

PAEDOBAPTISM

and

CIRCUMCISION

collated from:

INFANT BAPTISM

A SCRIPTURAL SERVICE

by

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With explanatory footnotes by the Editor.

(I) EVIDENCE FOR INFANT BAPTISM ARRANGED.

Our next business is to show that the baptism of infants, in the restrictive sense already specified, is “agreeable to, and founded on the Word of God.” A point affecting so essentially the constitution and character of the Christian church, claims the most deliberate and prayerful investigation. Scripture testimony in support of our position we hold to be both ample and decisive; and we are called upon to adduce it on correct principles of arrangement, and to estimate its force with impartiality and candour.

Among writers who espouse conflicting opinions on this branch of the controversy, we have observed marked diversity in the order of arranging the materials which are universally acknowledged to be more or less necessary for determining the Scriptural subjects of the ordinance. By one class of authors the decision of the entire question appears to be suspended on the evidence of the apostolic commission; and these generally place that document, or their own version of it, in the forefront of the argument, while opposing considerations derived from the Abrahamic covenant and other sources are dealt with as so many difficulties or objections. The advocates for Paedobaptism commonly pursue a very different course. With many of them the testimony believed to be furnished by the ancient economy takes the lead in place if not in importance; while, in some treatises, the patriarchal principle of admission to church membership, combined with the household baptisms recorded in the New Testament, is permitted to decide the point, without special regard to the voice of the commission. In some recent (i.e. early to mid 19th Cent. *Ed.*) works in support of Paedobaptism, the argument founded on the analogy of circumcision is in whole or in part abandoned, and the authors at once join issue with

their opponents on the ground of the commission, as interpreted practically in the record of apostolic baptisms. Dr. Carson¹ also occupies this ground, and enters at once upon the exegesis of the commission without reference to those anterior considerations which appear to us indispensable to a sound and enlightened interpretation of that important document. We do not indeed object to the value and the prominence which this acute author assigns to the commission; but we hold that if it is to be thoroughly understood in the depth and breadth of its import, we must first apply our minds to the examination of the primitive church, its organization, covenant character, and Scriptural membership, and especially its symbolic rite of initiation. The propriety of beginning at the fountain-head will, it is conceived, appear from the following remarks.—

1. The law of admission to the Christian church may be expected to receive light from Scriptural views of divine legislation on the same subject under former economies. The New Testament, all parties grant, cannot be rightly understood without an intimate knowledge of the Old. The idiom, imagery, and thoughts of the Hebrew Scriptures may be traced in every page of the writings of evangelists and apostles.² Nay more:— without affirming the absolute identity of the Jewish and Christian churches, we state without fear of contradiction, that these sacred institutions are one in many of their essential features, and exhibit throughout a close and interesting relationship. Not only are the great fundamental principles of religion recognised by these communities respectively; but both spring from the same covenant, and are subject to statutes framed and promulgated by the divine author of the covenant. More particularly the ancient church was provided with laws regulating admission to its communion; and it would be strange if the clear understanding of these would afford no assistance in the interpretation of corresponding laws under the Christian dispensation. In other cases of legislation the meaning of a given *act* often derives important light from its predecessors relating to the same subject; and hence we find lawyers by a retrospective survey carried perhaps through centuries, expounding more lucidly a law which may have been passed in our own day. On such grounds we maintain the superior excellence and utility of our proposed arrangement.

2. The order of procedure which we adopt is countenanced by the most approved method of discussing the mode of baptism. We traverse the literature of ancient Greece for occurrences of the principal term denoting mode, and our extended

¹ Dr. Carson. The reference here is to Dr. Alexander Carson 1776-1844, scholarly author of the seminal book on the Baptist position, *Baptism, in its Mode and Subjects*. This was in its 5th edition by 1857, being printed both in the UK and America. All subsequent refs. to Carson herein are to this work.

