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TERMS.

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CIRCULAR LETTER

Of the *Bethel Baptist Association*—by John Davis.

Beloved Brethren:—The subject appointed at your last anniversary for this year's circular being the *two covenants*, we therefore present the following remarks, with the hope they will elicit your careful and prayerful examination.

In its general acceptance, a covenant is a mutual agreement between two or more parties.—The Greek word *Dialtheke*, (translated covenant), may be also rendered a testament or will—in which sense, one party becomes the donor or testator, by promise, and the other the recipient of a gift; in this sense the word is sometimes used in the New Testament.

The Old Testament abounds in the history of a variety of covenants made between man and man; viz. between Abraham and Abimelech, Jacob and Laban, David and Jonathan, Solomon and Hiram, &c.

More than all, however, it is devoutly observable that God has condescended to enter into several covenants with frail man. After the flood, He made a covenant with Noah and his family; that the earth should never more be drowned by water, including other promises, and which he confirmed by the token of the bow in the clouds. Gen. 8. 21. In the year before Christ, 1897, God made the covenant of circumcision with Abraham, when he was 99 years of age. Gen. 17. 24. God in like manner made a covenant with David, that he and his family should be kings and governors of the Hebrews, until the Messiah should come from his loins as the Everlasting King. 2 Sam. 17. Ps. 89.

Many other covenants did God make with the Hebrews nationally or individually. But, whatsoever, importance may be attached to all other covenants God ever made with man, the apostle Paul appears to overlook them, in nothingness, in comparison to the glorious covenant from Mount Sinai, *written and engraven in stones*, and the yet far more glorious covenant established upon better promises, and *written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart*. Such is the apostle's allusion when he says, "these are the two covenants." Gal. 4. 24.

And now, dear brethren, the all important point for investigation, will be so to identify and contrast these two covenants, as to designate them from others, and not confound them with each other; for a mistake therein may be of eternal consequence. Because God by an apostle, has declared, the one to be *ministration of death*—the other, of *life*. 1 Cor. 3. Errors on this subject have caused schisms even in the primitive churches—especially in the Galatian church—and rent and torn asunder, christian churches ever since the apostolic age. From this source, have arisen contrary winds, which have driven its thousands of souls into quicksands and made shipwreck of their faith. To guard the church against those evils, the apostle Paul appeared to be particularly designed of God: this apostle under his inspirations, seemed to be fully alive to all the fearful consequences, that would necessarily arise in the christian church, from a misconception of the covenants. Hence, he has written the vision and made it plain; so that, by a critical and religious examination of it, together with the Old Testament revelations, we may take sufficiently accurate observations, to pass the straits in security and evade the many dangerous strands upon which many are tossed by the winds of error.

Before we expressly enter into a comparative discussion of the two leading covenants, it will be requisite to detach or dismember the covenant of grace, called by the apostle the covenant by promise, from the mass of error heaped upon this covenant by those who confound it with the covenant of circumcision. For if circumcision is a covenant of works, it is no less perilous to confound it, than the covenant of Mount Sinai, with the covenant by promise. The axiom in all legal covenants is, "Do and live, sin and die;" and if we examine the conditions of the covenant of circumcision that God made with Abraham in the year 1897, B. C. we shall find they speak the same language. "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. Gen. 17. 14. Further, the very first stipulation that God proposed to make the covenant upon, with Abraham, was, "walk before me and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee." Gal. 3. 12. Again, so far from the covenant of circumcision held forth to Abraham as a seal of the covenant by promise, (at the very time when God instituted the covenant of circumcision, and when Ishmael and other males of Abraham's house with himself were circumcised, God informed Abraham that he would establish his everlasting covenant with Isaac, which was a year before his son Isaac was born. Nor is this all. The apostle Paul, as if he designed to and all strife upon this subject, represents Agar, and Ishmael her son, who was the first circumcised son of Abraham, as allegorical of the law,

