

QUEST. VI.

WHO HAVE RIGHT TO BAPTISM, AND ARE TO BE BAPTIZED ?

THE right of infants to baptism hath been denied and violently opposed by the Anabaptists, so called from re-baptizing of those that were in their infancy baptized ; so that, according to them, adult persons only have right to this ordinance, the whole species of infants being excluded. Against this spiritual robbery much hath been written by learned men, and infants' right to baptism asserted and solidly instructed from the Scriptures of truth. In which point I am fully satisfied, not doubting but as God is the believer's God, so he is the God of his seed ; and therefore none can forbid water : wherefore I am not to meddle with this point. As the Anabaptists, denying infant baptism, have been faulty in making the subject lawfully receptive of baptism too narrow ; so it is a question to me, Whether or not others have made the same wider than the word of God will allow ? There may be a fault both ways ; in excess as well as in defect. That some infants, born within the visible church, may be baptized, I doubt not ; but that all such ought to be admitted to this holy ordinance, I find I cannot subscribe unto, unless I be more satisfied in that point than hitherto I am. This being a matter of practice, is worthy of consideration : and my doubts in that point have obliged me to this inquiry, if possibly I may find any thing in this matter wherein I may rest. In answer to the question proposed, somewhat must be said touching the right of adult persons to this ordinance, as well as of infants. But in regard that it is very rare to hear of an adult person baptized amongst us, I shall say but little upon that head ; and possibly I might have waived it altogether, were it not that it may contribute something to the clearing of that wherein my difficulty lies, viz., the right of infants born of Christian parents who are a reproach to their profession.

That we may the better succeed in this inquiry, there is one distinction that must be taken notice of ; and that is, There is a twofold right to church privileges ; there is a right *in foro Dei*, or before the Lord ; and there is a right *in foro ecclesie*, or in the judgment of the church. Where these two are confounded, men multiply words to no purpose. A person may have a right to church privileges before the Lord, who hath no right thereto before the church ; and contrariwise, one may have a right before the church to church privileges, that hath no right thereto before the Lord : for the being of

a thing is sufficient *in foro Dei*, but the appearing of it to be so, is necessary *in foro ecclesie*; seeing as to us *de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio et idem judicium*. So these are two distinct questions, Who ought to be baptized? and, Who ought to seek baptism?* The first respects a right to baptism before the church; the second a right thereto before God. Which being premised, we lay down these following conclusions.

CONCLUSION I. None have a right to baptism before the Lord, but those who have actually a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ.

ARGUMENT I. The Scripture plainly holds forth, that the having of the Spirit and faith are necessarily pre-requisite to baptism: Acts viii. 36, 37. "Here is water," says the eunuch, "what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip answereth, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." He saith not only, "If thou believest;" but, "If thou believest with all thine heart;" which plainly denotes faith unfeigned, as the apostle speaks; hence then, as Ursin infers,† *Ergo, si non credas, non licet*; "If thou believest not, thou mayest not;" which is necessarily to be understood with respect to the judgment of God; for none can say, that sincere faith is necessary to a right to the ordinance before the church. And so Philip baptizeth him on a credible profession of faith; but withal tells him, that it is no less than the truth of faith that can warrant him before the Lord to seek baptism to himself. Acts x. 47. "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we?" importing, that if they had not received the Holy Ghost, they had no true right to baptism; but they had received the Holy Ghost, as well as (Greek, *kathos*, even as) the apostle himself, and the believing Jews, who received the same as a spirit of saving grace, as well as of extraordinary gifts; not only (says Piscator) the gift of tongues, but of Christian faith. Whence he observes, that adult persons, concerning whom it appears from probable arguments that they believe in Christ, are to be received into the church by baptism. What though this receiving of the Holy Ghost have an immediate respect to extraordinary gifts, it is no otherwise made a ground whereupon they have right to baptism, but as it is an evidence of their having the Spirit of sanctification. They heard them speak with tongues; therefore says Peter, "Can any man forbid water, seeing these have received the gift of the Holy Ghost;" which, according to that Acts ii. 38, 39. did pre-suppose repentance, at least in appearance;

* Urs. Exp. cat. p. 471.

† Expl. cat. p. 564.

which appearance was the ground of their right *in foro ecclesie*, and the reality of the same the ground of their right *coram Deo*.

ARGUMENT II. The words of institution make this evident, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. "Go ye therefore and disciple all nations, baptizing them," &c. They must first be discipled; and then, and not till then, have they a right to baptism. To be a disciple of Christ and a believer are reciprocal terms, as Christ teacheth us, comparing with this Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth, and is baptized," &c. And infants may be no less disciples of Christ than adult persons, as is clear from that Acts xv. 10. "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke [viz. circumcision] on the neck of the disciples?" The apostles understood it so, as is plain from their practice; which may well be to us a sufficient commentary thereupon. See how Peter sets himself to his work, Acts ii. 38. "Repent therefore, and be baptized; where it is plain, that he requires their repentance antecedently to baptism, as necessary to qualify them for the right and due reception thereof. And there is no example of baptism recorded in the Scriptures, where any were baptized but such as appeared to have a saving interest in Christ; as afterwards we shall shew.

ARGUMENT III. This will plainly appear, if we consider the nature of sacraments, the ends and uses for which they are appointed of God, as the Scriptures do declare the same.

1. The sacraments are not converting, but confirming ordinances; they are appointed for the use and benefit of God's children, not of others; they are given to believers as believers, as Rutherford expresseth it *loc. sup. cit.* so that none other are subjects capable of the same before the Lord. Either must we say, they have no respect at all to saving grace; or that they are appointed as means of the conveyance of the first grace, that is, to convert sinners; or, finally, for confirmation of grace already received. If it be said, they have no respect at all to saving grace, then baptism cannot be called the baptism of repentance; nor are persons baptized for the remission of sins; nor can it be looked on as a seal of the righteousness of faith: all which is evidently against Scripture testimony. And I do not remember it is pleaded by any, though Mr. Fulwood is pleased to say, that persons may be considered to be truly baptized* without respect to saving grace. If it be said they are appointed as means of the conveyance of the first grace; then, 1. Either there are none converted before baptism, which is manifestly false, Acts viii. 12, 37; or else baptism is in vain

* Discourse vis Chur. p. 49.

conferred on converts, which is no less false. But surely in vain are means used to confer on any that which they have before. 2. It were unfaithfulness to Christ, and cruelty to men to withhold the sacraments from any person whatsoever. Were it not soul murder to withhold the means of conveyance of the first grace from any, and unfaithfulness to him, who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth? But that the sacraments, and particularly baptism, are not to be conferred on all promiscuously, none can deny. Wherefore it remains, they are indeed appointed for confirmation; which doth necessarily suppose the pre-existence of grace in the soul, seeing that which is not, cannot be confirmed.

2. Baptism is appointed of God to be a seal of the righteousness of faith. So testifies the apostle concerning circumcision, Rom. iv. 11. and consequently of baptism, which hath now come into its room, Col. ii. 11. 12.—“By the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism.” This none but Socinians, and such as they, will quarrel. But now none have right to the seal, but such as have interest in the thing sealed. The being of a thing is pre-supposed to the sealing of it; the contract must be made before it be sealed. No wise man will seal a blank, far less must God’s seal be given to him that hath no interest in that which it is appointed to seal. And it is evident, that such as are out of Christ, have no interest in his righteousness, therefore no right before God to the seal of it. “Abraham received circumcision” says the apostle, “a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had before.” Where the party baptized is one that hath no saving interest in Christ, the ordinance as to him is abused, and so he hath no right thereto before the Lord. The abuse is manifest from what is said; for, as Witsius teacheth,* God seals nothing, to such a one, that is truly good. The benefits of the covenant he hath neither part nor lot in; how then can he have right to the ordinance sealing the same? Some possibly may say it seals the conditional covenant of grace to such a one. But, not to examine the conditionality of the covenant of grace, denied by many godly and learned divines,† 1. This is inconsistent with the common doctrine of orthodox divines, teaching, That the efficacy of baptism is not tied to the moment of time wherein it is administered: for if it seal the conditional covenant to such, it is certain its efficacy is tied to that moment; for we know no other efficacy of it but effectual oblation. 2. Baptism either seals that conditional covenant as merely offered and not accepted, or as both offered and accepted. If the first be said, then, 1. It seals no engagement on our part; which is not only contrary to the

* Exer. de bapt. section 6. † Zanchius, Luther, Junius, Ames, Rysseus, and others.

orthodox doctrine of divines about baptism, but is inconsistent with what the Scriptures say of the baptized, their being "buried with Christ in baptism, baptized into Christ, into one body," &c. 2. How then can any deny baptism unto those to whom the conditional covenant is held forth, whether they consent to be disciples of Christ or not ? If the second be said, the case is altered, yea the cause is yielded : for such as accept of the covenant are in Christ, seeing there can be no entering now into covenant with God but through the Mediator. It will not help the cause to allege, that it seals the conditional covenant, as accepted externally by profession : for God doth propose faith, and not profession, as the terms of the conditional covenant of grace ; and therefore whoso come not up to the terms defined by God himself in his word, they are not accounted before the Lord to have accepted of the covenant, though before men they may be so accounted of ; in regard not faith in itself, but the profession of it, vocal or real, appeareth to them. If any shall say, that baptism seals visible church membership to those that have no saving interest in Christ, his righteousness, &c. I would demand a proof of that, that baptism is appointed to seal visible church membership, and no other benefit of the covenant ; or where it can be found, that God sealeth the benefits of the covenant by halves. As Mr. Baxter observes, the end of a sacrament must enter the definition thereof ; and it is certain it is appointed of God to seal the righteousness of faith, remission of sins, &c. to some. If then it be appointed to seal only visible church membership to others, there must be two baptisms, though the apostle tells us there is but one, Eph. iv. 5.

3. Let us view those Scriptures that directly hold forth the nature, ends, and uses of baptism. Math. iii. 11. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance," *eis metanoian*. So it is called the baptism of repentance, Acts xix. 4. John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance : not in respect of repentance to come after, but going before ; for John baptized none but those that confessed their sins, Matth. iii. 6. and he required of them a profession of their faith in him that was to come,* Acts xix. 4. It is called the baptism of repentance, for remission of sin, Mark i. 4. Peter calls those pricked at the heart to repent and be baptized for the remission of sin ; where it can be no otherwise understood, but in testimony and confirmation of remission of sins, as our divines shew against the Papists. Rom. iv. 11. He received circumcision, a seal of the righteousness which he had before. Gal. iii. 27. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put

* Piscator *in loc.*

on Christ;" where baptism is made a seal of our union with Christ, which is one of the ends of baptism. This end, says a learned man,* none but the faithful do obtain; for, as the apostle says in the same place, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." So baptism is called the laver of regeneration, and we are said to be baptized into Christ's death, and into one body; all which are to be understood of baptism, as sealing those things done already. From which it appears, that none but such as have an interest in Christ have right to baptism before the Lord. Which will be further clear by the arguments to be adduced for proof of the next conclusion.

Many testimonies might be adduced which are given by orthodox divines, unto this truth, whereof some afterwards shall be touched. But Mr. Fulwood flies in the face of it, in his discourse of the visible church. "The word of God" says he "Gen. xvii. 23. acknowledgeth, that one may have a right to the first seal of the covenant, and that *coram Deo*, that hath no saving grace. Ishmael was thirteen years old, ver. 25. when he was circumcised, and therefore of age to answer for himself; yet Ishmael had no saving grace, neither was he within the covenant of Isaac—the covenant of absolute and certain salvation, from which he was excluded, ver. 19. Yet Ishmael hath a right to the first seal of the covenant *coram Deo*, as is most evident from the immediate command of God, that he that was born in Abraham's house, must needs be circumcised, ver. 12. and accordingly Abraham understood it. He proceeds upon the command of God to circumcise Ishmael first of all. Now what is it that giveth one right to any ordinance but the command, or at least more evidently than the command of God himself? And that right which we have from God's command, is doubtless a right *coram Deo*, and in his sight."

In answer to this, I deny that Ishmael had a right to circumcision *coram Deo*; and the contrary is very far from being most evident from the immediate command of God, ver. 12. The command of God layeth an obligation on such as it is directed unto, to make use of such an ordinance as the command relateth unto; but it giveth not a right to any ordinance. If the ordinance which the command respects be not a sealing ordinance, then indeed the command pre-supposeth the person's right thereto, and evidenceth it; the ordinance being such as requires no special qualification in the party to found his right thereto: As it is in the hearing of the word, the command to hear pre-supposeth a right to hear, otherwise ministers should, at the command of God, preach to them that have

* Wendel. Christ. theol. p. 432.

no right to hear; for the command to hear obligeth not but when there is something spoken that may be heard. But if the ordinance be a sealing ordinance, as that we now speak of is, then the receiving of it comes under a twofold notion; first, of a duty; and, secondly, of a special privilege; the confounding whereof, or not distinguishing of the same, seems to be the ground of this mistake. It is a duty, because commanded; it is a special privilege, because allowed only to a certain sort of persons. Now, in such a case there is some special qualification in the party required to found his right to the sealing ordinance. I think this learned man will not say but it was necessary, that the party having right to circumcision, should be one in covenant with God, whatever that covenant be said to be; and that a person no way in covenant with God, could have no right thereto *coram Deo*: so that the right to that ordinance turned on the hinge of personal qualifications undeniably; and the command of God did not give a right to it, but obliged to the qualification (whatever it was), and to the usemaking of the ordinance, and that conjunctly; but did not so much as evidence a right thereto, either before God or the church. And what is said of circumcision, agrees to all sealing ordinances: so that what is alleged by the learned man concerning the right to a sealing ordinance, from God's command obliging to receive, it is *de subjecto non supponente*, in my opinion. And the thing he had to prove, was, that the command of God in such a case gives a right to the ordinance; which cannot be received without proof, and upon a bare assertion. When Peter, in the name of the Lord, commands every one of those to whom he spoke to be baptized, Acts ii. 38. it did indeed oblige them to submit to that holy ordinance, but in the meantime to go about it in God's own way, and to be persons duly qualified for baptism. But this command did not evidence their right thereto, either *coram Deo* or *coram ecclesie*, while they continued impenitent murderers of the Lord of glory; nay nor at all; for it was upon their gladly receiving the word that the apostle proceeded to admit them. Here then I would ask, 1. Whether or not those persons to whom the apostle said, "Be baptized every one of you," were obliged to submit to this ordinance? That they were, is manifest, if the command of God, by the mouth of his servant, could oblige them. 2. Whether or not, while they continued impenitent mockers of religion, enemies to Christ, neither sorrowing for their sins, nor professing sorrow for them, not believing nor repenting, nor appearing so to do, might the apostles have baptized them? or could they lawfully have received baptism? Whoso will say they might, would pour contempt

on Christ's holy ordinance. Sure I am, had they baptized them in such a case, they had gone beyond the bounds of their commission, obliging them first to disciple, then to baptize. From all which it appears, that persons may be obliged to the receiving of baptism by virtue of the command of God, and yet have no right thereto, either before God or the church. Again, the command of Christ, "Do this in remembrance of me," obligeth all that hear the gospel to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, as God giveth opportunity; yet it neither gives all a right thereto before God or the church: nay nor does it evidence the same; for there are many that may not lawfully partake, and many that may not lawfully be admitted thereto by church officers, notwithstanding that the command of God obligeth them to do this. If it be their sin not to partake, which it must needs be, Christ revealing his will to them, whereof this is a part; then it is their duty to receive it: yet they may not lawfully receive it, while continuing in their open wickedness. All that hear the gospel have not a right to it, either before God or the church, as I think none will deny. All indeed ought to eat; but, according to the apostle, they must first examine themselves, and then eat.* Ursin upon that question, "Who ought to come to the supper?" tells us,† "The sacraments are appointed for the faithful and converted only, to seal the promise of the gospel to them, and confirm their faith." And that the wicked and hypocrites ought not to come; not that they are not obliged to come, that is not his meaning; but that they cannot lawfully come as is manifest from what he says afterwards,‡ that such not coming *peccatum peccato cumulant*, "heap sin on sin." But hear the objection against this doctrine, and his answer to it. "OBJECTION. 'God commands all to make use of the sacraments.' ANSWER. He commands to all the use of the sacraments; yet the lawful use, which is not without faith and repentance. He commands that all be baptized, and make use of the supper; but he also commands that all believe and repent, Acts ii. 38." Let us suppose, a master commands his servant to sow his ground; doth this give a right to him to go immediately and cast in the seed, before that ever he break the ground with the plough, and make it fit for the receiving of the seed? Should he go thus to work, he were a disobedient servant. Neither could it excuse that he had his master's immediate command to sow his ground. Even so in the present case. Ishmael being by the command of God obliged to receive the seal of the righteousness of faith, was *eo ipso* obliged to receive the righte-

* 1 Cor. xi. 28.

† Expl. Cat. p. 547.

‡ P. 548.

ousness of faith ; and till then he had no right to the seal before the Lord.

CONCLUSION II. Visible believers, and such as have a profession of religion, probably signifying their having a saving interest in Christ, have a right to baptism before the church, so that they may be admitted thereto, though indeed they have no saving grace, yea or never shall have it. This may be allowed without a scrupulous inquiry into their state before God ; and men in this case ought to take the first probable profession as the ground of admission. All this is clear from the examples of baptism recorded in the Scriptures, particularly from the practise of John the Baptist, Matt. iii, 6 : and of Philip baptizing the Samaritans, and amongst them Simon the Magician ; and his baptizing the eunuch, Acts viii. And truly, if an apparently serious profession did not warrant the church to give the seals to such persons as have it, they could administer them to none without a revelation from God as to the person's state before the Lord. But this is so plain, that it were in vain to stand upon further proof thereof. And therefore we proceed to

CONCLUSION III. None but visible believers, or such as appear to have a saving interest in Christ, have right to baptism before the church. Whatever people do profess, in words, as to their faith in Christ, &c. if their profession be openly and visibly contradicted and belied by their practice ; if they be habitually profane in their walk, or grossly ignorant of the fundamental points of the Christian religion, they ought not to be baptized, though they offer themselves to baptism.

ARGUMENT I. " That which is holy is not to be given to dogs, neither are pearls to be cast before swine," Matth, vii. 6. But the sacrament of baptism is a holy thing, and those that are not visible saints, are visible dogs and swine : Prov. xxvi. 11, " As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool to his folly." 2 Pet. ii. 18, 20. Who is the fool, but he that understandeth not, and doth not seek after God, who is altogether corrupt and filthy ? Psal. xiv. Our Lord himself tells us, that " it is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs," Matth. xv. 26. " And therefore," as Zanchy* saith, " to admit unto the sacrament of baptism the impenitent and unbelievers, what else is it but to trample under foot the blood of Christ, and expose it to mockery ?" It were frivolous to say, that if this prove aught, it would prove that no unregenerate man ought to be baptized ; for they are those fools ; for indeed, as was said before, none of these have a right to the ordinance

* Com. on Eph. p. 226.

before the Lord. But be what they will as to their state before God, unless they appear to us to be fools, dogs, and swine, we are not to hold them as such, but to esteem them visible saints, as they are indeed supposed to be.

ARGUMENT II. None ought to be baptized but visible disciples of Christ; for in baptism there is an open acknowledging of the party for a disciple of Christ. He ought to be looked on as a servant of the great Master, before he get on his badge, and wear his livery. The commission for baptizing runs so, first to make disciples, then to baptize, Matt. xxviii. 19. And this is the very native order of these things. But none but visible believers can be acknowledged for Christ's disciples. *Ergo*, The assumption I prove. 1. None can be esteemed Christ's disciples, but those that appear to have "learned of the Father," and so also have come to Christ, being drawn effectually by the Father, John vi. 44, 45; and none but visible believers are such. Though that the Lord may have begun to teach others, and they are beginning to learn of him, yet till this appear to us, we can never reckon them disciples of Christ. Let it be remembered, that we do acknowledge infants to be disciples of Christ, as well as adult persons; and whatever is, or may be said on this head, must be understood *de subjecto capaci*, and without prejudice to the holy seed, the infants of the faithful. 2. We must judge of people's discipleship by their fruit, Matt. vii. 20, "By their fruit ye shall know them;" viz. whether they be Christ's disciples, or the devil's. This our Lord plainly teacheth, John xv. 8, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit; so shall ye be" (*i. e.* appear, yea further appear, to be) "my disciples." The same is taught, John viii. 31, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." Hence it plainly follows, that none but visible saints are visible disciples of Christ, and that such whose practice belies their profession are excluded. 3. Such as are worse than infidels, cannot be reckoned disciples of Christ; such as have denied the faith, are worse than infidels;* and those whose practice openly contradicts their profession, have denied the faith; for though they "profess to know God, yet in works they deny him," Tit. i. 16; and it is horrid indeed to think on sealing them with the seal of the covenant that in their works deny God, unto whom "nothing is pure, who are abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate." 4. We are plainly instructed what it is without which none can be Christ's disciples, Luke xiv. 26, 27, "If any man hate not his father and mother;—and whosoever doth not bear his

* 1 Tim. v. 8.

cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Will Christ acknowledge men as his disciples, on no other terms? then, without the appearance of these things, we ought not to reckon persons his disciples. Neither are ever any called disciples of Christ in the Scriptures, but such as were visible believers. We read indeed, John vi. 66, "that many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him," and so some visible believers apostatize: not that they are visible disciples of Christ when they fall into a total and final apostacy; but they that now are apostates, were visible disciples of Christ before. When we say an apostate disciple, or a disciple gone back, the term disciple is affected with alienation, as philosophers speak; as when we say, a dead man, the meaning is, he who was a man while living, is now dead. Hence it appears, that the argument taken by Fulwood* from this Scripture, to prove that the visible church may be considered to be truly a church of Christ without respect to saving grace, is of no use to his purpose. "Now, let it be supposed," says he, "that they now ceased to be disciples, (and truly I think it may not only be supposed, but fully concluded they now ceased to be disciples), yet this only evidenceth, for the time past, that they never had any true grace, howbeit they were then disciples. Unless they had gone on, they could not have gone back; and so long as they went on, they were disciples. Not those that seemed, but those that were disciples, went back." It is true indeed, that the apostacy of these persons evidenced, for the time past, that they never had any true grace; but it did not evidence that they never had any evidence, before men, of true grace, or that they never had any appearance of true grace, which, unless his argument prove it, cannot reach his conclusion: yea, it evidenceth the quite contrary, that they had some time an appearance of saving grace, in so far as they were accounted disciples of Christ, and to have walked with him. But I deny that their apostacy only evidenced they had no true grace; it evidenced also, that they were never the true disciples whom Christ sent his disciples to make and baptize, and so no church members before God: for, as Mr. Baxter saith, "When Christ saith, Make me disciples of all nations† baptizing them, he means sincere disciples, though we cannot ever know them to be sincere." It is a weak criticism, to remark, that it was not those that seemed, but those that were disciples, that went back; for were is no more in the text than seemed. And what if I say, they were seeming disciples, and not real. But they were indeed visible disciples before their visible

* Discourse vis. Chur. p. 129.

† Inf. Bap. p. 327.

apostacy; they were as really visible disciples, as Peter and John were; but when they apostatized, they ceased to be visible disciples.

ARGUMENT III. All the examples of baptism recorded in the Scripture, hold forth none to have been baptized, but those that before baptism appeared to have a saving interest in Christ. Those whom John the Baptist admitted, were such as "confessed their sins," Matth. iii. 6. So those baptized by Peter, Acts ii. 41. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." The Samaritans believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, and then were baptized, Acts viii. 12. "Simon himself believed also, and was baptized," ver. 13. "The eunuch said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and then was baptized," vers. 37, 38. Paul is first converted, and then baptized, Acts ix. 18. The centurion, and those with him, received the Holy Ghost; and therefore none could forbid water.* So Lydia, Acts xvi. 14, 15. the jailor, vers. 32, 33. Crispus and others, Acts xviii. 8. Neither can any instance be adduced wherein the matter appears to have been handled otherwise; and surely these examples are our rule in this case. What though some of them, as Simon Magus, were indeed hypocrites, the argument nevertheless holds good, if their hypocrisy did not appear before they were baptized; which cannot be proven to have been, even in the case of Simon: yea it appears right plainly, from the history of him, that it was some time after he was baptized that his hypocrisy appeared; for, after he was baptized, he continued with Philip all the time, till the apostles which were at Jerusalem, sent unto Samaria Peter and John, and the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost through the laying on of the the apostles' hands.

ARGUMENT IV. If the admission of such to baptism as are not visible saints be a profaning of the holy ordinance, then they have no right before the church thereto, nor ought they to be baptized; the former is true: *Ergo*, the latter also. The profanation of the ordinance appears, in that those are declared to be real members of Christ, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, blessed with the pardon of sin, &c. who, to the sight of the world, have, or at least appear to have, none of these things: for baptism, as was shown before, is appointed of God to seal these and such like; and so is a testifying sign that the party baptized is such a one.