² As St. Augustine well encapsulated it some 1600 years ago: "*Novum Testamentum Vetera latet, Vetus in Novo patet.*", which may be rendered as: "The New Testament is in the Old concealed, and the Old in the New revealed." We would also direct the readers attention to the enormous lists of Old Testament quotations and allusions found in the New Testament as listed in the Index of quotations at the end of the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament, which number an astonishing 2,645 !

review meets the approval of all who are competent to form a correct judgment. "Commence with the classics"—is the watchword.³ We even avail ourselves of certain related terms, the applications of which may shed a ray, however feeble and flickering, on the main topic of inquiry. These investigations are, by universal consent, previous and preparatory to the discussion of mode on the ground of the apostolic commission. Now on a principle evidently analogous, we preface the exposition of the law of admission to the New Testament church with a comprehensive view of the law of admission to the Old Testament church. We may safely appeal to those whose studies have rendered them familiar with the Baptist controversy in both its branches, whether the previous law of church membership may not bear as legitimately on the discovery of the rightful *subjects* of baptism, as previous ablutions Jewish and Gentile are admitted to do upon the discovery of the scriptural *mode* of baptism. God established what we may style a patriarchal law of entrance into his church, with which law the Jewish people were long and intimately acquainted. *Among the same people he first promulgated the Christian law of church membership.* Under these circumstances, and bearing in mind the analogy of the discussion respecting mode, we assert it to be the duty of the interpreter to prepare for expounding the law of the commission by a review of antecedent legislation on the same subject.⁴

3. Not to multiply particulars, we observe that this course seems to be plainly pointed out in the New Testament itself. Baptist writers accuse us of the inconsistency of deriving from the ancient economy what we define to be a *Christian* ordinance. The charge is a bootless cavil. True indeed we travel back to the Abrahamic covenant as involving principles and privileges identical with those which distinguish the new dispensation. But are we not taught to do so by the apostle, Gal. iii. 17, when he declares that covenant to have been *confirmed of God in Christ*, four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the Mosaic law? Is not the same lesson inculcated by the solemn assurance, Gal. iii. 8, that the author of salvation "preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed"? If therefore the father of the faithful had the gospel preached to him, and if the dispensation established with him was essentially evangelical, or even if it presents broad features of resemblance to Christianity, we have a strong reason for

3. Wilson here espouses the common lexicographical and philological school of his day. Suffice it to say that it was defective, but that nevertheless, not entirely without use. Its defective nature was in that it allowed men such as Dr. Carson some foundation for their Baptist assertions, and was no doubt an instrumental cause in converting Carson from the Presbyterianism he was brought up in to the Immersionistic position. But even he has to make important concessions, notwithstanding the "classical" presuppositions that went in to lexicography in those days.

4. Cf. particularly the amazing work of **Charles D. Provan**: *The Church is Israel Now* (publ. Vallecito Calif., Ross House Books 1987). Whilst the book is little more than a collation of Scriptures from both Testaments proving and elucidating the fundamental truth which Wilson is avowing here, the effect is astounding. Provan's book has been overlooked by too many, and it is worthy of much greater circulation. It is in itself a devastating blow to the baptistic position on infants and the Church.

discussing the patriarchal law of membership preparatory to the exposition of the Christian law of membership.⁵ This view supplies a definitive answer to the question which Campbell of America,⁶ and other Baptists put with characteristic confidence in its power to puzzle their opponents; viz.; there was a church in the world at least two thousand years before Abraham; and the question is, why does not the Paedobaptist go back to that primeval church for the law of infant membership? Why stop with Abraham? Our reason is that the New Testament directs us to the covenant with Abraham, as laying the foundation of the Christian church. And had the same authority pointed us to an elder federal transaction similarly related to the gospel, we should have cheerfully inquired into the character, of that, more venerable, ancestor of our common Christianity. But as our inspired guide has been pleased to conduct us simply to the Abrahamic covenant, we must be content with a less antiquarian original than our opponents suggest; while it shall be our endeavour to make amends for the comparatively recent date of this covenant by showing the completeness of its provisions in their bearing on the principle of admission into the Christian church.