and in bondage with her children, saying, "For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son: for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. Gal. 4. Instead of circumcision proving a seal of grace to Abraham's first circumcised son, he is made an allegory of the law which is the ministration of death rather than the promise of life; and that this apostle connects and levels circumcision with the law, his language leaves no doubt—where he calls it "the yoke of bondage, testifying to every man who is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." Gal. 5. 1 to 3. Do and live, or sin and die, must therefore be the bondage of all who place themselves under the conditions of the circumcision covenant, notwithstanding they may call it the covenant of grace, or by another name. Still further, the same apostle, to add "line upon line," has furnished us with another fact whereby the covenant by promise may be distinguished from all other covenants to a mathematical certainty—where he asserts that the covenant by promise to Abraham was 430 years before the law covenant was given from Sinai. Gal. 3. 17. And hence, if we refer to the Bible chronology we may clearly determine the dates and thereby designate the three covenants; so that all who understand the rule of subtraction may make the decision, viz. In the year before Christ 1921 the covenant by promise was confirmed to Abraham. In the year B. C. 1491 the law was given from Mount Sinai.—Deduct 1491 from 1921 and the remainder left (430) is precisely the apostle's computation.—Gal. 3. 17. Moreover, the covenant of circumcision was made with Abraham in the year B. C. 1897: subtract 1491 from 1897, and 406 is left; subtract 406 from 430 leaves 24. We have therefore 24 years between the covenant by promise and the circumcision covenant. But more to confirm the calculation, we shall prove it by another rule. Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised, Gen. 17. 24. He was 75 years old when the covenant by promise was made, and he departed out of Haran. Gen. 12. 4. The difference between 75 and 99 leaves the same number of years (24). The two rules of course produce the like result. Another fact worthy of notice. Whenever the apostle makes allusions to the covenant by promise, he quotes not the language of the covenant of 1897 but of 1921. As, "in these shall all nations be blessed." Gal. 3. 9.

The covenant of 1921 B. C. is almost universally designated, by this apostle, by the word promise, viz. For if the inheritance be of the law it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Gal. 3. 18. Heirs according to promise. Gal. 3. 29. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. Gal. 4. 23. &c. This is not applicable in letter or spirit to the covenant of 1897; but when this is referred to, it is called by its proper name, the covenant of circumcision. Acts 7. 8.

Having now detached the decayed rubbish of circumcision, wanted by some theologians to be attached to the new and most glorious covenant of grace, we proceed to submit some general remarks upon the two distinct covenants; and when we allude to the Sinai covenant, let it be understood that we associate with it the legal principles of the circumcision covenant, so far as Do and live, sin and die, is the condition.

Be it remembered, the apostle Paul discriminates the two covenants by the terms old and new and quotes Jer. 31. 33. Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt: because they continued not in my covenant and I regarded them not. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. Heb. 8. 9-11. This covenant is not, however, called new because of its date, it is already proved to be 430 years older than the Sinai covenant. It is called new because of the accomplishment of its promises being now written in fleshy tables of the heart, by the spirit of the living God, as promised. In that he saith a new covenant, he hath made the first old.—Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. Heb. 8. 13. This is old because circumcision and all the ceremonial parts of the law are nailed to the cross. The latter on tables of stone is waxed old: because the law is written in the heart, by the love of God being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.—This law of love is not, do and live, but live and do. Not to be circumcised or baptized to live, or to have Abraham or a believer to our father, to live. But, "if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3. 29. The law in its spirituality is not done away, or made void, by the new covenant; but established by being written in the heart.—As our Lord said to the circumcised Jews—If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham, John 8. 39.

Another consideration worthy attention relative to the two covenants—God for some wise purpose appointed a mediator under each covenant. Moses was called a mediator of the covenant from Sinai, when the apostle Paul said, The law was ordained by angels in the hands of a mediator. Gal. 3. 19. And the same apostle said, Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant. Heb. 12. 24. And further said this apostle, Jesus is Mediator of a better covenant which was established upon better promises. For if the first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. Heb. 8. 6 and 7. We might here dwell at great length on the superior glory of the second covenant, and the Mediator of the New Testament, as described in 2. Cor. 3. and Heb. 9 and 10; but will conclude by a few remarks upon the surety of the second covenant. For the apostle says, Jesus was made a

surety of a better testament. Heb. 7. 22. Hence, Jesus has become surety of the second covenant; and God has confirmed it by an oath. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, &c. Heb. 6. 17 and 18.

Having therefore, brethren, begun to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil.—Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised.) Heb. 10. 20-23. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. Ver. 36. For Abraham, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. Heb. 6. 15.

From Mr. McKoy's account of Baptist Missions within the Indian Territory.

NEW SYSTEM OF WRITING.