* "Can any man forbid," signifying, that unless the Holy Spirit had rested on them, there should have been who would have hindered them from baptism.—*Iren. Adv. Heres. b. 2.*

Wherefore, to baptize such persons, were to proclaim an agreement betwixt Christ and Belial, and to set up for concord betwixt light and darkness, and seal the same with a witness; which cannot be but an abuse of God's holy ordinance. It was a heavy charge against the priests, Ezek. xxii. 26. that they had violated God's law, and profaned his holy things; and put no difference between the holy and profane, nor shewed difference between the clean and unclean. Now, the law which they violated in this, we have expressly set down, Lev. x. 8. 9. 10. "And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation; lest ye die: It shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean." The first respects moral, the other ceremonial purity or impurity. And this putting difference is evidently distinguished from the shewing difference doctrinally; as appears from ver. 11. "And that ye may teach the children of Israel," &c. Now, surely the Lord doth as little allow the profaning of his holy things under the gospel, as under the law; and the putting no difference betwixt the holy and profane, cannot but be a profaning of God's holy things, now as well as then. The priests also are reprov'd for bringing into the sanctuary, strangers uncircumcised in heart and in flesh, and thereby polluting it, Ezek. xlv. 7. And to prevent the mistake, lest they should think that the only ground of the quarrel was, that such were uncircumcised in flesh, the Lord tells them, ver. 9. that "no stranger uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into his sanctuary." Mark the disjunctive particle, "uncircumcised in heart, *nor* in flesh." Was the sanctuary more holy than the sacrament of baptism is? will moral impurity pollute the one, and not the other? If any shall say, that this respects not Israelites, but strangers; and so although it may hold good in our case as to professed pagans, yet not as to professed Christians: I answer, 1. The strangers were debarred from the sanctuary as uncircumcised in heart, therefore all uncircumcised in heart were debarred; for a *qua tali ad omne valet consequentia*. 2. The Lord expressly reproveth the profane Israelites for entering into his sanctuary, Jer. vii. 9. 10. 11.

ARGUMENT V. ult. If none have a right to baptism before the Lord but real saints, then none have a right to it before the church but visible saints. The argument has been already proven; and the consequent is very plain. These two positions do mutually establish one another. If the word debar all from the sacraments that are not real saints, to admit such as have no appearance of

sainthood, were to pull in with the one hand, when we shut out with the other; which is the high way to make people Atheists, and to believe nothing that is preached. When God hath declared, that none have right before him to the seals of the covenant, but those that have a saving interest in his Son, in whom "the promises are Yea and Amen;" and hath required the dispensers of the holy mysteries, to "put a difference betwixt the holy and unholy, and to separate betwixt the precious and the vile," and told us, that "we shall know them by their fruits;" men ought to beware of admitting such as plainly appear to be profane and vile. Men must not be blind, when the works of the flesh are manifest, Gal. v. 19.

Now, all this doth no way prejudice the right of infants to baptism *coram ecclesie*; for the infants of visible believers are no less visible believers than they themselves are, seeing the Lord declares himself to be not only the believer's God, but the God of his seed. "We do not tie," say the professors of Leyden,* "the efficacy of baptism to that moment when the body is washed; but we do, with the Scripture, pre-require faith and repentance in all that are to be baptized, at least, according to the judgment of charity: and that as well in infants that are within the covenant; in whom, by the power of God's blessing and of the gospel covenant, we affirm, that there is the seed and spirit of faith and repentance; as in the aged, in whom the profession of actual faith and repentance is necessary." "Yea," saith Zanchius,† "We must believe, that an infant of faithful parents is already baptized with the baptism of the Spirit, seeing it is in the covenant." It were easy to heap up testimonies given by orthodox divines to the first and third conclusions. Ursin‡ gives his judgment thereon in two theses: "All," says he, "and only the regenerate lawfully, receive baptism. The church administereth baptism lawfully to all, and only these whom she ought to account in the number of the regenerate." See "Calv. Inst." lib. 4. cap. 16. § 23, 24; "Wits. in Symb. Apost." p. 455. § 15; "Exer." p. 372, 381, 416; "Zanch. in Eph." p. 226; "Wend. Christ. Theol." p. 432; "Baxt. Inf. Bapt." p. 327; "Bowles' Past. Evang." p. 185.

CONCLUSION IV. All infants descended of parents whereof one only is a visible believer, hath right to baptism before the church; they ought to be baptized, whether it be the father or mother that makes a credible profession. Such are in covenant with God visibly; we are to look on them as probably within the covenant, as to the saving benefits thereof, so that none can

* Synop. Pur. Theol. p. 609.

† Com. in Eph. p. 225. th. 13.

‡ Thes. theol. de Bapt. th. 12. misc. p. 125.

forbid water. The apostle plainly tells us, they are not unclean but holy, I Cor. vii. 14. and therefore subjects lawfully capable of this ordinance. I find no need to insist on this point, being fully satisfied therein, and knowing none that deny it who do not altogether reject infant baptism. If it be inquired, Who is to be sponsor for the child when the father is the unbeliever? I answer, The father cannot be admitted, seeing there is no reason to expect that he will bring up his child in the fear of that God, the fear of whom is not before his own eyes; or in that religion to which he himself is a stranger. To overlook the mother, and to require another to be sponsor for the child, I see no reason. But the mother is to be sponsor for the child: 1. Because it seems the child hath its right by her. 2. Because the Scripture lays the bonds on her; so that she is antecedently obliged to bring up her child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Eph. vi. 4. 3. Because she is the person most to be trusted in such a weighty concern. Whoever it be that presents the child to be baptized, I suppose is not material, providing he or she be a church member. Neither is it necessary that the sponsor present the child; but if it can be conveniently done, it ought to be. Only in the case supposed, the bonds being laid on the mother, it is not reasonable the child should want the seal of the covenant till she be able to appear in the congregation, if providence allow an opportunity before that time.

But now I come to the main point of this inquiry, viz. Whether or no all infants born of Christian parents, so called in opposition to Jews, Turks, and pagans, have a right before the church to baptism? or, whether the open wickedness, profanity, or gross ignorance of the parents, should hinder the infant to be baptized, till either the parents reform, or the child come to mature age, and by his personal walk satisfy the church as to his right to that ordinance? What hath been said to the former points seems pretty clear; but to determine this, *hoc opus, hic labor est.*

Many godly and learned hold the former part of that question, though, as I apprehend, on different grounds; all which, I conceive, are expressed by Zanchy, and Oliver Bowles. Their words are as follows. "The children of those," says that judicious divine, Zanchius,* "that are indeed in the church, but, because of their unclean way of living, declare that they are not indeed of the church; if they be offered to baptism, they cannot be debarred therefrom, nor ought they. The reason is, because though the parents be wicked, yet their impiety ought not to prejudge their children which

* Com. on Eph. p. 226.

are born within the church. But if you say, only the children of the faithful are to be baptized, because those infants only are judged to be within the covenant, and they only holy; I answer, the impiety of their nearest parents is not to be considered here, but the piety of the church in which they are born;—as also their ancestors who have lived godly and holily.” “All infants,” says Mr. Bowles,* “who, in the judgment of charity, are within the covenant, are to be baptized. And baptism is to be administered exactly according to this judgment of charity. And that judgment concludes all to be within the covenant, whose parents were sometime sealed with the seal of the covenant.” Hereto add Mr. Fulwood’s notion of it. He judgeth the children of openly wicked parents are to be baptized, because their parents may be really members of the visible church, (notwithstanding their want of saving grace), and really baptized. And so they allow the children of such heretics amongst whom the formula of baptism remains safe, children of excommunicate parents, bastards, if there be any evidence of the baptism, at least of one of the parents. Some add foundlings. Bowles requires that there be sponsors found in order to the baptizing of these children of heretics, &c. otherwise he acknowledges the action to be lusory, and baptism to be polluted. I remember there is a question, Whether or not the infants of pagans, Turks, or Jews, wholly in the power of a Christian believer, being by him devoted to Christ, ought to be baptized? This is by Mr. Baxter† resolved in the affirmative, on Scripture grounds. In this case, the infant’s right is wholly from the sponsor. Now, if the children of openly wicked Christians be put in this case, the plea for their right to baptism from their being born in the church, of godly progenitors, of baptized immediate parents, falls to the ground. But I suppose those learned men mean no such thing; but that, by virtue of their birth privilege, the children of openly wicked Christian parents have a right to baptism; and that, laying aside the case of such sponsors from whom the infants wholly derive their right to the ordinance, it is not necessary that one of the parents be a visible believer, or have a serious and credible profession, in order to their children’s having a right to baptism *coram ecclesia*. And for proof of this point let the following arguments be considered.

ARGUMENT I. The seal of the covenant belongs to all those that are within the covenant; but the infants of all Christian parents are within the covenant; for so runs the covenant, “I will be thy

* Past. Ev. lib. 3. cap. 3.

† Inf. Bapt. p. 101.

God, and the God of thy seed." Seeing the parents are sealed with the seal, they must needs be within the covenant, and consequently their seed also. The covenant is not made with the root, but also with the offspring; and if so, why may not the seal of the covenant be effectual, not only to the baptized parent if he believe, but also render his seed capable at least of the external sign. Wherefore the apostle saith, "Now are your children holy," to wit, by external holiness; whereby they are reputed to be within the covenant, being come of such a parent as hath given up his or her name to Christ, 1 Cor. vii. 14. Let it be duly considered what was the case that was so straitening to those Corinthians, which Paul doth resolve in the forecited place. It was not, whether or not the godly husband or wife might lawfully abide in the state of marriage with a wicked Christian yoke-fellow? but, whether or not the Christian husband or wife might lawfully abide in that state with a pagan? The apostle tells them they might, and gives the reason, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified to the believing wife," *i. e.* the pagan to the Christian; and gives the reason, "Else were your children unclean; but now they are holy." And it is very palpable there was very open wickedness amongst that people. What sad divisions and disorders were among them! They tolerated the incestuous person; they did not mourn, but were puffed up; some of them were drunken when they came to the Lord's table; some denied the resurrection, &c. Notwithstanding of all, the apostle tells them their children were holy, consequently within the covenant, and to be baptized.

ARGUMENT II. The infant not having stretched forth its hand to the parent's iniquity, must not bear his sin, at least in spirituals, Ezek. xviii. 20. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." But surely, if no infants should be admitted to baptism but those of visible believers, many infants born of Christian parents should be debarred, and so uncontroversibly bear the iniquity of their fathers. If God hath manifested his mercy so far, that the child shall not bear the father's sin, they seem to go strangely to work that will debar poor infants because of the wicked life of their parents, in which they, poor souls, have no hand. Which is the more to be noticed, and calls people to be the more wary, if we consider that many a time God brings chosen vessels out of the loins of the most profligate parents. Even in the family of Jeroboam was one "found in whom there was some good thing found toward the God of Israel."

ARGUMENT III. If the heresy, impiety, or profanity of the Jewish parents did not exclude their children from circumcision, then the

heresy, profanity, or impiety of Christian parents cannot exclude their children from baptism; the former is true: *Ergo*, the consequence is plain: for baptism is the same to us, that circumcision was to them; "circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith," Rom. iv. 11. as well as baptism; and none will say, that the grace of God is more narrow under the New Testament than it was under the Old. The minor is no less manifest, if ye consider these four things. 1. The universality of the command with respect to circumcision, Gen. xvii. 10. "Every man-child among you shall be circumcised;" which command is repeated ver. 12. Here is no exception. 2. The punishment or censure to be inflicted on the uncircumcised man-child among the Jews, ver. 14. "The uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people." 3. Consider the practice of Joshua, who at God's command circumcised the children of Israel at Gilgal, Josh. v. where it is expressly said, "When they had done circumcising all the people," ver. 8.; yet these were the children of them whom God for their wickedness kept out of Canaan, who fell in the wilderness, who vexed his Holy Spirit forty years, so that he swore they should never enter into his rest. And they themselves cannot be supposed to be all visible believers. 4. We never read of any of the Israelites' children that were debarred from that ordinance on any pretence whatsoever. From all which it is evident, that the impiety of the Jewish parents did not debar their children from circumcision, and therefore as little can the impiety of Christians debar theirs from baptism. Here is a grant of the first seal of the covenant, yea, a command to receive the same, directed unto the children of all that are externally in covenant with God, as Christians and their seed are. If any will say, it is now done away, and concerns not us under the New Testament dispensation; they must acknowledge themselves obliged to shew us the repeal thereof in the sacred records, otherwise confess it still stands in force.

ARGUMENT IV. This doth further appear, if we consider that Scripture, Acts ii. 38, 39. "Repent therefore, and be baptized every one of you. 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." Now, what is that promise he speaks of, but the great promise, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed." The apostle hereby means to stir them up to repentance, and to be baptized; and for their encouragement he tells them, the promise is to them and their seed. Note, that the promise is to them antecedently to their repenting; this is plain, because the apostle's argument is truly thus, the promise is to you, therefore repent and be baptized; he argues from their privilege to their duty. Again, the promise

is said to be to such "as are afar off, even to as many as God shall call," meaning the Gentiles, Eph. ii. 13. "Ye who sometimes were afar off." The call here spoken of, is the outward and external call, which puts the Gentiles into the same case with those Jews who surely were not savingly called, so that the promise is to their seed also, as well as to the Jews' seed. Hence I form a twofold argument.

1. If the promise be to the born Israelites and their seed even antecedently to their repenting, then the promise is unto persons within the Christian church and to their seed, antecedently to true repentance in them: but the former is true: *Ergo*, and if the promise be so to them, the seal of it must be so likewise.

2. The promise is to the Gentiles, whom the Lord externally calleth, and to their seed; but such are openly wicked Christian parents: *Ergo*, Who can forbid water to their infants?

ARGUMENT. V. John Baptist and the apostles admitted all to baptism that offered themselves, Matt. iii. 5, 6. "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and were baptized of him." He debarred none; no not the Pharisees, whom yet he called "a generation of vipers," ver. 7. That he did baptize them, is clear from his own express testimony, ver. 11. where, speaking to the Pharisees and Sadducees, he saith, "I indeed baptize you with water." Luke iii. 21, it is expressly said, "When all the people were baptized." Now the practice of John plainly holds forth, that they had a right to that ordinance, and that they were in covenant: *Ergo*, a *majori* the infants of wicked Christian parents are to be baptized. Now, if we look to the practice of the apostles, we shall find, that notwithstanding of all that John baptized, yet Christ by his disciples baptized more than he; as the evangelist expressly testifies, John iv. 1. Philip, on a bare profession of faith, baptized the eunuch; and so in other examples. Now, it is certain, that they would never have refused baptism to the infants of the parents whom they baptized; but so it is, that those children whose title to this ordinance is questioned, are the children of such parents as profess their faith in Christ; why then should not their right to the ordinance be acknowledged?

ARGUMENT VI. Those children whom God acknowledgeth to be born to him, and to be his children, have a right to the first seal of the covenant; for what children have right to it, if God's children, such as are born to him, have it not? but so it is that God owneth the children of the Jewish wicked parents to be born unto him, and to be his children: *Ergo*, Ezek. xvi. 20, 21. "Moreover, thou hast taken thy sons, and thy daughters, whom thou hast born unto

me, and these thou hast sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire unto them." Here is most gross and open wickedness of the parents, yet the Lord will not have it to prejudge the church state of the children.

ARGUMENT VII. If none but the infants of visible believers have right to baptism, and ought to be baptized; then, 1. Families, parishes, and whole countries, might come in a short time to be paganized; seeing in many places there are so very few visible believers. 2. Through the rigidity and indiscretion of church officers, many poor infants who are the children of believing parents should be deprived of that ordinance: for people may go to heaven while we hear not the sound of their feet; and it is well known saving grace may lie hid under the ashes of much ignorance and corruption. 3. Then ministers should have no certain rule to walk by in baptizing any infants. All that is left to them, is their opinion: They think such a one to be a believer, and such a one to be an unbeliever; and therefore they will baptize the infants of the one, not of the other: and they may be mistaken as to both; they may take a sheep for a goat, and a goat for a sheep. Is this sure standing? or can we suppose that God hangs such a weighty matter as this upon the opinion and fallible judgment of men? One possibly thinks such a measure of knowledge, and such a walk, to be sufficient ground whereon he may judge a man a believer; another will think so little will not serve the turn: Where shall we fasten? Surely these things hang not on such uncertainties.

ARGUMENT VIII. The children of baptized church members ought to be baptized; but the children of many openly scandalous and wicked parents are the children of baptized church members: therefore such children ought to be baptized. This argument is Mr. Fulwood's, and is the result of a large discourse concerning the visible church.* And so much for the proof of this point.

Notwithstanding of all that is said for the right of the infants of such Christians, some are of opinion, that one of the parents must needs be a visible believer, or have a serious credible or probable profession, or else the child hath no right before the church to baptism. And truly, though I have not willfully dissembled any thing that might add more force to these arguments, but have represented them to the best advantage so far as it occurred to me, yet I still doubt of the truth of that position: and therefore I will now pro-

pose some arguments that make me to doubt the truth of it, and incline me to the latter opinion, that I may at least ease my mind a little, by casting forth these my doubts into this paper.

In the *first* place, We must consider, whether infants may derive their right from their mediate and remote parents, or only from their immediate parents; for to bury this in silence, were to beat the air in arguing for the last position. And if I understand ought of this controversy, this is one of the main hinges of it. Some learned men, distrusting the right of infants from such immediate parents as are openly wicked, who declare by their impure life they are not of the church, do derive the right of such infants from their mediate or remote parents, who lived a godly and holy life. I find two Scriptures adduced for proof of this. The one is, Rom. xi. 16. "If the root be holy, so are the branches." "By the root" says Zanchius* "he understands not their nearest parents, who perhaps were wicked; but those first fathers of the Jewish people, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom was made and confirmed the promise and covenant, that God would be their God, and the God of their whole seed, by a perpetual covenant. Therefore all their posterity, who had not altogether apostatized to the gods of the Gentiles, were, I say they all were, in the covenant, and they were judged holy by reason of covenant holiness, *fœderis sanctitate sancti judicabantur*." Hence the promise is said to be "to them and their seed," (Acts ii. 39.), many generations after Abraham. Another Scripture is that, Exod. xx. 6. "Shewing mercy to thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments," while he visits iniquity only to the third and fourth generation. The truth is, if this were satisfyingly explained, and convincingly proven, the difficulty of the case would be in great measure removed. But it seems to me to come short of both. Against it let these few reasons be considered.

I. I observe, that the learned men who plead this, must needs disown the necessity of the baptism of one of the parents; and so they shall be judged holy, and within the covenant, and to have right to baptism, whose immediate parents were never so much as baptized; besides, that they are openly wicked in their lives: for it is plain, that godly progenitors may have such come of them as are unbaptized. But notwithstanding, according to this opinion, the children of such unbaptized parents may have right to baptism, and ought to be baptized; which will not be granted, as we heard before, even by such as agree with them in the main point: and I suppose, there

* Com. in Eph. p. 227.

are few that will be satisfied with less than the baptism of one of the immediate parents.

II. Are there not many infants born in such places where God has a church, whose immediate and mediate parents, so far as any man now living knoweth or can remember, have been brutishly ignorant, profane, or both; so that the God in whose name the infant is to be baptized, is a God whom neither they nor their fathers have known? As to these we may crave leave to enquire, *Quomodo constat?* what evidence is there that their mediate parents have lived a godly and holy life? I think no man that considers for how many generations God hath left some nations without the knowledge of his will concerning man's salvation, will obtain of himself to build his charity in this point upon that, that God "visits the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation" only.

III. If it be sufficient to give an infant a right to baptism, that it is come of godly progenitors, then the children of some pagans and Mahomedans have a right to baptism, though born and to be bred up in a pagan and Mahomedan country, and having nothing common with the church of God; but that is absurd, Eph. ii. 12. "At that time ye were without God, strangers to the covenant of promise." And the apostle gives us to know, that the children of pagans are unclean, 1 Cor. vii. 14. The consequence holds good, in regard the children of some pagans have had godly ancestors, and some of them lively baptized members of the Christian church, as is manifest in the case of those of Smyrna, Thyatira, Laodicea, and the rest of Asia (for the most part), which are now unchurched. But you will say, these infants are unchurched. It is so, but how do we know that but by their parents being unchurched? What if a godly woman with child should be cast out into a pagan country and there bring forth her child; is the poor infant therefore a stranger to the covenant, and no church member, because born in a pagan country? No, sure: "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," and the place of the child's birth can never prejudice it of the right it has by the promise and covenant of God. Wherefore it is plain, that the place of the nativity of the pagan's children can never evince their being unchurched; for *quatenus ad omne valet consequentia*. So that it is by the unchurched state of the parents that we know these infants to be unchurched. Let us consider the infants of the first unchurched generation, we find they have no right to the seal of the covenant, yet, *ex hypothesi*, they are come of godly progenitors. Wherefore it doth inevitably follow, that mediate parents their being in covenant with God, is not sufficient to give to their remote seed a right to baptism.

IV. If infants may derive their right before the church, or the evidence of their right before the Lord, to baptism, from their remote parents; than either from any of them whatsoever, or from some of them only—I know no mids. If from any of them whatsoever, then there is no infant under heaven that hath not a right to baptism; which is absurd. The reason of the consequence is, because there is not an infant in the world that is not come of parents that were godly; which will hold true, so long as it remains undoubted that all the world is come of Noah and of Adam. If from some of them only, then, 1. They that will have this believed, must tell us how far we may go back to seek mediate parents from whom the infant may derive its right. 2. They must afford us some probable evidence that such mediate parents were godly. 3. They must give us some reason, why we may go so far back, and no further. These demands seem truly as reasonable as the answering of them is difficult, to say no more.

