

APOSTASY OR PERPETUITY, WHICH?

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Reader, will you pause amid life's commotion to think, and from a biblical standpoint decide in your mind as to the truth or falsity of an apostasy from the organic form of Christ's church, and his doctrine, as they are taught in the New Testament?

On the hypothesis that Christ did build or establish the church, revealing doctrine as a method of adoption whereby to acquire a citizenship in said church, thus forming a relationship with God, one of two things must be apparent to even the surface thinker; namely, the organic form of that church with its method of adoption has been perpetuated and preserved intact, or an apostasy or departure therefrom has occurred.

Tradition may have taught you to believe that the continuance of Christ's church, from its inception until now, is incontrovertible. If so, a little investigation will in no way disturb your religious equilibrium.

On the admission that the New Testament is a true and authoritative reflection of both the organic form of Christ's church and his doctrine, though close study may be needed it will not be a difficult task to decide as to whether an apostasy from that church has taken place, or whether both the organic form of the church and its doctrine have been perpetuated. If the former, prophecies found in the New Testament will reflect it, and the teachings and practice of religionists since the death of the apostles

until the present time will confirm these prophecies in the event of an apostasy. And if the apostasy is thus confirmed, the idea of the perpetuity of Christ's church is absurd, and vice versa.

The writer therefore claims an apostasy, and in the inception of this investigation places in juxtaposition two passages of scripture:—

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.
—Matt. 28: 20.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.
—John 15: 6.

If, as claimed by some, that Matthew 28: 20 is proof of the perpetuity of Christ's church, then John 15: 6 is without significance, in which event the claim made in the light radiating from Matthew 28: 20 as to the perpetuity of Christ's church is fallacious; for John 15: 6 affords a basis for belief that Christ's promises, whether pertaining to this life or that to come, are but attainable upon given and written conditions. Let this be obliterated from God's divine economy,—together with the fact of man's will power or moral agency,—and the divine economy or God's saving method, is a farce—a purposeless design, therefore a reflection on the character of God.

In Christ's interview with the apostles he declared, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16: 18), which serves as proof that no other one was authorized to do that essential work; therefore, Christ is the head of the church. But Christ's church is referred to as a kingdom (Mark 15); a body (Col. 1: 18; 1 Cor. 12: 12-14; Rom. 12: 5); a building (Eph. 2: 21); signifying a system of

spiritual government. Hence these designations: body, kingdom, church, building, etc., mean one and the same thing.

But the advocates of the perpetuity of Christ's church, by an unbroken succession, may use Christ's declaration; namely, "And upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," as proof therefor, claiming that the fact of an apostasy would falsify Christ's promise in Matthew 28: 20, etc. But the God-fearing biblical student will see the necessity of a proper comparison of scripture with scripture, with a view to a proper understanding and with a due appreciation of instruction contained in Mark 7: 1-13, which involves a necessity for a proper discrimination between tradition and Christ's doctrine.

The fact of a time for a righteous retribution, when all are to be rewarded according to deeds done while probating on the earth, affords a solid basis for belief that man may exercise his will power in choosing good or evil; therefore, by choosing the good which leads to abiding in or by the conditions reflected in God's revealed method, he is justified of God, and in the ultimate is saved. But if choosing evil, he is condemned according to the enormity of his crime, or to the extent that he has sinned against light and knowledge.

Christ prophetically declared against the Jews in reflecting the calamities that should come upon them, saying:—

How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.—Matt. 23: 37.

Hence we learn they refused the overtures of God's mercies, and were condemned.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.—John 3: 20, 21.

The conception of language to convey a more vivid contrast between the obedient and disobedient, and at the same time give greater evidence as to the reception and retention of God's favor, on conditions, would be difficult indeed.

EVIDENCES OF APOSTASY.

The reader is now invited to perambulate in thought in a field of prophecy which reflects a departure or an apostasy by the people subsequent to the death of the apostles:—

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.—Acts 20: 29, 30.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity [the Jews]; but toward thee [the Gentiles], goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.—Rom. 11: 22.

In treating on Christ's second coming, Paul inspirationally declared:—

That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.—2 Thess. 2: 3.

