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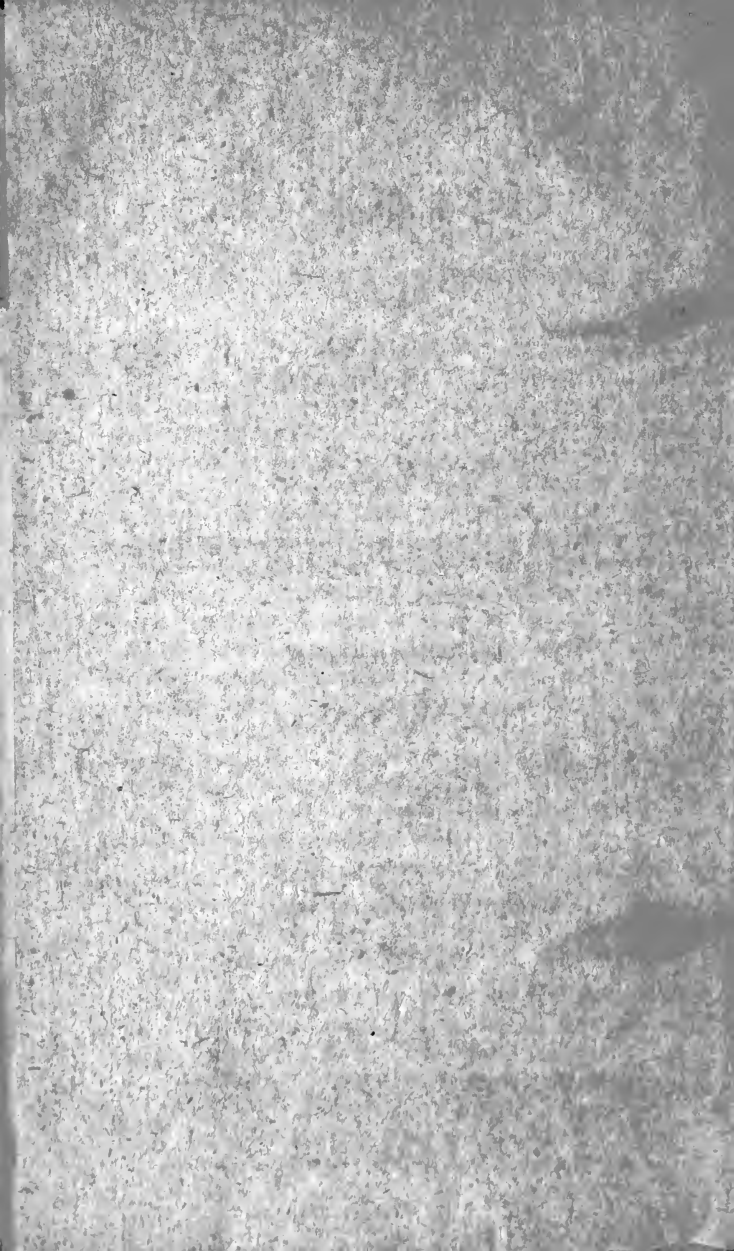
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A

CONFERENCE

BETWEEN

TWO MEN

THAT HAD DOUBTS ABOUT

INFANT-BAPTISM.

BY W. WALL,

AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF INFANT-BAPTISM, AND VICAR OF
SHOREHAM IN KENT.

THE TENTH EDITION.

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1812.

TO THE
R E A D E R.

SINCE the Time that I published a Book, called The History of INFANT-BAPTISM, containing many Quotations of the Ancients on that Subject, which made the Book too large for poor People to buy, or to read; I have been advised by some Friends, to whom I owe a Deference, to draw up for the Use of the Poor, a short Summary of the Evidences therein given (making References to the larger Book) and of the Proofs and Reasons from Scripture, relating to that Practice. I have not found it very feasible to bring a Controversy into so narrow a Compass: and am forced, for Brevity's sake, to refer to my own Book, not only for what I have there said myself, but also for what I have there quoted from the Fathers and others. Which would not be very modest, but that I could more readily and briefly refer to that, and you also may more readily have recourse to that, than to the Fathers Works. You will find there their own Words at large, and the Book and Chapter whence they are copied. It is mentioned in the References only by this Word Hist.

And in this Conference, those that deny Infant-Baptism, are named (not Anabaptists, which Name they disown; but) Antipædobaptists: and those that practise Infant-Baptism, are named Pædobaptists.

In the Conference P. represents one that has formerly had Doubts about Infant-Baptism, but is now satisfied: and A. one that has now such Doubts.

I pray God to keep us all in the Way of Truth and Unity.

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CONFERENCE, &c.

P. I AM sorry to hear, that since I left your country; your Neighbour *John N.* has forsaken the church, and is turned an *Anabaptist*. I took him for a very honest man: and he was a constant keeper of the church and communion, and very studious in the scriptures.

A. He is so; a very honest man. And for his forsaking the church I am as sorry as you: and I and some others have had conferences with him: on that subject; and he has studied the point so well, that he has some regret of conscience for the sin of schism, and will, I believe, return to the communion of the church, provided he may be admitted holding that opinion. But for his opinion against Infant-Baptism, I cannot be sorry, for I am of that opinion myself.

P. I crave your pardon; it is more than I knew. You were not accounted of that opinion, in my time: And I remember that your children were christened.

A.

A. I

A. I was not then of that opinion so absolutely as I am now. But I had even then doubts of the lawfulness of Infant-Baptism; which have so far increased since, that they have turned the scale with me: And I intend, God willing, to advise my children (when they are capable) to receive baptism in the due way, and to receive it so myself; and had before this time, but that I find some difficulty in getting one to baptise me.

P. I thought they had been very forward to do that office to any one that is of their opinion?

A. Yes: to one that is of their opinion in all things. But I, though of their opinion for adult baptism, yet have, I thank God, been made thoroughly sensible of the sin of division (*a*), separation, and renouncing communion with an established church, though holding some errors, provided they be not such as do avert the foundation of christian faith; and therefore am desirous to continue in communion: and they do not much care for baptizing such an one. And indeed I was not very inclinable to receive it at their hands, because of their schism; but had rather have received it from some minister of the church, of whose ordination to the ministry I am much better satisfied, but I find that cannot be obtained.

P. Will not the minister of the church baptize you by dipping, if desired?

(*a*) *Hist.* Part II. Ch. xi. § 1—5.

A. Yes,

A. Yes, very willingly, and the rubrick (b) prescribes it in the first place; if the person be willing to venture his health, which I am very willing to do; being satisfied that going into the water has more of fright than hurt in it. But they will refuse it to me, because they reckon my baptism received in infancy, to be a baptism rightly administered; and consequently, that the baptising me now, would be proper *Anabaptism*: which both sides hold to be an unfitting thing. I know those that have asked them, and they would not give it them: and indeed by their principle cannot. So that it were better for me, if I had had antipædobaptist parents; for then the ministers would willingly have baptized me now.

P. What do you think to do in this case?

A. I hear that there are in some parts of *England* antipædobaptists that are more for a general communion of all saints; and that do either continue in the communion of the established church themselves, or at least will baptize a man that does: and that do not require, that when one renounces the devil and wickedness, one must also renounce all the catholic church except themselves. And I think to find out some such man; for I would willingly so receive my baptism, as to keep my old creed, and own (c) the *catholic church*, and the *communion of Saints*; and be baptized into the *christian church*, as such, and not into any

(b) Part II. Ch. ix. § 2.
Chap. ix. § 10. p. 333.

(c) *Hist.* Part II.

particular sect. I want such a man as Mr. *Tombs* was.

P. I do the more heartily pity your case, because I have had great doubts about Infant-Baptism myself, and continued under them for some years, and during all that time felt great perplexity of conscience. And I indeed was like to fall away farther than you are like to do; for I should have gone totally over to them, and should not only have forsaken the church, but should have been probably by this time a great hater of it, and railed against it, as many of them do. For as for the way that you take, it would not have come into my mind: it is, you know, more spoken against than either of the other. You will be called a Jack on both sides, a halter between two opinions.

A. I do not halt between two opinions; but do, by a persuasion that is now firmly settled, hold these two things: *1st*, That the doctrine of Infant-Baptism is an error. *2dly*, That one is not to separate from a church merely for some error held, or erroneous practice used by them; provided this error be not such as does *avert the foundation*. And this is owned in the *confession of faith of one hundred churches of anti-pædobaptists*, printed at London, 1699. And (*d*) it appears also by plain consequences from what they there say (*e*), that they themselves do not take this error to be such.