Now, let us consider the Scriptures adduced for infants deriving their right to baptism before the church, from their remote parents. The first whereof is that Rom. xi. 16, “If the root be holy, so are the branches.” I am satisfied, that by the root the apostle doth not mean Christ, as some think; nor yet the covenant, as others; but Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or rather Abraham alone. And it is clear, that the apostle is speaking here of the Israelites, to whom only Abraham was a root in respect of carnal generation; so that whatever advantage the Israelites may have of this, we Gentiles can have none, seeing he was none of our remote parents. It is true, the Gentiles may be the spiritual seed of Abraham: but this quite alters the case, if we would plead it in this matter; for now we speak of parents from whom infants descend by carnal generation. And the way how we come to be Abraham’s seed, the apostle plainly tells us, Gal. iii. 29. “And if ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” If any shall say, that this is a general maxim, and may be applied to the Gentiles as well as the Jews; then unless the immediate parents be the root, by virtue of which their children are holy, as was argued before, so now, we crave 1. That it be shown how far we may go up to seek the root. 2. That it be manifest such infants are branches of a holy root. Yea, and it is reasonable in this case, such a remote parent be condescended on as had such a privilege as Abraham had, that he should be a root, whose remote seed should be holy: for however every godly parent is, by the covenant of God in which he enters, so privileged, that God is his God, and the God of his seed; yet I think none will make every believing parent equally

privileged, in this matter, with Abraham; the Scripture holding forth Abraham's special privilege in the holiness of his seed, by any other person in the world. Now, where can we fix for such a one in the case of us Gentiles? But to speak plainly to the point, I am of opinion, that unless we be swayed with authority of men, there is nothing in this Scripture that appears for evidencing the right of the branches to the seals of the covenant; so that it hits not the point in hand. My reason for this is, That the branches the apostle speaks of here, was the body of the people of Israel, the offspring of Abraham, and natural branches of this holy root; which branches were already actually broken off and unchurched: so that whatever be said of them, they could have no right to the sacraments, unless you will make them common to them that are without the church, as well as those that are within. That the body of the Israelites was now broken off, is plain; so that it were in vain to prove it, while the apostle is treating so expressly of their reingrafting. And that they were the branches spoken of here, is evident to me from the scope and design of the apostle, which is, to prove the calling again of the Israelites, and their reingrafting. For one proof of which he adduceth this argument, "If the root be holy, so are the branches;" but the root is holy: *Ergo*, the branches also. But holy branches, though cut off, shall be grafted in again. It is true, some of these branches were not broken off, viz. the believing Jews; for there were still some, amongst whom the Gentiles were grafted in, ver. 17. But the apostle needed not prove, that the believing Jews were holy; neither would it contribute ought to his purpose, so far as I can see; neither did the Gentiles boast against those branches that were not broken off, but against those that were broken off, ver. 18, 19, 20. "Boast not against the branches. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off." The only difficulty here is this, How branches broken off, or an unchurched people, can be said to be holy? I find one* arguing from this text for infant baptism, brings in this objection, "But what kind of consequence is this, If the root be holy, so are the branches?" which he solves, and senseth the text thus. "The apostle in the former verse speaks of a receiving in again of the Jewish nation, and brings in this as a ground to hope for it: There is yet a holy root which hath an influence on the branches; and argues, that if the root be holy, when the branches broken off shall be reingrafted, they shall be holy likewise." If this interpretation be received, the difficulty is removed; but I know none else

* Sydenham Exerc. on Inf. Bapt. p. 71.

that puts this sense on the text. It is true, no time is defined in the text, neither the present nor the future ; for the words are *ei he riza hagia, kai hoi kladoi*. But if we read that of the branches in the future tense, why not also that of the root ? But that which stumbles me mainly as to this interpretation, is, that it is utterly alien from the scope of the apostle, makes his arguing very jejune, and fathers on him a most palpable *petitio principii* : for thus says the apostle, according to him, The Jewish nation shall be received again ; for when they shall be reingrafted, they shall be holy ; which evidently supposeth the thing in question. But the learned man supports the cause with better arguments than this. Only by the by I cannot but notice, that Mr. Baxter upon that subject, adducing several arguments out of that chapter, makes no mention of any argument from the text under consideration. In whatever sense those branches broken off are said to be holy, it seems plain they are called holy. And, in my opinion, the branches of this root, or the body of that people which was now broken off, are said to be holy ; holiness being attributed unto them not universally, but indefinitely ; and that not only in respect of particular persons, but particular generations of them. Abraham being the root, all that come or shall come of him, from the first child begotten of his own body, to the last of his race that shall be born in the world, are accounted the branches of this root, make up one collective body of branches, one seed, and one people ; which, by virtue of the holiness of the root, is said to be holy. Thus we find the apostle speaks of them, ver. 15. " For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world ; what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead ? " Where it is evident, the apostle understands not this receiving again of the particular generation, or the particular persons that were then broke off, as the event hath proven ; yea, many generations have passed since, and they are not as yet received ; but of this collective body of branches, which is said to be received again, when some of them are received. So ver. 24. " How much more shall these which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive ? " Ver. 31. " Even so also these have now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. " Now, this holiness is in respect of separation to God by the decree of election ; God having so cast the lot of electing love, that it runs most eminently in that vein, or amongst the natural branches of the root ; though it is, by the unsearchable judgments of God, like unto some rivers, that having run above ground a good space, get under the earth, and run there, (as Guadiana in Spain, running under ground fifteen miles), and afterwards brake forth again, to run

above the ground, till they empty themselves into the sea; as Ovid says of Lycus, a river in Lycaonia,

*Sic ubi terreno Lycus est epotus hiatu,
Existit procul hinc, alioque renascitur ore.*

So under the Old Testament dispensation, "Happy wast thou, O Israel; who was like unto thee?" Now their sun is overclouded, but we look for the day when all Israel shall be saved, Rom. xi. 26. Or, if you please, call it a separation by virtue of the covenant with Abraham; all comes to one thing. Only this holiness of the branches, you see, can give no right to sealing ordinances. The apostle right clearly favours this interpretation, ver. 28. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the *election*, they are *beloved* for the fathers' sakes." Why not holy, as well as beloved of God? not that every individual branch has share, either before God or the church, of the special love of God; but that that people, and collective body of branches, is so beloved of God by others, that out of them he will yet choose many to himself, having in a special manner pitched on that seed for vessels of glory. Thus God is said to have "so loved the world, [in opposition to fallen angels], that he gave his Son, that whosoever should believe on him, should have everlasting life." Even as a king may be said to love a particular family, when he takes one or two of that family, and prefers them, while he takes not any notice of other families, though he do not prefer every individual person among them. This is plainly confirmed by the apostle's reason, ver. 29. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Yea, and they are still called the natural branches, and the olive, their own olive, notwithstanding that they are broken off, ver. 24. And thus we see how the branches broken off are said to be holy. As to that Scripture, Acts ii. 39. brought for confirmation of the point fore-said, it is plain, that notwithstanding they were Abraham's seed, and the promise was to them, and to their children, (in what sense we shall afterwards inquire), yet the apostle expressly pre-requires repentance to their admission unto baptism.

As to that other Scripture, Exod. xx. 5, 6. "Shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me;" whence some learned men would prove infants' right to baptism from their remote parents: I suppose no such thing can be proven from hence. This promise doth not respect the children of wicked immediate parents, though the remote seed of the godly, as those learned men would have it; but only the children of immediate godly parents, to whom the Lord will shew mercy for their parents' sake, and that unto thousands,

viz. successively godly; the Lord will still remember those their progenitors, in doing them good, and the longer the godly race has continued, one after another, in the love of God, the better shall it be for the children. Now, these few reasons incline me to understand it so.

I. If by the event we may judge of this promise, as doubtless we may, we shall find, that it cannot be understood as those that differ would have it. Take we an instance in the seed of Abraham. From Abraham to Christ, as Matthew reckons, there are reckoned only thrice fourteen generations. However we understand the evangelist, it is certain, there were but a few generations in comparison of the thousand in the text; and yet a very little after, the Jews are broken off, and unchurched, and had no right to the seals of the covenant; and long before, the ten tribes, all the seed of godly Abraham, were rejected. Yet no doubt the promise of God remained sure; his truth failed not, though the wicked seed of Abraham was cast off, yea, and "wrath came on them to the uttermost," as the apostle speaks, 1 Thess. ii. 16. I know, that to ward off this, it is said, the promise is only to be understood of those that are within the church. But, in my opinion, those who will be satisfied with this answer, are fixed before in the point in question, on some better grounds, or else they are easily satisfied: for it seems strange, to plead from this text in favour of the children of openly wicked immediate parents, for their right to the seals of the covenant, and yet to yield, that God may so far take away his mercy from them, notwithstanding of this promise, as to break them off utterly, and put them in the same case with pagans, while they, poor souls, were not capable to unchurch themselves; so that, notwithstanding of the piety of their remote parents, they are ruined by their nearest parents. I would think, that if this promise made over church privileges to such children, it should, in the first place, secure them from breaking off, and being cast out of the church; in regard it is made to go over the immediate wicked parents, and the mercy is to be shown to their children, being the remote seed of the godly. If any shall say, that, by virtue of this promise, the rejected Jews shall be received again, it is *gratis dictum*: for there is nothing here peculiar to the Jews, nothing which may not be applied, and belongs to the godly Gentiles, and their seed, as well as the Jews; and so ye may as well argue for the receiving in again of the Laodiceans, Thyatirians, &c. But however it be, notwithstanding of this promise, they are broken off for the time, and have no right to church privileges.*

* Baxt. on Inf. Bapt. p. 65.

II. Unless our interpretation be admitted, the promise and the threatening will be found inconsistent. For suppose the second generation of a wicked man be godly, and also the third, the promise and the threat both should belong to that third generation; the promise, because such a one is the immediate seed of the godly, and the Lord will shew mercy to thousands of them that love him; the threatening, because he is the remote seed of the wicked, even the third generation; and the threat is, that he will visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation. And that such cases may and do fall out, who can deny? An instance of it take in the case of Rehoboam, whose son was like himself, 1 Kings xv. 3. "He walked in all the sins of his father, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord." Yet Asa, the second from Rehoboam, did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father, ver. 11. And the third, Jehoshaphat, was a godly man. See then, according to the interpretation of those that differ, if both the promise and threat belong not to Jehoshaphat?

III. Unless we expound it of the immediate seed of the godly, there are none, or at least very few in the world, not comprehended in this promise: for I think it will be hard to find any in the world that are a thousand generations removed from godly parents. And truly, if it be so very good and profitable to be come of godly parents so far remote, genealogies are no more vain under the New Testament than under the Old.

Thus it would seem, that children derive their church right to baptism from their immediate, and not from their remote parents. But I will add yet some more for proof of that point; and will try whether those texts alleged on the contrary, have led us to any thing that may be helpful to our purpose.

ARGUMENT I. The child stands *coram ecclesia* for church privileges by the same person or persons by whom he falls. This proposition, I think, cannot be denied in the matter of moral standing, and right to privileges, whether civil or religious; and of no other standing do we speak here. But so it is, that infants fall from church privileges by their immediate parents: *Ergo*, they stand by them. The minor is clear from the case of the Jewish infants at the rejection of that people. That their infants fell from all right before the church to the seal of the covenant, is clear; and I think none will doubt it: for they were the natural branches as well as others, and were capable of reingrafting; and the believing Gentile comes with his seed in the room of the unbelieving Jew and his. Well, then, the apostle tells us, it was "for unbelief they were broken off,"

Rom. xi. 20. If so, then either because of their own, or their parents' unbelief; not because of their own, for they were not capable of rejecting Christ in their own persons, if because of their parents' unbelief, then either of their remote or immediate parents; not because of the unbelief of their remote parents, for their root was holy, ver. 16: therefore because of the unbelief of their next parents. I think none will quarrel our reasoning from the case of the Jewish children to those of Christians, but Anabaptists and Socinians. I see not what exception any would enter against this argument, unless it be, that these Jews who professedly rejected Christ; but the openly wicked Christians, of whom we speak, do not. But let the difference be what it will; though these Jews had turned professed Atheists, still it remains true, that unless their children had stood by them, they could not have fallen by them. I find Fulwood* brings in this as an objection against his doctrine, "That children stand in the visible church in their parents' right:" And answers, "That the infant's right is seated in itself, though it be derived from its parents." And this he proves by four arguments. But, in my opinion, he needed not have been at the pains; for I doubt if there be any that say the child's right is seated in the parent, whether it be understood of his right before God or the church. But sure it is, the child can have no visible right to the seals of the covenant, but as he is the child of such mediate or immediate parents, that have right to the same, and are members of the church; and his visible right stands or falls with theirs. So that it may well enough be said, that they stand in their parents' right, or that they stand before the church by their parents.

ARGUMENT II. If the repentance of immediate parents be necessarily pre-requisite unto their infants' right to baptism, (I mean the visible repentance of the parents to the visible right of infants), notwithstanding that such infants are the remote seed of undoubtedly godly parents; then infants derive their right to baptism from their immediate, not their mediate parents; but the antecedent is true: *Ergo*, the consequent also. The sequel is manifest. The assumption I prove from Acts ii. 38. 39. "Repent, and be baptized for the remission," &c. Here are two sorts of persons spoken off, viz. adult persons, who were personally guilty of the murder of the Son of God; and their seed, or little ones. Both were Abraham's seed, at least most of them were so: for however these words, "and to as many as are afar off," &c. be explained; yet none can doubt but the natural seed of Abraham

are designed in these words, "For the promise is to you, and to your children." So the children here spoken of, are the children of remote godly parents. Two things here remain to be proven for clearing of the assumption: 1. That repentance is required as necessary antecedently to a right to baptism here enjoined. 2. That in the call to baptism, the children of those parents are comprehended as well as themselves.

1. As to the *first*, That repentance is required of the parents in this text, as necessarily pre-requisite to a right to the baptism urged by the apostle, is plain, if ye consider, in the *first* place, That if they had right to baptism antecedently to their repentance, the apostle could not have denied the same unto them till they did declare it; and that the rather, that they were now pricked at the heart for their murdering of Christ, and crying out, "What shall we do to be saved?" Yet we find the apostle requires, in the first place, that they should repent, and stays their baptism till they have evidenced their repentance, notwithstanding that their present perplexity required a speedy possession of those privileges they had right unto. And when the apostles do fall a-baptizing, they baptize those, and those only, who gladly received Peter's word, ver. 41. Further, how could they have been baptized antecedently to their repentance, seeing they were to be "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ," as says the text; and none but Christ's disciples ought to be baptized? Matth. xxviii. 19. They could not be accounted Christ's disciples till they professed their faith in him, and their repentance; and consequently till then could have no right *coram ecclesia* to baptism in his name. Finally, they are called to be baptized for the remission of sins, *non obtinendam, sed obsequendam*, i. e. in testimony of remission of sins: but this could not be before faith, seeing it is by faith we obtain remission; and faith cannot be without repentance. Wherefore it is evident, they are called to repentance as necessary antecedently to baptism.

2. For the *second*, That the call to baptism here comprehends the children of these parents as well as themselves. *Metanoesate, kai baptistheto ekastos humon*. The authors of *Antisynodalia Americana* will have these words (if I right remember) read, "and every one of you be baptized," (it seems) that the sense may be, Every one of you that repent be baptized. But as our translation is exactly according to the original, so the call to repentance and to baptism are of equal latitude, as the words plainly bear, and the nature of the things themselves, as was shown before; otherwise it was no sin in them that rejected baptism so to do, providing only they did not repent, though under this call: which methinks is no sound divinity. But

to the point: This appears, if ye consider these particulars. 1. Here is express mention made of their children together with themselves, "For the promise is to you, and to your children." Now, those to whom is the promise, are by this call obliged to be baptized; but the promise was to their children as well as themselves: *Ergo*, If any doubt the major, I might prove it thus: If the gift of the Holy Ghost was to be given after baptism, then those to whom the promise is made, are called to be baptized; the former is true: *Ergo*, The reason of the consequence is, because the gift of the Holy Ghost and the promise being to them, are joined together; the latter as the ground of the former. The assumption appears from the apostle's own words, "Be baptized,—and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." 2. To what other end should mention be made of their children, but that the apostle would have them to repent, that so both they and their seed might receive the seal of the covenant? This, I think, must be granted, unless we will join hands with the Anabaptists, and delay the baptism of their children till such time as they were capable personally to evidence their repentance. 3. The scope of the apostle, which was to comfort those that were pricked at the heart for the murdering of the Lord of glory, doth prove this. They saw now what it was to be guilty of Christ's blood; and doubtless (as an awakened soul has a quick memory for bygone sins) they remembered well, that sometime they had cried out, "His blood be on us, and our children." Wherefore, that the plaster might be as broad as the sore, it was necessary that they should be taught the reception of their children to baptism, together with themselves; and so both were called together thereto. 4. In all examples of the parents' call to receive the first seal of the covenant, the children also are comprehended, whether under the Old or New Testament dispensations; and how can it be otherwise, seeing God has said, he will be the believer's God, and the God of his seed also.

ARGUMENT III. God threatens that he will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him; but promiseth to shew mercy to thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments. I have already proven, that the promise is only to the immediate seed of godly parents; and by the same labour, that the threatening is only to the immediate seed of the ungodly: and as I said of the meaning of the promise, its being extended to thousands; so say I of the threatening, its being extended to the third and fourth generation, viz. successively, and one after another ungodly. God, in punishing the children, will remember

the iniquity of their fathers and grandfathers ; they being still the children only of the wicked. Now, whatever else the mercy promised doth comprehend, I think it will be denied by none but Anabaptists, and such as they, that it includes a visible right to the first seal of the covenant. By the same reason then, the threatening includes the contrary ; and so God himself, in his holy and wise dispensations, has explained it, while he hath broken off wicked parents and their seed from the visible church, and all right to church privileges. This Scripture then affords us a twofold argument for our purpose.

ARGUMENT 1. From the threatening. If God visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of immediate wicked parents, then the children of immediate wicked parents have no right to baptism, though they be the remote seed of the godly ; the former is true : *Ergo*, The sequel, which only needs proof, is thus evinced : The mercy promised to the children of those that love God, comprehends a grant of a visible right to the initiating seal made to them ; *Ergo*, the judgment threatened to the children of wicked parents, comprehends a denuding them of, or a denying unto them, a visible right to the same : for *contrariorum contraria sunt consequentia*. And otherwise, they to whom the threatening visibly belongs shall have the mercy of the promise visibly belonging to them also ; not without great appearance of confusion of those things which God hath so divided and distinguished. This reasoning the learned Zanchius yields to us *in thesi*,* though *in hypothesi* he is against it. His words are, “ There is a certain antithesis betwixt the promise and threatening. Now, what doth he promise, when he says ‘ He will shew mercy to those that love him ’ ? temporal good things only ? not at all ; but eternal life, according to that, ‘ He that doth these things, shall live in them : ’ and in many places he promiseth salvation to them that keep his law. Therefore also in the threatening, he threatens eternal death.” Yet the same learned man will not allow us to conclude from this, that the children of those parents who are excluded from the covenant for their iniquities and defections, are excluded also.† But why, upon the same ground we may not argue as before is done, I see not. Nothing can strike against the one, that doth not equally militate against the other. But says the learned man,‡ “ Surely when we have come to the fourth generation, where those fathers also are wicked, and excluded from the covenant for their own wickedness ; their children also, belonging to the fifth generation, must necessarily be supposed to be excluded from the covenant ; and likewise

* *Tom.* 4. p. 372.† *P.* 375.‡ *Ibid.*

their children, and so on. How then would it be true that the Lord says, he will not extend this curse but to the fourth generation at most ?" I answer, with all deference to that judicious man, there is no absurdity in this consequence that he draws from the opinion of those that differ from him ; yea, the threatening itself obligeth us to believe it, it being supposed they are still wicked one after another : for surely even the fifth generation, in the case supposed, are the children of those that hate God, and so liable to the threatening ; only the fifth generation, according to the threat, hath not the sins of any of the former, but the fourth remembered against them in the punishment : and so on, till we come to the third and fourth generation again : whereby the Lord shews himself indeed slow to wrath, but abundant in goodness ; while, on the other hand, the mercy promised extends to thousands. And thus we see how it remains true, that God will not extend this curse beyond the fourth generation, that is, visiting the iniquities of grandfathers upon the children. But nevertheless, if there should be thousands of quaternions of wicked generations, the denial of the mercy should be carried down through them all, according to the threatening. If the learned man mean, that we cannot refuse, according to our interpretation, to allow the fifth generation of successively wicked persons the seal of the covenant ; I deny any such thing follows, but the contrary, as was cleared before. But if he take that to be true, it deserves consideration, how that can agree with God's dispensation, in visiting the iniquities of the fathers on the children among the Jews, sixteen hundred years and upwards ; not to speak of the pagan nations. It can no more be inferred from thence, then, that God will not give the mercy to more than thousands of them that love him. But when God minds the mercy we speak of, either to the fourth or fifth generation, the mercy, I say, of visible right to the first seal of the covenant in their infancy, we may expect he will deal with the third or fourth so as to make way for it.

ARGUMENT 2. From the promise. If the mercy promised belongs only to the immediate seed of godly parents, then children derive their visible right to the ordinance of baptism from their immediate, not from their mediate parents ; the former is true : *Ergo*, the reason of the consequence is, because a visible right to the first seal of the covenant is comprehended in this mercy, whatever more it include ; which I need not stand to prove, till the arguing of the orthodox from this text, against Anabaptists, be invalidated. The assumption I have already proven by three reasons. And I shall now add a fourth from the scope of the words. The scope plainly is this : that seeing it is natural for parents to desire the prosperity

and happiness of their seed, and the evil that cometh on their children, especially by their means, is afflicting and heavy to them; therefore, as they would not ruin the fruit of their bodies, they should take heed that they depart not from the way of God's commandments; and as they would have their children to enjoy the mercy of God, they would shew themselves to be lovers of God, and keepers of his commandments. That this is the scope of the place, is past doubt with me. This the learned man before mentioned doth grant.* "If then," says he, "their children be dear to them, at least on their account let them not revolt from the true worship of God to idolatry. Surely this is the end of this commination." But how the contrary opinion agrees with the scope, I cannot see. Now, let us consider the Israelites to whom the law was immediately given. It is pleaded, that the open wickedness of immediate parents among them did not take away this mercy from their seed; but they derived their visible right to the seal from the holy root, which was Abraham alone, or Isaac and Jacob also. But these holy men were dead long before, so that there was no need to stir them up to keep God's commandments, being then in glory: and as for that generation of adult persons, it could have no influence on them, being so understood; what needed they fear the threat, seeing their infants were already secured from any harm they could do them, seeing they were the remote seed of the godly? The promise could have no influence on them either; seeing, by virtue thereof, however holy they were, their infants could have no advantage they had not before, from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So that the threatening and promise both are rendered quite useless to them, and could have no tendency to the stirring up of them to a holy life; unless their fearing where no fear was, and hoping where there was no ground, could have efficacy on them. The same way is it rendered useless to us Gentiles, supposing once that we have had but one godly remote parent. I see no way to evite this, unless we say, that the mercy promised has no respect to a visible right to the seal of the covenant, and so gratify the Anabaptists; or deny this to be the scope of the place. Either of which they may venture on, that will; I dare not. It is in vain to say that the mercy in the promise comprehends many particular mercies; and though that one was secured to them as the children of remote godly parents, yet there might be some others that the children might meet with, through the holy life of their immediate parents. For, though it might be, that they should have many

* P. 373.

mercies, through the holy life of their immediate parents ; yet none at all by virtue of this promise, which they had not before by their remote parents : for though the mercy promised comprehend ten thousand particular mercies, they are all in that one word made over to the children of those that love God ; and if these be the remote parents, in the supposed case, then they are all made over unto the remote seed of the godly, though the immediate seed of wicked ones, as upon the account of the remote parents. But nothing can be more agreeable to the scope, than to understand it only of the immediate seed of godly parents : and it is easy to perceive what an incentive to a holy life it must needs be to every parent. It is very probable it would scar many from their open wickedness, if it were duly pressed doctrinally, and followed accordingly in the way of discipline. And I am truly apprehensive, that the blunting of the edge of this threat and promise, is one of the pillows of the security of our day, and fills our congregations with so many people as would not be tolerated in a well ordered commonwealth. I will add yet

ARGUMENT 3. From the threat and promise jointly considered. If the children of openly wicked immediate parents may be acknowledged by the church to have a right to the seal of the covenant, on the account of their remote godly parents, as well as the children of godly immediate parents ; then the church should make no difference betwixt the children of those that love God, and those that hate him : but that ought not to be so. For where God in his word hath made a difference, the church ought to do so too ; for in all things revealed we are bound to follow God's judgment : but such practice seems to thwart with it, as the text shews ; God having put so manifest a difference betwixt them, that he will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the one, and shew mercy to the other. It seems then, we ought to separate betwixt the precious and the vile, put difference between the holy and profane, even in this case. Let none say, they know not who are the precious, who the vile, amongst infants. Here is God's revelation of his mind, for the terror of the wicked, that he will visit their iniquities on their children. If the Lord be pleased to bring elect vessels out of the loins of openly wicked parents, and of his free grace to give them his Holy Spirit, as no doubt he may do, and many times actually doth ; yet *de occultis non judicat ecclesia*. We are to wait till we see the same evidenced by their personal carriage ; and in the meantime, we go according to the plainly revealed word, leaving secret things unto the Lord : even as we are to look on the seed of visible believers as visible saints, and to deal with them as such, till by their walk they manifest the contrary. Wherefore, there is no

ground to say, as Zanchy,* “that this is repugnant to God’s eternal election, seeing that many times elect children are born of wicked parents and idolatrous reprobates.” What though they be elected, we have no evidence of it; without which, as to us, it is as if it were not. Truly, if this should hold good, there is no infants of the most barbarous savages in the world but have a right to baptism; for who knows but they are elected, and in due time will be called? But I suppose, in admitting to baptism, the church looks to the party’s being in Christ, and having the Spirit; not to his election immediately or solely; for even the elect may be for a time dogs and swine, not fit subjects of sealing ordinances. If any say, that they do make a difference betwixt those children requiring sponsors, in order to the administrating of the seal to the children of openly wicked parents; I answer, 1. I wish it were so ordinarily, that sponsors were required for the children of such parents as are not themselves visible believers. 2. If the godly parents die before the child’s baptism, where is the difference? But, 3. There is no difference at all in point of right to the ordinance and church state: for still the one as well as the other is supposed to have right to the ordinance as such a seed; and the children of the godly are not baptized without sponsors either.