And he further declares:—

In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers

of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.—2 Tim. 3: 1-5.

Let the reader pause and consider the characters and proclivities made conspicuous in the above, and ask himself if the effects of covetousness, blasphemy, boasting, pride, disobedience to parents, unthankfulness, a lack of natural affection, trucebreakers (one who violates a truce, covenant, or agreement), false accusations, incontinency, etc., were ever more visible than in the present age?

You may be young, old, or middle-aged; historians or nonhistorians; observant or nonobservant; studious or nonstudious; but you certainly cannot fail, though you never read a column in a newspaper, to hear comments by a frequent reference to passing events, and thus be impressed with the thought that we are living in perilous times, and that men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth. (Luke 21: 26.)

Nor can you close your eyes to the fact of distress of nations. And if you have never before thought of the fact of the declaration—that when these perilous times are upon us, so graphically described by Paul, the people were to have a form of godliness but to deny the power thereof, you may now consider, and be convinced, and therein discover the verity of these predictions relative to the apostasy. Further:—

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure

sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.—2 Tim. 4: 1-4.

SOUND AND UNSOUND DOCTRINE.

One of the most conspicuous features in the above is the fact of the time coming at some period subsequent to the time when Paul spoke, when they (the people) would not endure, believe, defend, and obey sound doctrine. By informing ourselves as to what is sound doctrine, we may determine the truth or falsity of Paul's prediction.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.—2 Tim. 4: 3.

Jesus answered them (the Jews) and said:—

My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.—John 7: 16, 17.

It must follow that the doctrine Christ taught was sound, true, and the only doctrine God did or will recognize.

From Mark 16: 15-18, we learn: (1) that Christ commanded his disciples to go and preach the gospel in all the world; (2) "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" (3) "he that believeth not shall be damned;" (4) these signs enumerated were to follow them that believe.

Matthew's testimony runneth thus:—

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe

all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.—Matt 28: 18-20.

BAPTISM IS IMMERSION.

We may, with injury to none, examine that which has obtained publicity, for the sake of comparison. The quotations from Matthew and Mark warrant the claim that teaching is to precede baptism; it must, therefore, follow that that which is styled baptism, more commonly known as sprinkling, is not sound doctrine. For it is made to appear that faith and repentance were prerequisites to baptism; and as infants are not capacitated to exercise faith, or to know as to the purpose of repentance, they, therefore, are not the proper subjects for baptism. Hence in the establishment of aspersion, or infant sprinkling, we have evidence of a failure to endure, preach, defend, and practice sound doctrine; for the baptism of the New Testament is immersion, its purpose being for the remission of sins.

Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.—Matt. 3: 5, 6.

And John also was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.—John 3: 23.

And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he [Paul:] baptized him.—Acts 8: 38.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.—Rom. 6: 3, 4.

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.—Col. 2: 12.

Peter declares, referring to the flood:—

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.—1 Peter 3: 21.

Kind reader, whatever may be your proclivities, you would hardly insist that sprinkling or pouring would be a like figure to the flood, which covered or buried the earth and all things therein or thereon.

OBJECT OF BAPTISM.

Your attention is now solicited while going in quest of instruction to learn as to the purpose of baptism. Listen:—

And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.—Luke 1: 76, 77.

And he [John] came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.—Luke 3: 3.

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.—Mark 1: 4.

And all the people that heard him [John], and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.—Luke 7: 29, 30.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.—Acts 2: 37-40.

To the keeper of the prison, who tremblingly appeared in the presence of Paul and Silas, the response came in answer to his interrogation:—

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.—Acts 16: 30, 31.

For no guaranty of salvation is given without a belief in Christ, and a belief in Christ is only evinced by obedience to his mandates; the conclusion, therefore, that the jailer was saved by a mere assent of the mind, or tacit belief in Christ, is premature; for we read:—

And they [the apostles] spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in the house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.—Acts 16: 32, 33.