To each Indian language, and to each dialect of language, belong peculiar sounds, which cannot be obtained by the use of the English alphabet. To designate syllables which could not be spelled, or sounds which could not be obtained by the ordinary use of letters, writers who would write intelligibly, have been compelled to introduce arbitrary characters, each according to his fancy. It can easily be perceived, that serious inconveniences attend this course of things.

Mr. Guess, a Cherokee, had discovered, that the language of his tribe, could be written with about eighty syllabic characters. Guess' plan was tried in relation to some other languages, and found to be inapplicable, because characters would be multiplied beyond the bounds of convenience.

To remedy the evils which attended the ordinary methods of writing Indian, and to avoid the complexity attending the universal application of Guess' system, the idea suggested itself to Mr. Jotam Meeker, then a missionary at the Sault de St. Marie, of using characters to designate, not syllables, but certain positions of the organs of speech. By the addition of this third principle, so much of the two former, as were apparently necessary, he discovered that much would be gained.

Subsequently, Mr. Meeker became located at the Shawanoe mission house, where, by himself and fellow missionaries, the scheme which was first thought of for the purpose of supplying defects in other modes of writing, was carried out and successfully applied.

In the New System, spelling is rendered entirely unnecessary; and the tedious process is avoided of familiarizing the memory with certain names of characters, [letters] and then recollecting that after combining these names, an arbitrary sound [syllable] must be uttered. This sound, unmeaning in itself, must be borne in mind, until by a similar process, a second, third, or fourth be obtained; and then these arbitrary sounds must be combined to make a word. With an unlettered Indian, whose thoughts have never been disciplined upon any matter, the study of orthography is exceedingly irksome, especially in a language which he does not understand.—Nothing can be further from his habits, than to strain his thoughts to acquire a knowledge of something like the art of *causing a paper to talk*, when he is unprepared to appreciate the result.

On the new system, every sound is indicated by a character, [letter] which in Indian languages, are usually about eight or ten, the greater part of which, but not all, are vowel sounds.—The other characters [letters] merely indicate the position of the organs of speech, preceding or following these sounds, by which the beginning or ending of sounds are modified. This modification, as we easily perceive, except in simple vowel sounds, is necessary to the articulation of a syllable.

Not more than twenty-three characters have yet been found necessary in writing any Indian language. A knowledge of the use of these can be acquired by the learner in as short a time, as he can learn the name of the letters of the English alphabet. As soon as he has learned the use of the characters, he is capable of reading; because, by placing the organs of speech, as indicated by the characters severally as they occur, and uttering a sound, as is in like manner denoted by a character, he necessarily expresses a word. Speech consists alone of this simple process. It is the excellence of the new system, that it is the natural painting of speech on paper, by characters which never vary their uses, unincumbered by every thing complex in the art of reading.

The common English types are used, to save the expense of founding others; and chiefly, because one who knows the use of those letters can learn to read with them on the New System, with the greatest facility.

A person capable of reading any language, written upon the principles of orthography, can, in the course of an hour, learn to read a book in any Indian language, so as to be well understood by one acquainted with that language: therefore, writings on the new system, can be used by all who are capable of reading any book. An Indian who never knew the use of a letter, can learn to read his own language in the course of a few days; that is, he can learn to read in the same time, that it would require him to learn the names of from sixteen to twenty-three letters of the English alphabet. Many instances have oc-

*For further evidence of the utility of the New System, as demonstrated by its application, the reader is referred to those articles under the general head of "Missions," which relate to the Shawanoe, Delaware, and Puttawatomie.

curring, in which adult Indians, ignorant of letters, have learned to read their own language upon this system, by merely occasionally falling in company with some of their people who had learned to read, and receiving a little instruction from them.

