

mystical experience) to authenticate His letter? *Why cannot we take Him at His word and believe what He tells us?* Cf. Luke 16:24-31, Rom. 10:6-10, 1 Thess. 2:13, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, etc. Does not the Apostle Peter inform us positively that "divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" with the completion of the New Testament canon (2 Pet. 1:2-4)? Does not Jude state unequivocally that we should "contend earnestly for the faith which was *once* for all delivered unto the saints" (v. 3?) What more do we need? (Cf. Matt. 12:38-41, 16:4; Luke 11:29-32.) The canon of the New Testament was closed with *Revelation*, just as we have it today.

## 6. Spiritual Circumcision

Deut. 10:16, 30:6; Jer. 4:4, 9:25-26. Cf. Rom. 2:28-29, Phil. 3:3, Acts 7:51, Gal. 3:27-28, 2 Cor. 3:2-6, Col. 2:9-13. The Scriptures teach expressly that there is such a thing as "circumcision of the heart." But what does "heart" (Heb. *leb*, Gr. *kardia*) mean in Scripture? This we can determine by what the "heart" is said to do, to experience, to suffer, etc., namely, it *thinks* (Gen. 6:5, Deut. 15:9, Prov. 23:7, Matt. 9:4, Heb. 4:12); it *reasons* (Mark 2:8, Luke 5:22); it *understands* (Matt. 13:15); it *believes* (Rom. 10:8-10); it *loves* (Matt. 22:37); it *knows* (Deut. 29:4); it "*breaks*" with sorrow (Jer. 8:18, 23:9); it can be *grieved* (Deut. 15:10); it can be *troubled* (John 14:1); it can be *fearful* (John 14:27); it *rejoices* (Psa. 16:9, 28:7; Acts 2:26); it can be *comforted* (Eph. 6:22); it *wills*, "*purposes*," "*determines*" (Dan. 1:8, 2 Cor. 9:7, 1 Cor. 7:37); it can *lust* (Matt. 5:28, Rom. 8:6-7); it *obeys* (Rom. 6:17, Eph. 6:6); it *approves* and *condemns* (Rom. 2:14-16, Acts 2:37, 1 John 3:19-22). From all these texts we must conclude that the Scriptural "heart" includes intellect, feeling, conscience, and will. It is the entire "inner man," everything that is not included in the phrase, "flesh and blood" (John 3:6, 1 Cor. 15:50, 2 Cor. 4:16, Rom. 7:22, cf. 1 Pet. 3:4—"the hidden man of the heart").

1. There is such a thing as spiritual circumcision, "a circumcision not made with hands." The Bible leaves no room for doubt on this matter.

2. Fleshly (physical) circumcision of the Old Covenant was designed to be a type of spiritual circumcision under the

New. Hence, as the circumcision ordained in the Old Testament was a seal stamped upon the flesh, it follows that the circumcision ordained in the New Testament must be a seal stamped on the *mind* or *spirit* of man, the true "inner man" (Cf. John 3:1-8, Acts 2:38, Jer. 31:33, Ezek. 11:19).

Whitelaw writes that fleshly circumcision was designed (1) to be a sign of the faith that Christ should be descended from Abraham, and (2) to be a symbolic representation of the putting away of the filth of the flesh and of sin in general; therefore, it served the following uses: "(1) to distinguish the seed of Abraham from the Gentiles, (2) to perpetuate the memory of Jehovah's covenant, (3) to foster in the nation the hope of the Messiah, (4) to remind them of the duty of cultivating moral purity (Deut. 10:16), (5) to preach to them the gospel of a righteousness by faith (Rom. 4:11), (6) to suggest the idea of a holy or spiritual seed of Abram (Rom. 2:29) and (7) to foreshadow the Christian rite of baptism (Col. 2:11, 12)."

There can hardly be any disagreement about the first six of the "uses" of fleshly circumcision listed above. The one exception is the last-named. One of the errors that has caused untold confusion in Christian teaching and practice is this oft-recurring claim that fleshly circumcision of the Old Covenant was the type of which baptism is the antitype under the New Covenant. There is no Scripture warrant for this view.