(*d*) Chap. xxvi, xxvii.

(*e*) In th: Preface.

P. What! do those hundred churches live then in communion with the church of *England*? or do they separate from it, as all the antipædobaptists about us, you see, do?

A. That I do not know. But by their own principles they ought to hold communion, if the church would admit them.

P. What do you do when in the time of public service an infant is baptized? You cannot join in those prayers.

A. Not in all of them. That (f) God would bless the infant, and that (in case he live to maturity) God would make him a good man, I pray with the rest. To the other prayers in that form of baptizing I give no *amen*: but I read in the mean while some chapter in the Bible.

P. By this rule, not only the *Antipædobaptists*, but much more the *presbyterians*, *independents*, &c. ought to come to church, though they hold their particular opinions. And by the same rule, put the case that the church of *England* should declare for your opinion; of antipædobaptism, and establish it by vote in convocation, and by law; I and others that believe Infant Baptism to be the right way, ought not even in that case to forsake her communion: but only getting our own children baptized, ought in other things to hold communion (g).

(f) *Hist.* Part II. Chap. xi. § 7. *it.* § 4.

(g) *Hist.*

Part II. Chap. xi. § 6.

6) *A Conference between two Men*

A. I do conceive it clear from Scripture, that both these your consequences are true; provided you and they may be admitted without declaring any assent and consent contrary to your own opinions. - And the church of England does not require any such (*b*) assent and consent in order to lay communion. And it is plain also from scripture, that such communion ought to be constant; and that the man so joining ought to avoid all that cause divisions, Rom. xvi. 17. (that is, renounce communion with them) though those dividers may hold opinions which he thinks to be truer in some particular matters. And in a word, that all christians in the world that hold the same fundamentals, ought to make one church, though differing in lesser opinions; and that the sin, the mischief, and danger to the souls of men, that divide into those many sects and parties among us, does (for the most of them) consist not so much in the opinions themselves, as in their dividing and separating for them.

P. This way of yours, if practicable, would cure at once, God knows, how many mischiefs. But you see the world is not of your sentiment: for as soon as they fall into any particular opinion in religion, they set up a separate church for it.

A. Not all the world. It is only in *England* and *Holland* where this humour does so generally prevail. In other parts of Christendom

(*b*) *Hist.* Part II. Chap. xi. § 2.

they (though holding different opinions, yet) do account schism from them a great wickedness, and a great mischief. And, to shew you they are in the right in thinking so, I will (because you seem not to have considered this matter so well as some others) refer you to some plain places of scripture, which if you please now to peruse, I will be silent the while. See what our Saviour himself says, *John* x. 16. *John* xvii. 11. And what the primitive christians practised, *Acts* ii. 46. and iv. 32. And what *St. Paul* says, *1 Cor.* i. 10, 11, 12. and 2, 3, 4, also the whole twelfth chapter: *Eph.* ii. 18, &c. to the end. Where the Jewish and Gentile christians are shewed to be *one body, one household, one temple fully framed together*: and yet these were of different opinions in several matters. Likewise chap. iii. 6. iv. 1 to 13. *Phil.* ii. 1, 2, where he uses the most solemn adjurations to this purpose. But I would more especially recommend to you the reading of *Gal.* v. 20, 21. *Phil.* iii. 15, 16, The fourteenth chapter to the *Romans*, and part of the fifteenth, to *verse* 7. and also *Rom.* xv. 17.—Have you read them?

P. Yes, I have: and I thank you for directing me to them. For though there is none of them but what I had read before, yet I had not minded how fully applicable they are to this purpose.

A. Are they not plain, full and earnest? Do you find any of the controverted points to be determined by scripture in words nigh so

plain or pathetic? Whatever disputes be raised, whether such or such a point be a fundamental, there can be no doubt but this is one of the most fundamental of all. You see in that of *Gal. v.* where *St Paul* gives a roll or catalogue of such sins as shall certainly exclude men from heaven, that he reckons *seditions and heresies* among them. And those are the words by which he commonly denotes parties, factions, divisions and schisms in the church; as appears by comparing *1 Cor. xi. 18, 19.* and several other places.

P. I observe some of these places to require that we should be *like-minded, of the same mind, mind the same things, &c.* Do not these mean that we must be all of one opinion: which is the thing we find to be impossible?

A. I have read a book of bishop *Stillingfleet's*, called the *Unreasonableness of Separation*; which shews (i) that the original words in those places do signify no other than what we say in English; *Unanimous.* And men may be unanimous in the joint-worship of God, though they be not of the same mind in all disputable things. And he also plainly shews there, that that command of *St. Paul, Phil. iii. 15, 16.* is to be applied so, namely, that if we differ about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of some particular practices, it is to be hoped that God will in time bring us to a right and uniform understanding of them: but that in

(i) *Hist.* Part II. 17, 18, 19.

the mean time we should, in the things *whereunto we have attained*, or wherein we have agreed, worship God with a joint rule of worship. But this is more fully and plainly commanded by *St. Paul* in that other place, *Rom.* chap. xiv. and xv. to *verse* 8. where giving rules to those that differed in opinions, he orders them not to judge or despise one another for them; but to *receive one another*; meaning to Christian communion and brotherhood, as the scope of the place shews.

P. That place is indeed full to this purpose. And the command he gives with such earnestness, *Rom.* xvi. 17. to *avoid those that cause divisions*, is a plain proof that we ought not only to beware that we do not ourselves make any division, but also to avoid those that do. But some say baptism is a fundamental; and therefore that they that differ about it cannot be of one communion.

A. That baptism is a fundamental, I am inclined to be of their opinion: It is so plainly commanded in scripture, and so much stress laid on it; which makes me amazed at the *Quakers*, and some of the *Socinians*, that call themselves christians, while they reject it. But the parties we speak of do both of them own baptism: They differ only about the age or manner of receiving it.

P. Well. Upon the whole matter, I am sensible what thanks I owe to God for restraining me from the error of antipædobaptism, which would in my case have been attended with the

fin of schism; which is, I see, ten times worse than the error itself.

A. I shall be obliged to you, if you will let me know the grounds upon which you overcame the inclination to that which you call *an error*, but I think is the *truth*: For you say you were once inclined to it. Were it not that you seem a serious man, I should be afraid that you overcame it as people use to overcome any good motion of conscience, namely, by stifling the conviction you had.

P. Not so: but I had certainly yielded myself up to it, if I had not consulted some of more understanding than myself, and particularly Mr. B. the minister of the parish I live in. And I would crave leave to ask you, whether you have taken the same course; that is, whether you did propose to him that has the cure of your soul, or some other minister, your doubts about your baptism received in infancy, before you came to this resolution of renouncing it?

A. I confess I have not.

P. How then can you acquit this course of yours from being rash and precipitate, in a matter of so great moment? Those men, who having doubts concerning any practice, or any doctrine received in the church, do use all means that are in their power for clearing of the truth: if they be yet at last mistaken in judging; and the error do, after their best endeavours for information, appear to them to be the truth; will, as we have reason to hope,

hope, obtain an easy pardon of God for their mistake. But it seems plainly to be a sin of presumption in any of us to alter, on our own heads, a practice so universally received in Christ's church, without so much as consulting those that are *over us in the Lord*, to see whether they can give any satisfaction to our objections. You would not do so with a title of land conveyed to you in your infancy: if you thought you had discovered any flaw in your old title, you would consult a lawyer before you threw it up to seek for a new one. If I did not otherwise perceive you to be a conscientious man, and conversant in the scriptures, I should question whether you had learned those first christian lessons of humility and modesty, which teach us *not to be wise in our own conceits*. This duty of hearing and regarding our spiritual guides and pastors, is enjoined in texts of scripture as plain and express as those you recommended to me, *Ephes. iv. 11, 12, 13, 14.* where it is shewn to be necessary for us, in order to our preservation from being *tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of new doctrine.* Also *1 Thess. iv. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 17. Malachi ii. 7.* and many other such places. I am sure it is that without which I should have been undone.

A. What I said before against divisions, may satisfy you that I am no despiser of the church or the ministers thereof. But I have read many of the books written *for* as well as those *against* infant-baptism. Most of the former are written

by ministers: and it is in their books that we expect the best of their reasons and proofs.