(II) INFANTS INCLUDED IN THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

I. In addition to the national or civil advantages secured to the seed of Abraham by the covenant of their great ancestor, that beneficent arrangement comprehended also spiritual blessings. The promises which compose the substance of the Abrahamic covenant, traced in the order observed in **Genesis Ch.17** we find to be the following:—1. A numerous posterity (v. 2), restricted federally to the line of Isaac (v. 19). 2. An intimate relationship to God, conveyed in the cheering declaration, “I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee,” (v. 7). 3. “All the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession,” (v. 8). That temporal blessings of great value are guaranteed in this transaction cannot be called in question;—it is our present business to unfold the *spiritual* treasures with which it teems for the descendants of Abraham, and for the church of God till the end of the world.

The provisions of this covenant embrace spiritual good not merely in symbol but

5. Again, for a modern proof of Wilson’s view here, see **Provan**, op cit. footnote 4 above. Provan actually gives a list of Old Testament verses referring to Israel which are quoted in the New Testament as referring to Christians. Thus in one blow he demolishes Dispensationalism, and the Baptist position on infants, in that that latter is founded on a “Dispensational” attitude to the OT and to Israel.

6. **Campbell**, of America, indeed! He was born in 1788 near Ballymena Co. Antrim, of all places! He emigrated to the USA as a licentiate minister of the Scots Seceders (Boston’s denomination) and appears to have imbibed a full dose of the Amyraldianism then rising amongst the Seceders. Campbell was immersed in 1812, and inaugurated the *Campbellite Baptists*. By the late 19th Cent. they numbered some 600,000 communicants. They carried out the Baptist doctrine to its logical conclusions making sacramental baptism become “regeneration or conversion” and thence “all experimental religion and all spirituality are rejected and ridiculed, and Christianity appears as a stark, gaunt, grinning skeleton, as destitute of spiritual life and power for good as Romanism in its most degenerate days.” Cf. **W.A. Mackay**: *Immersion and Immersionists* (Toronto: William Briggs c.a. 1880) and page 5.

in substance, as may be successfully argued from the terms in which God introduced it to the patriarch, and from its intrinsic character. "The Lord appeared unto Abraham, (v. 1;) and said unto him, "I am the Almighty God; - walk before me and be thou perfect." Does not this verse solemnly and forcibly inculcate on Abraham a life of holy obedience? Even the more jejune and unspiritual interpreters of Scripture, such as Rosenmüller⁷ whose main strength lies in a cold literary exposition, regard the command to "walk before God," as enjoining such a devoted life as Enoch lived upon the earth, (Gen. v. 22) while Ainsworth⁸ says expressly, "This walking comprehendeth both true faith, and careful obedience to God's commandments." By thus inculcating on Abraham a holy and upright deportment, does not the Lord intimate in terms not to be mistaken, that this course alone would be consistent with the revealed spirituality of covenant obligation? But let us inquire whether the body of this federal transaction is not in complete harmony with its divine introduction. "Walk before me and be thou perfect." v. 2, "And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly." The argument derives strength from the close relation between the covenant and its introductory precept;—the exemplary religious conduct which God demanded of Abraham, being by implication enjoined on his numerous posterity. In vv. 7 and 8, we find still more direct and decisive testimony — "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, *to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.... and I will be their God*". In these verses Jehovah announces as the very essence of this precious covenant, that he would be the God of Abraham and of his seed. Such words are indubitably pregnant with spiritual meaning.

Carson thinks this promise has a letter and a spirit, and that it "was fulfilled in the letter by his (God's) protection of Israel in Egypt,—his deliverance of them from bondage,—his taking them into covenant at Sinai,—and all his subsequent dealings with them in their generations, till they were cast off by their rejection of Christ."—p. 214. But this is to evade, instead of manfully encountering and removing the difficulty. The protection, the deliverance, and the other dealings to which he refers, may have respected Israel merely in their civil capacity; and as the Sinaitic covenant is often expounded by Baptists on the same narrow political principle, Dr. Carson's (notion of the) fulfilment of this promise in the letter appears discreetly to avoid the recognition of the existence of the ancient church. Yet it is upon the constitution and membership of that church under the immediate superintendence of the Author of the covenant, that the argument for infant baptism is entirely founded. As the God

⁷ **Ernst Friedrich Karl Rosenmüller**, 1768-1835, German orientalist, expert in Arabic and Hebrew, Prof. at Leipzig University. Wrote extensively, notably the 5 vol. *Handbuche für Biblische Kritik und Exegese* (Göttingen 1797-1800). He exercised considerable influence on evangelical theology in his day by furnishing exact information on the state of the Orient both ancient and modern. Cf. **Schaff-Herzog**: In loc. for full details.