ARGUMENT IV. If the children be unclean, unless the unbelieving husband be sanctified by the believing wife, or the unbelieving wife be sanctified by the believing husband, then the children derive their right to baptism from their immediate parents; the former is true: *Ergo*, All this is clear from the testimony of the apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 14. “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now they are holy.” So that the apostle plainly turns this matter of the children’s holiness, and consequently of their right to the ordinance, on the state of the immediate parents, as the only hinge of it *coram ecclesia*. I do easily perceive an exception that will be entered against this argument by those that differ, to wit, that in this case there were no remote parents from whom the children could derive their right; these immediate parents being once both pagans, come of pagan parents, though now the father or mother was a believer; and so can make no general rule. ANSWER. Grant these parents to whose case the apostle applies this, were all come of mere pagans; which nevertheless will be impossible to prove, but that some of them might be the children of parents proselyted to the Jewish church; yet the rule that the apostle lays down here, is a general rule for all such cases wherein a believer is yoked with an unbeliever, “For the unbelieving—is sanctified: else were your chil-

* *Ubi sup.* p. 375.

dren unclean," &c. This, I think, cannot be denied. Let us then suppose the believing wife, a daughter of a believer, but the wife of an unbeliever: such a case not only may be, but no doubt has been. It is no strange thing to imagine an unbeliever to profess faith and repentance, and that to gain marriage with a believing woman; and thereafter to turn back again to infidelity, and that openly, when he has accomplished his design: yea, it is very supposable, and like unto the Lord's dealing in his ordinary dispensation of grace, that there were some in Corinth in that case, the father and the daughter called, but her husband left to remain in infidelity, or *vice versa*. In this case then, I ask, Whether or no the children of the believer and unbeliever should be holy, and have right to the seal of the covenant, though the unbelieving husband were not sanctified by the believing wife? If you say, they should be holy, as you must say, while so much stress is laid on a child's being the remote seed of the godly, (for so the child is in the supposed case), then you plainly contradict the apostle, teaching that unless the unbelieving husband were sanctified by the believing wife, the children were unclean, not holy. If you say, they should not be holy, unless the unbelieving husband were sanctified by the believing wife, then you plainly derive the child's right from the immediate parent, and acknowledge that the piety of the remote parent giveth not a visible right to the ordinance unto the child; which is the very thing we plead for. Moreover, let us suppose amongst these Corinthians a believing father, his daughter a wife, and her husband, both unbelievers; which I think is a very rational supposition: I ask, whether or not their children be holy? If they be holy, then I would know what children under heaven are unholy. If they be not, then the piety of remote parents doth not evidence their seed to be holy, and infants derive not their right from godly remote parents. We have a case in the Old Testament which we shall consider here: Ezra x. 3. "Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God, to put away all the strange wives, and such as are born of them." ver. 16. "And the children of the captivity did so." ver. ult. "And some of them had wives by whom they had children." Now, I would know whether or not those children born to the Jews of their strange wives, were holy children, and had right to the seal of the covenant? If they were, it is strange they should put away their holy children, or that the fierce wrath of the Lord should go out against them for keeping such a holy generation. This looks not very like God's way, to put out of his church a holy seed. To say they were to be put away because they rejected the covenant of God, is *gratis dictum*; surely

some of them were not capable to reject the covenant. Yet those children put away, were the remote seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as much as Boaz, whom Salmon begat of Rahab a Canaanite; and Obed, whom Boaz begat of Ruth the Moabitess, and many others. These two are expressly owned by Matthew to be the children of Abraham, Matth. i. 2. 5: yet were not these children holy; and consequently, some of the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were not holy; and that though born within the visible church: which, I think, should go far to prove the main point now under consideration, How was it then that they were unclean, and not holy? I know no other reason can be given, but that their mothers were not sanctified to their fathers for bringing forth of a holy seed. The contrary whereof was in the case of the Corinthians; which still hangs all on the state of the immediate parents. Whatever disparity be betwixt these two cases, here is all we are seeking after, viz. children come of godly remote parents, born within the church likewise, as that phrase is commonly used, yet unholy, having no right to the seal of the covenant, because of the state of their immediate parents. And if a thousand differences betwixt these two cases should be produced, so long as they agree in the point for which they are adduced, the cause is safe.

ARGUMENT V. ult. A cursed seed have no right to the seal of the covenant; but the children of openly wicked immediate parents, though they be the remote seed of the godly, are a visibly cursed seed. This is plain from Deut. xxviii. 18. where God tells the Israelites, even the seed of Abraham, that "if they did not hearken to the voice of the Lord, to observe to do all his commandments, the fruit of their body should be cursed." Hence it follows, that children's right to the seal of the covenant is derived only from their immediate parents, not from their remote parents: for, notwithstanding of the holiness of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God will curse their remote seed, because of their immediate parents' wickedness. Now, whom God has declared in his word to be cursed, they are visibly cursed; which is inconsistent with a right to a sealing ordinance, as I shall afterwards prove, when I come to improve this argument further. And so much for the proof of infants deriving their right to church privileges, or to the sacrament of baptism *coram ecclesia*, from their immediate parents only.

I come now to offer some arguments to prove that none but the children of visible believers, or such as make a credible profession, have right before the church, or a visible right, to the sacrament of baptism. Having fixed the former point, viz. that infants derive their visible right to baptism, from their immediate, not their

remote parents; now the question is, Whether or not it be necessary, in order to the child's visible right to baptism, that one of the immediate parents be a visible believer, or have a probable or credible profession? We offer the following arguments for the affirmative.

ARGUMENT I. If no infants but those whereof one of the parents do commend themselves and their seed to the church, either by their conversation, or by their baptism, have right before the church to that ordinance; then no children but those whereof one of the parents is a visible believer, have a visible right to the same; the antecedent is true: *Ergo*, the consequent also. The truth of the antecedent is acknowledged, at least by some of those that differ, while they do necessarily require that it appear to the church, that one of the parents have been baptized, otherwise the children can have no visible right to the ordinance; though indeed they think this sufficient to entitle their children to baptism, though their walk be not as becomes the gospel in any tolerable measure. I suppose those learned men that do require the evidence of the baptism of one of the parents, understand it as the *minimum quod sit*, that the church can be satisfied in this matter with nothing less than this; though albeit this were wanting, if the parents commend themselves and their seed to the church, by a credible profession, or holy conversation, in the sight of men, they would look on this as giving their infants a visible right to the seal. If it be not understood thus, I cannot yield to it. I doubt not but in some cases, the administrator of baptism may have greater clearness to baptize the child of an unbaptized person, than of many that are certainly known to have been baptized. The child of such a parent may have a visible right to baptism; for it is plain, that an unbaptized parent may have faith and repentance, and that so as they may sufficiently appear to the church to be believers and penitent, while in the meantime there is not the least shadow of those things in many that are baptized. Now, by faith the soul is entered into covenant with God; and at the same time the parent is taken into covenant, his seed also is brought into the covenant: whence it appears, that both parent and child have a visible right to baptism, antecedently to the baptism of the parent. So these converts, Acts ii. they had visible right to baptism before they were baptized, and this by reason of their probable profession; which also gave their children a visible right thereto as soon as they themselves had it. So, put the case such parents should have died before they were baptized, it could not have robbed the children of their visible right which they had before to the seal of the covenant. Yea, I suppose, the truth of the antecedent is yielded by them all, viz. That one of these two,

either the baptism, or else a visible godly conversation of one of the parents, is necessary to the child's visible right to baptism. As for those that go to the remote parents for the child's right, we are agreed in that the visible piety of parents is necessary. Only they say, the piety of the remote parents is necessary; we say, it is the immediate parent, as has been proven. Others express themselves thus, that the children of such as are probably judged within the covenant, have right to baptism. Now, this probable judgment must needs proceed upon one of the two things mentioned. And as for those who say, that the infants of wicked parents being born within the church, have right to baptism, I think it is plain they mean by that, born of baptized parents. Either they mean it so, or that it is the place of their birth that gives them this privilege. I could scarcely have thought any could have been so absurd as to have affirmed the latter. Yet I find one zealous assertor of the real and visible title that the children of openly wicked parents have to baptism, tells us,* that there are many arguments urged by divines for it, that to him were never yet satisfactorily answered; whereof this is one: "That such children have their right supplied from the holiness of the place or people wherein they are born." I wish he had told us what divines those are that urge this argument. I doubt if he can shew us any of whom he will have much credit, that ever asserted such a thing. He might have left out the people here, for there are none born in people, but in the place where a holy people lives: but by this addition he seems to answer a question arising from his own words, which I fancy would puzzle many great divines; and that is, How a place now under the gospel dispensation is made holy, especially so holy that the very birth of an infant in it gives it a real title and visible right to the holy ordinance of baptism? ANSWER. There is a holy people lives in that place. But I would propose more questions still upon the back of that. What holiness is that that a holy people communicate to the spot of ground where they live? And what is the way how they make it holy? And by virtue of what appointment of God is it that English ground is holy, where a holy people lives? And whether or not we may suffer pagans to come in, and defile our holy place with their unclean feet? And how came it that the land of Egypt and Babylon were not made holy places, seeing they were places where God's holy people lived for many years? Why had not the Egyptian and Babylonish infants a right to circumcision from the holiness of the place

* Fulwood's Disc. vis. Ch. p. 213.

and people wherein they are born? No doubt, if this learned man had been living in the seventh century, when Augustine came from the Bishop of Rome, and called the Britons to help him in the conversion of the Saxons that were heathens, he would have thought their answer very unmannerly, (as indeed it cannot be approved), viz. that they were not obliged to preach to their enemies, seeing the Saxons had spoiled them of their lands, and did still continue to prey upon them: but he would off-hand not only have preached to them, but baptized their infants, in regard of the holiness of the place and people wherein they lived: for, besides the ancient inhabitants, the queen was a Christian, and had her preacher; and the king was converted too afterwards by means of Augustine, and no doubt he did not alone embrace the Christian religion. But enough of this. Paul used another way of arguing, 1 Cor. vii. 14. "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 are they holy;" though these infants were born in a place where God had a church. And I do not think we shall find many to conclude, if a pagan woman were cast out upon our coast, and brought forth a child, that *ipso facto* the child should have a right to baptism. But I proceed to prove the sequel of the major thus: The baptism of a parent that hath no credible profession, or is an openly wicked person, is not sufficient to commend himself to the church, or to commend his seed to her, for the seal of the covenant; *Ergo*, the sequel stands good. For if one of these two, the baptism, or the credible profession of the parent, be necessary to this end, then it clearly follows, that if his baptism be insufficient to that end, and yet he have no credible profession, his child hath no visible right to baptism: and so none but the children of visible believers are thus privileged. I prove the antecedent, That baptism that ought to be looked upon as unprofitable and non-baptism, cannot commend a man's seed to the church, as having visible right to baptism; but that baptism which is without a credible profession, ought to be looked upon as unprofitable and non-baptism: *Ergo*, the proposition is clear. The assumption I shall prove by the following reasons.

REASON I. The apostle tells us expressly, Rom. ii. 25. "Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." I hope those that differ will allow us to argue from circumcision to baptism; and will easily acknowledge, that we may say the same concerning baptism, Baptism verily profiteth, &c.* Ursin, arguing for the neces-

* Expl. Cat. p 566.

sity of church discipline, among other reasons gives this for it, "Those that are not yet baptized, must not be admitted to the supper; but baptism is not baptism to those that fall away from their baptism, Rom. ii. 25. *Ergo*," I hope none will think he is arguing for the necessity of church discipline to be exercised against Turks, pagans, and Jews; but the openly wicked of whom we speak; as is manifest from what he says in the same page. It is evident the apostle speaks here of the openly wicked Jews, who had the outward sign of circumcision, but a profane conversation; as is clear from the preceding verses. So that ver. 24. he plainly tells them, "the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles, because of them," (as it is in our case); which manifestly argues open wickedness, with a profession of religion. Yet because of their circumcision they valued themselves highly; but the apostle shews them they had no profit of it, but their circumcision was by their profane life made uncircumcision. "He answers," says a learned commentator* on the place, "That the outward sacramental symbols profit nothing without good life and manners; without which circumcision differs nothing from uncircumcision; that is, a Jew differs nothing from a heathen." If then God in his word hath pronounced the circumcision of openly wicked persons to be unprofitable and uncircumcision, and so hath declared his mind concerning the baptism of openly wicked Christians; the church ought to look upon it to be such as God hath declared it to be, that is, unprofitable and non-baptism. If this hold good, it says much to the point. I shall consider what exceptions may possibly be entered against it, so far as they occur to me.

EXCEPTION 1. It would follow then, that such should be re-baptized when they repent. ANSWER. I deny it would follow, more than that those to whom circumcision became uncircumcision by their profane life, ought to have been circumcised again upon their repentance; which was never done: and yet this was no new, but the good old way, that the apostle lays down here. Although, as Christ teacheth, by excommunication a man is made to be as a heathen; yet the re-baptizing of an excommunicated person upon his repentance, is not urged. I say then, with Ursin,† in answer to the same objection, that "reception by baptism is ratified to penitents, even without the iteration of the sign." Indeed, if baptism were of the kind of physical causes, this exception might possibly have some force; for when a physical cause is unprofitable, and as good as none, there must be a new

* Aret. in. loc.

† Ubi. sup.

application, or else the effect is not produced; as when a plaster is laid to a sore, if it be unprofitable, and as good as none, there must needs be a new application made, or the party cannot be healed. But baptism is no physical cause, but a moral cause; which, though unprofitable, and as good as none to a person sometimes; yet, without a new application, it may become profitable: As suppose a seal were appended to a blank paper, even the king's seal, and given to a man, what is he the better of it, what doth it profit? nothing at all: but if the king shall write on that paper a grant of a pension, then it profits indeed. But you see plainly there needs no iteration of the sign. The application is easy.

EXCEPTION 2. The apostle means, that circumcision profits nothing to justification, though otherwise it may. I answer, *Non distinguendum ubi lex non distinguit*. The apostle simply, without any limitation, pronounceth, That circumcision profiteth nothing, if a man be a breaker of the law. To which that is a plain contradiction, Circumcision profiteth something, though a man be a breaker of the law. Yea, he tells them roundly, it is uncircumcision, and therefore unprofitable, not only to justification, but to all intents and purposes. And I think it can scarcely be denied by any that considers the apostle's discourse, but that hereby he levels the openly wicked Jews with the heathens in point of circumcision, so that the one had as much real profit of it as the other, that is, none at all. Yet further, I do indeed believe, that the great thing the apostle is aiming at in these chapters, is justification by the free grace of God; and to this end, he endeavours, in this chapter, to beat down the boasting of the wicked Jews, (as, in the next chapter, he proves all, both Jews and others, to be guilty before God): for effecting of which, he lays out before them their vicious lives so unanswerable to the written law that God gave them; which has a native tendency to his main scope and design: and withal tells them, that their circumcision would not cover their wickedness. But notwithstanding of that, they were wicked men still, as he clearly shews, vers. 28, 29. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly:—But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly," &c. But I see no reason to understand the words of the text we are now upon, as the exception gives it, viz. That it profiteth nothing to justification, but in that respect is uncircumcision. Read the whole text accordingly; and I suppose we may find the weakness, yea and unsoundness of this exception. "For circumcision verily profiteth to justification, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision in point of justification." Now, by justification here, is either meant justification by free grace, or jus-

tification by works. If justification by the free grace of God, according to the covenant of grace, be meant; how does circumcision profit to it? has that any hand in our justification? If justification by works, according to the old covenant, then I ask, by what appointment of God was ever circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, made profitable for justification by works? Let any such appointment be produced, and then we shall see the law and the gospel confounded. Wherefore, though a man should keep the law of works, circumcision could profit him nothing to justification: yea, possibly I may say, if he should go about it as a piece of God's worship, it should contribute to his condemnation, in regard it is no part of the law of works, and therefore to him should be will worship. And so, if any shall say, that though circumcision was never appointed to be a seal of the covenant of works, yet it might profit as a commanded duty, and as an act of obedience to the law of works; I confidently deny it, that it could be an act of obedience to the law of works; that could ever profit that way. And the reason is, because God never commanded it to be used but as a seal of the righteousness of faith: nor did it ever belong, before God, to any but such as were in the covenant of grace with him; nor, before the church, to any but such as were visibly in that covenant. The law and grace have two distinct dominions, Rom. vi. 14; so that receiving of circumcision could no more be an act of obedience to the law of works, than the obeying of a particular law of the kingdom of England, can be an act of obedience to the law of Scotland, though both kingdoms be under one sovereign. Only I desire it to be noticed, that when I deny that the receiving of circumcision could be an act of obedience to the law of works, I deny it only in the sense it is asserted in the instance against our answer to the exception; that is, that it could be an act of obedience to the law of works profiting to justification, thereby, as a part of a law righteousness; which is the plain sense of the instance. The reason why I add this caution, is this, because I am of opinion, that where the covenant of grace is revealed, and it is revealed only to lost sinners, and they are called to enter this covenant, and consequently to receive the seal of it; those sinners being under the covenant of works, as to its commanding and threatening power, though the promise of it is weak through the flesh, are, by virtue of that covenant and law of works, obliged to believe, accept of the covenant of grace, and to receive the seals thereof, and so to get out from that covenant of works. In this respect, to receive the seal of the covenant of grace, is a remote act, at least, of obedience to the law of works, but not at all

profiting as a part of our righteousness before God, or profiting to justification by that law. I cannot indeed apprehend how the covenant of works does not oblige every one that is under it to obey whatsoever God shall command them to do; so that, supposing a call to receive Christ made to one under the law, he is obliged by the law to receive Christ, and to submit to the law of Christ, which commands men to receive the seals of the covenant of grace, whosoever they be that are under it: and therefore I cannot deny but thus it is a remote act of obedience to the law of works, to receive the seals of the covenant of grace, in so far as it obligeth them to submit to Christ, whose law particularly enjoins this; though indeed the law of works leaves the soul as soon as it is in Christ, they dying to it, and it to them. The law then that the apostle speaks of here, I conceive to be the ten commands, as they are the law of Christ; to which obedience is performed only in point of sanctification. And thus indeed these persons might be profited by circumcision, if they did evidence their faith in, and love to Christ, by sincere keeping of his law; circumcision being a seal of the covenant of grace; and their keeping of the law sincerely, an infallible token that they were within the bond of that covenant, and had right to all the promises of it; the accomplishment whereof is confirmed by the seal. But while they, by their loose walk and wickedness, evidenced their hypocrisy, and that they were but Jews outwardly and in name, they were not a whit profited by circumcision.

EXCEPTION 3. This is understood of their circumcision before the Lord, not before the church. ANSWER. That cannot be proven from the text. But let it be so: Then, 1. I say, seeing God makes account of everything as it is in itself, for his judgment is according to truth, then their baptism who are profane in their lives, profiteth nothing, but their circumcision is made uncircumcision. 2. Seeing God hath not kept his judgment of it secret, but hath revealed the same in his word, so as every one may read what account he makes of it, it necessarily follows, that the church must account so of it, unless men may take liberty to let their judgment go another way than God's mind revealed, and look on them quite another way than God tells us he looks upon them.

EXCEPTION 4. The apostle plainly teacheth the profit of circumcision, chap. iii. 1, 2. "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" Much every way. For answer to this, we must take notice, that there are here two distinct questions, which are so many objections, of the Jews against his doctrine. He had in the former chapter levelled them with the

heathens, and reckoned their circumcision for uncircumcision; he easily perceives the Jews would take this very ill, and therefore brings them in here with two questions in their mouths; the first, "What advantage hath the Jew?" the second, "or what profit is there of circumcision?" To the first of these, the apostle answers by way of concession, "Much every way," ver. 2. to wit, in respect of God, who had given them many things which were indeed advantageous in themselves; which things he had not given to the heathens: but not in respect of themselves; for they were no advantages to them, no advantages eventually. And so again, in this chapter, he puts the Jews and Gentiles in the same balance, by testimony from the Psalms. So that it is a kind of ironical concession, used also by the apostle towards these same persons, chap. ii. 17, 18, 19, 20. As if he should say: "Ye have indeed much advantage every way, I confess: for unto you were committed the oracles of God; God gave you the revelation of his mind and will, when the poor heathens were left to walk in darkness, having nothing to guide them but the dim light of nature; but so much the more miserable are ye, and the greater shall your condemnation be, while ye walk as ye do." As for the second question, it is not here answered; but that "much every way" belongs allenarly to the first, which the words in the original plainly hold forth, which are these: *Ti oun to perisson tou loudaiou, e tis he apheleia tes peritomes? Polu kata panta tropon. Polu, viz, to perisson* But the second question he answers, chap. iv. 11; where he tells them, what profit there is of circumcision,* and to whom it was profitable. Both these he sheweth in the person of Abraham, of whose fatherhood they boasted; "And he received circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had yet before being uncircumcised." That is the profit of circumcision, that it seals the righteousness of faith; but it profits only those that have received and submitted to that righteousness: to the wicked it profits no more than a seal to set a blank. So that the argument stands good notwithstanding of these exceptions.

REASON II. The baptism of those persons to which the characters given by the Spirit of God in the Scriptures appear not to agree, ought to be reputed unprofitable, and their circumcision is uncircumcision; but such is the baptism of those who have no credible profession: *Ergo*, the major is plain: for no baptism but the Scripture baptism can be reputed profitable; and the Scripture characters of baptism must needs agree to Scripture baptism. The

* See Aret. in loc. Piscat. in loc.

minor will appear if we take a view of some Scriptures speaking of baptism. Mark i. 4.—“the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins.” Matth. xxviii. 19. “Disciple all nations, baptizing them,” &c. Mark xvi. 16. “He that believeth and is baptized.” Acts ii. 38. “Repent and be baptized, for the remission of sins.” Acts xxii. 16. “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins,” or, “be washed from thy sins,” as some read it,* and the words will bear, *kai aplousai tas hamartias sou*. Gal. iii. 27. “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.” 1 Pet. iii. 21—“Baptism doth also now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh.” “For many are externally washed only, [which is the use of baptism not lawful, *qui est usus baptismi non legitimus*]; few, so as they may call on God with a good conscience.” *Pareus in loc.* “This purifying of the conscience is opposed indeed to washing simply carnal, but not to the sacrament of baptism; for to the entireness of baptism (*ad integritatem baptismi*†) both concur the external and the internal washing, not one of them only; and when any hath received it worthily, that answer of a good conscience towards God is joined.” Hoornbeek. Now, let it be considered how these things agree to the baptism of those that have no credible profession: What visible agreement is there betwixt them? nay, what visible disagreement is there not? If any shall say, that such persons profess all these things; I shall reply with the same learned man,‡ speaking of the same Scriptures, *Nunquid illa non plus dicunt quam nudam aliquam a nobis factum professionem?*

REASON III. That baptism which the church cannot look upon as a seal of the righteousness of faith to him that hath it, they ought to make no account of it, but look on it as unprofitable; but such is the baptism of him that hath no credible profession: *Ergo*, the proposition is evident, if ye consider, that baptism is a sacrament of the covenant of grace, and all the sacraments of the covenant of grace, whether under the Old or New Testament, agree in this, that they are seals of the righteousness of faith. Now, it is an undeniable maxim, *Negato genere tollitur species*; That which I cannot look upon as an animal, I cannot look on as a man. That baptism which is not a seal of the righteousness of faith, is non-baptism; and how can that baptism be profitable that sealeth not that which baptism is appointed of God to seal? The assumption I prove also: Where the church cannot look on a man as privileged with the righteousness of faith, they cannot look on his baptism as sealing the righteousness of faith to him; but so it is in the present

* Hoornbeek. Piscator.

† Loc. Conf. tom 3, p. 239.

‡ P. 237.

case, where the person makes no probable or credible profession: *Ergo*, the assumption is clear, and the proposition also; for the having of the thing sealed is pre-supposed to the seal, as was said before. If they repent, it becometh indeed a seal to them, but otherwise it doth not. This I apprehend to be the truth. We have heard Pareus' judgment, that the bare outward washing, which is all that many get, is the unlawful use of baptism. Ursin tells us,* "The sacraments are no sacraments to them that have no true faith. Therefore," says he, "they are mad that say unbelievers receive, together with the signs, the things signified by the signs." And a little after he thus argues: "To whom nothing is promised in the word, to him the sacraments seal nothing. To the wicked nothing is promised in the word; therefore the sacraments seal nothing to the wicked." The learned Witsius teacheth us thus:† "Baptism confers nothing on such [viz. to whom it belongs not *stricto jure*]; no grace, no salvation doth it signify or seal, no more than a piece of wax, adorned indeed with an elegant character, but appended to clean paper, on which nothing is written, and to be written; or, if you will, appended to a paper bespattered every where with so exceeding great blots, that no good can be written on it." It must be observed, that this very learned man is of opinion, that all federate elect infants are regenerated before baptism.‡ That I dare not say; but, with the generality as I suppose of the orthodox, I think they are, in the judgment of charity, to be looked on as such, and that baptism is conferred to them as visible saints. Now, that opinion made the learned man to express himself so, "On which nothing is written, and to be written." And concerning adult persons, he tells us,|| "It cannot be that any adult person may well be baptized, but he that believeth." So that it is plain, according to him, baptism seals nothing to the unregenerate. Mr. Baxter gives us his judgment in the point thus:§ "Baptism is ordained to signify and seal, and thereby confer remission of sins; but not to all that have right in the judgment of the church to be baptized; but only to those that have right to it before God, and to whom his word doth first give remission; that is, not to all whom we must baptize, as being probably true believers, but only to those that have true right to baptism and its benefits, as being true believers indeed." And if we would hear again who have right to baptism before God, he tells us elsewhere,¶ "It is only solid true faith which is the condition of the promise of remission; therefore it is that only that gives right

* Expl. Cat. p. 453.

† *Exer. de Eff. Bapt.* § 6.