The claims that the jailer was saved by belief without baptism, or that the form of baptism was sprinkling or pouring, because himself and his house (household, therefore children made up that household) were baptized straightway, are farfetched and unwarranted. The above quotations prove that the mode of baptism was immersion, or a burial, to resemble Christ's death and burial; and as Christ was raised from his actual death by the glory of the Father, so those thus baptized, buried in water, rose to a

spiritual life, divinely new, by the glory of the Father, which is compatible with Paul's testimony.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.—Romans 8: 2.

Compare this with Romans 6: 4, and divine proof is given that baptism was that law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, preceded by faith in God and Christ, with a godly repentance; and that baptism is for the remission of sins.

LAYING ON OF HANDS.

Next in order is the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 8: 17-19; Heb. 6: 2.) Further:—

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.—Eph. 1: 13, 14.

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.—2 Cor. 1: 22.

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.—2 Cor. 5: 5.

Now who were these that were thus sealed, receiving the earnest (assurance) of the Holy Spirit? Let Paul answer:—

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.—Gal. 3: 27.

Would you, respected reader, claim that those received the sealing, the earnest of the Spirit, that had not put on Christ, or that those had put on Christ that were not baptized into Christ? Think soberly and decide wisely.

The response of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, to the interrogation: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" runs thus: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;" and it is compatible with the above quotations setting forth the order of God's saving method; and it teaches the God-fearing biblical student that faith, repentance, and baptism in water for the remission of sins, are the prerequisites for the gift of the Holy Ghost, the sealing process, by the laying on of hands. And, therefore, without a compliance with or honoring of these prerequisites there is no guaranty of the precious gift of the Holy Ghost, or being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise as an earnest of the inheritance.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.—Romans 8: 14, 15.

In the light radiating from the above, the reader will hardly object to the following conclusions: 1. If those led *by* the Spirit of God are the sons of God, those that are *not* led by the Spirit of God cannot be the sons of God; hence the distinction between those adopted into Christ and those not adopted. 2. Those repudiating the method of adoption cannot be adopted. The climax of evidence as to the essentiality of water and Spirit baptism is found in John 3: 5:—

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God:

And upon the same authority evidence is given against the decision reached by many learned theologians of the day; namely, John's baptism was not a Christian baptism. For Christ in response to the demurrer John made to baptizing him, said, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3: 15); which is further attested, if that is necessary, by the manifestation of the Spirit and the Father's recognition of his beloved Son. Can you, kind reader, furnish evidence of the Father's recognition of his Son in this public manner before his baptism by John? If not, what evidence have you that God will recognize you, if failing to accept or obey the ordinance of baptism which Christ declares to be a part of righteousness?

DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

The reader's attention now is called to a recapitulation of Christ's doctrine given by Paul in Hebrews 6, which we find to be faith, repentance, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. Thus we have six fundamental rules or doctrines underlying the great and God-revealed science of life—eternal life; and no one of these fundamental doctrines can be repudiated and we be the recipients of blessings guaranteed by our acceptance of this system as a whole, than we could become the recipients of the benefits of mathematics by repudiating one of its fundamental rules. For James declares those are blessed who look "into the perfect law of liberty"—hence those who fail to look, learn, and to do, must suffer deprivation. (James 1: 23-26.) John plainly declares that those abiding in the doctrine of Christ have "both the Father

and the Son," while those failing to abide therein have neither the Father nor the Son. (2 John 9: 10.) And Paul unhesitatingly says, whether man or angel "preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1: 9.)

Hence, as we search for proof in God's word, touching the organic form of Christ's church, and pause to contrast the systems of men, evidence of an apostasy is made so visible that persistent efforts to make valid the claim to the perpetuity of Christ's church as builded and left by him, or an unbroken succession, would be a betrayal of ignorance as to the force and significance of God's word, or willfulness evincive of policy rather than a love for principle.

The New Testament teaches that the above doctrines were taught under the auspices of one general government. Hence Paul taught:—

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body [church, kingdom, or government], whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.—1 Cor. 12: 13.

The claim as to the impracticability to see eye to eye, upon a given topic, found no favor under Paul's spiritual jurisdiction. Hence he reproved the saints for contentions, advising that they be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Cor. 1: 10.)