There are many "clergymen" who still cling to the threadbare argument that baptism as "spiritual circumcision" under the New Covenant has taken the place of fleshly circumcision, the seal of the Old Covenant; hence, they contend, that as infants were inducted into the Old Covenant by fleshly circumcision (Gen. 17:9-14, cf. Jer. 31:31-34, Heb. 8), so infants are to be inducted into the New Covenant by "baptism" (as a matter of fact, by sprinkling), which, according to the theory has "taken the place of" the old fleshly circumcision. *Their errors are those of making baptism the seal of the New Covenant, and identifying baptism with spiritual circumcision.* We reply to this argument as follows:

1. *Baptism is not a seal.* In New Testament teaching there is not the slightest intimation that baptism is the seal of anything. On the contrary, it is expressly stated that the seal of the New Covenant is the indwelling Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22;

Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19-20; Rom. 8:14-17, etc.). True, the reception of the Holy Spirit by the repentant believer is connected in Scripture with baptism; however, it is not baptism. It is the Holy Spirit who seals us as members of the Covenant (Acts 2:38, Gal. 3:27, Tit. 3:5). If someone should ask, How can we know that the baptized believer is sealed by the Spirit? or, What is the certain proof? The answer is obvious, namely, the principle enunciated by Jesus Himself, "each tree is known by its own fruit" (Luke 6:43-45), or "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:16-23). The baptized believer who is truly sealed by the Spirit will bring forth in his life the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25; Jas. 1:22-27, 2:14-26; Matt. 7:11-27, 25:31-46).

2. *Baptism is not spiritual circumcision.* If baptism under the New Covenant has "taken the place of" fleshly circumcision of the Old Covenant, it follows that, since only male infants received fleshly circumcision under the Old (and that "when eight days old," Gen. 17:12), so only male infants can be properly subjects for what the "pedobaptists" call "baptism" under the New Covenant. As stated above, there is such a thing as "spiritual circumcision" (Rom. 2:28-29, Phil. 3:3, 2 Cor. 3:2-6, Col. 2:9-13), a "circumcision not made with hands." Moreover, as the fleshly circumcision of the Old Covenant was designed to be a type of spiritual circumcision under the New, and hence, that as the circumcision ordained under the Old Covenant was a seal stamped on the flesh, so the circumcision ordained in the New Covenant must be a seal stamped upon the *mind* or *spirit*, the inner man.

3. *Spiritual circumcision consists in the cutting off—from the interior man—of the body of the guilt of sin.* Rom 6:6—"our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away" (1) This is done by the Spirit of God at the time of His entrance into the human heart to indwell and to sanctify it; although this occurs in connection with the penitent believer's baptism into Christ, still it is not baptism itself. (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:2, 5:16-26; John 3:3-8, Tit. 3:4-7, etc.). The remedy for sin is the blood of Christ, and the place divinely appointed for the repentant believer to meet the efficacy of this blood is the grave of water (1 John 1:7, Rom. 6:1-10, John 3:1-8, Col. 2:9-12): here divine grace and human faith meet, and the pardon, remission, justification,

etc., takes place in the Mind of God; the entrance of the Holy Spirit at the same time cuts off the body of the guilt of past sin: this guilt will be put away as far as the east is from the west (Psa. 103:11-12, Rom. 6:6, Col. 2:9-12). (2) The Spirit of God, as He continues to indwell and to possess the heart of the true Christian as the Agent of the latter's sanctification, is the *seal* of his participation in the privileges and responsibilities of the New Covenant, and is at the same time the *earnest* or pledge of his eternal inheritance, the rest that remaineth for the people of God (1 Pet. 1:3-5, Eph. 1:13-14; Acts 20:32, 26:18; Rom. 8:18-23; Col. 1:12; 2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Heb. 4:9, 9:15, 11:13-16, 10:28-31; Rom. 5:5, 14:17; 1 Thess. 5:19). (3) In a word, spiritual circumcision is, in its essential nature, identical with regeneration, the process which begins with the reception of Christ into the human heart by faith (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:27; Rom. 10:17, 8:1-11; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; Jas. 1:18), and is consummated in the penitent believer's birth from the water of his final act of "primary obedience" (conversion): John 3:37, 3:1-9; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 5:25-27; Acts 2:38, 22:16; Heb. 10:22). (4) Thus it will be seen that baptism as the consummating act of the process variously designated in Scripture as conversion, adoption, justification, regeneration, etc. (i.e., the consummating act on the human side) as associated with it the entrance of the Spirit into the obedient believer's heart, to possess and to mould his inner spiritual life. (It must be emphasized here that *only those who believe and repent are proper subjects for Christian baptism*. What is commonly designated *change of heart* must precede baptism (Luke 13:3, 1 Cor. 7:10, Acts 16:29-34, Rom. 10:9-10, Luke 24:46-47). One who does not have this change of heart will go down into the baptistry a dry sinner and come up a wet sinner (Rom. 6:17). *However, it is the indwelling Spirit, and not baptism, that is the seal of the Christian, stamping him as set apart for participation in the blessings and responsibilities of the New Covenant. And it is the operation by the Spirit of excising the body of the guilt of sin, at His entrance into the newly-made saint's interior life—and not baptism—which is designated in Scripture spiritual circumcision. Baptism and spiritual circumcision are associated in God's plan, but they are not identical* (Col. 2:9-14). As a matter of fact, to identify baptism *per se* with spiritual circumcision is to vest the ordinance, that is to