⁸ **Henry Ainsworth**, 1560-1623, English puritan of the "Brownist" or Independent tradition. Exiled to Amsterdam he gained great fame as a Hebrew scholar. Cf. **Schaff-Herzog**: In loc.

of Abraham and of his seed, the Lord organized the church of the fathers, appointed her officers and ordinances, enacted her laws, and arranged all her solemnities of religious worship. Was there nothing spiritual in all this—are we to resolve it all into the secularities of Dr. Carson's literal fulfilment? Not solicitous, however, about a mere name, we take our stand upon the solid fact that this promise of the covenant, in its religious aspect was repeatedly urged upon his ancient people by God himself, as an incentive to holy obedience. How often does this federal engagement show itself, with an unquestionably spiritual import, in the code which heaven framed for the guidance of the visible church, "the church in the wilderness"? (Acts 7: 38). How often do we read, as in Lev. xviii. 4, "Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God"—xix. 3, 4, "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God. Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: *I am the Lord your God.*" Nay, in the case of the restored captives the same rich promise is coupled (Jer. xxiv. 7,) with the *gift of an heart to know the Lord*, and with the cordial return of an apostate people to their covenant God. Thus it appears incontestably that in the history of the tribes of Israel, *the church visible* realized in the fulfilment of *this promise* something better and more nourishing than the husk provided in the *letter* of Dr. Carson. His account of its spirit we hold to be in one respect still more objectionable; but it will meet us at another turn of the argument. It is worthy of remark that even Rosenmüller, with all his *literal* and earthly propensities, regards this assurance to Abraham and his seed, as implying, "*not only* that the divine Being would be *worshipped* by them, but also that he would distinguish them from other nations by peculiar tokens of goodness." To this learned commentator, the *spiritual* import of the promise appears too obvious to be challenged; while he is concerned to demonstrate that temporal benefits are likewise included.

II. The rite of circumcision as the sign of the Abrahamic covenant sustained an intimate relation to the spiritual blessings, which were accessible within the pale of the ancient church.

The true nature of Abraham's church will probably be best understood by studying the spiritual relations of the token of Abraham's covenant. We have seen that God (El-Shaddai Gen. 17:1) federally pledged himself to be a God to Abraham and to his seed. This constituted an essential, and indeed the most momentous promise of the Abrahamic covenant; and that it involved spiritual blessings is manifest from the terms employed, and the connections in which the promise is found in the inspired volume. Now we admit that circumcision was a token of the covenant regarded as securing certain civil rights; but we feel bound to contend for the more important fact that *it sustained a similar relation to the covenant regarded as securing sacred interests*. By the same covenant Abraham and his descendants acquired a right to Canaan as their inheritance and an interest in Jehovah as their God, both privileges being ratified by the common seal of circumcision.

It may be objected that in the case of multitudes of Abraham's posterity, this observance was attended with no spiritual efficacy whatever, and that therefore the seal and significance of the covenant issued in no beneficial result. But is not the objection equally valid with reference to the possession of the earthly Canaan? In the Israelites who took their departure from Egypt we witness the circumcised seed of Abraham; yet because of unbelief "their carcases fell in the wilderness." (Heb.3:17). The mere token of the covenant betrays admitted inadequacy to secure either temporal or spiritual blessings; nay the very promises of which the covenant consists impose obligations the faithful discharge of which is indispensable to the enjoyment of its rich and generous provisions.