BODY OF CHRIST.

The careful reader, by a due study of the twelfth chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, will see that Christ's mystical body (church) is compared to man's physical organism, which exists as a whole by integral

parts; the integral parts of the former being apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, bishops, deacons, etc. (1 Tim. 1: 1, 2, 12; 1 Cor. 12: 28, 29; Eph. 4: 8-14.) And through the instrumentality of these officials the work of the ministry was to be performed, the body of Christ edified, the unity of faith enjoyed, the knowledge of Christ acquired, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ reached, and the saints prevented from being tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive, Christ being the head. 'Tis true that Paul adds (after declaring that God had set some in the church, first apostles, etc.) helps and governments; yet this cannot be construed to mean diverse and conflicting governments, but rather that such helps and government should be added as necessity should require under the auspices and direction of the one government. Hence we read:—

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.—Romans 12: 4, 5.

Further, we find that when in about the year 53 A. D. dissension began of a threatening aspect (Acts 15), the elders and apostles came together to consider the matter, and after due deliberation it pleased the apostles and elders with the whole church to send chosen men to give publicity to the decrees or decision reached. Read the chapter entire, and no evidence will be seen of a recognition of diverse governments; but rather that all must recognize, live, move, and work under the one general government; for Christ is not divided.

And as he gave no command for diverse or conflicting governments, he will not recognize them; for he is not the author of confusion. (1 Cor. 14: 33.)

APOSTASY—CHURCH AND STATE.

About the year 96, John, who was banished to Patmos, severely denounced the seven churches of Asia Minor for a divergence from Christ's teachings, and for essaying to establish practices of a demoralizing character in lieu thereof, which were far from legitimate efforts to endure, preach, defend, and practice sound doctrine, rather evincive of a retrogression. And about the year 312 A. D. Constantine the Great, as is claimed, took the religion of Christ to his "unhallowed embraces of the state, assumed to unite in his own person the civil and ecclesiastical dominion, and claimed the power of convening councils and presiding in them, and of regulating the external affairs of the church." (History of Romanism by John Dowling, D. D., page 30; also Eusebius in his life of the Emperor.)

This would appear as an unwarrantable interference with and a repudiation of the order Christ established in setting in the church first apostles, and a preparatory step towards a consolidation of church and state, which, as history teaches, culminated in about the year 538; but certain it is that the eighteenth verse of the seventeenth chapter of Revelation reads thus: "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." And this woman is presented as being degraded, having committed fornication with the kings of the earth, arrayed in scarlet color, decked with gold and precious stones and

pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abomination and filthiness of her fornication. The close affinity of this lewd woman with the scarlet colored beast is doubtless a figurative representation of the consolidation of church and state, which accelerated her progress in the presentation of the golden cup to the nations, from which they drank and became spiritually intoxicated. No risk is made in the claim that Rome is the only city known which has reigned over kings since the coming of Christ; and she is mystery, Babylon, etc., which is to fall. (Rev. 14:7, 8.)

Few if any biblical students will question the claim that the seventeenth chapter of Revelation, under the figure of a fallen woman with the beast, is reflective of and warrants the belief of an apostasy, or the establishment of an apostate church; which is compatible with apostolic prediction as noticed above, and that known in history as the Reformation being supportive of this thought.

THE REFORMERS.

The writer would detract nothing from the many Reformers of which history speaks; but would respectfully suggest to the reader to test the validity of all purporting to be religion, in the light radiating from the teaching of Christ and his apostles, ever bearing in mind the truth that the most potent and convincing fact as to the verity of an unbroken succession, would be the fact of those claiming to be successors of the predecessors, the apostles, treading in the footsteps by teaching the identical doctrine under the auspices of an organic form identical with the form of government Christ established; and anything short of the above fails to be a

reflection of God's given pattern, therefore is an imposition, however good the intentions of those advocating the same.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCES.

Cyprian, in A. D. 250, in referring to the fact of the apostles going to Samaria to confirm those that Philip had baptized, says:—

Which custom is also descended to us, that they who are baptized might be brought by the rules of the church, and by prayer of imposition of hands to obtain the Holy Ghost.