say, the water itself, with magical properties. Certainly, to present infants—or anyone incapable of faith—for such a rite as what is generally called “infant baptism” (sprinkle, pouring) is not only unscriptural—it is antiscritural. If there is any efficacy in such an act, obviously it cannot be in the state of the child’s heart, but would have to be in the water: this would be sheer magic. There is no warrant in the New Testament for such an esoteric concept. Moreover, the attitude of the parents in such a practice cannot in any way affect the child’s salvation. There is no such thing in Scripture as *salvation by proxy*.

But, someone may be asking, *what about the salvation of infants?* We answer as follows: (1) According to Scripture teaching, sin is a personal act, and responsibility for the guilt of sin is *personal* (Ezek. 18:19-20: here we have the doctrine of the *guilt* of sin, as distinguished from that of the *consequences* of sin as stated in Exo. 20:1-17; Prov. 24:12; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:10, 11:15; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:25; Rev. 2:23, 20:12, 22:12). As there is no such thing as salvation by proxy, so there is no such thing as sinning by proxy. “Original sin,” in the sense of original *guilt*, is just another fabrication of the theological mentality. True it is that the human race is suffering the consequences of Adam’s sin (of which the most frustrating is physical death, Gen. 3:17-19, Heb. 9:27) and of the sins of the fathers, but there is no evidence from Scripture, experience or common sense that any person will be held *guilty* before God for what Adam did or what his own forebears have done. Such a notion impugns the justice and goodness of the Heavenly Father. All this “theological groundwork” for the practice of what is called “infant baptism” (true infant baptism would be infant immersion) thus turns out to be nothing more than a house of cards. The infant does not sin for the simple reason that it *can not* sin; hence, said Jesus, “to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14). (2) Whatever the human race lost through the disobedience of the First Adam, it has regained through the obedience of the Second Adam (Rom. 5:19, 1 Cor. 15:45-49), regained *unconditionally* for the innocent and the irresponsible, but regained *conditionally* for all accountable human beings, that is, on the terms and conditions of the Last Will and Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ (“the keys of the kingdom of

heaven," Matt. 16:19, Acts 2:37-38). Our Lord atoned for the innocent unconditionally by His sacrifice of Himself on the Cross, the Lamb of God who "taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 1 Cor. 5:7). The infant is in need of salvation from the consequences of sin only; it is in need only of the redemption of the body, that is, salvation from mortality itself (Rom. 8:22-23, 2 Cor. 5:4). The spiritual progression for accountable persons is from the Kingdom of Nature, through the Kingdom of Grace (John 3:1-8), into the Kingdom of Glory (Rev. 20:11-14, 22:1-5). The spiritual progression for those who die in infancy, we may surely believe, is *directly* from the Kingdom of Nature, by means of the Covering of Grace, our Lord's Vicarious Sacrifice, into the Kingdom of Glory (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Col. 1:18-23; Heb. 12:23).

(3) Infant sprinkling, pouring, christening, etc., reverses the order specified in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). The order demanded by the Commission is (a) *go*; (b) *make disciples*, that is, learners, believers; (c) *baptize* those who have been made disciples, believers, by the preaching of the facts, commands, and promises of the Gospel; (b) *nurture* those who have been baptized into Christ and have the right to wear the name Christian, that is, nurture them in the most holy faith, the Spiritual Life. The pedobaptist order is (a) *go*, (b) "baptize," and then (c) teach, or make disciples; in a word, "christen" them in infancy and require "confirmation" at about the age of twelve. Those who practice this sequence are simply bringing over into the New Testament the sequence prescribed in the Old Testament. The Old Abrahamic Covenant took in those born in Abraham's house and those heathen servants bought with his money, all of whom had to be taught to *know Jehovah* after their induction into the Covenant by fleshly circumcision. But God states explicitly, with respect to the promised New Covenant, that "they shall teach no more, every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them," etc. The New Covenant is not a covenant of *flesh*, but a covenant of *faith*. Those who would enter the New Covenant must, as Jesus states expressly, be "born anew," literally "born from above," "born of water and the Spirit," "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-