It is a grand mistake to assert, as some have done, that mere flesh—natural descent—when circumcision was superadded, formed an unchallenged title to the membership, and even qualified for the sacerdotal office, in the Old Testament church. The assertion may impose on the ill-informed, but to subject it to scrutiny is to achieve its exposure. It is true indeed that for both objects, circumcision was absolutely essential; but it is equally true that in regard to all the higher interests contemplated in the Abrahamic covenant, and embodied in the Mosaic institute, unbelief and consequent disobedience converted circumcision into uncircumcision. On this central point we differ radically from the views of Dr. Carson which are palpably erroneous. "The Scribes, and Pharisees and Sadducees," says he, "with the whole unbelieving body of the Jewish nation, enjoyed all the ordinances of the Jewish dispensation, by as valid a title as the apostles of Christ. . . . The ministrations of the priests were never objected to because they were carnal men, and rejected the Messiah when he manifested himself to Israel." Again—"Jewish ordinances shadowed good things to come, and were appointed for the nation in general, which had only a typical holiness."—(Carson op cit. p. 229). These statements derive their plausibility from a sophism of too common occurrence, and they do gross injustice to the character of the ancient economy. When Dr. Carson speaks of the title of unbelieving Jews to God's ordinances he betrays want of discrimination. The Jews had *a valid title* to the ordinances, *as Jews*; but *as unbelievers* they had *none*. This distinction is founded, and it stands out prominently through the whole history of God's ancient people. In the wilderness the Israelites *as such* had title to divine protection; but *as unbelievers* the wrath of God waxed hot against them, and consumed them by thousands. See Ps. lxxviii. 21, 22; comp. Numb. xi. 1—3. The case was the same in the days of our Saviour. Through the forbearance of God, the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, were not yet driven from ordinances which multitudes of them criminally abused. But that forbearance was no proof of the validity of their title in the sight of that God whose mercy to their fathers had so often procrastinated the hour of retributive visitation. And when the Lord eventually cast them away as a people, was it because the genealogical title had failed—was it because they no longer possessed the flesh, and bones, and blood - of Abraham?

No, "because of UNBELIEF they were broken off."—Rom. xi. 20.

"But," says Dr. Carson, "the ministrations of the priests were never objected to; because they were carnal men." If the writer intended us to draw from the silence of our Saviour an inference favourable to the lawfulness of the ministrations of a carnal priesthood as such, he has sadly overshot the mark. As well might we conclude that these Jewish priests were men of excellent character, on the ground that Jesus never denounces them as a class, or thunders against them the words of woe which fell upon the Scribes, Pharisees, and Lawyers.

But as regards the general question, we contend that the discharge of its offices by carnal men was not the use, but the abuse of the Jewish priesthood. Hophni and Phinehas were carnal men in the priests' office, and for their carnality God slew them with the sword of the Philistines. Nadab and Abihu were carnal men, who, probably under the influence of intoxication, offered strange fire before the Lord; and by fire from God—meet punishment—they were consumed. On the latter occasion, the Holy One laid down this great religious principle, "I will be *sanctified* in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified," Lev. x. 3,—a principle which strikes forcibly against the idea of allowed carnality in the ancient priesthood, the duties of which combined with divine instruction and warning, to inculcate on those who discharged them the necessity of personal holiness.

Dr. Carson speaks of the nation in general as having "*only* a typical holiness." This we consider to be the primary falsehood of the system which labours to carnalize the Mosaic dispensation. A typical holiness no doubt belonged to the church and nation of Israel; and a typical holiness some consider also to belong to the Christian church. But it cannot be asserted with truth of either, that it has *only* a typical holiness; nor was it merely or even chiefly in this view, that God designated Israel *a holy people*. On the contrary he enjoined real personal holiness—a life of obedience to God, in accordance with their federal engagements—as the only proper and secure basis of this honourable designation. "*If ye will obey my voice indeed,*" said Jehovah to the tribes of Jacob, "*and keep my covenant,* then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.—*And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an HOLY NATION.*" Ex. xix. 5, 6. Is there nothing but "type" here? With these words before us, is it practicable to eliminate spirituality from the ancient church? On this point, to which it will be requisite to advert hereafter, there is less difference than many writers imagine between Judaism and the religion of Christ. Both embrace the spirit and power of godliness, though in different degrees of development, and such was the state of religious disclosure and obligation even in the former, that the *faithless* observance of God's ordinances by priesthood or people was *not innocent*, however it might pass with impunity.