P. I had done the same: but I find that without the other, is not nigh so useful. A living guide at hand, to explain things that are obscure, answer any emergent objection, inforce and clear an argument where it seems deficient, &c. is a help greater than one would think. A man that can read a good physic-book, may think himself able to prescribe medicines to himself out of it: but he commonly makes mad work of it, if he goes about it. Besides that, in this case of spiritual direction, these are the men whom God has appointed to watch for our souls, as they that must give account: and he is most likely to give a blessing to his own means.

A. Did you find Mr. B. willing to discourse calmly and friendly with you? I have heard that they generally are apt to despise a man that comes with these scruples; and rather to chide, deride, and perhaps hate him; than patiently hear his reasons, and take pains to satisfy him.

P. I have heard the same. But I found by experience that there is nothing more contrary to truth than that insinuation; which seems to have been raised on purpose to obstruct the fruit of their ministry. They do on the contrary own that this is one of their proper businesses, and that one of the greatest discouragements they meet with, is to find that people have so little regard for their advice and assistance.

ance, as not to fend for them when they are sick, consult them when they are in any doubt, &c. When I had, in discourse with any Antipædobaptists, met with any new argument or objection that did puzzle me, and came to him with it; he did not only patiently give me the hearing, but also shewed an unwillingness to part with me, until he had given full satisfaction to my mind: or, if the case required, he would shew me some book to read at my leisure, where that matter was more fully cleared. In a word, as I have occasion to love him better, so I am satisfied that he loves me better than he did before I gave him that trouble.

A. I may then perhaps take your advice, and discourse with our minister, or some other before I fully resolve. But in the mean time, I desire you to let me know what were the chief reasons by which Mr. B. satisfied you.

P. It was the work of several conferences, reading of books and places of scripture, to which he referred me. And you cannot think that the substance of all that can be given in this half hour, without great disadvantage to the force of the argument.

A. I shall make allowance for that. Only tell me the chief heads of matters. I will consider, confer, and read books about them at my leisure.

P. He first advised me (seeing I had already read and thought much of that matter) that I would let him know which of the reasons and objections

objections brought by the Antipædobaptists I could answer myself. For they bring many arguments, some of more weight, some of less, and some of none at all.

A. This was a good method, both to shorten the dispute, and make it more distinct and clear.

P. I told him; That

First, I did already understand that in the text of St. *Matt.* xxviii. 19. (which is the chief account of Christ's commission to baptize the nations) *Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them.* The word which is translated, *teach*, does not properly signify (*k*) *teach*, but *make disciples*; or *enter disciples*: or (to express it in one word, as our Saviour does) *disciple all the nations*, or *profelyte to me all the nations, baptizing them.*

A. Well; That is granted by all the understanding men of our opinion.

P. *Secondly*, That whereas in the text of St. *John* iii. 5. *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*; some Antipædobaptists do catch hold of the word *man* (*l*) there, and say, it must be a man grown, and not a child; I understood that to be a mistake, proceeding from ignorance of the original word: and that our Saviour's own word is such as signifies, *any one*, or *any person*, man, woman, or child.

A. But was not this to yield the whole matter at once? for if no person, man, woman,

(*k*) *Hist.* Part II. Chap. x. § 3. p. 377.

(*l*) *Ibid.*

Part II. Chap. vi. § 1.

or child, can in God's ordinary way enter the kingdom of God without baptism; is not this a proof that children, as well as grown men, must be baptized?

P. I do think so now; that this text is enough to carry the whole dispute before it.

But I thought then that though the words be general, yet they must interpret them with a limitation to such subjects as are capable of the thing spoken of: and I could not then conceive that a child, though he might be born of water, could be said to be born of the spirit. And besides; I questioned whether by that phrase [*born of water and of the spirit*] was meant baptism at all: or whether it were only an allegorical phrase, denoting by the word *water*, only the internal cleansing or sanctification of the heart (*m*). But these things he cleared to me afterward.

Another thing which I owned of myself, was, That I was satisfied that a child is not incapable of being entered into a covenant with God. For this was the express order of God himself; *Deut. xxix. 10, 11, 12. You stand this day all of you before the Lord: your captains, &c. your little ones, &c. that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath.* And that they might and did receive in their infancy an outward sacrament, namely, the sacrament of circumcision, as a seal of this covenant, is also plain and confessed. So that I myself was able to

(*m*) *Hist. Patt II. Chap. x. § 3. page 380.*

see the weakness of all those arguments in the books of the Antipœdobaptists, which represent an infant's being entered into any covenant at all with God, as an absurd or ridiculous thing; and that I accounted all such their sayings as make a mock at this, (because the child has no sense) to be very profane; as casting a reproach on the wisdom and former conduct of God himself in appointing circumcision to children eight days old. Moreover, whereas, some of them say, That this covenant which the little ones were entered into, and which was sealed to them by circumcision, was only a carnal covenant, to give them the land of *Canaan*, and to engage them in some carnal ordinances, and contained no spiritual privilege or engagement in it; I could see myself the falshood of that pretence. For in *Gen. xvii.* where circumcision to the infants is instituted, the style of the covenant is; *Walk before me and be thou perfect.* And on God's part, not only to give them the land of *Canaan*, but thus; *To be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee,* ver. 7. And so likewise in the aforesaid place of *Deut. xxix.* (where the little ones are entered) *That he may be a God unto thee.* And in *Chap. xxx.* (which is one continued recital of the terms of the covenant then entered). *And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart; and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, &c.* v. 6. And on the man's part, v. 16. *To love the Lord, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments,*

ments, &c.—These surely are spiritual things, and what our Saviour calls the first and great commandment.

And as for the covenant of the ten commandments in *Horeb*, I perceived that it was made with the infants as well as others. For forty years after (when all (n) that were twenty years old at the giving the law were dead in the wilderness) *Moses* says *Deut. v. 2, 3, The Lord made a covenant with us in Horeb. Even with us, who are all of us alive here this day.* Most of these were infants and little children at that time. So that I counted it plain, that infants may be entered into a covenant with God, to do some spiritual duties hereafter, of which they at present can have no knowledge or sense; and to receive some spiritual privileges.

A. Whether you call this covenant a carnal or a spiritual covenant; the right to it was conveyed down in a carnal way, from father to son, by a fleshly generation; and was a particular privilege of the offspring of *Abraham's* body.

P. The covenant had this property, that whosoever was in it, had a right to bring all his children to be entered into it in their infancy. But this was not limited or confined to the offspring of *Abraham's* body for the words are (o) *He that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not*

(n) *Numb. xvi. 32, 33. it. xxvi. 64, 65.*

(o) *Gen.*

of thy seed, &c. must be circumcised. And so a profelyte was to *circumcise all his males* (p), and then he was to be *as one born in the land*. So that the covenant extended then (as it does now) to all of any nation that would come into it; and they were to bring into it all the infant children, not only of their own body, but all that they had the legal custody or possession of.

A. But here is a question hotly disputed, Whether the circumcision given to these infants, were to them *a seal of the righteousness of faith*? That it was so to *Abraham* himself, is expressly said by St. Paul, *Romans* iv. 11. even of that faith, by which he is the *Father of all them that believe* under the gospel. But the Antipædobaptists do deny that it was so to the infants: because they were not capable of having any faith at the time of their circumcision, as *Abraham* had.

P. This dispute seems to me only a contention about words. For as the Pædobaptists will not pretend that it was to the infants a seal of any actual faith then at that present wrought in their hearts: so the other cannot deny that it was to the infants the seal of a covenant then entered, by which covenant they were engaged to believe in the true God when they came to years of discretion. For I quoted before the very words of the covenant engaging them to *love the Lord, to walk in his ways, &c.* And that supposes *faith* in him.

(p) *Exod.* xii. 48, 49.

And

And you may observe, that St. *Paul*, in *Rom. x.* 6, 7, 8. when he is going to quote some passages out of that very recital of the covenant in *Deut. xxx.* (into which the little ones were entered, *Deut. xxix.*) premises to the quotation these words; *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise*: and then having recited those passages, he adds, *this is the word of faith, which we preach.*

A. But do you think that the covenant made to *Abraham*, into which the little ones were admitted, did contain any engagement on God's part, to give an *eternal life* after this; which is the chief thing in the gospel-covenant?