13, 3:3-5). God's law is put in their inward parts, written in their hearts, in order for them to be born again, and so to enter the Covenant. (Cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-7). Suffice it to say that there can be no spiritual birth without a prior spiritual begetting, and there can be no spiritual begetting without faith. Infant christening, "baptism," sprinkling, pouring, etc., ignores this teaching *in toto*; not only ignores it, but contradicts it in every particular. Infant christening, infant "baptism," infant affusion, infant aspersion, infant dedication, infant church membership, etc., not one of these things, nor all of them together, can be substituted, in the Gospel Plan of Salvation, for spiritual birth (regeneration). These are all forms of so-called "baptismal regeneration," a dogma which the present writer rejects flatly. *Baptism is an act of faith, or it is nothing.* My personal conviction is that the term *kingdom* (literally, *reign*) in Scripture is more comprehensive than the term *church*, in that it takes in all who, in the very nature of the case, cannot belong to the church; that is, infants and irresponsibles generally, and in all probability the elect of prior Dispensations. (Cf. Luke 17:21; Mark 10:24; Matt. 18:3; Mark 10:15; Luke 18:15-17; Matt. 21:43; Heb. 11:4, 5, 8-16, etc.)

(4) Other objections to the pedobaptist practice of following the Old Covenant pattern are the following: It contradicts New Testament teaching regarding the design of baptism (1 Pet. 3:21, Rom. 6:17). It belies the plain teaching of the New Testament that Christian baptism is more than a physical act. It tends to fill the church with unconverted, unregenerated persons; that is, with those who would make of their Christianity nothing but vain ritual observances. It ignores altogether man's God-given power of choice. Finally, it tends to obliterate the distinction between the church and the world, and the distinction between church and state as well. How many professing "Christian" parents use the practice of christening pretty largely for the credentials by which birth certification can be established? Moreover, so-called "infant dedication" is misleading: the popular tendency, so great is the general ignorance of the Bible, is to identify it with infant sprinkling. If the act is simply a dedication, why use water in the observance of it?

To summarize: the equating of Christian baptism with spiritual circumcision is one of the most egregious fallacies that

has ever been perpetrated on the Christian world. We repeat that baptism is an act of faith, "the appeal of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21)—or this nothing. Spiritual circumcision is the excision of the body of the guilt of sin by the entrance of the Spirit into the human heart to take possession of it and thus to make it, little by little, a partaker of the divine nature and meet for the interitance of the saints in light (2 Pet. 1:4, Col. 1:12, Heb. 9:11).

## 7. Questions for Review of Part Seventeen

1. List the effects which the Holy Spirit is said to accomplish by His indwelling of the saints, which are also said to be accomplished by the Word. What general conclusion do we draw from these correspondences as to the relation between the Spirit and the Word?
2. Explain what conversion includes, according to Scripture teaching. What is the name given to the same process of change on the Divine side?
3. How, that is, *by what means*, does the Spirit move men to repentance and obedience that results in conversion to Christ?
4. What are the steps psychologically by which this change known as conversion takes place, *i.e.*, according to the Scriptures?
5. Does the Spirit operate *directly* upon the person to be converted, that is, *independently* of the Word? Explain your answer.
6. Why do we reject the view that the Spirit operates on the person to be converted *in addition to* the Word?
7. By what general name is this *direct-operation* theology known? On what grounds do we reject it?
8. Why can we not depend on *feeling* as furnishing a reliable evidence of acceptance with God?
9. Why do we insist that the Spirit operates only through the Word in the conversion of sinners?
10. Name some of the "by-products" of the Word through which He may operate in the conversion of sinners.
11. State the facts to be believed, the commands to be obeyed, and the rewards to be enjoyed, through the Gospel Plan of Salvation.
12. Give the evidence from the Scriptures that the Spirit of God has striven with men through the Word as communicated to them through men of great faith, to lead them in the ways of righteousness.
13. Is there any evidence in Scripture that the Divine Spirit will strive with men for ever? What did God say about this in the Age before the Flood?
14. What is the all-embracing mission of the Spirit throughout the present Gospel Dispensation? In what two ways does He accomplish this mission?
15. Is there any evidence in the New Testament that the Spirit operated directly on the hearts of men, in some *mystical* manner, to turn them to God?
16. In what two instances in the book of Acts did He operate to bring the evangelist and the person (or persons) together, that the