The relations which circumcision sustained to this spiritual element may be discovered by considering the rite, as it presented an emblem of moral purity, and involved a corresponding responsibility.

1. As an emblem of purity it requires little elucidation. Circumcision, whatever

may have been its origin, was not confined to the seed of Abraham. It existed in various nations, and among the Egyptian priesthood, it appears to have been universal. Herodotus, Diodorus, Philo, and Strabo attest its observance in Egypt; and Herodotus extends it to the Ethiopians. It is a striking fact that of the nations remaining in Canaan, the Philistines alone are spoken of in Scripture as uncircumcised. In regard to Egypt, modern investigation has confirmed the evidence of history; while the rite was confessedly symbolic of moral purity.

Our chief concern is, however, with circumcision, as it formed the sign of the Abrahamic covenant, and the symbol of religious purity under the ancient economy. To Israel, it has been said, belonged the circumcision of the flesh, for which has been substituted among Christians the circumcision of the heart. This is doubtless a summary method of divesting the sign of the covenant of all pretensions to spirituality; but happily it derives no countenance from the sacred records. Paul, it is true, addresses the Colossians (ii. 11,) “as circumcised with the circumcision made without hands:” but it is equally true that the Jewish church was not unacquainted with the spiritual, or heart circumcision. On the great fact that God had chosen Israel as his peculiar people, Moses founds the exhortation, Deut. x. 16, “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your *heart*, and be no more stiff-necked.” The same truth is still more strikingly exhibited in Deut. xxx. 6, “*And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.*” From such passages we learn that “the circumcision made without hands,”—the removal of spiritual defilement,—instead of constituting an exclusive privilege of the Christian church, was also realized under the Mosaic dispensation; and hence Dr. Carson contradicts the testimony of Scripture when he asserts that “the circumcision of Christ came in the room of the circumcision of Moses.” *On the contrary, the preceding testimonies demonstrate that the circumcision of Christ may be truly said to have coexisted with the circumcision of Moses.* Both dispensations possessed, though in different measures, the same spiritual cleansing; and in both an external rite was the appointed symbol of inward purity. Dr. Carson states very properly that “circumcision and baptism correspond in meaning. They both relate to the removal of sin, the one by cutting, the other by washing.” Now it is possible that the one external rite may have come in the room of the other; but to make the circumcision of Christ the successor of the circumcision of Moses, is to fall into manifest absurdity.

The spiritual cleansing figured by the circumcision of Christ is *an essential feature common to both dispensations*, and, therefore, it can not, in any proper sense, be said to have succeeded in the room of the circumcision of Moses.

2. The party undergoing circumcision was thereby brought under a solemn engagement to live in the fear and service of God. We admit that circumcision was not a seal of personal righteousness to any except Abraham; but we maintain that all who received it were thereby *pledged* to personal righteousness. When a divine ordinance, symbolizing spiritual purification, is administered to man, it powerfully

enjoins on him by the language of action to "keep himself unspotted from the world." By no chemistry can the ordinance be disengaged from this weighty obligation. The apostle (Gal. v. 3,) assures us that "every man that is circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law." His argument indeed contemplates mainly the ritual department of Judaism; but the principle which his assertion necessarily recognises implies a higher obedience. Is the circumcised person a debtor to do the whole law? His obedience must not only be active and universal;—it must also exhibit the combination of inward principle with outward performance. Compliance with law-requirement on lower terms would be unworthy of the name of obedience, the observance of the rites of the law being neither profitable nor innocent apart from the fulfilling of its righteousness.