P. Not only I do think so; but all Christians, except the *Socinians*. And it is plain by our Saviour's words. For he, at *Matt. xxii.* 31. proves to the *Sadducees* the resurrection of *Abraham* to eternal life from these words; *I am the God of Abraham.* And those very words had been part of the covenant sealed by circumcision. These *Sadducees* were the only men in the Jewish church that denied the resurrection: and our Saviour here tells them, they *err, not knowing the scriptures.* But all the orthodox Jews believed and expected it, as we perceive by St. *Paul's* appeal to them themselves, *Acts xxiv.* 15. And it was from this covenant (which was sealed by circumcision) that they expected it.

A. It is, you know, disputed between the two parties, whether *Abraham's* covenant was the same with ours: the Antipædobaptists,
many

many of them say, No: for ours is called, *Heb. viii. 6. A better covenant, established upon better promises.*

P. I know it is so disputed. But that in which they are agreed, and which is plain, is enough for our purpose, namely, that in both administrations, faith in God, and obedience to him, is required, and a faith also in the Messiah; the Jews believing him as to come; we, as already come: and that in both there are delivered promises, both for this life, and for that which is to come. On which account *St. Paul, Gal. iii. 8.* calls the former by the name of *the Gospel preached before to Abraham:* and at *ver. 17. the covenant confirmed before of God in Christ.* And that in both of them there is granted the direction and assistance of the same spirit.

They are also agreed on the other side, that now since the actual coming of Christ, there are more clear revelations of the future glory, greater and stronger motives to faith and obedience, (which, if we neglect or despise, we shall be subject to greater condemnation) a fuller and more particular knowledge of the nature and offices of Christ, and of his work of redemption wrought for us, &c. On which account ours may be called, in some sense, a *new* or a *better* covenant: though the substance of the things declared, enacted, and revealed be the same.

But the only thing that concerns our present purpose, is this; that an infant then was entered

tered into a covenant containing in it an engagement to such spiritual things, as he could no more understand, than an infant now can understand the things covenanted at baptism.

So far therefore I told Mr. *B.* I could go of myself, in answering the doubts and objections against Infant-Baptism; that I could see plainly that an infant is not incapable of being entered into a covenant with God, obliging him to do and to believe some things hereafter, (if he live) of which at present he can have no sense; and that upon such his entrance he may be made immediately an heir of eternal life by covenant, which will hold good so long till he by actual sin does break the said covenant. And that I conceived this transaction, that was then done by God's command in spiritual things, to bear some resemblance to what we see every day done in temporal affairs; namely, a deed of land with covenants is sealed to an infant, and the guardian, in the infant's name, seals the counterpart: there is no difficulty in understanding that the infant, when he grows up, must (if he will hold that land) perform the covenants mentioned in the deed: and that if he will not, he loses all right to that inheritance; but in the mean time the deed is not insignificant, because the infant does not understand it.

A. You granted that an infant is not incapable of all this; but that such a thing is possible to be one, if God please: and that some such thing was done by his order in the
 case

case of circumcision. But this does not prove, That (now, since circumcision is abolished) we must set up any such practice in spiritual things without an order from him.

P. No. So I thought then that this does not follow. Neither do I think now that it follows merely from thence; that because an infant is *capable* of such a token of a covenant as baptism is, therefore it must be given to him. But this takes off the force of all those arguments of the Antipædobaptists, which they raise from the *incapacity* of an infant. One half of what they say is, not only that God has not ordered infants to be baptized; but also that it would have been an absurd or foolish thing to order it. And they do not mind, that all the jeers they cast upon *baby-baptism*, (as they call it) taken from the incapacity of an infant for such an holy ordinance, do reflect upon the wisdom of God, who appointed circumcision, which by the same rule, they may call *baby-circumcision*.

Mr. B. also shewed me afterwards grounds from scripture that do much confirm the consequence from the use of circumcision to that of baptism. But I am telling you as yet, only how far I could argue or answer their arguments myself.

A. Thus far you could go: and I do not see but you might go so far upon good ground. What were the remaining difficulties at which you stuck?

P.

P. Nothing but that which you mentioned just now. That though there is no reason but Christ might have ordered baptism to infants proportionably to the use of circumcision; yet that I could not find that he had done so. And therefore I questioned whether it were his meaning that infants should be entered (at least by any visible token) now, (though I saw plainly they were formerly) because neither he nor his apostles have expressed any such thing, (as it was plainly expressed before) nor have given us any example of it in the New Testament.

A. Well. That is the chief of all. And that was a thing in which I am sure Mr. B. could not satisfy you. Pray, what did he say to that?

P. He said that our Saviour's command to *disciple the nations, baptizing them*, being given in very short and general words, expressing only the term *nations*, and not descending to express particularly the sorts of persons that make up the nation; it was necessary, in order to our judging whether he meant infants and all, or only the adult men of the nations, to mind (q) what was then and before that time usually done in the Jewish church in receiving any profelyte of the nations that came over from his heathenism to the true religion, and desired that he and his children might be admitted into covenant with the true God.

(q) *Hist. Introduct.* § 1, 2.

And that it was useful also to know how the primitive christians (who lived so nigh the times of the apostles, as that they might easily know what the Apostles ordered with respect to infants) did practise this command.

And as to the first of these things: he made me understand (what I knew not before) that such a profelyte of the nations was wont to be baptized, and his children likewise (r).

A. This is news. He was wont to be circumcised, he and all his males, we know. But baptized, how does he prove that?

P. From a great many passages in the books of the Jewish writers, who, in setting down the customs of their nation, do mention the baptizing of such a profelyte and his children, male and female, as ordinarily as they do the circumcising of the male ones.

A. Did he shew you these passages in the books themselves? I wish I could be satisfied whether there be any truth in this matter of fact.

P. The books themselves are written in the *Hebrew* or *Chaldee* language. But there are several *English* and *Latin* writers of unquestionable credit, who do quote the places: such as *Dr. Hammond*, *Dr. Lightfoot*, *Mr. Selden*, *Ainsworth*, &c. Of these he shewed and lent me some and directed me to others. They do produce the words of the Jewish writers; name the book and page, and give the translation. He lent me also a book called *The*

(r) *Hist. Introduct.* § 2, 3.

History

History of Infant-Baptism, where (as in the book itself, are given the passages of the eldest christians concerning the baptizing infants, so) in the Introduction, the chief of those places concerning the Jewish Baptism are collected; and references given to the books before-named, and a great many others, for any one that will, to find more of the same. I spent two or three weeks in getting and reading these books about the Jewish Baptism of profelytes and their children, and at last was fully satisfied, that they had such a custom: And I understand by a late book of *Leo Modena* (s), and by some other accounts, that they have the same custom still, if any profelyte comes over to them. And I found that though there was a dispute (t) between Dr. *Hammond* on one side, and Mr. *Selden* and Mr. *Tombs* (who was the most learned of the Antipædo-baptists) on the other side, concerning the children of natural Jews; yet they all agree, that the infant children of Profelytes were baptized; and that it was a common phrase with them to call such infants *Profelytes*, as well as their parents. For they have such sayings as these:

If (u) with a Profelyte, his sons and his daughters be made profelytes; that which is done by their father, redounds to their good.
And again,

(s) *Hist. of the Jews*, Part V. Ch. ii.
Introduct. § 3.

(t) *Hist.*

(u) *Gemera Bab. Chetubeth*, Ch. i.

A (x) Profelyte that is under age, is baptized upon the knowledge [or profession] of the house of judgment, [that is, the synagogue or church of the place] and they become to him a father. And again.

An Israelite that takes a little beathen child, or finds an beathen infant, and baptizes him for a Profelyte; behold he is a Profelyte. Maimon. Helack. Aibdim. c. viii. For it seems that it was their custom with infant children whom they either took in war, or found exposed in the highways by their heathen parents. Of which you may see more in the aforesaid Books.

A. If I were sure of this it would go a great way with me. For such a custom would direct one to another sense of our Saviour's word, *disciple* or *make disciples*, than I should otherwise have thought of. For putting the case that it was then customary to baptize such infants, and call them *Profelytes*, and they were usually said to be *made Profelytes* (which seems much the same word as *disciples*) our Saviour's command in these Words; *Go disciple, or make disciples* all the nations, baptizing them; would seem to me to include the infants as well as others. For a man is to take words in that sense, in which they were current at the place and time in which they were spoken. So that it would in that case, seem to me necessary that our Saviour, if he meant

(x) Maimon. *U. Bia.* Ch. xiii. § 7.

they should, in baptizing the nations, not baptize infants, as had been usually done should have said so.