‡ Section 32.

|| *Oec. fœd. Dei*, p. 15.§ *Inf. Bapt.* p. 329.

¶ P. 327.

in foro Dei to the seal." But how, notwithstanding of all this, he condemns as an error in Mr. Tombes the following proposition, I do not understand. The proposition is,* "Every right administration of baptism is not God's sealing: actually God sealeth not, but when it is administered to a believer: it may be called a right act of the administrator according to God's appointment, but not God's sealing." We see here Mr. Tombes speaks plainly of the administration of baptism in respect of the administrator, not of the party to whom it is administered. I confess I incline very much to Mr. Tombes' error in this point; and so much the more freely, that I think, by what is said, it appears to be the judgment of others of more entire fame than he. Once more hear the learned Witsius.† "Indeed," says he, "the administrators of holy things, who must act about every one from the judgment of charity alone, cannot distinguish the elect from the non-elect; and in so far they are not at all faulty (*atque hactenus nihil peccant*) if perhaps they baptize even them to whom baptism is not due *stricto jure*." And a little before;‡ "If we consider the most strict right to baptism, it agrees to none but the elect in very deed and in the judgment of God." And who would think but Mr. Baxter himself had fallen afterwards into the same error with Mr. Tombes, at least when he says,|| "We ought to baptize them though they have no true right to baptism, because we are to take all for true believers that make a probable profession." Is not that a right act of the administrator which he ought to do, and must do? And yet, as he himself says, baptism is ordained to seal remission of sins, but not to all whom we must baptize. I hope none will say, God seals by baptism what he did not, or where he did not ordain it to seal. It would seem then very consequential to infer Mr. Tombes' conclusion from these premises. Mr. Baxter says indeed, in confutation of this position of Mr. Tombes, "That it is only the conditional promise which God sealeth by the sacraments, 'If thou believe in the Lord Jesus, thou shalt be saved.'" Possibly then one may think, that he means God seals remission of sins to believers only, but to others he seals the conditional promise. But this will not salve the matter in my opinion. For, 1. Mr. Baxter telleth us roundly, that the promise is to others besides believers, and so is the seal; and that this will be evident, if it be once understood, that it is only the conditional promise which God sealeth by the sacraments. What can be made of this, but that it is the same thing that God seals to believers, and to others besides them? 2. Understand it only of others, besides be-

* P. 222. † *Exer. de Eff. Bapt.* § 6. ‡ Ibid. || *Inf. Bapt.* p. 298.

lievers; is not remission of sin comprehended in that promise which he says the sacraments seal? Sure I am the scriptures make it one main part of the salvation promised, Matth. i. 21. "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins." 3. How can baptism be appointed to seal remission of sins to believers, and only the conditional covenant to others, when, as Mr. Baxter himself teacheth us, "That in relations, such as sacraments are, the end entereth the definition?" Therefore (if not through any natural incapacity of the subject, (which I dare say Mr. Baxter will not plead in this case), but God's mere institution), baptism have ends so exceeding different in (infants and the aged, says he there, let me change it into) believers and others, then you must have several definitions of baptism, and so several baptisms; but the apostle saith, there is but one baptism.* Much more he has to the same purpose in that place. Let them who can reconcile these things, do it, it is altogether beyond my reach; it may be because I am not well acquainted with his doctrine. But I will weigh what the learned man says in confutation of the above-mentioned proposition, and to prove that the sacrament rightly administered to a hypocrite is God's actual sealing. His arguments are two.

I. "If the sacrament rightly administered to an hypocrite have all in it that is essential to God's actual sealing,† then it is an actual sealing: but the sacrament—therefore it is his actual sealing. A seal is an engaging or obliging sign, or at least a testifying. He that actually useth a seal to such an end, doth actually seal. Now, I. God useth this sign; II. and to this end. 1. He useth the sign while his ministers use it in his name at his command. 2. He commandeth it to be used to this end, to engage himself to make good his promises. For, 1. to what other end should God command them? 2. Else he should command them to be used to one end to one, and to another end to another. 3. If the promise be to others besides believers, then so is the seal, (for to whom God promiseth, to them he engageth himself to perform); but the promise is to others: therefore, &c. It is only the conditional promise, &c. *ut supra.*"

ANSWER. I deny the minor of this argument, together with the proof of it, that God useth the seal to this end to hypocrites. The reason is because hypocrites have no possession of, interest in, or right to those things whereof God hath appointed the sacrament to be a seal. What a minister may do *de facto*, is not the question: but I deny, that ministers do use the sacrament at God's command,

* P. 300.

† P. 222.

or *de jure*, towards any but as they are visible saints; and if they should use it in his name towards any that are not so, they should go beyond the bounds of their commission, Matt. xxviii. 19. as it is above improven, with help from Mr. Baxter himself. That God commandeth the seal to be used to this end, to engage himself to make good his promises, is true in respect of them that are in Christ, in whom the promises are Yea and Amen; but in respect of hypocrites, it is false. But to what other end should God command them? I answer, that God hath commanded the seals as seals to be used towards believers only; and he hath commanded ministers to look on them as visible believers that have a probable profession. And if it be said, that he has commanded ministers to use them towards all visible believers, but some of them are hypocrites and so he commands them to be used to hypocrites; I answer, he commands the seals materially considered, that is, sprinkling with water, and bread and wine, to be given and administered to all visible believers; but considered formally as seals, he commands them only to be administered to those that are real saints. So that in this sense the sacrament cannot be administered as a seal to any but on supposition that the party is in Christ, seeing none other have a right before God thereto: yet it is a right act of the administrator when he administereth the sign to one that is a close hypocrite, in regard he is a visible believer. And in asserting that the administrator is not bound to know certainly and infallibly, that the party whom he baptizeth hath a right to baptism before the Lord, Mr. Baxter himself will bear me out: for he saith expressly,* “Ministers have right to baptize those that before God have no right to baptism; for they must judge of men’s right by a probable profession.” Now, let Mr. Baxter ask, to what other end than to seal actually, doth God command the seals to be administered to a hypocrite? I answer, he commandeth them not at all to be administered to them: for whatsoever is given them, or administered to them, is not God’s seal; for *forma dat esse rei*. And the water in baptism administered to a hypocrite, is no more God’s seal to him, than a soul and a body without union are a man. And if I should say, the sacrament is no sacrament to him, it is no more than what we heard before was roundly said by a far wiser head. And truly I think it deserves to be considered, how the definition† of a sacrament agrees to that which is administered to a hypocrite. “A sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are re-

* P. 328.

† Assem. Short. Catech.

presented, sealed, and applied to believers." But I pass this. If we consider other cases wherein ministers are commanded to dispense other ordinances, besides this of baptism, it may give light to what is now under consideration. When a brother hath fallen into any scandalous sin, and he appears penitent, the church officers look on themselves as commanded to absolve him, and to loose his sin; and this they do in the Lord's name and at his command, not only loosing him from church censure, but declaring his sin to be pardoned before God; yet this is on supposition that he really be before the Lord that he appears to be before the church. Yet, notwithstanding of all this, if he be hypocritical in his repentance, he is not loosed in heaven; but what they do herein, they do in God's name and at his command. And you may prosecute this the same way, to prove God's loosing the hypocrite in heaven, as Mr. Baxter doth the present argument. In admitting of close hypocrites to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the church dare not debar them, which argues a sense of God's command in the case; yet the church dare not admit them but as they appear to be real believers. The act of admission is a right act in those that admit them; but God in his word declares they have no right to it, ministers doctrinally debar them as such to whom the seals belong not. Only men know not their hearts; and in their lives they are visible believers, but in their hearts enemies to God, whom he will severely examine for coming to this gospel feast without a wedding-garment; for stretching out their hands, being profane dogs, to snatch up the children's bread. Strange! if notwithstanding of all this, the administration be God's actual sealing. The short is, the command to the administrators is not an absolute, but a qualified command. His second reason to prove that God useth the seals for actual sealing to hypocrites, falls with the first. It follows indeed on his doctrine, as was observed before, that the sacraments are used for one end to one, and another end to another, which with him (as it was above explained) I account an absurdity; but it no way follows upon our doctrine. As to the third reason, that the promise is to others, and therefore so is the seal; I cannot but observe another piece of inconsistency (as it appears to me) of this man with himself. He saith, the promise, meaning that, "If thou believe," &c. is to others besides believers, and therefore infers that so is the seal; no doubt he means it belongs to them really and *in foro Dei*: and yet elsewhere he flatly denies, that the seal belongs to any but true believers, and such as have true solid faith, *in foro Dei*, though it may belong to them in *foro ecclesie*. But I deny, that the promise which the sacrament seals is that promise he speaks of, and have given my reason before.

But the former observe brings to mind an argument against it; which is this: if it be that conditional promise which baptism sealeth, or God sealeth by baptism, then whosoever have a right before the Lord to that promise, have a right before the Lord to baptism; but that is absurd: *Ergo*, the consequence is evident: for whoso have a right to the thing sealed, have a right to the seal; and deny it who will, it cannot be denied by any making use of his argument. The minor I prove thus: if those that have a right to that promise before the Lord, have therefore a right to baptism before the Lord, then Jews, Turks, and pagans, to whom the offer of the gospel is made, though they be still in their infidelity, have a right to baptism, even *coram Deo*; but that is most absurd: *Ergo*, the sequel is plain. For whosoever they be that have the gospel offered to them, have right *in foro poli* to the conditional promise of salvation; so that if they should believe, God could not but save them by virtue of that promise. The appendix to his "Aphorisms," in which he saith he hath fully proven this position of his, my poor library doth not afford me; neither think I myself at any great loss thereby, for I look on it as most uncomfortable doctrine, That it is only the conditional promise which God sealeth by the sacraments. If they seal no more, sadly have many godly souls, been deluded in their enjoyments at sacraments. But, however, it falleth under the next question, he says; and so we may expect to hear that sad doctrine confirmed. If I really believed he could confirm and prove it convincingly, I would hear it as my doom and sentence of death. Wo to poor saints if the sacraments confirm and seal no more to them.

Now, that which Mr. Baxter in the next question sets himself to prove, is, that the absolute promise (or covenant) of the first grace* is not it that is sealed in baptism and the Lord's supper. And for proof hereof he gives six arguments. But this seems to me strange arguing, as from the mill to the moon. What consequence is this, it is not the absolute promise of the first grace that baptism seals; *Ergo*, it is only the conditional promise, "If thou believe, thou shalt be saved?" What though it be not the absolute promise of the first grace, must it therefore be that conditional promise? are there no other promises in the covenant but these two? I think, if there were any shadow of a consequence here, it behoved to be thus: It is not the absolute promise of the first grace; *Ergo*, it is the conditional promise of the first grace; which should be Pelagianism in grain, and put much respect on the Jesuits' maxim, *Facienti quod in*

* P. 225, 226.

se est, Deus non denegabit ulteriorem gratiam. And so we might leave him to his dispute with Mr. Tombes. But I cannot think that ever Mr. Tombes would assert, that it was only the absolute promise of the first grace that baptism is a seal of. His words as Mr. Baxter sets them down, are,* “That the covenant, whereof baptism is the seal, is the absolute covenant of grace, made only to the elect.” It is certain many famous divines do hold, that the covenant of grace is absolute, and that baptism is a seal of the covenant of grace; and therefore it must needs be, according to them, a seal of the absolute covenant. But that which Mr. Baxter aims at, seems to be, that baptism doth not at all seal the promise of the first grace. Whatever be of this, if I were obliged to believe it, I would require more convincing arguments than Mr. Baxter offers for it; which I will briefly consider, to the end I may win to some light in it.

ARGUMENT 1. “That which is sealed to by the sacraments is a proper covenant, having a restipulation on our parts, as well as a promise on God’s part; but the absolute promise is not a proper covenant, with such a mutual engagement: therefore.”† ANSWER. Those that hold the covenant of grace to be absolute, will tell him, that in respect of us it is a mere promissory covenant. But if I deny the major with them, I see nothing to prove it, but somewhat from Mr. Baxter, who holds it to be that promise, “If thou believe,” &c. to disprove it. For, says he, “The very definition of a proper covenant sheweth as much, that it must be a mutual engagement. Now, in that absolute promise there is no such matter—but only God telleth what he will do.” I say the same, *mutatis mutandis*, of the conditional promise, there is no mutual engagement there; but only God telleth what he will do, if we will do so and so. Where it is plain, there is no engagement at all upon the party to whom this promise is made by virtue of it, unless it be an engagement, by way of gratitude, to accept of such a precious offer; but the promise is to him, whether he fulfil the condition or not, or any way engage with the promiser, ay and until he that made the promise declare he will no longer stand to these terms. I am confident, that neither *Grotius de jure belli*, nor other lawyers (of whom he speaks here), will ever say, that a bare conditional promise is a proper covenant, where there is a mutual engagement. Many times both in peace and war, such conditional promises are made, which not being accepted, there is no covenant made. So that by this argument neither Mr. Tombes nor Mr. Baxter are right.

* P. 223.

† P. 225.

ARGUMENT 2. "If it were the absolute promise of the first grace that is sealed by the sacraments, then the sacraments must be given to no man, or to all men. But, &c. The consequent is manifest, because that absolute promise or prophecy is only of the elect, and that before regeneration: now, no man hath any sign given him, so much as probable, by which to judge of the unregenerate elect."

ANSWER. I deny the consequence, here called the consequent, either by a typographical error, though not marked among the rest, or that *Aquila non captat muscas*. And what is alleged for proof thereof, is false taken universally. Though we have no probable sign given us whereby we may judge of the election of the seed of openly wicked parents, till such time as they evidence some good thing in them by their personal walk; yet as for the seed of believers, we have God's promise, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed." As for infants especially this holds good. And as for those children of godly parents, who when they are come to years of discretion, yet savour nothing of piety, that says indeed we cannot judge them probably to be regenerated: but yet it says not that we may not probably judge them elected. But this brings into my mind an argument against baptism its being a seal of the absolute promise of the first grace, which possibly may deserve consideration. It is this.

If baptism be a seal of the absolute promise of the first grace, then some openly wicked adult persons have a right *coram ecclesia* to baptism; but that is false, as we have before proved: *Ergo*, I prove the consequence. They to whom the thing sealed doth visibly belong, have a visible right to the seal of the covenant; but if baptism be a seal of the absolute promise of the first grace, the thing sealed by baptism doth visibly belong to some adult persons openly wicked: *Ergo*, if baptism, &c. The proposition is plain. The reason of the assumption is, because the promise of the first grace belongs visibly to those that are visible elect ones, or such as we may probably judge elected; and the seed of the righteous we must probably judge to be elected, because of the promise, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed;" yet nothing is more plain, than that there are many of the adult seed of the righteous that are openly wicked: *Ergo*, but I pass this.

ARGUMENT III. "It may be known to whom that covenant belongs which is sealed by the sacraments, but it cannot be known (before the fulfilling, no not at all) to whom (particularly) that absolute promise doth belong: therefore, &c." ANSWER. I distinguish the major. It may be known (without extraordinary revelation) probably to whom that covenant which is sealed by the

sacraments belongs particularly, I grant; and in this sense the minor is false. It may be known infallibly, I deny. But, as Mr. Bowles saith,* "Baptism is to be administered according to the judgment of charity, seeing it can by no certain signs be determined who they are that are actually in covenant." Now, if this argument could have any weight, it behoved to be proven, that we may, without extraordinary revelation, know infallibly to whom in particular the covenant sealed in baptism doth belong; which the learned man doth not attempt.

ARGUMENT IV. "If that absolute promise must be fulfilled to a man before he be capable of receiving the sacraments, which are seals of the covenant of grace, then it is not that absolute promise which is the covenant of grace sealed to by the sacraments; but that absolute promise must be fulfilled, &c.: therefore it is not that absolute promise which is the covenant so sealed to." ANSWER. This is a manifest *ignoratio elenchi*. This is neither what Mr. Baxter undertook to prove, nor what Mr. Tombes denied, so far as we can learn by his words cited by Mr. Baxter. Mr. Tombes indeed saith, that the covenant whereof baptism is the seal, is the absolute covenant of grace, as several divines of better note say as well as he, but not that the absolute promise of the first grace is the covenant of grace; it is according to their opinion a part of it, but a part is not the whole. Does Mr. Baxter think, that his adversaries in this point leave out of the covenant of grace all grace but the first? and if Mr. Baxter would have concluded his own thesis, he should have inferred, *Ergo*, it is not the absolute promise of the first grace that is sealed to. But let us hear the proof of the consequence; which is this: "The mercy promised in the covenant which is sealed, is not given before the first sealing; but the mercy promised in that absolute promise is (according to Mr. Tombes, and in part the truth) given before the first sealing of the covenant of grace: therefore, &c." I wish Mr. Baxter had set down his conclusion. However, we will get some conclusion in the premises. But behold! how he wavers again. The conclusion of this argument is plainly this: Therefore the mercy promised in that absolute promise, is not the mercy promised in the covenant which is sealed. And this conclusion we have instead of the major proposition of his argument, which ought to have been the conclusion of his proof. Such wavering would tempt a man to distrust the cause he is defending. But as to the premises, the major taken universally is manifestly false: and unless you will maintain that

* Past. Evang. p. 180.

there is only one single mercy of the covenant which is sealed, which is the covenant of grace no doubt, you must either take it so, or it is an argument *ex puris particularibus*, as is manifest. So then the major is, no mercy promised in the covenant which is sealed, or in the covenant of grace, is given before the first sealing. But most of our divines, that ever I read, against the Papists and Lutherans, their baptismal regeneration, will tell him, that some mercies promised in the covenant which is sealed, are given before the first sealing; yea more, unless that some of these mercies be given before baptism, such as the saving indwelling of the Spirit, regeneration, union with Christ, remission, &c. they can have no right, before God, to the first seal; and unless they appear to us probably to be given them, they have no right before the church to it. And if Mr. Baxter hath not said as much, as that some mercies promised are, yea, and must be given before the first sealing, or the parties have no right to baptism before the Lord, let what is said before manifest. I need not stand to prove the falsity of Mr. Baxter's major proposition last named, it hath been sufficiently done before. But at length we come to something that is indeed to the point, which immediately follows the conclusion of the last syllogism; and it is this: "God doth not promise and seal to a man that hath a new heart, to give him a new heart; or to a man that is a believer, that he will give him to be a believer; except we speak of the continuance or increase of faith and newness, which is not the thing in question." But I answer, there is another use of a seal besides that of engaging and obliging to the performance of anything; it is also of use to testify and represent, as a demonstrative sign. This is plain not only from the common nature of seals appended to contracts, but from that plain Scripture, Rom. iv. 11. "And Abraham received circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had before." And Mr. Baxter himself acknowledgeth it;* "A seal" says he "is an engaging or obliging sign, or at least a testifying." So then, although God doth not seal the promise of giving a new heart to him that hath a new heart, by way of engagement and obligation to perform the promise, yet he may seal to him that hath a new heart the promise of giving a new heart; he may seal it, I say, by way of testimony, that such a promise hath been made to, or concerning that person that hath the new heart. This is not done in vain: for the promise contains a grant of the mercy; it is the foundation of our right thereto, and the tenor of our freeholding, or holding of free grace; which it is very reasonable we

should be put in mind of, the rather that some learned men do very much to darken the glory of grace. Suppose a king should write a promise of a vast sum of current money, to be given freely to one that had been a traitor to him, or rather is a traitor, and should actually pay it him before the writ be sealed; and, upon the payment thereof, the man sees his folly, in that he should have been so undutiful to such a gracious prince, and so becomes a loyal subject: what solecism in conduct would it be, either in the subject to desire of him, (even after he hath got the money), that he would please to seal this his promise and grant; or in the king, to seal his own writ? Maybe the man hath no great skill to discern betwixt true and counterfeit money; the rather should the promise be sealed. The application is easy. God made promise to Abraham, saying, "I will be thy God," seals it with circumcision; yet before circumcision the promise was made out to Abraham; God was the God of Abraham before he was circumcised, yet was not the seal used in vain. But Mr. Baxter will say, that he sealed the continuance of that mercy of being his God. Let it be so; yet *ipso facto* that God sealed by way of engagement and obligation the continuance of that mercy to Abraham, he also sealed, by way of testimony, the beginning of that mercy, or that mercy given at first, and consequently the promise thereof; for God seals no mercy to us but as it is comprehended in a promise. If any will say, that the sacraments seal any mercy but what the word promiseth, let them prove it. For my part I think it contrary both to Scripture and reason.

ARGUMENT V. "The benefits of the covenant of grace, which is sealed by the sacraments, are (by those of age) to be received by faith; but the benefits of the absolute promise of the first grace are not to be received by faith: therefore this is not the covenant of grace so sealed. The major is evident. Mr. Tombes saith, only believers must be baptized as disciples. The minor is proved before. Faith is part of the thing promised; and we do not by faith receive our first faith, or our power to believe." ANSWER. To pass this, that the conclusion of this argument is indeed, Therefore the benefits of the absolute promise of the first grace are not the benefits of the covenant of grace, which is sealed by the sacraments; the conclusion, as it is formed by the learned man, labours under the former disease, *quod non concludit negatum*. He had need of quicker eyes than I can pretend to, that can discern a contradiction between these two; The absolute promise of the first grace is not the covenant of grace, which is sealed by the sacraments; and that, The covenant whereof baptism is the seal, is the absolute covenant of grace, made only to the elect; which is the proposition Mr. Baxter undertakes to confute. But I

deny the major, universally taken. When Mr. Baxter speaks of receiving the benefits of the covenant by faith, either he means receiving things themselves, or receiving a right to them; and in both senses the proposition is false. If he mean it of receiving the things themselves, as contradistinct from receiving a right thereto, then I would fain know, 1. Whether the resurrection of our bodies, and glorification, be benefits of the covenant of grace? and then, 2. How these benefits in this sense are received by faith? If he mean it of receiving a right thereto, contradistinct from receiving the things themselves, then I would desire to understand, whether justification, adoption, and such relative benefits, be benefits of the covenant of grace; and then, how a man can receive a right to relative benefits, as contradistinguished *in re* from the things themselves; or if a man can have a right to a relation, and not *ipso facto* be so related. I speak not of *jus sub termino*; but an immediate present right, as the matter with faith in respect of justification, &c. Whoever may quarrel this, it cannot be contradicted by Mr. Baxter's principles, "As to the relative benefits," says he,* "right to them, and right in them, are inseparable," &c. As to the proof of the proposition, I confess I see not how it toucheth the point. Mr. Tombes saith very right, and according to the scriptures, when he saith, Only believers must be baptized as disciples, meaning it of those that have right thereto before the Lord; and many others say, and that on good grounds, that only the regenerate, justified, &c. must be baptized as disciples; and yet it will not hence follow, that the benefits of the covenant of grace, sealed by the sacraments, must be received by regeneration, justification, &c.

ARGUMENT 6. "The covenant sealed to by the sacraments is a plainly propounded, unquestionable covenant; but this absolute promise of the first grace is not such," &c. ANSWER. This conclusion is like some others before, that hit not the scope of the dispute. But no doubt the covenant is plainly propounded, and ought not to be questioned. But who can help the questioning that nice wits will needs make about truths plainly propounded? And this argument might have been left out, while it is seen plainly and unquestionably, that many that have eyes in their head as well as this learned man, cannot agree with him, as to what it is that the sacraments do seal. But it is time now to come to his second argument for God's actual sealing to hypocrites.

II. "If God do no more in his actual sealing to believers, than he doth when the sacrament is rightly applied to hypocrites, then

* Inf. Bapt. p. 308.

he actually sealeth to hypocrites; but God doth no more, &c. The major is proved by the enumeration of the several acts. 1. God maketh the promise. 2. He commandeth ministers to publish it. 3. He hath instituted the sacraments as mutual engaging signs or seals. 4. He commaundeth ministers to deliver or apply them to those that profess their consent and desire to enter or renew the covenant—now, what act more than these doth God perform to the elect or believers?" ANSWER.—The proof of the major I will take for the proof of the minor, which is denied. And to his question, I say, God doth more than all those things enumerated while he actually seals to believers, or else he should not actually seal to them at all. The Westminster Assembly, in their Shorter Catechism, tells us, what God doth more, in answer to that question, "How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?" The answer is, "The sacraments become effectual—by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them." So then God blesseth them to believers, which he doth not when administered to hypocrites; God works by his Spirit in the one, not in the other; and thus he gives them efficacy to believers, not to others. God ratifies in heaven what ministers do on earth, when the sacraments are administered to them who are fit for receiving them; which is not done in the case of others. What if a Jew or a Mahommedan should undertake to put a mock on the Christians and their God; and, in pursuance thereof, should feign repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ, so as no minister should know but he were serious, and so be baptized? might not this be a right act of the administrator? But doth God no more in his actual sealing to believers, than he doth when such a one is baptized? Believe it who will, I cannot obtain it of myself to give credit to it. Put the case, that two visible church members fall into some scandalous sin, and are censured: both give sufficient evidences of their repentance to the church, yet the one is hypocritical, the other sincere: God maketh the promise, commandeth his ministers to publish it, he hath instituted church discipline for the gaining of offenders, he commandeth that such as appear penitent be absolved. But doth God no more towards the one than towards the other? Surely he doth, as in the former case.

