house," v. 2. and their receiving the "like gift with those who believed in the Lord Jesus," mentioned chap. 11:17. I saw no reason to suppose that infants were of that number.

This led me to consider the conversion and baptism of Lydia, of whom we read, Acts 16:14. that she was "a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, and heard the apostle; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul; and was baptized, and her household."

As to Lydia, I thought there could be no dispute, whether she believed before she was baptized; the text asserting that she worshipped God that the "Lord opened her heart." As to her household, what it consisted of, is not said; nor is any notice taken of her husband, if she had any; all that appeared to me, from a careful examination of the account was, that she was not at home, or in the place of her common residence; that she came to sell her purple, had a house for that purpose, and probably servants to assist her in her trade; nor could I see it altogether consistent with prudence, to bring a family of young children, if she had any, into the hurries of business.

Upon the whole, I thought it might be such a house as Cornelius had; who, if they did not fear God before, were converted by the apostle and baptized with their mistress. And what greatly tended to confirm me in this was, that the persons the apostle found in Lydia's house when he entered, into it, are called brethren, and were comforted by him; which cannot be said of infants; as also the account of the conversion of the jailer and his family, contained in the same chapter, ver. 25,26, &c. which is as follows:

"At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, &c. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, &c.. The keeper of the prison would have killed himself.—Paul cried with a loud voice, saving, do thyself no harm. The keeper called for a Light and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and

Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straightway.

And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

The fact here I thought stood thus. The jailer, under the power of strong convictions, cries out, What must I do to be saved? The apostle answers, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house. That is, as I understood it, if they believe also. Upon which they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And God blessing his word to the jailer and his family, they believed, were baptized, and rejoiced.

This led me to consider what is said of Crispus and the Corinthians, Acts 18: 8. "And Crispus the chief ruler of the synagogue believed on the Lord with all his house, and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized."

Here I found the master and the family believers, and that the Corinthians heard, believed and were baptized. And as hearing and believing are mentioned previous to the baptizing of the Corinthians, I concluded it was equally so, in the instance of Crispus and his house.

The last instance I met with was in 1 Corinthians 1: 14, 15, 16, which speaks of baptizing the household of Stephanus. " I thank God I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius ; lest any should say, that I baptized in my own name: and I baptized also the house hold of Stephanus," &c.

What this household was I gathered from the 16th chap, and 15th verse, where the apostle says, "I beseech you, brethren, to know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." Whence I thought they could not be infants, but believers in Christ, converted and baptized by the apostle: or they could hardly be called first fruits, and be said to addict themselves to the ministry of the saints; whether we understand it of their relieving their wants, or preaching the everlasting gospel.

Having thus gone through the history of baptism, as administered by the apostles, I proceeded to consider the account they give of the meaning or spiritual design of it: and with this view, compared Romans 6: 3, 4, with Colossians 2:12. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism, into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection knowing that our old man is crucified," &c. And in Colossians I found the same metaphor kept up: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God."

In forming a judgment of the design of the Holy Ghost in these passages, I thought it necessary to consider first the description or character of the persons baptized; and they are said, ver. 12., "to be circumcised with the circumcision made without hands," which I knew not how to interpret so well if any thing, as the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost; agreeable to which they are further represented as the subjects " of that faith, which is the operation of God or as it is elsewhere called, precious faith, and the faith of God's elect. 2 Pet. 1:1. & Tit. 1: 1.

The metaphor came next under consideration. They were buried with Christ in baptism. This seemed much better to answer to immersion than sprinkling or pouring—and supposing that the faith mentioned might refer to their being buried as well as rising; this I thought might be the meaning of their being "planted in the likeness of Christ's death."

That as in the ordinance of the supper, there is a believing memorial of Christ's love in his sufferings and death; so in baptism, the saint, by an eye of faith is called to attend to his condescension when imprisoned in the grave, and his glory as a conqueror, in breaking the bands of death. In each of which he sustained the character of the surety of the covenant and head of the body. And as the actions of breaking the bread, and pouring out the wine, are expressive of his agony and death; the immersion and rising of the person baptized, might refer to his burial and resurrection.

I then proceeded to examine 1 Corinthians 7: 14, a text I had often heard quoted as proving, if not in direct terms, yet by just consequence, the right of

infants to baptism. The words are, " For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean, but now they are holy."

I began with the occasion of the words, and I could find nothing relating to baptism in the context. An affair evidently of another kind, employed the mind of the Apostle; to wit, the necessity or expediency of attending to the duties of the marriage relation, where one was a convert, and the other an infidel. This, I thought was the point in view. And it stands determined, that the "wife is not to depart," nor the "husband to put her away;" unless some other circumstances should render it necessary and warrantable.