In the development of the New System, is recognized the dawn of brightening days for the obscure aborigines; and animating prospects rapidly widening, commensurate with their country and their condition. By it, some of the more formidable obstacles to Indian reform, are, in a great measure, obviated. With the aid of an interpreter, one may write in a language which he does not understand. He may write a portion of scripture, a religious tract, or other useful writing; and can teach the natives to read and to write it also. The facility with which a knowledge of reading is acquired, would enable a teacher, who could mingle with a tribe even in their rudest condition, to introduce the art of reading, and circulate his tracts. For example, if the two missionaries, who have mingled with the Pawnees for about two years past; and who have accompanied them in their hunting migrations, spoken of on page 22, had, previous to their setting out, furnished themselves with a few thousand tracts, hundreds of those half-saved Pawnees, might at this time have been capable of reading them. By the introduction of such tracts, those missionaries would not have been hindered, but would have been aided in the acquisition of the Pawnee language. Here would have been an immediate usefulness. While they were preparing themselves for greater usefulness in future, they would have been sowing precious seeds, and even while sowing, would have been reaping some fruit of their labors. Instead of this, the Pawnees are as they were; and the chief that has been accomplished by the assiduous efforts, and noble self-denial of those worthy brethren, is the knowledge which they have acquired of Indian language and habits.

Could there be found a competent number of devoted Christians, as zealous for the salvation of the Indians, as traders are for their peltries and furs, bidding defiance to hunger and fatigue, to the perpetual snows of the Rocky Mountains, or the frosts of the higher latitudes, and penetrating to the remotest hordes of these miserable mortals; the arts of reading and writing could be rapidly introduced among every tribe in the vast wilderness which they inhabit. Even the most rude could, in a few days, as they would occasionally rest from pursuing the game, or from the fatigue of digging roots for subsistence, learn to read in their "own language, in which they were born, the wonderful works of God." What astonishing facilities would be afforded to such as in future would do these people good, by the previous introduction of the arts of reading and writing! To give an outline of the happy results which might be anticipated from such a course, would require more than another number of our pamphlet; to the reader, common sense, and common observation can tell the story, the interest of which, could only be equalled by its length.

For twenty years, we have been required by our situation to notice the "signs of the times" in relation to this afflicted race of men, and notwithstanding the calamities under which they have been suffering, like Elijah's servant, we have fancied that we saw the hand of deliverance, rising even out of the great "deep" of their afflictions. Among the indications of Divine Providence, that He who dwells in Heaven "had seen their afflictions and come down for their deliverance," the invention of the New System of writing is, to us, not the least remarkable.

The New System is applicable to any language, but more advantageously to some than to others. It is hoped that through the Baptist Board of Missions, and other missionary societies, such hints will reach missionaries in other countries, who may happen to labor among people destitute of a written language, as will induce them to make an experiment of this system.

We also solicit for it the serious consideration of such as have charge of the instruction of the deaf and dumb, and of the blind.

From the Baptist Magazine. BURMAH.

HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE AVA STATION.

The following notices were prepared by the missionaries at Ava, in September, 1836, and although they give some particulars anticipated by previous accounts, will, we doubt not, be interesting to our readers. We omit a few paragraphs relative to the establishment &c. of the station, full details of the same having been published from Mr. Malcom's journal, at pp. 159-9 of this vol.

General labors of the Missionaries.

From the commencement of this station, every effort has been frank and open, as if we had been laboring in the British provinces. As soon as a house was obtained, religious services were conducted twice every Sabbath, and every evening at candlelight during the week, either by preaching a sermon, or reading and explaining the scriptures, with prayer. The doors were open to all who choose to come in, and more or less always attended. During the day the verandah was occupied, either by the missionary or one of the assistants, and conversation carried on with the visitors; and tracts were given to those who wished to read. The two native assistants spent most of their time in travelling about preaching in the zayats, within, and outside of the city. After two or three months, two places became prominent stands for preaching; one on the great road leading to Amcrapuz, and the other on the south side of the city. In both these places, great numbers heard more or less of the gospel, and many tracts were distributed. On one occasion, a tract was made to distribute tracts and books at a cyclone religious festival, and in two days between 5

*When we speak about preaching in the verandah and in the zayats, we do mean what is considered preaching in America, that is, to sermonize, but what was probably considered preaching in the days of the Apostles, viz. teaching, reading, explaining, and disputing.

and 10,000 were put in circulation; but some of them being taken to the quays, and being informed of the numbers given away, affected to be angry, which made some difficulty, the particulars of which are already known to the Board. By these means, many tracts and portions of the Scriptures have gone into the surrounding country.

Near the close of the first year, when the two assistants left, all efforts out of doors, except what little was done by the two Ava Christians, were necessarily suspended. However, the school continued, and the labors of the house were sustained as far as one individual with poor health was able to sustain them. This state of things continued till September last, when another missionary and his family arrived. Since then our operations have been somewhat enlarged. We have been repeatedly employed in conducting our regular meetings with the native brethren in reading, talking, and distributing tracts in the verandah; attending to inquirers, and others who call either for medicine or to read and converse—and teaching a Burman and English School. Excursions also have occasionally been made in the city and country, and one tour to Rangoon.