ARGUMENT II. If the parents of such infants concerning whom our question is, have no right to the table of the Lord, then the infants have no right before the church to the ordinance of baptism: but the former is true: *Ergo*, and hence it hath been a piece of difficulty to me, to reconcile the practice of admitting men's children to baptism, and in the meantime debarring themselves from the

sacrament of the Lord's supper, and that constantly. The minor is least to be doubted; for the church, in debarring openly wicked persons from the table of the Lord, declareth that they are looked on as persons that have no right thereto. I apprehend it will be said, that such persons have *jus ad rem*, but not *in re*; and that the former is sufficient to entitle their children to baptism *in foro ecclesie*. This I willingly grant, as to some that are debarred from the sacrament of the Lord's supper: even as in the case of the Israelites with respect to the passover, where some had a remote right to that ordinance; but when they were unclean, they could not rightfully claim the possession of it. But I would distinguish of scandalous Christians, or baptized persons. Some are habitually and constantly scandalous, who never gave any probable signs of their sincerity; others there are that have sometimes given such probable signs, but afterwards fall into some scandalous sin or sins. That the latter sort have *jus ad rem*, or a remote right to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, I will not deny. Yea, it will not be grievous to me to grant, that the children of such persons, while as yet they have not evidenced their repentance, have nevertheless a right *coram ecclesie* to baptism. And my reason is, because the church still looks on such a person as a living, though not a lively member of Christ, as one savingly in covenant with God, evidenced by his former walk, before the hour of temptation; and the child's visible right to baptism, depends not on the parent's visible frame, but his visible state as in covenant with God; for so runs the promise, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed:" so that the church looking on the parent as having God for his God, in the sense of the promise, must needs look on his seed as enjoying the same privilege, and consequently a right to baptism. But as for those who are habitually profane, who never appeared to walk in any tolerable measure becoming the gospel, as there are too, too many baptized persons, they have not so much as a remote right to the sacrament of the Lord's supper: for it is appointed of God for believers, and them only: for the living, to make them grow; not for the dead, to give them life, else why are any debarred from it? So that none have a right, no not a remote right thereto, before God, but real believers; and none have a remote right thereto, before the church, but visible believers. Whatever some are pleased to plead for the right of all baptized persons to the Lord's table, it will not much move me, nor do I think will it move many (but to indignation,) when they sist their consciences before the tribunal of a holy God; therefore I will not digress from my purpose, to consider the weak arguings wherewith some endeavour to support that cause. We

say then, that as none have a remote right to this sacrament *in foro poli*, but such as are right as to their state; and none a proximate right thereto, but such as are in a frame, in some measure, suitable to that venerable ordinance: so none have *jus ad rem in foro poli*, but visible believers; and none *jus in re*, but the same persons being free of public scandal. I proceed to prove the consequence. The child hath no visible right to that ordinance to which the parent hath none. This proposition hath been proven before. But if the parents have not so much as a remote right to the table of the Lord, they have no right to baptism: *Ergo*, if the parent have not so much as a remote right to the table of the Lord, the child hath no visible right to baptism. The minor is clear; for I think it will be denied by none, that all that have right to baptism have a remote right to the table of the Lord, *et vice versa*. None need to think it strange, that we speak of persons actually baptized having right to baptism, no more than to question the right that a man hath to an estate he has long enjoyed; for it is certain here, that possession may be where there is no rightful possession, or right and title to what is possessed. If any say, that children are not baptized in their parents' right, but in their own right, they may freely for me enjoy their liberty to express it so: for it is certain the child has a right, and that right is not the parents' right; but all the evidence that we can have of a child's right to baptism, is from the parents; therefore said I, the child can have no visible right, &c. I doubt not, but as the child of a most profane parent may have the Spirit; so in that case it hath a most undoubted right, before the Lord, to the seal of the covenant: but the parent being an openly wicked person, there is no probable evidence of this; nor can there be in that case, till the child do manifest the same by its personal carriage. In the meantime, as to us *de non apparentibus et non existentibus eadem est ratio*.

ARGUMENT III. A cursed seed hath no right to a sealing ordinance; but the children of the openly wicked, or such as make no credible profession, are a cursed seed: *Ergo*, there can be no doubt of the assumption, the Scripture is express for it, Deut. xxviii. 18. "Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body." The proposition I prove thus. If a visibly cursed seed, (for so I understand the cursed seed I speak of in the argument, taking it for granted, they are visibly cursed whom God has declared in his word to be cursed, which I think none can deny with any colour of reason); if a visibly cursed seed have a visible right to a sealing ordinance, then a visibly cursed seed are a visibly blessed seed; but that is absurd: *Ergo*, the consequence is plain: for they that have right to the seal of the covenant of grace, are a visibly blessed seed; they are surely visi-

bly blessed who appear to be in covenant with God, and members of Christ, as those do who have a visible right to baptism. The assumption is no less plain : for blessing and cursing are inconsistent ; whom God visibly curseth, he cannot at the same time visibly bless, else they should be visibly happy and miserable at one and the same time ; even so happy as God's blessing makes, and so miserable as God's curse makes a person. It is in vain to say, they are blessed and cursed in sundry respects ; so that however in some other respects they are cursed, yet, in respect of a right to the first seal of the covenant, they are a blessed seed : for there is no distinction, nor ground for such distinction, in the text. But in what other respects can they be visibly cursed, when they are visibly blessed in this respect ? Were they in the most miserable case that ever any was in the world in other respects, while they have a visible right to baptism, God is their God, and who will dare say, that those who are thus visibly privileged are visibly cursed ? As the blessing of God puts a person in a blessed state, so his curse puts him in a cursed state, in whatever particular the blessing or the curse do chiefly appear ; for God's blessing and cursing are formally forensic actions, and so the different states resulting therefrom are inconsistent utterly, as justification and condemnation. Yea, I add, that the executive blessing and cursing are also inconsistent ; for these flow from, and do necessarily pre-suppose the formal acts of blessing and cursing : so that although a person in a cursed state may receive good things from God, that are in themselves, and unto others blessings indeed, yet they are cursed to him, Mal. ii. 2 : even as afflictions, which are curses to the wicked, are nevertheless blessings to them that are in Christ. What though the seed of the wicked by sovereign grace may be blessed ; yet, while this blessing is latent, we are to look on them as God in his word hath denounced the seed of the wicked to be : for the word is the rule of the church's judgment, not the secret will of God ; "Secret things belong to the Lord, but unto us those things that are revealed." When they do by their personal carriage declare themselves to be blessed ones, the church is to deal with them as such then, but not till then. As God hath declared the seed of the wicked to be cursed, so he hath also declared the seed of the righteous to be blessed, Psal. xxxvii. 26, "His seed is blessed ;" and cxii. 2. "The generation of the upright shall be blessed." What a vast difference doth the Lord in his word make between the seed of the righteous and the ungodly ! the one is blessed, the other cursed : it seems reasonable then the church should make some difference betwixt them also in the matter of church privileges, as was argued

before. Can we suppose, that God hath given no more ground of comfort to the godly as to their seed, than he has given to the wicked, if they be but baptized? or can we restrain this ground of comfort merely to temporal good things? In this readily the children of the faithful have least share. I think it is a pitiful straitening of the many promises that are made to the godly and to their seed, to allow them no more ground of comfort as to their children's souls, than wicked baptized persons may have as to theirs, notwithstanding of the curses denounced upon them. Allow both an equal right to the seal of the covenant of grace, and so to all the benefits thereof, and then sure all odds are made even. For my part, I am indeed of opinion, that, but prejudice to the sovereignty of God, who hath neither in the curse nor in the blessing set a law for himself, to bind up the hands of free grace from bringing forth elect vessels out of the loins of wicked parents; nor the hands of absolute dominion, in reprobating some of the seed of the godly; that the main thing aimed at, both in the curse and in the blessing, is what concerns the eternal state of their seed, viz. that God will deny his grace to the children of the wicked, and so damn them for their sins; and give his grace to the seed of the godly, and so save them eternally. So judicious Calvin* understands the threatening and the promise in the second command. And it is highly reasonable, that the holy oracles of God should be always understood in the most comprehensive sense, where there is nothing to restrain the same, as it is in this case. And what else can we make of the grand promise of the covenant, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed?" This answers the scope and design of the declaration of the mind of God most fully, both in the declaration of the curse, and of the blessing. This makes them most pungent incentives to true piety. And thus God himself hath visibly explained the same. How often do we see the children follow the footsteps of their parents, graceless parents with children no better than themselves, when the children of the godly are blessed? It is true, the wickedness of some of the children of the godly is much noticed, and ready to be talked of, when the impiety of the children of the wicked is not: but this plainly confirms what we say; for no better is expected of the seed of the wicked, when better things are looked for in the children of the godly. Seldom it is but the godly have some good; seldom the wicked have any. Of some stock of people God never wants some, even to the view of the world; and of others he hath none, in all appearance. And if the curse and blessing be

* Inst.

thus understood, it doth mightily strengthen the argument, as I apprehend; for baptism is *de jure* conferred on children, only as they are apparently such as belong to God in a saving manner, as was before pleaded. This argument then I will conclude, with Balaam's words inverted, "How shall we bless whom God hath cursed?"

ARGUMENT IV. If it be necessarily pre-required to infants' right to baptism *coram ecclesia*, that their parents appear penitent, and lovers, not haters of God; then none but the infants of visible believers have a visible right to the ordinance of baptism: the former is true; *Ergo*, the latter also. The consequence is plain: for visible penitents, lovers, and not haters of God, are visible believers, and none other; the one cannot be necessary, but the other *ipso facto* is also necessary; and those whom we cannot look upon as visible penitents, and lovers of God, we must needs look upon as visibly impenitent persons, and haters of God, and so as visible unbelievers, wanting that which is necessary to evidence their infants' right to baptism. The assumption is proven before from Acts ii. 38. Exod. xx. 5, 6. From the former of these, it plainly appears, that repentance was pre-required of those pricked at the heart, antecedently to their own, or their children's visible right to baptism. And what though parents now are ordinarily possessed of that privilege in their infancy, when they were admitted as visible saints, seeing afterwards they have nothing of that visible saintship? ought they not to be pressed to repentance, in order to a visible right to their seed for this ordinance, having now lost that visible right thereto themselves, which they possibly had in their infancy? Those in the text were circumcised, whether *jure* or *injuria* we shall not determine; and circumcision was a seal of the same covenant whereof baptism also is; it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, as well as baptism: yet notwithstanding, they behoved to evidence their repentance before their children's right to baptism could be acknowledged; as was proven before. It seems then no less reasonable, that baptized parents should be obliged to do the like, ere their children's right to baptism be acknowledged by the church. From the latter of these Scriptures, it hath been evinced, that the children of wicked parents are, by the threatening, denied a right to the seal of the covenant; and that it is given, by the promise, only to the children of those that love God; which doth plainly restrain the same to the seed of visible believers *coram ecclesia*. Hereunto add that testimony of the apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 14. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife:—else were your children unclean; but now they are holy:" from whence

it doth inevitably follow, that one of the parents must needs be a visible believer, else the children cannot be reckoned holy; and hence it is ordinary to prove the right of the infants of the faithful unto baptism.

EXCEPTION 1. By the haters of God in the second commandment are meant idolaters only; and so by lovers of God, those that cleave to the true worship of God: and therefore the threatening cannot be extended to the children of those that do not turn aside to idolatry, or renounce Christianity. ANSWER. Many things may be returned to this exception; as, 1. Then all baptized persons' children have not a right to baptism; for they may be baptized, and yet be idolaters, though they have not renounced their baptism. 2. Then the children of Papists have no right to baptism; for they are manifest idolaters, as all Protestant divines do hold; and yet those that differ will not allow this. But, 3. Though the contempt of this command is no doubt aimed against in the threatening, and the promise hath respect to the keeping of it; yet to restrain either the threat or the promise to this command, is to do violence to the words; for the words are express for God's commands in the plural number, both in Exod. xx. 6. and Deut. xxvii. 10; so that at least they belong to all the commands of the first table. "If you consider duly," says Calvin,* "the promise which we have now explained, is not peculiarly annexed to one command, but is common to the whole first table of the law." Zanchius carries it further.† "The true interpretation," says he, "is that this (viz. the fifth command) is the first command with a promise, to wit, not pertaining universally to all the commands." And a little after: "God doth so much esteem the keeping of this command, that he hath added to it only, and so to none other, a peculiar promise." 4. That by haters of God are meant idolaters only, &c. is *gratis dictum*. It seems strange, to restrain that odious character to those only, seeing the hatred of God is common to all unregenerate persons, who are "enmity against God," Rom. viii. 7; and the hatred of God is most vigorous amongst those where idolatry is banished, and the pure word of God is preached, levelling pithily against the sins of the wicked. And no less strange is it, that those should be accounted lovers of God who outwardly cleave to pure ordinances, while they are openly wicked in their lives: surely Christ accounts those his enemies, who shall be brought forth, and slain before his eyes, and that with a double death. Wherefore we understand the haters of God to be all the wicked, and the lovers of God the truly godly, who obey out of love, as the other disobey out of hatred to God; as Calvin judiciously teach-

* *Com. in loc.*

† *Com. in Eph. vi. 2.*

eth.* Those that love me. "The fountain and origin of true righteousness is expressed. The transgressors of the law are called enemies and haters of God. For seeing he cannot be separated from his justice, the contempt of the law argueth this hatred; because it cannot be, but he that will not suffer God to be his lawgiver and judge, desires also to rob him of his government." 5. *Lastly*, Though it should be yielded, that the threatening and promise belong only to this command, yet what reason is there that they should be restrained to one sin and one duty only? I should think at least, that such as do not observe the ordinances of God, as prayer, &c. should be also here included.

EXCEPTION 2. The apostle (1 Cor. vii. 14.) means not real believers, in opposition to openly wicked Christians; but believers, in opposition to pagans, accounting all believers who had given up their name to Christ in baptism. ANSWER. The apostle means visible believers, amongst whom some were sincere, others hypocrites; even as he means visible holiness, when he saith, their children were holy. To suppose that there were any in the church of Corinth that were not visible Christian believers, is what I cannot grant without proof; and I am of opinion, it cannot be proven from the Scriptures. There is, as I said before, a vast difference betwixt one that sometimes, by his personal carriage, gave probable evidence of his saintship, and one that never did so. There were certainly many grievous enormities amongst that people, or in that church; yet the former of these appears to be their case. The reason is, because, as the history of the acts of the apostles shew, none in those days were baptized, but such as gave probable signs of their sincerity, together with their children; and of the Corinthians particularly Luke testifies, that "many of them hearing, believed, and were baptized," Acts xviii. 8; and the Lord told Paul in a vision, that "he had much people in that city, and so he abode a year and six months with them," vers. 9, 10; and though he himself baptized few of them, yet it cannot be thought but that people were baptized by his direction, and that therein he did as the rest of the apostles, requiring them to evidence their repentance before baptism; and when he was gone, Apollos, a faithful brother, was with them for a time, Acts xix. 1. That others than visible believers were baptized among them, we cannot without proof grant, especially seeing all of them whose baptism is recorded in the Scripture, were visible believers, and therefore baptized. Wherefore, although that by means of their own corruptions, and hypocrisy, no doubt in some of them, and by means of false teach-

* *Ubi sup.*

ers, some were led aside into erroneous principles and disorderly practices, they could not lose their visible saintship, till such time as they proved utterly irreclaimable: but how they took with the apostle's reproofs, the apostle himself plainly tells, 2 Cor. vii. 8. &c. And indeed, for all the faults that were among them, the apostle acknowledgeth them still as visible believers; writing to them, as few ministers amongst us, I suppose, durst write to his congregation of baptized ones: 1 Cor. i. 2. "Unto the church of God that is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called" (our translation adds, but without reason,) "to be saints" ver. 3. "Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father." ver. 7. "Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." ver. 8. "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." See ver. 9. chap. vi. 15, 19, 20. But in our case the persons we speak of, are such as never gave probable evidence of their sincerity, else there would not be so much difficulty about the matter.

ARGUMENT V. Those who cannot be probably judged to be within the covenant, have no visible right to baptism; but the children of openly wicked parents cannot be probably judged to be within the covenant: *Ergo*, the major is owned to be a truth by most divines that are orthodox. Wendelin is very express for it:* speaking of the subject recipient of baptism, he says, "It is all, and only those who are probably judged to be within the covenant of grace." So saith Oliver Bowles,† who nevertheless allows the children of all baptized persons a right to baptism. "All infants," says he, "that in the judgment of charity are within the covenant, are to be baptized. I call that the judgment of charity, when we obtain all those things by which it is probable the party to be baptized is under the covenant." It is evident, these learned men speak of a saving inbeing in the covenant, the probableness whereof they think is requisite in those that have right to baptism before the church; which is the very thing our proposition doth import. However, I shall prove it. None have right to that ordinance, before the Lord, that are not really and savingly in covenant with God, as hath been already cleared; *Ergo*, none have visible right to the ordinance, that are not visibly or probably within the covenant. The consequence is manifest; because the judgment of the church must be regulated by the judgment of God, so far as the same is revealed. Again, those who cannot be probably judged to have a real right to the thing sealed, or rather a real interest in

* Christ. Theol. p. 426.

† Past. Evang. lib. 3. cap. 3.

the same, have no visible right to the seal; but those who cannot be probably judged to be within the covenant really and savingly, have no visible interest in the thing sealed, because it is the covenant of grace that is the thing sealed: *Ergo*, if therefore any will plead an external being in covenant with God, as a distinct thing from a visible being in covenant with him; and allege, that the seal may be given on the account of this external being in covenant, they speak unadvisedly; for it is no other covenant that is sealed by baptism but the covenant of grace, which is entered into, or accepted by faith; neither can any be said to be in it, but either really or apparently, which we call visibly. Now, I prove the minor. Openly wicked parents cannot be probably judged to be within the covenant; *Ergo*, neither their children. The antecedent must needs be yielded, unless we say, that openly wicked persons give probable signs of their piety and interest in Christ; that they are probably regenerated, justified, adopted, &c.; which is in effect to say, that openly wicked persons are not openly wicked, but visible saints. It is in vain to say, that they are within the conditional promise, in so far as they are baptized; for we speak now of a probable judgment of a particular person's being within the covenant. But if by this be meant, that they are within the compass of that promise, though they have not yet come up to the terms, then they have no more than what pagans have, whensoever the gospel-offer is made to them: if the meaning of it be, they are within it in so far as they have really believed, then we would fain learn, how a real believer comes to be an openly wicked man; and by what means, or probable signs, men do judge an openly wicked person to be a believer. The consequence is proved from hence, that children stand and fall before the church, with their immediate parents; so that we cannot judge a man's seed probably to be in covenant with God, if he himself be not visibly in the covenant. I can apprehend no way how the force of this argument can be warded off, unless we make recourse to the remote godly parents: which to how many inconveniencies it is liable, we have heard before. Some indeed lay the whole stress on the baptism of the parents, one or both, and will have the judgment of charity to conclude all those to be within the covenant probably, whose parents sometime were baptized; which, in my opinion, is wonderfully wide charity, to say no more of it. How can a person's baptism be more useful to another, than to himself that personally received it? The baptism of some is followed with open wickedness; and that which we now speak of, is that right the children of openly wicked parents can have to baptism; and we have proven, that the openly wicked can-

not be probably judged to be within the covenant; and yet a baptized person may be openly wicked; consequently the baptism of an openly wicked parent cannot be a ground whereon we may probably judge him within the covenant. Yet that this baptism, so useless to himself, should be so useful to his seed, is a thing that would need strong arguments to back it with, in order to its reception. One would expect, that such as go no further than the immediate parents for the church-state of the infants, should shew as much in the immediate parent as the child hath, seeing nothing can give more than it hath to itself. Moreover, if the judgment of charity must conclude all those children to be probably in covenant whose parents were once baptized, then, if Simon Magus had enjoyed a child, even after his discovering himself to have been still "in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity," and to "have neither part nor lot" with the people of God "in the gifts of the Holy Ghost," that child would have been probably judged to be within the covenant, and so to have had right to the seal of the covenant: but that could not be, in regard Simon himself had then no visible right to baptism; and had that discovery been made before, doubtless he had not been baptized. How many baptized persons do as really discover themselves to be still "in the gall of bitterness," as Simon did, by their open wickedness? But the unprofitableness of the baptism of openly wicked persons, while they continue so, has been largely discoursed on before.

ARGUMENT VI. If none be visibly privileged with having "God to be their God, and the God of their seed," (in the sense of the promise and covenant of grace, which is sealed to by the sacraments), but visible believers; then the infants of openly wicked parents, though baptized, have no visible right to baptism; the former is true: *Ergo*, the latter also. The sequel is manifest, if ye consider, that openly wicked persons, though baptized, are visible unbelievers, and that they can have no right to baptism *coram ecclesia* whose God the Lord is not: for, in baptizing infants, we do really declare that we look on God as the God of the parent, and the God of his seed. Now that this great privilege visibly belongs only to visible believers, we hope to manifest by these following reasons.

1. That which belongs only to real believers before God, visibly belongs only to visible believers and their seed; but this privilege belongs only to real believers before the Lord: *Ergo*, &c. The reason of the proposition hath been given oftener than once in this discourse, therefore I stand not upon it. I prove the assumption: Those to whom this privilege is given, have ground to expect the accomplishment of the rest of the promises of the covenant to them:

the reason is, because this is comprehensive of all, and all the rest depend on it; for what can God promise or give more than himself to be a God to us? but none have ground to expect this but real believers: *Ergo*, further, those who are thus privileged now *coram Deo*, God will at the last day openly acknowledge as his people; for these two go together, "I will be their God and they shall be my people;" but God will so own none but real saints: *Ergo*.

2. Those to whom this privilege doth visibly belong, whose God the Lord is, are those, and those only to whom the Lord hath been visibly so gracious, as to "put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;" but these are none other but visible believers and their seed: *Ergo*, the major is clear; for these two are joined together in the promise, Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel—I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." See now how this doth visibly agree unto the openly wicked, that visibly cast God's laws behind their backs.

3. Only Abraham's visible seed are thus visibly privileged: *Ergo*, only visible believers. The antecedent is plain. The consequence I prove thus: None are Abraham's real seed spiritually but real believers; *Ergo*, none are his visible seed but visible believers. The Scripture plainly holds forth, that none are really Abraham's seed but true believers, Gal. iii. ult. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." The apostle is there speaking to such as in the judgment of charity were Abraham's seed; but because men may be Abraham's seed that way, yet none of his in the judgment of God, he tells them who they are that are the true seed of Abraham, even they that are Christ's by real union with him through faith; not by a bare profession, or by baptism without true godliness: for there were none of them but were baptized, and professed Christ, but that was not enough to make them heirs according to the promise, and consequently not enough to make them sons either. Gal. iii. 7. "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." ver. 9. "So then they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham."

4. Those only are thus visibly blessed for whom it appears Christ has died, and who are apparently redeemed by him from the curse of the law; and such are only visible believers and their seed: for the apostle plainly teacheth, that these go before the blessing of Abraham, as the procuring causes thereof, vers. 13. 14. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law—that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we

might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Now, it is certain, that God's being Abraham's God, and the God of his seed, was the blessing of Abraham, comprehending all other particular blessings, which is now come on the Gentiles.

5. From the same Scripture we further argue thus : That blessing which comes on people only through Jesus Christ, and that promise of the Spirit (or promised Spirit) which is received only by faith, doth visibly belong to none but visible believers, such as appear to be in Christ and endued with faith ; but such is the blessing of Abraham which comes on the Gentiles : *Ergo*, the proposition is plain : for where there is no visible evidence of a person's being in Christ, through whom alone the blessing comes ; where there are no probable signs of faith through which it is received, that blessing is not, nor cannot be visibly come on them.