The responsibility imposed by circumcision, whether limited or universal, enables us to dispose of a great argument brought against infant baptism. Infants, it is said, are incapable of entering into a contract, or coming under obligation, because they are not accountable agents. But this boasted principle is not of boundless application in the ethics either of common life, or of theology. The statement of the apostle teaches us that the circumcised person was a debtor to do the whole law; and we know that the rite was almost universally administered in infancy. As the obligation was strictly coextensive with the ordinance, none were exempted from its bond; and thus at the very threshold of the ancient church, infancy and responsibility met together. **There the little one of eight days became a debtor to keep the covenant, and to do the whole law of God;—a fact which should be seriously pondered by those who reject infant baptism on the ground of its supposed incompetency to entail obligation.** Whatever may be alleged on other grounds against the baptism of infants, no man can endorse this objection, without discarding a principle affirmed by the God of truth in reference to the former rite of initiation. If the *circumcised infant* was thereby a debtor to do the whole law of Moses; why may not the *baptized infant* be a debtor to do the whole law of Christ?

III. The federal transaction with Abraham recognised the infant children of none but parties within the covenant or church members, as proper subjects of circumcision. It would be worse than useless to waste time and labour in vindicating the right of infants to the initiatory seal of the Patriarchal or Mosaic economy. On this point there exists no room for argument, inasmuch as the circumcision of infants is provided for in the very basis and constitution of God's ancient church. Our proposition, however, instead of putting forward this ecclesiastical truism, limits the application of the federal symbol to those who composed the membership of the Old Testament church. To authenticate this limitation, by showing that it rests on the solid framework of Scripture testimony, is our present business, and though the enterprise is attended with difficulties, chiefly of controversial growth, we hope to conduct it to a satisfactory issue.

As the ancient church theoretically comprised all the descendants of Abraham in

the line of Isaac and Jacob, it is self-evident that within this range the circumcised infants were the children of church members. So far therefore as Israelites were concerned, the pale of church membership constituted the scriptural and impassable barrier of circumcision. This important fact holds equally, whether we place the circumcision of the child on the ground of its parent's connection with the covenanted church, or trace its claim in unbroken descent from the *remote ancestor*, Abraham. The *remote* bond of relationship indeed, and the *immediate*, in such cases necessarily imply each other; and both appear to us to concur in linking infant circumcision to parental church membership. But it has been alleged that whether the parents were church members or not, their children of the seed of Abraham, had an inalienable right to this ordinance. This view which is commended by no inconsiderable amount of ability and argument, is in our judgment obnoxious to fatal objections. Whatever importance may attach to lineal descent from Abraham, we cannot detect in it the broad universal principle on which infants were initiated in the church of the covenant. Let us put it to the test. The Ishmaelites, Edomites, and others "had Abraham to their father;" yet could their offspring claim neither part nor lot in "the congregation of the Lord." Though the seed of Abraham, their extraction could not obtain for them access to the provisions of Abraham's covenant. Here, therefore, the principle of genealogy is not the principle of admission to church membership. Again, there were children in whose veins flowed not one drop of the patriarch's blood, yet were they admitted to circumcision and to all the privileges of the covenanted people. In this case also the genealogical principle fails to render an account of infant circumcision. This principle is, in fact, both too broad, and too narrow for combining the induction of facts. It would introduce within the precincts of the covenant multitudes who are found to be excluded; and it would shut out from the same sacred inclosure numbers whom a covenant God admitted to federal privileges. It finds room for the wandering sons of Ishmael, but has not a corner for Gentile proselytes and their children.

The view which we consider to be based on Scripture, and commensurate with the facts is, that as God included in the covenant, *certain* of the descendants of Abraham, and arranged for throwing open its provisions to proselytes of the Gentiles, the children of both classes sustaining the same relation to its initiatory seal, this ordinance in its religious aspect, belonged properly to the church of God, whether its members were of Jewish or Gentile extraction, and never possessed divine sanction for wandering a hair's breadth beyond this prescribed boundary. As a religious institution, the seal of the covenant and the symbol of moral purity, circumcision was confined exclusively to the church; and the infant seed of her members, whether derived from Abraham or not, were regarded as within the covenant, and therefore to be circumcised.

To be continued, (DV).....