P. You draw naturally the same consequence that Mr. B. urged to me. For when I had read the aforesaid books, and owned myself satisfied that there was such a custom, he said to me; “suppose an Antipædobaptist congregation should send one of their teachers to some heathen island, with a commission in those words; *Go, disciple that nation, and baptize them*; He indeed would not think himself commanded to baptize the infants, because that was not the custom of the church that sent him. But supposing a minister to be sent by the church of *England* with a commission in the very same words; *Go, disciple that nation, and baptize them*; would not he think himself commanded to baptize the infants of such as were converted and baptized?” I granted he would: because that was the known custom and meaning of the church that sent him. So, says he, when the apostles were sent with a commission given in the said words; what could they think other, but that they must do as had been usually done in the church where they and their master had always lived?

He asked me also this question; suppose our Saviour had bid the apostles, *Go, disciple all the nations, and* [instead of baptizing had said] *circumcise them*; must they not have

circumcised the infants of the nations as well as the grown men, though there had been no express mention of infants in the commission? I granted it. "Then," said he, "what is the reason that in case circumcision had been appointed to the Gentile nations, it must of course have been given to infants?" I said, because the apostles knew of themselves, that circumcision was usually given to infants. He desired me to draw the same consequence from what the apostles must know of baptism usually given to infants.

A. I should be almost of his mind, if the matter of fact were certain. But of what credit are those Jewish books that mention this custom?

P. They are such as the Jews own for the most authentic they have, except the Bible. And not only the books of particular men, but their *Misna* and *Talmud* (which are to them much the same as the book of Canons, or the Rubrick are with our church) are full of these orders about receiving and baptizing Profelytes, the Men and their Children. Now, how fallible soever the Jews were in judging what is fit to be done; yet they cannot fail of being sufficient witnesses of the matter of fact, and able to tell what was actually done among themselves.

A. From what authorities in *Moses'* law did the Jews infer this necessity of a Profelyte's baptism?

P. They

P. They reckoned that the whole body of their nation, men, women, and infants, was baptized unto *Moses* (not only *in the cloud and in the sea*, as *St. Paul* says they were, *1 Cor. x. 1, 2.* For the cloud and sea covered men and children all alike, but also) just before the giving of the law, in *Exod. xix.* where *Moses* is ordered thus, ver. 10. *Sanctify the people to-day and to-morrow, &c.* They hold, that the way by which *Moses* sanctified them on these two days, was by washing them (for they prove from many places of their law, that by *sanctifying*, is often meant *washing*; especially where any man is said to sanctify other men.) And since it was commanded in *Numb. xv. 16.* *One law and one manner shall be for you and for the stranger, [or Profelyte] &c.* they conclude, that as their own nation, men, women, and children, were entered into covenant by the sanctification of washing or baptism, so ought a Profelyte; and if he will have his children entered, so ought they.

A. I see it necessary to know the sense in which the words of any law were used at the time when that law was given. But does it not seem strange that we should have need to recur to the Jewish *Talmud* for settling a point in our religion?

P. You express that question improperly. The point of profelyting (or making disciples) the nations, is settled by *Christ*. But since he was a Jew by nation, and spoke the phrases of that language; what hinders but that we

may learn from Jewish books what that phrase of *profelyting*, or *making disciples*, did then usually signify in that language? One of the main articles of our faith, is, that Christ was *crucified*: and since crucifying was a sort of death not ordinarily used by the Jews, but by the Romans, (for it was a common way by which the Roman slaves, guilty of any notorious crime, were executed) we understand by Roman writers what sort of death it was; the cruelty of it, the form of the gibbet or cross to which they were nailed, &c. more particularly than we do by the words of scripture; And yet nobody is so silly as to say, we ground the belief of that article upon the Roman histories. It is only the use and proper signification of the word that we learn from them.

A. If this was the meaning of the word; *discipling*; and this was the custom to make the infant children of Profelytes *disciples*, (as well as the parents) and call them so, and baptize them; the rules and conditions of this dispute are turned upon the Antipædobaptists. For whereas they used to say; “ Since baptism was a new ordinance instituted by
 “ *Christ*; his saying nothing of infants, is a
 “ sign he meant not to include them. It will
 “ be rather said on the contrary, since it was
 “ no new ordinance, but a thing that had
 “ been usually given to infants; his not except-
 “ ing of infants, is a sign he meant not to ex-
 “ clude them.” So that the proof will be on
 them

them to shew that infants are forbidden to be baptized.

P. You say no more than Dr. *Lightfoot* (a man of the greatest skill in the Hebrew customs and language) says on this (z) argument. "If baptism and the baptizing of infants had been a new thing, and unheard of until *John Baptist* came, as circumcision was, until God appointed it to *Abraham*; there would have been, no doubt, as express command for baptizing infants, as there was for circumcising them. But when the baptizing of infants was a thing commonly known and used, as appears by incontestible evidence from their writers; there needed not express assertions that such and such persons were to be the objects of baptism, &c."

And in another book (a) having shewn at large that this was the custom, he concludes, "That since it was ordinary in all ages before, to have infants baptized, if *Christ* would have had that custom abolished, he would have expressly forbidden it. So that his and the scriptures silence in this matter, does confirm and establish infant-baptism for ever (b)."

And there is a quotation which Mr. B. shewed me from a christian writer of the eldest times, which farther confirms this notion and meaning of the Word *discipling*, to have been

(z) *Harmony* on *John* i. 25.

(a) *Hor. Heb.* on *Matt.* iii. (b) *Hist. Introduct.* § 5.

then in common use. It is from *Justin Martyr's* apology for the christian religion to the emperor *Antoninus Pius*. This *Justin* was himself a Jew, (I mean a Samaritan Jew) born in the apostles times, and converted to christianity about thirty years after; and he speaking there of the continent life led by the christians, says, "Several persons among us sixty or seventy years old, of both sexes, that were *discipled to Christ* in their childhood, do continue virgins." He uses the very same word that is in the text of *St Matthew*; *Go, disciple the nations, baptizing them*. And this he says, was done to them in their childhood.

A. I shall judge better of this matter, when I read the books you mention.

P. Our Saviour also, *Matt. x. 42*. speaks of a cup of cold water given to one of those little ones in the name of a *disciple*. But there is one thing more, you will observe if you read the said books, namely, that the Jews did commonly call the baptism of such a Profelyte, his (*c*) *Regeneration*, [or being *born again*] and so do all the christians of those eldest times call the christian baptism by that name (*d*), and the said *Justin Martyr* for one. This puts it beyond all doubt, that our Saviour by those words, *John iii. 3, 5*. *Except any one be born again, born of water, &c.* does mean baptism; for that was the common phrase for it at that time.

(*c*) *Hist. Introduct. § 6.* (*d*) *Hist. Part I. Ch. xi. § 3. Ch. iii. § 2. Part II. ch. vi. § 1.*

A. This

A. This takes off one of the objections which you said you had against applying that text to the proof of Infant-Baptism. But what say you to the other, *born of water and of the spirit*? How can a baptized infant be said to be born of the spirit?

P. There are some operations of the holy spirit, as working actual faith, repentance, &c. in the heart, of which an infant indeed is not capable. But when God does apply the pardon of original guilt, does transfer a person out of the state of nature into the state of grace and of the christian covenant, does unite him as a member into the Mystical body of Christ, accept him for his child, &c. these things, and these promises, are spoken of in scripture as done, sealed, and applied to the person *by the spirit*. Now of these latter an infant is capable. And *John* the Baptist is said to be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb.

And a person that is capable of some of the great ends of baptism wrought by the spirit, may be baptized for them; though he be not as yet capable of all the several ends for which baptism is designed. For our Saviour, who was not capable of remission of sins, regeneration, &c. was baptized for the other ends that baptism is designed for.

Mr. B. shewed me where the chief of the Antipædobaptists, (e) *Toms, Danvers, &c.*

(e) *Hist.* Part II. Ch. vi. § 1.

do own this application of *Christ's spirit* to infants, and God's putting them into Christ, uniting them to him by his holy spirit; and the ancients do speak at the same rate (*f*)

A. Then it is in this sense, I suppose, that the Church of *England* gives thanks to God, "That it has pleased him to regenerate the baptized infant *with the holy spirit*; to receive him for his own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into his holy church."