And to remove the scruples of a tender spirit, it is added, that the unbeliever is sanctified by the believer; by which, I could not understand an internal spiritual purity of mind, this being the work of the Divine Spirit; but, as every thing else, so the marriage relation is sanctified to the believer, by " the word of God and prayer." The ignorance or enmity of the infidel would not render the saints' conscientious and faithful discharge of his duty less necessary or acceptable.

And to enforce his determination of their continuing together, the apostle adds, " else were your children unclean, but now they are holy."

Here I considered, how children may be said to be unclean; and I thought they are so "by nature," being shapen in iniquity," and " conceived in sin." The guilt and pollution of which can only be removed by the blood of Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost. As to this I could see no difference between the seed of believers, and others; all are "concluded under sin," and by "nature children of wrath."

I then remembered to have heard, that all out of the pale of the Jewish church were unclean, as opposed to that holiness which is attributed to the whole congregation of Israel, and that such uncleanness attends the children of unconverted Gentiles now; but considering Peter's vision in which he is forbid to " call that common which God had cleansed;" that " the middle wall of partition is broken down" that in regeneration, or the new man, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian Scythian, bound nor free, but Christ is all and in all."—Remembering the peculiars of the Jewish church as hereditary and national, are now utterly set aside, I could see no more uncleanness in one infant than in another.

Upon the whole I thought the affair settled by the apostle being wholly matrimonial; it was highly probable, the holiness and uncleanness were of the same kind; or related to apparent legitimacy or illegitimacy.

Nor could I see on the supposition of an external sort of holiness derived to an infant from a believing parent, that we are to conclude its right to baptism without a special direction from the Lawgiver of the church.

This led me to consider the apostle's account of Abraham, Romans 4:11, 12, 13. "As the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised ; and that the promise is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end it might be sure to all the seed ; not to that only which is of the law but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. And that he received the sign of circumcision, a zeal of the righteousness of faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised.

This I found commonly insisted on to prove that Abraham's covenant was the covenant of grace—that a part of his seed were the believing Gentiles, and their offspring—and that as Abraham's children were circumcised, the children of believers should be baptized."

To come at a certainty in this matter, I thought it might be proper carefully to inquire, what the covenant was which God made with Abraham; the duties required and privileges to be enjoyed under it; the persons interested in it, and manner of conveying and signifying that interest. The covenant I found at large in the 17th of Genesis, and it appeared "to me to be of a peculiar kind; some things belonging to Abraham in his personal character, as that he should have a numerous posterity; that kings should descend from him ; the making over the land of Canaan to him ; and the particular honor of being the father of the Messiah according to the flesh. This part of the covenant I thought distinguishable from the covenant of grace; for I could not but see he might have all these, without any special relation to God as a child. But when God promises to be "his God," to "bless him," and that "in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed;" I looked upon these to be promises as expressive of privileges of another, and more valuable kind than any of the former.

And as the covenant appeared thus to be of a mixed nature, and the blessings distinct; so I found his seed to be described very differently in scripture;

sometimes intending all his natural children ; sometimes the person of Christ only ; and here and in, other places, all his spiritual offspring,' whether Jews or Gentiles.

As to his children, who were only so after the flesh, they had their outward advantages; but not, as I could see, the blessings of the covenant of grace.

As to Christ, it did not appear any blessing was derived from Abraham to him; but oh the contrary, Abraham received the blessing in and from the Messiah, his root as well as offspring. And as to his spiritual seed, they were all, whether Jews or Gentiles, partakers with him of the same faith and salvation.

Circumcision I thought to be a sign or badge of separation to the Jews in common, as distinguished from the Gentiles, and perhaps of regeneration to his spiritual seed; but conveyed, as I could see, no spiritual blessing to either. And, I thought, if the baptism of infants under the gospel was to be argued from circumcision, the apostle would certainly have given some hint of it; whereas his discourse is confined to believers, without a word of their children.

That circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith to Abraham, is indeed asserted ; but that it was to his natural seed, I could form no idea of; at least until they had, by faith, a view of the same righteousness by which Abraham their father was justified.

And the apostle seemed to explain the whole matter, Rom. 9: 5, 6, 7, 8. "They are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither because they are of the seed of Abraham, are they all children; that is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." I concluded, if this was true of the natural seed of Abraham, a believer, certainly it could be no less so of the offspring of Gentile believers.

