

**"THESE LITTLE ONES": WHAT GOD
HAS COMMANDED TOUCHING THEIR
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, AND WHAT
HE HAS GRACIOUSLY PROMISED
CONCERNING THEIR SALVATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649382255

"These little ones": what God has commanded touching their church membership, and what he has graciously promised concerning their salvation by William Scribner

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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WILLIAM SCRIBNER

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"THESE LITTLE ONES."

WHAT GOD HAS COMMANDED TOUCHING THEIR
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP, AND WHAT HE HAS
GRACIOUSLY PROMISED CONCERN-
ING THEIR SALVATION.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM SCRIBNER,

Author of

"PRAY FOR YOUR CHILDREN," "PRAY FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT."

PHILADELPHIA :
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
134 CHESTNUT STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1878, by
THE TRUSTEES OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

WESTCOTT & THOMSON,
Stereotypers and Electrotypers, Philada.

Dedication.

TO

THE MEMORY

OF

MY SAINTED BROTHER,

CHARLES SCRIBNER,

NO LESS TENDERLY BELOVED NOW

THAN WHEN

HE WAS PRESENT WITH US.

PREFACE.

WITHIN the last twenty years the mind of our ministers and people has been much exercised on the subject of the church relations of the children of the covenant, and it has received no little attention. That the general and growing attention given to the subject has resulted in great good no one can question.

It will doubtless, however, be freely admitted that we still see evidences and signs of the forgetfulness, the ignoring or the disowning of infant church membership and of God's precious covenant-promise to parents in relation to their children. Multitudes who would by no means surrender infant baptism are unable to say exactly why the infants of church members are baptized. Sabbath-school children whose parents are professors of religion hear never a word from their superin-

tendents and teachers by way of instructing them concerning their covenant relations and covenant duties. Thousands of professors, and we know not how many pastors, are too well satisfied to have Sabbath-school teachers do the whole work of religiously instructing the children of the Church. Books are written on the conversion of children in which the subject does not have even the slightest mention. Committees consisting of ministers are often appointed by presbyteries to visit the churches within their bounds in order to warm up these cold churches, without receiving from the presbyteries any instruction to present the subject of the relation of the baptized children to the church, and to warn parents not to neglect covenant promises and covenant training and education. Conventions of elders and other convocations are held to consider how revivals may be brought on, in which not a word is breathed as to the need or the methods of arousing churches and Christians on this subject. And when the children of professors become communicants, it is frequently the case that the people have

no other idea than that these children "join the church" just as adults join it when they are baptized. It is believed, therefore, that the necessity for the continued discussion of this subject is not yet superseded.

The subject handled in the first chapter is the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son in reference to the salvation of Christ's people, since it is this which lays the foundation of the covenant of grace, of which God and his people are the parties, and which covenant, when it is *externally* and *visibly* enacted, includes their children.

Our sole argument for the church membership of the children of professing Christians is the one derived from the fact that the children of God's people were by divine command included in the Church under the old dispensation. All the Jews of the old dispensation were professors of the true religion and constituted the visible Church, considered as a spiritual society, and yet their children were included in it by God's command. This is the broad and enduring basis of infant church membership.