P. Yes, doubtless.

A. But will not this text so cleared from the objections, and understood thus [that except any person, man, woman, or child, be baptized, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God] prove too much, in your sense, in respect of such infants as by some unavoidable accident do miss of baptism?

P. Not more than it does now in your sense, being understood of all grown persons; many of whom do, after they have resolved to receive baptism, miss of it by sudden death, &c. All such texts of scripture are to be understood with an allowance, namely, that such or such an ordinance is appointed by God as the *ordinary* (*g*) means, or *ordinary* condition of salvation: Not that we are to bind God to the means that he has bound us to. As in the case of *circumcision* omitted, though the rule was as peremptory as this; *That soul shall be cut off*:

(*f*) Ibid. Part I. Ch. xv. § 5, and 9.

(*g*) *Hist.* Part II. Ch. vi. § 7, 8.

Yet where his providence made it impracticable, he did not execute the penalty; and yet in ordinary cases the rule stood firm.

A. I think the Antipædobaptists generally have in this respect the most charitable opinion of any. They, most of them (all of them, except such as pry into the decrees of election and reprobation) are very positive that all children dying in infancy, baptized or not, born of parents godly or ungodly, christians, turks, or heathens, do go to heaven.

P. This were to good purpose, if the kingdom of heaven were at their disposing.

But if we have no promise of God, it is not a promise of man that will keep us from despair. I remember a saying of St *Austin* (b) against the *Pelagians*, (who denied any original sin in infants; and said, if infants died unbaptized, they might be saved; that is, be in some good place hereafter, though not in the kingdom of heaven) "Let us not of our own heads promise any eternal salvation to infants without the baptism of Christ, which the holy scripture, that is to be preferred to all human wit, does not promise."

A. What made these *Pelagians* say, they should not go to heaven, and yet be in some other good place?

P. They said they should be in some good place, as having no sin. But they did not dare say they should go to heaven, except they were baptized: because our Saviour had

(b) *Ibid.* Part I. Ch. vi. § 5.

given that rule last mentioned, *except any one be born of water, &c.*

A. Then they judged that that text does include infants and all.

P. No christian at that time made any doubt of that (*i*). Suppose you have a child that is like to die, and some advise you to pray for its soul, and others dissuade, saying, all children are saved, whether you pray for them or not: Which would you count the most charitable of these?

A. I should take the counsel of those that advise me to pray.

P. Do the same in respect of those that advise you to baptize it. For you see that in both these texts, that of *Matt. xxviii. 19.* and this of *John iii. 5.* our Saviour's words are general and universal; *All nations; every person:* And that the reasons which the Antipædobaptists bring why infants should not be meant as well as others, do fail of proof. Therefore it is good to be sure: and take the advice of the judicious Mr. *Hooker (k)*; "If Christ himself, who giveth salvation, do require baptism; it is not for us that look for salvation, to sound and examine him, whether unbaptized men may be saved," [by men he means any persons of human nature; for he is there speaking of infant baptism] "but seriously to do the thing that is required; and religiously

(*i*) *Hijß.* Part I. Chap. vi. § 4.

(*k*) *Ibid.* Part II. Ch. vi. § 1.

“ to fear the danger which may grow by the
“ want thereof.”

A. But they say, they do not promise this of their own head. Our Saviour, speaking of little children, *Mark x. 14.* says, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven.* Therefore all children go to heaven.

P. He says, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven:* which proves that they are capable of going to heaven: and that many infants do go thither. But he adds at the same place; therefore *suffer them to come unto me and forbid* [or withhold] *them not.* And since our Saviour is now present with us only in his ordinances and sacraments, what way have we to bring our children to him, as he orders, but by baptism to offer and dedicate them to him? And here I would ask you one question: they say that all children, heathens' children and all, go to heaven. Do they judge that heaven is their natural portion, as being human creatures, and because they are born of human race? or that they have it by the merits and purchase of Christ and his death?

A. O! by Christ. They do not offer to say that the kingdom of heaven is given to any human creature, but only for the sake of Christ's merits.

P. Now does it not seem to you strange, that the children of heathen men, of such men as are *without Christ,* (as St Paul says, *Eph. ii. 12.*) and *strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world;*

world; should have an equal interest in Christ with the children of christians, who do offer and dedicate both themselves and their children to Christ? And that there should be no more promise to a good christian for his children, than there is to the children of Pagans? St. Paul, having told the *Ephesians* that they had been such *strangers from the covenant*, &c. says in the next words; *But now in Christ Jesus, you who where some time afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ*. But it seems they had been nigh once before, namely, in their infancy. Pray tell me: Do they count such infants members of Christ, united to him, parts of his body the church, redeemed by him, included in his covenant and purchase?

A. They do not say, that such infants or any infants are members of the church. For that would prove that they must be baptized; baptism being the entrance into the church. And what they would say to your other words, *members of his body, united, redeemed, covenant, purchase, &c.* I know not, (I believe some of them would say one thing, and some another) but that they are saved by him, they say.

P. The scripture calls the church, his body (l); and him the Saviour (m) of the body: but that he should be the Saviour of any that are not of his body, is beside the scripture. And that also puts every where a great difference between being *in Christ* on one side, and

(l) *Eph. i. 23.*(m) *Ibid. v. 22.*

of the world, or without Christ, or in the kingdom of darkness, on the other. But that one place of St. Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 14. does most expressly shew the different state of some infants from that of others; for he puts a case in which *their children would be unclean: but now, says he, they are holy.*

A. I wish we had a good comment on that text. I must frankly own to you, that I am not very well satisfied with the exposition which those of our opinion give of it; that St. Paul persuading there the man that had an unbelieving wife, not to put her away, because she, an unbeliever, is so sanctified by him a believer, that the children are *holy*, should mean no more than this; that they are not bastards. For I do not see that they would have been bastards if both the parents had continued in unbelief. Nor do I find the words ever so used, that *holy* should signify *legitimate*; or that *unclean*, when opposed to *holy*, (as it is here) should signify *bastard*. Nor does that seem to have been the doubt, or question put by these people to St. Paul; Whether the use of the marriage bed did in such case continue *lawful*, and the issue legitimate: but whether the continuing of cohabitation were *advisable*, considering the danger of being drawn to idolatry, and the abomination which the heathen husband must have of his wife's worshipping Christ, or the christian husband of his wife's worshipping of idols in the same house: and considering that St. Paul had before written to them,

(n) not to accompany with fornicators, idolaters, &c.

P. If one reads the place attentively from *verse* 12 to 16, he shall plainly perceive (what you say) that the query which they had written to St. Paul about this matter, was not of *lawful* or *unlawful*; but of *expedient* or *inexpedient*. For they had sent to him several queries about several matters, as appears at *ver.* 1. *Now concerning the things whereof you wrote to me.*

Some of their queries had been about the *lawfulness* or *sinfulness* of some things. And to them St. Paul answers not by way of his *advice*, but by the *authority* of Christ; as at *ver.* 10. *I command; yet not I, but the Lord.*

But to this question, of cohabitation in case of different religions, he answers in another strain; *To these speak I, not the Lord.* And his advice is not absolute neither: for he advises the continuance of dwelling together only in case the unbelieving party be willing. *If any brother [that is, any man that has embraced christianity] hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away: and the woman that has a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.* Now this is what he would never have said, if the question had been of *lawful* or *sinful*: as whether the unbelieving woman would have been in the state of an *harlot* to a christian husband,

(n) 1 Cor. v. 9. 10.

or the children so begotten *bastards*. For the willingness of the unbelieving party to cohabit, would not in such a case have mended the matter at all. For a willing *harlot*, that is *pleas'd to dwell with a man*, is as bad, if not a worse harlot, than one that is over-persuaded against her will, and the children as much bastards.

And besides: How could a man that had had several legitimate children by his wife, whilst they were both heathens, fall into a doubt that those that should be born to him after he became a christian, would be bastards, merely because she would not become a christian too?

A. I am persuaded, as I said, that *St. Paul* means something more by *sanctified, unclean, and holy*. But what he means I cannot tell. For the interpretation given by the Pœdobaptists of *holy*, that is, *federally holy, or in covenant with God*, is far-fetcht too. It makes *St. Paul* prove a thing that was obscure by a thing that is more obscure. *I would not have you part. The unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband, so that the children which she shall bear to him shall be in covenant.* In what covenant do they mean, in a state of salvation?