Number of Bibles and Tracts distributed—Method of distribution.

During the first three years, no exact record was kept of the number of books and tracts distributed; but, on the first of June we took an account of all we had on hand. They were as follows:—1st and 2d vol. of the Old Testament 109—New Testament 132—unbound portions of the Scriptures, including the Psalms, Gospels of Luke and John, Epistles, Digest, &c. 13067—Religious tracts (six kinds) 25622—Tracts on Geography, Astronomy and Chronology, 767. Of these were given away during the last three months, Old Testament 24—New do. 23—unbound portions of the Scriptures 2457—Religious Tracts 5267—Scientific do. 500. We have also distributed portions of the Scriptures and tracts in Bengalee and Chinese, and still have a few more on hand. Expecting our present stock will be nearly or quite exhausted by the first of December, we have ordered from Masselin 500 copies of the New Testament, and the same of the Old; and 50,000 tracts and portions of the Scriptures; also a box of Bengalee, and a box of Chinese tracts from Calcutta.

In the distribution of books and tracts, we have labored to have the people understand, that we place a high value upon them, and therefore do not scatter them indiscriminately, without a reference to the use that may be made of them. Notwithstanding all our care, we know that many of our tracts and books are torn up.

Great numbers of the priests, especially of the younger class, frequently call on us. We have adopted the plan of giving the catechism, or some small tract to them in the first place; and when they call again and are able to answer questions readily on what they have read, they receive something larger. So far we have found the plan to work well; for, although we know only approximately of them becoming apparently serious, yet they are getting correct ideas of God, and of his son Jesus Christ, and we hope this knowledge will ultimately lead them to lay hold on eternal life.

Having, as yet, been able to procure but a small number of the Old and New Testaments, we have only supplied the members of the church, and occasionally given one to a promising inquirer. To people in the city, we are not in the habit of giving more than one book at a time, as they can call again; but when intelligent persons call on us from the country and distant towns, we supply them liberally. Particular pains have been taken to supply females and children who are able to read, with some tract as suitable as we have. Intelligent females occasionally call on us and spend some time in conversation, and ask for books. In giving away books, we accompany them, as far as possible, with religious instruction.

School—Medical Practice.

A school has been in operation ever since October, 1833, with the exception of a short time when we were too ill to attend to much of any thing. The number of scholars who have been with us, and have left, is twenty-three—boys fifteen, girls eight. All were taught Burman except three, who were instructed in English. Of these, five girls and three boys remained about a year and a half, and the attendance of the rest would average from six to nine months. They were taught to read and write, and received instruction in geography, arithmetic, and astronomy. All attended worship, and were daily instructed in the Catechism and portions of the Scriptures. The number now in school is 15; of these two are girls, the rest are boys and young men, except one who is an elderly man,—five are studying Burman and English, seven Burman only, and six English. Three of the young men are members of the church, and contemplate going to the Theological Seminary at Ta-coy in the course of the year; another young man who has a mind capable of improvement, but whose advantages have been small, is now learning to read, and we trust he will follow the others hereafter and prepare himself to become useful. The elderly man mentioned, is the last one baptized here, and being a person of promise, we have encouraged him to come and spend his time in studying the word of God.

During the past year we have received a variety of articles for schools from America, which we have found exceedingly useful.

The scholars are in school from four to five hours, and have exercises daily in reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, and singing. Ko Lha instructs them in reading and writing Bur-

*This is done by a giddy thoughtless class, such as are to be found in Christian countries, as well as heathen, who, for want of something to do, voluntarily run into mischief, and encourage each other in wickedness. Some, before their characters become well known to us, succeed in getting from us several tracts, for no other purpose than to tear them up. They have various uses for them.

The Burman, priest and people, are as much addicted to lying as the ancient Cretans were. It may not be so constantly practiced among the better class, because the occasions for it are not so frequent. The class, mentioned above, will use you in the face with all the audacity imaginable, and tell you they were never at your house before, and had never read your books, and at the same time you are certain that they have been often.

But here we are reminded of the Apostle's injunction, "Consider Him that endured such contradictions of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."