Again, in Epistle 72:—

It is of no purpose to lay hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit unless they receive the baptism of the church.

Augustine, of the fourth century, writes:—

Still we do what the apostles did when they laid their hands on the Samaritans and called down the Holy Ghost upon them.

Mosheim, in his history:—

After baptism they, by prayer and the laying on of hands, were solemnly recommended to the mercy of God, and dedicated to his service.—First Century, part II., chapter IV.

The attempt to establish aspersion, or sprinkling, was a retrogressive step from the scriptural mode of baptism, tending towards an apostasy. Eusebius (who is called the Father of Church History) says aspersion, or sprinkling, was applied to Novatus about A. D. 263, on this wise:—

Who, aided by the exorcists, when attacked by an obstinate disease, and being supposed at the point of death, was baptized by aspersion, in the

bed on which he lay; if, indeed, it be proper to say that one like him did receive baptism. But neither, when he recovered from disease, did he partake of other things, which the rules of the church prescribed as duty, nor was he sealed [in confirmation] by the bishop. But as he did not obtain this, how could he obtain the Holy Spirit?—Eccles. Hist., b. 6, c. 43.

The Monks of Cressy, A. D. 754, inquired:—

Is it lawful, in case of necessity occasioned by sickness, to baptize an infant by pouring water on its head, from a cup, or the hands?

To which Pope Stephen III. replied:—

Such a baptism, performed in such a case of necessity, shall be accounted valid.

In speaking of the foregoing, Basnage says:—

This is accounted the first law against immersion. The Pontiff, however, did not dispense with immersion, except in case of extreme necessity. This law, therefore, did not change the mode of dipping, in public baptisms; and it was not until the legislature in a council of Ravenna, in the year 1311, declared immersion and pouring indifferent.

The above historical items are extracts from the tract on "Baptism," published by the church, pages 8, 9.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

The reader will find the twenty-fourth chapter of Isaiah a chapter of prophecy. The fifth verse contains the following:—

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

And it is a significant fact that no other gospel ordinance has been changed but baptism, for touching the laying on of hands, apostles, prophets, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, etc., it is said they are done away, being no longer needed. Nor is it any more strange that the prophet should look through the vista of time, and by inspiration see the acts of men, in changing the ordinance of baptism, than it was for him to note the event as described by John in Revelation 18 : 3, which he so vividly describes in his twenty-ninth chapter, saying:—

They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.—V. 9.

Or that he should foretell Christ's birth hundreds of years before it came to pass, his death, etc. (See ninth and fifty-third chapters.)

The declaration of the prophet; namely, the breaking of the everlasting covenant, may possibly excite surprise, leaving the reader in a quandary as to how man could break that which is everlasting.

Let us see: Christ called and ordained his apostles, saying, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you." (John 15: 16.) The acceptance of this ordination by the apostles was, as the writer believes, tantamount to entering into a covenant with God to acquit themselves of duties attaching to the accepted positions; thus the two parties unto a covenant, which on God's part was everlasting, to culminate in eternal life if they, the second party, should keep this covenant inviolate; but the prophet saw the time when this everlasting covenant was broken by man through transgressing the law, etc. To be understood on this wise: Baptism by immersion, as we have seen,

was a part of the gospel, hence by virtue of the covenant, man by the acceptation of God's proffered ordination covenanted to preach, defend, and practice that kind of a baptism; therefore, a change or a failure to practice that baptism, and corresponding efforts to establish another form in lieu of the one God gave, was, so far as man is concerned, a violation of the everlasting covenant to that extent that man was deprived of blessings guaranteed when keeping the covenant inviolate; but with God the covenant is still unchanged, therefore everlasting in that sense. For if God shall see fit to renew that covenant with man, his promises will be identical with promises made with the apostles as above. But in the absence of evidence of a renewal, no evidence of the existence of Christ's church among men is known in view of the fact of an apostasy, which is claimed because of a failure to abide in or by God's revealed conditions, which in no way invalidate God's promises, all of which are accessible now as ever, if abiding in the doctrine of Christ.