P. Some explain it so: in the covenant of grace. But some others that will not allow that a child who after proves wicked, (ever was in a state of salvation) do, by *covenant holiness*, mean only a right to church privileges. every one that is a member of the visible church,

church, has a right to church-privileges, and so is *holy* in that respect; though every such member is not in a state of salvation. And from the child's having that *covenant holiness*, they conclude its right to the seal of the covenant.

You cannot deny that this sense of the word *holy*, is much more agreeable to the general use of that word in scripture, than the other. *Holy*, that is, *belonging to God, accepted of God, set apart to God*. And *unclean*, that is, *out of covenant with God*, is a very common use of the word. *Acts* x. 28. *Rom.* xi. 16.

A. Pray, how did Mr. B. expound this text to you?

P. He confessed there had been various interpretations of it. But that which seemed to him more natural, plain and agreeable to the scope of St. *Paul* there, than any of these new ones, is that which, he said, was most current among the ancient christians. And I also do think it so, since I have considered and compared it with the text: but I confess at first it seemed very new to me, because the sense in which we have been used, in these later times, to take words, does prejudice us against any other, though many times that other do upon search appear to be the ancient sense of them.

A. What was his interpretation, which you say is the ancient one?

P. First he observed to me, that the word which is there translated [*is sanctified*] is in the original [*has been sanctified*] (o).

(a) *Hist.* Part I. Chap. xi. § 11.

A. I have seen many on both sides recite it so. But then how came our translators to alter the sense?

P. The properties of languages are, it seems, such, that that is sometimes necessary, when the sense requires it: and they thought, it seems, that it required it here. But so it is in the original: *An unbelieving husband has been sanctified by his wife: and an unbelieving wife has been sanctified by her husband, &c.* And by this the ancients understand [*has been converted, or persuaded to receive the christian faith and baptism*] or as *St. Paul* expresses it in the verse next but one, *has been saved by her.* So in *1 Cor. i. 1, 2.* *To those that at Corinth are sanctified* [or, (as it is there also in the original) *have been sanctified*]. *called to be saints*, that is to all that have embraced christianity there: or have been baptized: for the word *sanctified*, is by all old christian writers frequently used for *baptized*.

A. Well. Suppose it be so: *The unbelieving party has oftentimes been converted by the believing party.* This indeed agrees well with *St. Paul's* scope: for he is there persuading them to stay with their unbelieving partners on account of this hope, and it is the same encouragement that he uses *verse 16.* *What knowest thou, O Wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? &c.* But still I do not see how this gives much light to what follows; *Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.*

P. You must note that the word here translated

lated [*holy*] is in St. Paul's epistles, (when it is applied to persons) far oftner translated *saints*; however they happened here to translate it *holy*. And that word, *saints*, was in the same use then, as the word *christians* is with us. As in the Creed, the *communion of saints*; is nothing else but the communion of *christians*. And St. Paul's direction of his epistles, *To all the saints* at such a place; is as much as to say, *To all the christians* there. And the word that he uses here which we read *holy*, is the very same as that in the Creed, and in the directions aforesaid of St. Paul's epistles, is translated *saints*.

A. Now I begin to understand your meaning. "The unbelieving party is generally prevailed on by the believing party. Were it not so, the children of such matches would be brought up to heathenism: but now we see they are generally made christians, or saints." This is what you understand St. Paul to say.

P. You take it right. He would have them stay with their partners that did not yet believe: and persuades them thus: "It frequently has been observed, that an unbelieving husband has been sanctified, or brought to the faith, and so to baptism, by his wife: and likewise an unbelieving wife by her husband. Were it not so, that the faith of the one did generally prevail against the infidelity of the other, the children of such of you as are so matched would be

“ be generally kept unbaptized, and so be un-
 “ clean. But now we see, by the grace of
 “ God, a contrary effect: for they are gene-
 “ rally baptized, and so become holy saints, or
 “ sanctified (p).” It is much the same advice
 that St. *Peter* gives to women that had unbeliev-
 ing husbands, 1 *Pet.* iii. 1. *That if any obey not*
the word, they may be won by the conversation of the
wife, &c.

A. Do they think that St. *Paul* means, *such*
children as we now see generally baptized?

P. Yes. The term *saints* is not given in the
 New Testament but to baptized persons. They
 called no other by the names of *saints* or *bre-*
thren.

A. This fits your purpose indeed. This was
 all you wanted; that there should be in scrip-
 ture mention of any infant baptized. I am apt
 to doubt that this interpretation has been in-
 vented to serve a turn by some Pœdobaptist
 that was puzzled with that objection of the
 Antipœdobaptists, that there is no example of
 it in scripture: not that it has come naturally
 into the mind of any reader, but on that occa-
 sion.

P. I can, as it happens, cure your doubt.
 For there are upon record, several (q) com-
 mentaries of ancient christian writers upon this
 text, who do expound it much to this purpose.
 And I have noted down the words of two of
 them that lived 1300 years ago, and had never

(p) *Hist.* Part I. Chap. xi. § 11. Part II. Chap. x. § 3.
 p. 378. (q) *Hist.* Part. I. Ch. xix. § 19.

heard of any Antipædobaptist, who do explain it just in the sense that I mentioned. I will, if you please, shew you in their own words.

A. How did you know first that they had never heard of any Antipædobaptist? This must have been within 300 years of the Apostles time.

P. They do both of them say at other places of their books that they never did.

A. Now this looks very odd. How should men that lived at a time when no Antipædobaptist had ever been heard of, come to say in their books that they never heard of any? What gave them occasion to speak of it then?

P. They disputed about original sin, as I told you before. The *Pelagians* said there is no such thing. St. *Austin* saith; Why then are infants baptized, if they have no sin? They answered (r), it was, "that they might be sanctified [or made saints] in Christ." St. *Austin* said, he had never before met with any christian, churchman or sectary, (that owned the scriptures) nor read any christian writer, who taught any other doctrine, but that infants are to be baptized *for pardon of sin*. From whence it is my consequence, that much less had he heard or read of any that denied that they are to be baptized at all.

Pelagius was reproached by some people, that by denying original sin in infants, he did deny any necessity of baptism to them. He answered in a rage; That (s) the thing which they accuse him of saying, was a thing "that

(r) *Hist.* Part I. Ch. xix. § 17. (s) *Hist.* Part I. Ch. xix. § 30.

“ he never heard any man, no not any impious
 “ sectary, say. For who, *says he*, is so igno-
 “ rant of what is read in the gōspel (meaning
 “ *John* iii. 5.) as to hinder infants from being
 “ baptized, and born again in Christ, and to
 “ make them miss of the kingdom of heaven ?”
 For though he thought a child dying unbap-
 tized would have no punishment, as having no
 sin; yet he thought it could not come to hea-
 ven, as having no interest in Christ.

A. Did not *Tertullian* live before these men ?

P. Yes. He did.

A. Then how is this sense ? They never heard
 of any one that ever was against Infant-Bap-
 tism : and we know he gave his opinion against
 it (1).

P. You observe right. It must be con-
 cluded that they had never seen (u) his book of
 baptism : for he having revolted to heresy, his
 books were not much read by churchmen : and
 that observation of theirs, that there had been
 none before their time of that opinion, does
 not hold, without an exception of that one
 man. But even he, in the truest editions (w),
 speaks against the use of it only at such times,
 when there is no urgent necessity, by the child's
 being in danger of death.

A. Well. What is the comment on this text,
 given by those two men ?

P. You shall have it in their own words.
 St. *Austin* set down the texts (x) ; *An unbe-*

(1) *Hist.* Part I. Ch. iv. § 5. (u) *Hist.* Part II. Ch. x.
 § 2 to 5. (w) Part I. Ch. iv. § 8. Part II. Ch. ii. § 5.
 (x) *Hist.* Part I. Ch. xv. § 2.

believing husband has been sanctified [so he reads it; and so it is in the original] by his believing wife: and an unbelieving wife by her believing husband: and on that gives this comment; “ I suppose it had then happened, that several
 “ wives had been brought to the faith by their
 “ believing husbands and husbands, by their
 “ believing wives. And though he does not
 “ mention their names, yet he makes use of
 “ their example to confirm his advice.” Then he sets down the rest of the text *else were your children unclean; but now they are holy*, [or saints] and gives this comment; “ For there
 “ were then christian infants that were sancti-
 “ fied, [or made holy, or saints] some by the
 “ authority of one of their parents; some by the
 “ the consent of both: which would not be,
 “ if as soon as one party believed the marriage
 “ were dissolved; and the infidelity of the
 “ parties were not borne with, till there were
 “ an opportunity of believing.” By an infant’s being sanctified by the authority of its parents, can be meant nothing but its being baptized: and the word sanctified, is a common word with him for baptized.