6. *Lastly*, It sounds exceedingly harsh, to say, that God is the God of a visible unbeliever and his seed, in the sense of the great promise sealed by the sacraments ; for in some sense he is the God of the whole creation, but surely it will not be denied, that this is something else, viz. that he is their God by way of covenant. Either, then, to have God for our God in the sense of this promise, is to have God for our God in the way of the covenant of works, or in the way of the covenant of grace. The first will not be pleaded : for the sacraments seal not the covenant of works ; besides, God is the God of all out of Christ that way, of pagans as well as others. It is therefore meant of God's being our God in the way of the covenant of grace ; and what greater blessing hath the most undoubted real believer ? Consider then how this can be digested, that God is the God of an openly wicked person ; one grossly ignorant of the principles of religion, necessary to salvation to be known ; of one possessed with a dumb devil, that calls not on God in secret or in his family ; that hath not so much as a form of godliness, but is a visible member of Satan's kingdom, and a visible enemy to the kingdom of Christ. That God is the God of such a one and his seed, and that we are to judge so of him and his seed, as of the most holy and exercised professor of religion, is what would need bands of iron and brass to tie a body to the belief of it. Wherefore I conclude, that seeing God cannot be judged to be the God of any and of their seed, but of visible saints and believers, none others' children have right to baptism : which must needs hold good, till such time as it be manifest, that others have right to baptism than they whose God the Lord is not, and have no interest in that privilege and blessing, to which circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, and consequently baptism, was appended,

Gen. xvii. 7—10. Let none say, he is their God by their profession, in so far as they were baptized in his name, and have not yet renounced it; for what sort of a profession is that which is visibly contradicted by their practice? Surely men would lay little weight on such a profession of service made to them by others. But God hath made faith, not profession, especially a profession visibly contradicted by their practice, to be the way of entering into covenant with him; and we look on a credible profession only as a probable sign of real faith, which we cannot discern but in its effects. Where then this credible profession is wanting, there appears no faith; and consequently there is no probable evidence of God's being the God of such persons, or of their seed.

ARGUMENT VII. If the children of openly wicked parents, though baptized, have a visible right to the seal of the covenant, then the church is bound to admit them to baptism, and actually to baptize them? but that practice of baptizing the infants of openly wicked persons, or such as are not visible believers, as deriving their right from their parents, (in which sense the proposition is to be understood,) is unwarrantable; *Ergo*, the sequel is plain: for it is a wrong to deny any the possession of that to which they have a visible right, when there is no impediment laid in the way by the party who is to have possession; as it is in the case of infants. Yea, it is a wrong not to put infants in the possession of those privileges whereof they are capable, and have a visible right to, seeing they are such as cannot move in their own business. Thus Moses was injurious to his son, in not circumcising him at the time appointed of God; for which cause God sought to kill him, Exod. iv. 24. I prove the minor: the action is lusory, even according to the principles of those that differ, if the church hath no probable grounds to expect the religious education of those children that are baptized, or that they shall be brought up for the service of him in whose name they are baptized; but, in the case we speak of, they have no probable grounds to expect the same: *Ergo*, the action is lusory, and consequently unwarrantable. How can openly wicked persons, whether grossly ignorant of the fundamentals of religion, or profane in their lives, having knowledge, be trusted for the bringing up of a child for Christ? Is it probable, that they who are visible slaves to the devil themselves, will bring up their children in and to the service of God? We know not but they may formally renounce their baptism, and carry away their children with them to idolatry, &c. who have so far gone on in a practical renunciation of the same. Such persons are not fit to be trusted in such a weighty concern. If any shall say, that the baptizing of the children of such parents

is to be suspended till their parents reform, or they themselves come to ripe years, and evidence their piety by a visibly holy walk ; we agree in the thing, though not in the name ; for by this means the infant's visible right is plainly made to depend on the visible state of the parent ; which is indeed not to suspend, but utterly to deny the thing, and all right thereto, unto such infants, till such time as one of these two things before mentioned does appear. But how the suspending of the child's baptism for shorter or longer time, upon the parent's account, can be pleaded, according to the principles of those that differ, I see not ; seeing that were contrary to what they urge in the main point, that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father.

But this is thought to be salved by bringing in of sponsors for such children ; that their openly wicked parents are not to be admitted to make faith for them, but some other fit person. If such a fit person be found, then the child is to be baptized ; if not, then indeed the action is lusory, say they. To this I answer, That either the child hath its right to the ordinance from the sponsor, or the parent. If from the sponsor, then not from the parent ; which is the very thing we plead : if from the parent, then how comes the child to be denied that which it hath a visible right to, in any case, while, poor soul, it can do nothing to lay an impediment in the way of its possession of the privilege it hath right to ? must it so far bear the iniquity of the father ? It follows then still, that such an infant must be baptized in the right of the immediate parent ; and that, on the same account, the infant cannot be kept back from baptism, nothing being on its part to hinder the actual possession. It is in vain to say, that the infant hath from the parent *jus ad rem*, and from the sponsor *jus in re* : for unless there were a *jus sub termino* fixed by the Lord in his word, as it was in the case of circumcision, when the child had no actual right in that ordinance till the eighth day, which cannot be alleged here, the infant hath a most immediate right by birth privilege, if it have any at all ; so that the actual possession of that privilege may be immediately claimed in favours of such a child. And therefore that distinction is not applicable to the matter in hand. Neither do we need the help of it, in such a case, where godly parents are both dead before the child be baptized : for such a child being by birth privilege within the covenant visibly, and so having a visible right to baptism, in whose favours the actual possession of the seal may immediately be claimed, the church is bound to be tutor to it, and see to the education of it in the ways of God, and baptize it according to its right. Even as in the case of a temporal inheritance, where the heir is left an infant ; the magistrate

is bound to see to the bringing up of such a one, and that it be not defrauded of its heritage. So the church, in this case, gives it not any right to the ordinance that it had not before, but doth her duty in putting it in actual possession of that which it had all right to, antecedently to their meddling with it, and takes care of its education. And this they were obliged to do upon this formal consideration, that such a one was a child of the covenant.

To consider a little further of sponsors for the children of openly wicked parents : In the first place, the practice of many is to require those only in some more odious cases, as when the parent is guilty of fornication, adultery, or the like ; but readily, if they be civilized, though they have not so much as a form of godliness, nor ever bow a knee to God in secret or in their family, which doth hold them out of the number of visible believers, and so ranks them amongst the openly wicked, no sponsors are required for their children other than themselves. Now, what, are those persons to be trusted in the religious education of a child ? Either we must say, that mere civility is religion and Christianity ; or else we must say, it is probable that these will bring up their children in the holy religion and for Christ, that have not so much as a form of godliness themselves ; which is a strange sort of probability. And what reason truly is there why such a difference should be made, in this matter, betwixt civil men that have not so much as a form of godliness, and common drunkards, swearers, &c. that are baptized ? Are they baptized ? so are these we speak of. Are they civil persons, free of gross immoralities ? so are some pagans as well as they. If the church be satisfied with them on the account of their baptism, they must also be satisfied with the other sort : if on the account of their civility, then they must be so satisfied with pagans also ; for *quatenus ad omne valet consequentia* : if on the account of their baptized civility, why not also with many of the other sort upon the account of their drunken prayers ? Nothing but bad custom, I presume, hath authorised the want of a form of godliness, neglect of prayer, and the like, in a civil baptized person, to go with such a black character, in the face of the visible church, as drunkenness and the like are marked with. Further, what if the parents will not allow another person to be sponsor for their child, and will rather let it lie unbaptized than suffer any such thing ; will the church force away their children from them, and baptize them whether they will or not, so that the child may not be defrauded of its pretended right ? Finally, in order to the church's security for the education of such children, it seems to be of absolute necessity, that they be put wholly in the power of the sponsor ; for how can a man be trusted with the upbringing of a child that hath

it not wholly in his power? To promise otherwise is to promise impossibilities, or that which might be rendered impossible by the parent. Surely no man will take it upon him to learn another man's son a trade, whereby he may gain his livelihood, unless such a one be put in his power, so that the father may not call him away when he pleaseth. If the child be still at the disposal of the wicked parent, the sponsor may promise, but the parent will perform as he seeth good. Now, if the child be put wholly in the power of the sponsor as to its education, it is plain, the formal reason for which the child is baptized, is not because he is born of baptized parents, but because he is as it were the adopted son of the sponsor; so that the child hath his visible right to baptism, not by the parent, but the sponsor. And so the cause is yielded, and the case and question quite altered. And the question will be, Whether or not an infant which is devoted unto Christ by a stranger, having it wholly in its power, at least as to its education, hath a visible right to baptism? which is resolved by Mr. Baxter in the affirmative, on Scripture grounds, even though they were the children of Turks and Jews. Against which I dare not as yet reclaim, providing these sponsors be visible believers, and so fit to be trusted in such a matter. Hence it appears, sponsors, 1. ought to be visible believers; 2. having the child for whom they engage, wholly in their power as to its education; 3. required in the case of all children that are not the seed of parents whereof one is a visible believer. If matters were brought to this pass, much, if not all the difficulty of this case, would be removed.

ARGUMENT VIII. No infants but those of visible church members have right to baptism *coram ecclesia*; and none but the infants of visible believers are the children of visible church members: *Ergo*, the major is evident: for if the children of those that are no visible church members have right to baptism, it is made a privilege common to the church with those of the rest of the world; which is absurd. I prove the minor: if none be true members of the church but the faithful or real believers, then none are visible church members but visible believers; the former is true, therefore the latter also: consequently none are the children of visible church members, but the children of visible believers. The reason of the consequence is this, that visible church members are none other but such as apparently are true members of the church of Christ; so that if none be true members but real believers, none can be visible members but such as appear to be true believers. Christ hath not two churches, one invisible, and another visible; but one church, that in one respect is visible, in another respect invisible: Christ is not

a head with two bodies, but we are "all baptized into one body," and mystical "Christ is but one," 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. If then the true members of the church are only believers, it is plain that the visible members thereof are only such as are apparently believers. If we judge *in thesi* that believers only are true members of the church, when we come to judge *in hypothesi* as to this or that particular person, we cannot judge him a true member but as he appears to be such. As to the assumption, the body of Protestant divines will bear me out in it; whose constant doctrine against the Papists is, That the wicked, hypocrites, and reprobates, who outwardly profess the faith, are not true members of Christ's church; but only the godly and faithful, who not only profess faith, but indeed believe and are regenerate, are to be judged true members of the church.

ARGUMENT IX. If none but visible believers have right to baptism before the church, and infants derive their visible right thereto from their immediate parents; then none but the children of visible believers have right to baptism before the church. The antecedent hath been already proven in both its parts, and the consequence is too evident to be denied. The Scripture is so plain and full, in asserting, that no adult persons but such as are visible believers ought to be baptized, that I can see no evasion from the force of this argument, for those that do not derive the infant's right from the remote parents, but require evidence of the baptism of one of the immediate parents; whereby they plainly suspend the visible right of the infant on the visible state of the next parent; unless they say, either that one can give what he hath not to himself, or that the parent's baptism, notwithstanding of his gross ignorance of the fundamental points of religion, or of his openly vicious life, never having had so much as a form of godliness, be a sufficient evidence of his faith as to us: the absurdity whereof I will not stand to prove, being under no temptation to suspect the truth of it, but assured, by the Lord's word, that we ought to judge of the tree by its fruits.

ARGUMENT X. *Lastly*, I shall conclude with this, That the way we plead for seems to have the advantage of the other, in that it apparently hath a more direct tendency to the advancement of the great ends of the gospel; which calls men to "join themselves unto the Lord" through Christ by faith, and "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live godly and soberly in this present world." And this it hath, in respect of the parents, of the children, and of others.

1. In respect of the parents. We find the most ignorant and pro-

fane wretches almost that are amongst us, cannot easily digest their children's want of baptism, though they understand not the nature of it, the ends and uses for which it is appointed; or if they do understand, yet take no care to perform their vows. Now, while their children are baptized, as they offer them to baptism, they are hardened in their impiety, and the church is mocked with their engagements; for what trust can be put in them, or what credit can be given to the promises and engagements of such? It is sad that many are trusted in this matter, to whom we could give no credit in far less matters. And this evil is not cured by requiring of sponsors, into whose power the child is not wholly given up, as to its education, as was said before. But were the children of such parents debarred from the sacrament, till such time as either their parents, one of them at least, should reform and amend their lives, as the same parents are debarred from the Lord's supper; or they themselves should evidence their faith by their carriage at years of discretion, it might rationally be expected, that we should see a reformation in the lives of many, if not of most, who now do never bend themselves that way: "the haters of the Lord should" at least "lye unto him," as it is Psal. lxxxi. 15. And it is a promise made unto the church, that "her enemies shall lye unto her," Deut. xxxiii. 29. but otherwise, it is rather a mocking than a lying to her: for, as Ursin says, "they deny in their deeds what they profess with their mouth, and it is plain they lye:" for faith and a Christian life cannot be separated. Whoso separate them, mock God and the church. But were they thus dealt with, they might at least be brought to the performance of the external duties of religion: and who knows but many, being thus laid in Christ's way, might be really delivered from the snare of the devil, who otherwise are led captive at his pleasure. Experience hath shown these hopes are not vain.

2. In respect of the children themselves. They seem the same way to be hardened in their sinful courses. When they come to understand their parents have always lived as they see them do, and yet they were admitted to baptism in their infancy, being born not of unbaptized but baptized persons, having right to the seal of the covenant by their parents, whether mediate or immediate; unless God, with his overcoming grace, work with them, there is no probability that they will in the least trouble themselves to mind religion. And if it should be so, that their wicked parents should tell them, they were devoted to God in their infancy, what success can their instructions and admonitions be expected to

have, while they have still before their eyes the bad example of their parents? A more forcible inducement to wickedness, than a thousand of their admonitions will be to the contrary. But were they denied baptism, till either their parents should reform, or till they themselves by their personal walk should evidence their right thereto, in case their parents be incorrigible, it would be a very probable mean to induce them to seek the knowledge of religion, and to study a holy walk; considering that they live in a place where the gospel is preached, and the sad case of those that are without the church is holden forth. I confess, these things have no small weight with my conscience.

3. Whence it appears, that it would very probably have no small influence on others, especially the younger sort; who first, because of their youth, think religion not fit for them; and then betaking themselves to a married state, do wholly drown themselves in the cares of the world, or other lusts, leaving all care concerning their souls till they come to old age, (which perhaps they never see), or to a death-bed. This would at least put them in mind of changing their course of life, and turning over a new leaf ere they change their single life. I shall add, that by this means it would probably come to pass, that the holy ordinance of baptism, which is a seal of the same covenant with the Lord's supper, should not be so visibly degraded, and put so far below the other sacrament, in people's estimation, as indeed it is, by the promiscuous admission of infants thereto; there should be a more beautiful harmony in the subjects receptive of both; gross ignorance and wickedness should get a black mark set on it before the world; and, finally, the name of Christ should not be so blasphemed amongst Turks, Jews, and pagans, as it is, by reason of the vicious lives of those that live in the visible church.

Thus I have proposed what arguments on both sides have occurred to me, being desirous to find out the truth: and though there be difficulties on both hands, some whereof possibly may not be easy to answer, yet, truly, upon the whole of what is said, I think the opinions of those that say, None but the infants of visible believers have a right to baptism before the church, is most probable; and that the infants of any such as are not visible believers, though their immediate parents be baptized, and though they have had godly remote parents, have no visible right to baptism. And so I address myself to consider the arguments offered by those that differ, which are mentioned above.

I. As to the *first* argument, That the infants of all Christian

parents are within the covenant; I answer, The phrase of being within the covenant is ambiguous. 1. Improperly, it may signify a person's living under the outward administration of the covenant; that is, in a society and amongst a company where all gospel ordinances are administered, so that they have the call of the gospel to come to Christ, and partake of the benefits of the covenant: for to say, the meaning of that is, that they are those to whom all ordinances are actually administered, as it would not help the cause, so it were impertinent here, while we speak of those to whom some of these ordinances may lawfully be administered. But this is very improperly said to be a being within the covenant, and can give no right to the seals of the covenant: for why? people may be living under the outward administration of the covenant, that is, in a society where all gospel ordinances are administered, and yet neither be in reality nor in appearance within the covenant; as Jews and pagans living in a Christian town or country, having Christ offered to them, and the benefits of the covenant, as well as baptized persons. So these Jews, Acts ii. were under the outward administration of the covenant, yet had they no visible title to baptism, and consequently were not properly within the covenant, till such time as they gave evidence of their faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance towards God. 2. There is a real being within the covenant *coram Deo*; as all are, whether adult or infants, that have the Spirit of grace. This cannot be meant here, (although it is that which only gives right before God to the seal;) because, as Mr. Bowles* tells us, we cannot certainly know who are actually, as he terms it, within the covenant. 3. There is a visible being within the covenant; and that is, when a person doth really appear before men to be savingly within the covenant, or rather really and before God in it; and in this sense I deny that such infants as we speak of, are within the covenant: yet this only is that whereby they can have a visible right to the seal. The reason is, because their parents are not visibly within the covenant, unless you will reckon them to be visibly within the covenant, who have made a professed but a feigned devoting and upgiving of themselves to God; which is openly and plainly discovered to be feigned, by their profane walk, or gross ignorance. But of this before. Yet, if you will, it shall not be grievous to me to grant, that even this is a visible being in a covenant with God, (though not in the covenant, viz. of grace, holden forth in the gospel,) and a most proper visible being, under their own voluntary promise to take God for their God; by virtue of which, God hath a kind of interest in them more than others that

* *Past. Evang. lib. 3.*

have not come that length, which serves to aggravate their sin, and will heighten their misery ; so that they are God's people, by virtue of their voluntary obligation to take God for their God ; and God also, by virtue of the same, is their God, to give them laws, exact obedience of them, and to punish them for their disobedience. Yet are they not within the covenant of grace, either really or apparently ; neither is God their God in the sense of the promise on which this argument is built ; and so they can have no right to baptism by their being under that covenant or promise, however it be called. The plain reason is, because in that covenant, or the covenant of grace, to which baptism is appended as a seal, God promiseth not to be our God on any other terms but saving faith : so that whosoever believeth not really and savingly, is not before God within the covenant ; and whoso doth not visibly believe, is not visibly within it. Hence seeing openly wicked baptized parents come not up, either really or in appearance, to the terms of the covenant, which is not a bare profession with the mouth, or the receiving of the sign in baptism, but true faith, or a real accepting of Christ, and God to be our God in him, they cannot be said to be in the covenant, either really before God, or visibly and apparently before the church. And this observation may serve to invalidate an argument wherein some do confide much, viz. that God owns himself to be the God of a profane people, and them to be his people. As to that which is added for proof, that such are within the covenant, viz. that their parents were sometimes sealed with the seal of the covenant ; I deny it follows ; and there is good reason for it : for so let men turn Arians, Socinians, &c. or wallow in never so open and manifest gross abominations, notwithstanding of all means used to turn them from their evil way, they must still be looked on as within the covenant of grace, till they actually and formally renounce their baptism. But I say, with Riissenius, answering the Popish objection and argument adduced by them to prove that hypocrites and reprobates are true members of the church, because they are baptised, "they have only the sign."* It was never a seal to them, as I have already shown. It will be worth our pains to hear what a censure a very learned divine passeth against the assertors of this doctrine. "To profane the covenant of God," says he, "is to give out and acknowledge those for the confederates of God, who are enemies of God ; and so to make such a God as obligeth himself to hypocrites and wicked ones." As for that proof of the argument, viz. That the covenant is made, not

* Urs. Expl. Cat. p. 553.

only with the root, but with the offspring; from whence it is inferred, that the seal may not only be effectual to the baptized, if he believe, but also render his seed capable of the external sign; it is of no force. If the learned man that hath this argument, mean by the root, the immediate parent, as I think he plainly does, then I deny the covenant is made with such roots; and therefore not with the offspring either, visibly; and have given the reason before. If he mean the remote parents, we have discoursed that already at some length. But truly I see no reason to talk so diminutively of baptism, as to call it the external sign. Was ever baptism appointed of God for a mere external sign? or do ministers, in baptizing the children of profligate parents, mean, that they should receive only the external sign, and not the seal of the righteousness of faith, remission of sins, &c.? If so, no doubt they are guilty of profaning that holy ordinance. As for the confirmation of the argument taken from 1 Cor. vii. 14. we have already vindicated that place, and shewn that the apostle speaks to them as visible believers, which needs not be repeated here.

II. I am convinced there is scarcely less force in any of the arguments adduced for this cause, than in the second, which is, That the children must not bear the iniquity of their fathers, (for which Ezek. xviii. 20. is alleged); and therefore the infants of wicked, openly wicked baptized parents, are to be baptized. ANSWER 1. Why then is there an infant under heaven that ought not to be baptized? The infants of the rudest savages in the world have as little stretched forth their hands to their fathers' iniquity, as the infants of baptized persons. 2. Whose iniquity did the infants of the first unchurched generation of the Jews, and those of Smyrna, Laodicea, and others, bear? I suppose none will plead their visible right to baptism. 3. The Israelites had God's express command for cutting off all the Canaanites, Deut. xx. 16. 17. "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. All the males among the Midianites' little ones are slain with the parents at God's command, Numb. xxxi. 17. The children of Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up with their parents; Achan's sons and daughters were stoned and burned with him; and so, as Mr. Baxter* saith, cut off from the church and life. 4. Doth not the Lord expressly threaten, that "he will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation?" But how all this may be, and yet

* Inf. Bap. P. 69.

that it should be such a strange thing, that the children of openly wicked parents have no visible right to baptism, because they are the children of such parents, I see not any colourable pretext for it. Now, as for the reconciling of this with Ezek. xviii. 20. the opponents are obliged to see to it as well as we, not only in the forementioned cases, but also in their dealing with the Socinians, in the matter of the imputation of Adam's sin, and our obnoxiousness to the wrath of God upon the account of it, and in the point of Christ's satisfaction; in reference to both which, these heretics abuse that Scripture: yea, not only so, but in the case of baptizing the infants of heretics and excommunicated parents, where they do necessarily require sponsors; and if there be none found that will oblige himself to the church, and undertake the care of teaching those infants, they confess the action is lusory, and baptism is polluted: so that, even according to their own principles, the child may bear the father's iniquity. But the reconciling of these may be seen with such of our divines as write on the second command, and of the Socinian controversy. And what answer those learned men that use this argument make for themselves in the forementioned cases, they may bestow the same on themselves for us. Only I think, in the meantime, they should prove, that our doctrine doth properly make the children to bear the iniquity of their fathers in this case, as if the formal ground and reason whereupon the Lord proceeds against those infants were their parents' open wickedness; which if they do not, they do but beat the air, and fight with a shadow. Why may not the Lord well be said to visit the open wickedness of such parents on their children, when he only takes occasion from that open impiety of the parents thus to punish the children; yea, to punish them for worse, for their own sin, which they bring to the world with them, and lays them open to the wrath of God? As if a king had a parent and his son both under sentence of death for treason, and the father should be so far from shewing any sorrow for his offence, that he is still going on in treasonable attempts, the king should on that occasion execute the sentence of death, not only on the father, but also on the son, who otherwise might have had mercy; and thus punish the father in his son, as well as in his own person: and yet the formal reason of the sentence against the son is his own treason, though he owes it to his father that the sentence is executed, but yet has no ground to complain of injustice in this matter. For my part, I will plead for no more in this matter; and this sufficiently maketh the argument without force.