As to the privileges of the Jews above the Gentiles, the apostle is express, that unto them "pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; and that from them, as concerning the flesh. Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Rom. 9: 4, 5; or, agreeable, to what he before had said, when putting the question, What advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit

is there in circumcision? He answers, Much every way; chiefly because unto them were committed the oracles of God.

So that it evidently appeared the church of the Jews had its glory; but as the same apostle tells us, 2 Cor. 3: 10, 11, this was as " no glory, if compared with the glory which excelleth. For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." That is, as I understood it, all the carnal part of Jewish glory was swallowed up, and utterly set aside by the simplicity, spirituality, and liberality of the gospel dispensation; and as it was formerly, " all were not Israel, which were of Israel, so now he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh : but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God." Romans, 2: 28,29.

I then proceeded to consider the excision of the Jews and the taking in of the Gentiles, recorded, Rom. 11: 15, 16, in which, though there is no express mention of baptism, or of the baptism of infants, yet I found commonly produced as declarative of a federal holiness, conveyed from parents to children; in consequence of which they might, yea ought to be baptized.

The words of the text are.

“If the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches; and if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree," &c.

That converted Gentiles stand on a level with believing Jews, I had already seen. That the peculiar form of the Jewish church was abolished at the death of Christ, I found generally acknowledged: that being the " ministration which was to be done away," to make room for that "which was to remain;" so that I could not tell how to conceive of the 'Gospel church incorporated with the Jewish, they being always represented as distinct, or distinguishable the one from the other.

By the root, then, I understood Abraham —by the branches his natural offspring— by the wild olive the Gentiles in a natural state; who, upon receiving the grace of God, became the spiritual branches of Abraham the

father of the faithful: and were equally interested with his believing natural branches in all the special privileges of the covenant of grace.

This I thought to be the most natural sense of the text nor could I see how this could have any relation to baptism, whether of the adult or infants.

The next reference to baptism I found 1 Cor. 11:1. 2. "I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea."

To understand this I thought it proper to inquire into the fact, as recorded by Moses, which I thought would give light to the allusion.

And in Exodus 14:19, &c. we are told, "the pillar of cloud went from before the face of the Israelites, and it stood behind them ; and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and gave light by night to the other. And the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land; and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground, and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left."

Here I found, that part of the cloud which was next to the Israelites was bright, clear, and comfortable; not the least intimation of rain falling upon them. The sea was made dry ground, and the waters were a wall unto them, on the right hand, and on the left; so that I concluded, the term baptized must refer to their situation in the midst of the sea, encompassed by these walls, and attended with the cloud, rather than to any water coming out of the one, or sprinkling dashings, from the other; which must have been very troublesome, to such a body of people in their march; and, as I thought, inconsistent with the account of their standing in, and coming out of the sea on dry ground.

This brought me to the last place of scripture, which speaks directly of the nature and meaning of the ordinance of baptism, 1 Peter 3: 20,21.—" The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing; wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting

away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Here it appeared that there were some circumstances attending the ark, and the salvation of Noah and his family by water, which were figurative or typical of baptism; and when I examined the account as given by Moses, Genesis 7. I found it stood thus: the ark was God's contrivance and appointment, and it was a large hollow vessel, in which Noah and his family, and the creatures with him, were for a time as it were buried; and especially this was the case, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and they in the midst of that deluge, which destroyed all the rest of the world. This appeared to me to answer to immersion in baptism; and I could not think the Holy Ghost would refer us to the water of a flood, as a type of a little quantity of that element, made use of when poured or sprinkled on the face of an infant. And as Noah and his family were saved by water, the believer is saved by baptism, not efficaciously or meritoriously, but declaratively and instrumentally. In the profession of his faith, he declares his entrance into Christ as the ark of salvation, and his baptism is a lively representation of the burial and resurrection of him, who died for his offences, and rose again for his justification.

And as Noah built the ark, and entered into it in obedience to the command of God; the believer is baptized from a principle of conscience towards God; yea, a good that is as I thought, an enlightened, renewed conscience.

Having thus gone through the scripture account of the ordinance of baptism I found myself obliged to conclude the balance was greatly on the side of adult believers as the only declared subjects; and of plunging or immersion, as the only mode of that sacred institution.

I well knew, that, many godly and learned persons thought otherwise; but not daring to call any man master on earth, and remembering the account I must shortly give to HIM who said, " Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness,"— I determined to comply with my duty; and, on the closest reflection, have seen no reason to repent of it.

The end.