III. But now we come to the third argument, which is the most considerable, in my opinion, of all that is advanced in this matter

by those that differ. It is this: if the heresy, impiety, or profanity of the Jewish parents, did not exclude their children from circumcision; then the heresy, impiety, or profanity of Christian parents, cannot exclude their children from baptism; but the former is true: *Ergo*, ANSWER; before I come directly to answer this, I will propose three prejudices that I have against it. The first is this: that this argument concludes, that no heresy, profanity, or impiety of Christians, so called in opposition to pagans, Turks, and Jews, excludes their children from baptism; so that the door is thereby opened to the children of the most gross heretics that ever bare the name of Christians, and that even though accompanied with the grossest wickedness, unless perhaps they formally renounce their baptism: so that, as good right to the seal of the covenant have the children of the Gnostics, Nicolaitans, Ebionites, Cerinthians, Samosatenians, Arians, and Socinians, and such hellish crew, as the most holy and pious professor of the truth that is according to godliness. *Quis feret hæc!* what a sad thing is it to repute practically open blasphemers of Christ, and of the Holy Trinity, amongst those in covenant with God, though Turks, pagans, and Jews belch not out such blasphemies as they do against the truth! 2. This is inconsistent with the principles of some of those that use this argument. They say concerning the Jews simply, without any limitation, that their heresy, &c. did not exclude their children from baptism; yet when they come to shew their mind concerning Christian parents, they tell us only of the children of such heretics amongst whom the formula of baptism is safe, that they are to be baptized; whereas, their argument carries it, not only to those, but to all heretics. And, alas! what is the formula of baptism to the purpose in Socinian congregations, where they do baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, while it is the open confession of their Satanical synagogue, that Christ is a mere man, whatever divine dignity is conferred on him, and the Holy Ghost not a person? It is strange there should be such virtue in bare words, without the true sense and meaning. The Socinians in Transylvania sometimes baptized "in the name of Jesus who was crucified," but afterwards were obliged by the Prince to baptize "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." If the children of those who were baptized in the name of Christ who was crucified had right to baptism, then even the children of heretics, amongst whom the very formula of

* *Ego sentio, si quis doceat baptizandum, solem Patrem esse verum Deum, Filium primam creaturam. Spiritum Sanctum actionem tantum Dei in animis nostris; et ita in nomen horum baptizet, hunc baptismum nullum esse.* Zanch. tom. 4, col. 441. *Vide Hoornbeek App. ad Cont. Soc.*

baptism is not preserved, have right to baptism; and so indeed the argument concludes: if they had not, but the latter sort had, what made the difference betwixt them who still retained their former doctrine and principles, and only for pleasing their prince changed their words? It is like it will be said, the former were not Christians: and why were they not Christians? because they were not baptized persons, not being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. I should be loath to plead, that either of them were or are Christians: but I dare not unchristian them upon this head, that they are not baptized, lest I should make the holy children of the faithful no Christians, till they be baptized; or unchristian such Anabaptists as are not baptized, till such time as they may be baptized according to their principles; or unchurch the church in the wilderness, that for forty years wanted circumcision: but I would make both the sorts aforementioned no Christians, on the same ground that John makes them Atheists, 1 John ii. 23. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:" which is judiciously improven against them, by a late writer.* And thus, as we go on, we go the deeper, finding the right of the children of very Atheists to baptism. 3. There is another prejudice I have against it, the lawfulness whereof may appear, if ye consider this argument: if the heresy, impiety, or profanity of the Jewish parents, did not exclude their children from circumcision; then the heresy, impiety, or profanity of the Jewish parents did not exclude their children from baptism: the former is true: *Ergo*, the consequence is plain, (I use the same words that the opponents do, for proof of the consequence of their argument, only *mutatis mutandis*): for baptism was to them what circumcision was to them; their circumcision was to them a seal of the righteousness of faith, and so was baptism. Now, the grace of God is not more narrow under the New Testament, but more large than under the Old. This argument hath the advantage of the other, in that it proceeds from the Jewish parents and children under the old dispensation, to the same under the new; whereas the other proceeds from the Jews under the old, to the Gentiles under the new. If those things alleged by them prove their consequence, they must also prove ours. Yet I suppose they will not grant the conclusion of this argument, viz. that the heresy, impiety, or profanity of the Jewish parents, did not exclude their children from baptism: that the children of the Pharisees and Sadducees, impenitent murderers of the Lord of life, had a visible right to baptism. However, I think Peter judged not so, when he does so peremptorily require repentance antecedently

* See Edwards' Socinian Creed, p. 52, &c.

to baptism. One of the premises must then be false : the minor is their own *in terminis* ; they must then stick at the sequel of the major. If there be any just ground so to do, we have the same reason against theirs, as we shewed before. And let me add, that it is certain it is one and the same covenant to which both baptism and circumcision were appended as seals ; it is one and the same church in which the Jews were under the Old Testament, and we are now under the new. The believing Jews were not taken out of one church and put into another ; but only others were grafted in amongst them, and they continued still in the same olive, Rom. xi. God did not pull down his old house, and build a new one ; but only took down the partition wall, and so made more room, Eph. ii. 14. Say then, that the heresy, impiety, or profanity of the Jewish parents did not exclude their children from circumcision, and see if it will not follow, that these things did not exclude them from baptism either. I am not concerned either as to the truth of the antecedent, or of the consequent ; it is only the connection betwixt the two. It is as true a proposition *Si equus esset alatus, esset volabilis* ; as *Passer est alatus et volabilis*. I do indeed think the consequent false, and therefore am led by the hand to question the truth of the minor of the argument proposed. I cannot but observe, that (so far as I have read or remembered) our divines against the Anabaptists do still set themselves to prove, that the children of the faithful ought to be baptized ; and, in their arguing from circumcision, do hold the conclusion in the same terms : and so indeed the argument is not liable to the former exception, if it be so proposed, the children of the faithful under the Old Testament were circumcised ; *Ergo*, the children of the faithful under the New must be baptized. Now, although I should not answer the argument propounded to mine own satisfaction, these seem to me such lawful prejudices against it, that until I be rid of them, I cannot fall under the force of the argument.

To come now to answer directly to the argument, I deny, the minor, viz. That the heresy, impiety, or profanity of the Jewish parents, did not exclude their children from circumcision. The grounds whereupon I deny it, besides that in the third prejudice, are these. 1. God threatens the Jews as well as others, in his law given on Mount Sinai, that “ he will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation ;” which was already shown, that it extends to the seal of the covenant. And judicious Calvin* understands it of “ the Lord’s taking away from the house of the wicked his grace, the light of his truth, and other helps of salvation.” He doth also declare the seed of the wicked to be a

* Inst. lib. 2. cap. 3. Sect. 20.

cursed seed, Deut. xxviii. 18; of which before. 2. It was a positive law that God gave unto the Jews, that in case a city were withdrawn to serve other gods, that city was utterly to be destroyed, and all that was therein; no not the infants were to be spared, Deut. xiii. 12, 13, 14, 15. Now, if the idolatry of the Jewish parents excluded their infants from the church and life, it excluded them also from circumcision; and so the impiety and profanity of the Jewish parents excluded their children from circumcision. So Achan's sons and daughters were stoned and buried with him, Josh. vii. 24, 25, 26. How hard is it to believe, that the impiety of wicked parents amongst the Jews did go so far, as to cut them off, even from the church and life; and yet not to cut them off from a visible right to the seal of the covenant? 3. The Jews were to be excommunicated for heresy, impiety, and profanity. This must needs be granted, unless we say, that there was no such thing as excommunication amongst them; for who could be excommunicated but such? Now, even those amongst them that were excommunicated with the least degree of excommunication, called *Nidui*, those who were the *apostynagogoï*, their male children were not circumcised, as Goodwin tells us.* And truly, whoso considers how usually the children smarted with their parents in their impiety, will not easily conceive of it otherwise. 4. This further appears, if we consider how God visits the profanity of the Jewish parents in their contempt of circumcision, not only upon themselves, but their seed; as we may learn from that, Gen. xvii. 14. "And the uncircumcised man-child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant." To understand this place, so as that the parent only was liable to this punishment, and not the child, till he come to the years of discretion, as Goodwin doth, seems to me a commentary destroying the text; which passeth a sentence on all Jewish male children, whose flesh of their foreskin is not circumcised, that these shall be cut off from their people, and not that they shall be cut off when they are past the age of childhood. Till the eighth day they were not obliged, yea they might not be circumcised; but when that was over, and the child not circumcised, through the parent's contempt, he is then an uncircumcised man-child, and so liable to this sentence here passed against all such. Now, a parent might be guilty of this profane contempt two ways; either by reason of continuing impenitently in an openly wicked course, whereby his seed lost visible right to

that ordinance; or by a profane slighting of it, though otherwise his child's title to it could not be denied: however, the child by this profanity of the parent, is cut off before he be capable to cut off himself; and no less can be meant by it, than a cutting off from visible church membership. "If any object, (these are Calvin's words),* that the infants were not to be blamed; I answer, that even as God adopts the infant son in the person of the father, when the father rejects such a benefit, the infant is said to abdicate himself from the church; for so much signifies that word, "To be put out from among the people whom God had chosen for himself." That some expound it, they shall not be Jews, is too coldrife: we must go further, to wit, that God will not acknowledge among his people those who will not bear the mark and badge of adoption." However this text directly toucheth the cutting off of the child,† yet it seems plainly to follow thence, that much more the parent was to be cut off. From which it appears, that the profanity of the Jewish parents did render their children no visible church members, and consequently excluded them from circumcision, as Jewish children, or children of such profane parents: which hath the more weight, if it be considered, that the Lord doth not here command others to see to the circumcision of such a child, which might have been expected if he had any visible right thereto, but precludes this, while he tells us, "he shall be cut off, or not acknowledged among his people:" so that should such a one afterwards be admitted, he comes in as a stranger doth, but not by birth privilege.

I come now to consider the reasons adduced to prove that the heresy, impiety, or profanity of the Jewish parents, did not exclude their children from circumcision. The *first*, which is taken from the universality of the command, is answered already, in taking off an objection made against our first conclusion. The command does indeed oblige all to be circumcised; but it doth also at the same time oblige them to be subjects theologically capable of that ordinance; as is above more fully declared. And, by the same labour, the force of the *second* reason, taken from the punishment to be inflicted on them, is removed also. And that Scripture we have spoken to before, and improved it for our purpose. To the *third*, taken from the practice of Joshua, in circumcising all the people at Gilgal, at the command of God; I answer, It can no

* Calv. *in loc.*

† Cutting off is of himself and of his children. *Aruch. cit. Lightf. Temp. Serv.* p. 9.

no more be proven from hence, that Joshua circumcised every individual male among this people, than it can be proven from Matt. iii. 5, 6. that every individual person of Judea, and the region round about Jordan, was baptized of John, confessing their sins; for there it is said, "All Judea, and all the region," &c.: yea it is certain, neither Joshua himself nor Caleb were then circumcised, being circumcised before. But the persons that were the first subjects recipient of that ordinance there, were men at age standing in their own right, capable to answer for themselves; and for the infants among them, they stood by the right of their parents, who are, without all possible proof, denied to be all visible believers. How can it be proven, that such were there circumcised as were not visible believers? The contrary is rather manifest, that being men at age, they were circumcised at God's command. But if men will hold by this, that such as were heretics, impious, and profane, were circumcised by Joshua, then we see more how far on this argument does lead us, not only to admit the children, but even such persons themselves at age, to baptism. That is observable in Joshua's commission,* "Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time." With respect to Abraham and his family, their being circumcised, which was the first time, where the first subjects recipient of the ordinance were men at age, and then the infants by right derived from them; and so to be continued in the church, the males always to be circumcised in their infancy: but this order was broken off by the generation of adult persons who came out of Egypt, Josh. v. 5; so that it is now a second time to be set on foot, and so to go on as at first was appointed; first men at age to be circumcised, and then their infants. But in Old or New Testament it cannot be instanced, where the first subjects recipient of the seal of the covenant, were not visible believers. And is it not expressly said, that all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, and obeyed not the voice of the Lord, were consumed in the wilderness? and after their circumcision, before they removed from Gilgal, these people kept the passover? ver. 10. Either then we must say, they were not heretics openly impious and profane, or else let us admit such as these to the sacrament of the Lord's supper too under the gospel: As Ursin† observes from these two places, Numb. xv. 28; Deut. xvii. 12. "God commandeth the contumacious to be taken away out of the commonwealth, nor does he allow them to be members of his people; much less then will he have them to be

* Josh. v. 2.

† Expl. Cat. p. 563.

holden for members of his visible church, and to be admitted to the sacraments." And it appears, that in the wilderness, in a special manner, God acted himself the part of the magistrate, and put his own laws in execution. As to the *fourth* and *last* reason, That we never read of any of them excluded; I answer, *A non scripto ad non factum non valet sequela*. We read of children excluded from the church and life by their parents' impiety, and it would seem there were laws for the excluding of them; so that, by the word of God, they were excluded *de jure*. And we have heard, that the children of excommunicated parents were actually excluded.

IV. As to the fourth argument, taken from Acts ii. 38, 39. we have already explained and improved that Scripture against the doctrine of the opponents. Whether by the promise be meant that, "I will be your God, and the God of your seed," or not, is not very certain. Some learned men* understand by the gift of the Holy Ghost, the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, peculiar to the first times of the church; and by the promise, the promise of the same, cited by Peter out of Joel, which he did repeat at large, ver. 17, &c. But howsoever it be understood, it is clear, that this promise being to them gave them not a right to baptism, but that repentance was necessarily pre-required of them in order thereunto; as we have proved before; which quite invalidates any argument taken from hence for the cause that is pleaded. Again, there is another thing in this text that makes it, as explained for this cause, altogether useless to the purpose; and that is, that the promise is no less said to be to those whom the Lord shall call, who as yet were afar off, than it is said to be to those to whom he spoke; but had the Gentiles yet uncalled a right to baptism too? Finally, it is to be marked, that those to whom the apostle speaks here, were not all Jews, but many of them were Gentiles, neither were they all proselytes, as Aretius observes; yet to them is this spoken as well as to others. I have seen nothing as yet that satisfieth me as to that, in what sense the promise is said to be to those persons; but from what hath been said, it plainly appears, that in whatever sense it be said to be unto them, it doth not follow, they had thereupon a right to baptism.

V. The fifth argument is, That John the Baptist, and Christ's disciples, baptized all that offered themselves. This plainly concludes, that we are to baptize all that offer themselves; which I doubt if any sober man will affirm, seeing Turks and pagans may offer themselves in mock to be baptized: nor would ever this have

* Piscator, *schol. in loc*; Hoornbeek, *Soc. Conf. tom. 3. p. 237*.

come into my head, that they baptized all that offered themselves, as an argument for this cause, unless I had seen it among the arguments offered, as Mr. Fulwood says,* by divines, (what divines he means, unless it be Mr. Prin, I cannot conjecture), which to him were never satisfactorily answered. I grant indeed, that John and Christ's apostles did baptize whosoever, being visible believers, offered themselves; but I utterly deny it in any other sense. The proofs adduced are lame, and not to the purpose; for it is plainly said of the persons whom John baptized, that they were baptized "confessing their sins." Whether or not he did baptize the Pharisees and Sadducees, of whom mention is there made, is a question, the negative whereof I think is most probable; seeing it is expressly said, Luke vii. 30, "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." And in Luke iii. while the Evangelist is speaking of those whom John baptized, particular mention is made of the people, the publicans, and the soldiers, their asking questions of John as to what they should do, and each of them gets their directions; but there is not one word of the Pharisees and Sadducees asking what they should do, nor any particular directions, given to them; for which no satisfying reason appears, if we admit that they were baptized as well as the rest: Matth. xxi. 32, "Ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him." Ver. 45, "And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them." As for that saying of John, "I indeed baptize you with water," ver. 11, it will no more prove that he baptized every individual person to whom he spoke, than it will prove that Christ baptized every individual among them with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; for this, as well as the other, John speaks to the same persons. Luke tells us the occasion of this speech, and to whom he said it, Luke iii. 15, 16, "And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not; John answered, saying unto them *all*," (amongst whom the Pharisees and Sadducees were, as Matthew must be understood,) "I indeed baptize you with water;—he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." Will any from hence infer, that he baptized every individual person that heard him? if they will, we shall infer on the same ground, that they were all baptized with the Holy Ghost. So then that word, Luke iii. 21, "When all the people were baptized," must needs be understood of all those of them who were baptized by him at that time; as the forecited word,

* Disc. vis. Ch. p. 213.

vers. 15, 16, "All men mused—and he said to them all," viz. that heard him at that time. But grant he did baptise the Pharisees and Sadducees, how will it be made appear that they were not visible believers, or that they did not with the rest confess their sins? That he calls them "a generation of vipers," will not prove it; for that he said to all the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, as well as to them: and it is to be specially noticed,* he calls them not vipers, but "a generation of vipers," *gennematu echidnon*, those come of vipers, or the offspring of vipers: this they might be, and yet not be vipers themselves. That word, John iv. 1, doth indeed bear, that Christ by his disciples baptized more than John; yet neither John nor Christ's disciples baptized any but visible believers; for it is expressly said, "that Christ made and baptized more disciples than John," *ibid.*; so that both made them disciples before they baptized them. Finally, I deny that the apostles baptized any on a bare profession, or on a profession which was not a probable profession, or a probable evidence of true faith; as is clear from the Scriptures instanced, of which before.

VI. As to the sixth argument, taken from Ezek. xvi. 20, 21, that the children of the idolatrous Jews are called "God's children," and "born to God?" I answer, this will not prove that they had a visible right to the seal, no more than that magistrates have such a right, because they are called "the children of the Most High;"† as specious a character as is given here to the seed of these idolatrous persons. These might be God's children, as being heirs of God and the kingdom of heaven, though thus barbarously slain by their parents; yet no visible members of the church, nor having any visible right to the seal. What if I say, they were the first-born whom God challengeth a special propriety in, upon the account of the deliverance their fathers met with when the first-born of the Egyptians were slain? according to that law, Exod. xiii. 2. "Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb,—both of man and beast: it is mine." It will not thence follow, as Mr. Fulwood says,‡ that he owneth their parents yet to remain in his covenant; for this law would have obliged the children of Israel, though they had openly renounced God's covenant, and turned entirely apostates. It was the whole nation of Israel that had this mercy conferred on them, and so it obliged those that were of that nation, though not of the church. Wherefore, howsoever the parents should apostatize and renounce the covenant, by this law their first-born was the Lord's; unless we will

* Urs. Epl. Cat. p. 575.

† Ps. lxxxii. 6.

‡ Discours. vis. Chur. p. 131.

say, that men by their iniquity may free themselves from being under the law of God once given to them. But truly I think, if we consider the context, we may plainly perceive the reason of this designation given to those children; and that is this: because God gave them those children, but, in the giving of them, reserved still his propriety in them, and made them not absolute lords over them, to dispose of them what way they pleased; but they were obliged to make use of them for God's honour, under whom they had their right to them. So that herein, not only cruelty, but robbing of God, and disposing of what was his, contrary to his revealed will, is objected to them. Now, view the context, and see how it favours this exposition, ver. 17. "Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of *my* gold and of *my* silver, which I had *given* thee, and madest to thyself images." vers. 18, 19. "Thou hast set *mine* oil and *mine* incense before them." "My meat also which I *gave* thee, fine flower," &c. ver. 22. "Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare." Nothing more ordinary with the wicked and idolaters, than to forget God's propriety in what they have, and thence to take liberty to dispose of it at their pleasure, and to thank their idols for them rather than God; therefore God will vindicate his propriety in what they have, that they may see their sin, in abusing God's gifts to them towards his dishonour. Hos. ii. 5. "I will go after my lovers, that give me *my* bread and *my* water, *my* wool and *my* flax, *mine* oil and *my* drink." ver. 8. "For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil,—which they prepared to Baal." Ver. 9. "Therefore will I—take away *my* corn,—*my* wine,—*my* wool, and *my* flax."

VII. The seventh argument is taken from the following absurdities, that are supposed to accompany our doctrine.

1st, Families, parishes, &c. should soon be paganized. ANSWER. *Fiat justitia, et ruat mundus.* A man, say some, had better be a beast than like a beast. Sure I am, it had been telling some they had never been baptized, nor acknowledged to be church members. But truly I think the quite contrary would follow most probably, viz. that this would be a mean to bring them to be visibly christianized, as was above declared. It is truly a sad matter that people have nothing but their baptism to discern them from pagans. I confess, if the church should give over all dealing with them, there were some shew for the absurdity, or rather bad consequence, before mentioned; but while it is still the church's duty to preach to them in order to their conversion, there is no reason for it; yea, if it were so, by all probability, preaching would have more influence on them than now it hath.

Though I dare not say, it is more for the honour of Christ to have no more in his visible kingdom than only such as are real believers, and rather to want close hypocrites than have them; yet I confess it is my settled judgment, that as it is a greater credit for a master of a family to have a few servants of entire fame in his house, than to have a great many rogues; so it is more for the honour of our holy head in the world, to have a few visible believers or saints, visible members of his church, than a great number of profligate wretches amongst others, members of the same.

2dly, Many infants of believing parents should be deprived of this ordinance. I answer, Baptism is not due *coram ecclesia* to the infants of any but visible believers: if therefore a parent be a believer, and yet not a visible believer, his child hath no right before the church to baptism; for *de occultis non judicat ecclesia*. But whatever men may speak of people's going to heaven, the sound of their feet not being heard, it seems to be no very difficult question, Whether or not a person come to years, can be a real saint, and yet want a form of godliness? "Although," says a grave author,* "we cannot say, every one that hath a form of godliness, hath also the power of godliness; yet we may truly say, that he who hath not the form of godliness, hath not the power of godliness; though all be not gold that glistereth, yet all gold doth glister."† Our Lord tells us, "By their fruits ye shall know them." I shall add, that if a person be a real believer, and yet not appear so to be, he that judgeth him a visible believer, judgeth amiss, for he is not so.

3dly, As to the third, That ministers have no certain rule, &c.; it equally militates against the ordinary practice of admitting to, and debarring from the Lord's table those that are baptized, and not excommunicated; the same flourish of words might be used in that case. But I deny that we have no certain rule here, or that we stand on uncertainties. The rule is certain, because laid down in God's word, viz. That we are to take that person for a visible believer who makes a credible profession, and are to deal with him in the dispensing of the seals, as such.‡ This rule we learn from all those Scriptures that shew us on what grounds ministers did baptize persons who offered themselves, Matt. iii. 6. Acts ii. 41. and viii. 12, 37. and such like. And what though the person whom we take for a visible

* Mar. of Mod. Div. p. 169.

† If thine affections appear not, thine affections are not.—Fenner Treat. of the Affections.

‡ See Urs. Expl. Cat. p. 574. Baxter on Inf. Bapt. p. 93, &c.

believer be not a believer indeed, we are not mistaken in our judgment, unless we go to judge so as we have no warrant, that is, to judge him to be certainly a true believer: if men judge so of others, what wonder they be mistaken, when they arrogantly thrust themselves into that which the Lord hath not revealed. But we are to judge according to the rule, that a person making a credible profession, is probably a true believer, that is, certainly a visible believer: and herein we are not mistaken, though the person we so judge of be really "in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity;" for it is certain he appears and seems to be a true believer, though indeed he is stark naught before the Lord. As for that which is added, viz. "That one thinks so much enough to make one a visible believer, &c.;" ANSWER. The Lord hath plainly told us in his word whom he accounts real saints, and whom the church hath accounted visible saints. If we swerve from the rule in our application, it is no doubt our sin: who can help it, if men will needs close their eyes when the works of the flesh are manifest? It is certain we are commanded to separate the precious from the vile, to put difference betwixt the holy and profane, and to judge of the tree by its fruits. And for infallibility of our judgments in the application, as none will pretend to it now, so it can as little be had the other way as this way. Suppose it be, that such a parent was baptized; that such a one hath had godly remote parents amongst us Gentiles; unless we go up to Noah or Adam, no greater certainty can be here than what we have from our eyes and ears, which doth not reach to an infallibility; yea, for the most part, we have not so great certainty the other way, as in the way we plead for. But enough of this.

VIII. We come now to the last argument, viz. That the children of many openly scandalous and wicked parents, are the children of baptized church members. ANSWER. I conceive there is a vast difference betwixt an openly scandalous, and an openly wicked person; so that they ought not to be confounded. David and Peter in the hour of temptation were openly scandalous, but not openly wicked persons. And therefore as to many openly scandalous I yield the argument, concluding that the children of many openly scandalous ought to be baptized; but then there is *ignoratio elenchi*. Laying aside this then of many openly scandalous, and the argument being made to proceed only as to the openly wicked, I distinguish betwixt church members *de jure, et de facto*. It is plain we speak now of visible church members. Those that are church members *de jure*, are those who have not only a possession of church membership, but a right and lawful possession of it.

Those are church members *de facto* (only), which have a visible possession of that privilege, but no rightful possession; and therefore ought to be cast out and deprived of that possession. Now, such a possession can give no right either to the parent or child as to church privileges, for *nullum jus fundatur in injuria*: even as an usurper, though he hath the crown, yet neither he nor his have right to the revenues of the crown. Wherefore I distinguish the major of that argument. The children of baptized church members, who are visible members in point of right, ought to be baptized; and thus the minor is false: the children of baptized church members, who are such only *de facto*, and not *de jure*, ought to be baptized, I deny. And in this sense only are the openly wicked (some of them, I say) baptized church members.



A MEDITATION ON THE DAY OF EXPIATION, AND THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

THE day of expiation was the only anniversary stated fast and humiliation that God gave to the church of the Jews: it was a sorrowful day, for afflicting their souls; so that he who ate anything that day, was liable to cutting off. The "feast of tabernacles" was the most joyful feast they had; so that the Jews say, that he who never saw the rejoicing at the drawing of water (used at this feast), never saw rejoicing all his life. The ceremonial law was the Jews' gospel; and the gospel to them and us is glory let down in words and syllables, the map of Immanuel's land, a looking-glass wherein we see heaven, a scheme and draught of the house with many mansions. The day of expiation represents to me the time of this life, the state of the saints in this world; the feast of tabernacles, heaven.

The day of expiation went before the feast of tabernacles. Why should not our day of afflicting our souls go before our days of rejoicing? The Babylonians began their natural day at the sunrising, and so their night came last. The Jews began theirs at sunset, and so they had their night first. "Woe to you that laugh now, ye shall weep." "Blessed are they that mourn now, they shall be comforted." Let the evening and the morning make our day. If we have our morning first, the fears of the approaching night will make our sun go down at noon. If we will take the evening first,