Pelagius wrote a comment on both the epistles to the *Corinthians*. And on that text makes this comment (y), “ There were by
 “ this time examples, both of men whom their
 “ wives, and of women whom their husbands,
 “ had gained over to Christ; and of infants,
 “ concerning whom the christian desire, even

(y) *Hist.* Part I. Ch. xix. § 19.

“ of one of their parents, had prevailed that they should be made christians.”

A. This is indeed as you explain it. But did not Mr. B. own to you that some of the ancients expound the text otherwise ?

P. He did own that there are some (z) that make no more doubt of it than the Antipædo-baptists do. But that the most, and those the most ancient, do understand it of baptismal holiness.

A. Are there any more texts of scripture, or arguments that he produced to you ?

P. Yes, several. But the time will not allow to mention any more than the heads of things to you. By referring me to many texts where circumcision is mentioned, and many where baptism is mentioned, he made it plain to me, that baptism serves to the same use and purpose now, that circumcision did to the Jewish church: to confirm the truth of the promises on God's part, and instate the partaker in the privileges of the church of God, and to denote the obligation of the party (if he lives) to faith and obedience.

That baptism is a seal of the covenant, which is for substance the same covenant that was established then: and therefore that God's command to give the seal in infancy then, does continue a command to us, and is a sufficient declaration of his will to us now, unless he had somewhere declared an alteration of his will in that regard.

That the seal should be given indifferently to *all nations*, and to *both sexes*, did need a particular declaration (because that was otherwise in the case of circumcision), and that is accordingly particularly declared by *St. Paul*, *Gal. iii. 28.* where speaking of baptism, he says, there is in respect of it *neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female*; that is, there is no difference between them: but that there should be neither young nor old, needed no declaration, because that was a ruled case before in the use (both of Jewish baptism, of which we spoke before, and) of circumcision itself. It was a known thing all along before in the covenant, as it was made with *Abraham* and renewed to *Moses*. There was need of an express prohibition, if infants, that had ever been members of the visible church and people of God, had been now to be excluded. Especially when *St. Peter*, persuading the Jews to christianity and baptism, tells them, *Acts iii. 25. Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with our fathers, &c.* Now that covenant had ever included infants: and therefore when he says again, *Acts ii. 39. Repent and be baptized, &c. for the promise is to you and your children, &c.* it follows, that they were still to have a covenant including infants: or else it would have been a covenant altered much to the worse in that respect; if the Jews, when they became Christians, were to lose the advantage of having their children admitted as church-

church-members by circumcision, and have nothing substituted for them instead thereof.

A. We grant that baptism does resemble circumcision in many uses of it, as a seal, an entrance into the church, &c. But so did many other things, the Ark of *Noah*, the Sea, the Cloud, &c. And therefore your consequence, that it is to be applied to the same persons as circumcision was, is not very plain, unless you could shew from scripture that it is appointed by Christ to be to us in the stead or place of circumcision.

P. The scripture does say that, in effect, when in *Col. ii. 11, 12.* it calls baptism *the circumcision of Christ*: or (as it would more intelligibly and more agreeably to the sense of *St. Paul*, be rendered, and is in several translations rendered “the christian circumcision,” (a) that is, the sacrament which is appointed by Christ to us instead of circumcision.

A. Turn to that text and expound it.

P. The *Colossians* were going to make two additions to the christian religion. One was the worship of angels, taught by the philosophers: the other, circumcision, taught by the *Jews*: *St. Paul*, at ver. 8, 9, 10. shews that the first was needless; for that having Christ they were complete in him, who is the head of all angels. And at ver. 11, 12, 13. that the other was needless too: *for in Christ*, says he, *you are circumcised, &c. by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism, &c.* He cannot

(a) *Hist. Part I. Chap. ii. § 2.*

mean (b) that they were circumcised by that action by which Christ in his infancy was circumcised. He must mean, by that which Christ has appointed for, or instead of circumcision to a christian.

And here if St. *Paul* had meant this as applicable to the grown men only amongst them, and not to the children; might they not reasonably have objected; "It is true, we have baptism instead of circumcision: But what have our children? nothing at all."

You will find (c) all the ancient christians call baptism, "the spiritual circumcision, the circumcision done without hands, the christian circumcision, our circumcision, &c."

Do not you remember how angry some Jews that had lately received the christian faith were with St. *Paul*, Acts xxi. 21. for that they had heard that he taught all the Jews that were among the Gentiles, that they ought not to circumcise their children? How much more, think you, would they have objected to him, if he had taught them that they ought not to baptize them neither? And since we do not find that they objected that to him, we have reason to conclude that he never taught so.

A. But neither do we find, on the other side, that St. *Paul* made that apology to them, that they had baptism instead of it.

P. You do not read it there. But you do in the aforefaid place of his letter to the Colossians (who were troubled with that sort of judaizing (b) Ibid. (c) *Hist.* Part I. § 10. Ch. vi. § 10. Ch. xiv. § 1. Christians)

Christians) that they had the Christian circumcision, *viz.* baptism.

Does not he in his epistle to the Romans, ch. ii. ver. 17. tell the Gentiles that had embraced the faith, that they were now *grafted into the olive tree*; from which the unbelieving Jews were cut off, and did *partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree*; that is, of all the privileges which the Jewish church had? And does he not say, *Gal. iii. 14*, that *the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles*? And was not that a great part of it, to have their children admitted into the covenant, and into the privileges of the church and people of God? And this privilege of bringing in their infants, had been ever granted to such Gentiles as did embrace the Jewish religion, as was said before.

A. But as soon as *John* the Baptist came baptizing, this privilege was declared to be abrogated. For he says to the Pharisees and Sadducees that came to be baptized; *Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.* They must shew personal fruits of repentance, if they would be baptized, *Matt. iii. 7, 8, 9.*

P. Was this case of theirs any thing like that of infants? *These were a generation of vipers*, that had by their actual sin and hypocrisies forfeited all the covenant right which they originally had: and had great need of actual repentance. This does not prove that any infant would have been so sent back.

A. None could be sent back where no one

came, or were brought: and we do not read that any infants at all were brought to him.

P. It is true: there is no express mention of any: nor could it well be expected in an account that is so short in all. But if you will read the books I mentioned, of the Jewish baptism, you will find that they prove it to have been so ordinary a thing, and practised of course, for people that came to baptism to bring their children with them, that they take it for granted that those that came to *John*, did so: and that the reason it is not mentioned, is, because it was a practice so ordinarily known at that time, that there was no need to mention it; as for the same reason you may read in the Old Testament the history of five hundred years together without any mention of any one infant circumcised.

St. *Ambrose*, who lived so near those times, that he might enquire of the Jews their customs, and know much better than we, speaks of (*d*) the infants baptized by *John* the baptist: and so does St. *Austin* after him. Now since it was so ordinary to bring infants; if St. *John* had rejected them that would have been as proper to have been recorded as the history of his rejecting the Pharisees.

A. I will, God willing, read those books of baptism used by the Jews. For matters of fact are more material to direct one in the right understanding of a practice, than these arguments from the reason of the thing which may

(*d*). *Hist.* Part I. Chap. xiii. § 1.

I see be banded to and fro eternally. Had you any other arguments from Mr. B.?

P. He bade me consider how many absurdities do follow by consequences from the Anti-pædobaptist's opinion: as, if an infant cannot be a church member, or one of the church; then Christ in his infancy was out of his own church, neither head nor part of it. He bade me imagine St. *Peter*, when he exhorted his nation to turn christians, speaking thus to them; "You and your children have been hitherto in covenant; but now if you will believe in Christ, you yourselves shall have the privileges of the covenant in a higher degree; but your children shall be in no better condition than the Pagan world; out of any church-covenant;" and so that their coming into a better condition put their children into a worse. That Christ came to dispossess infants of their covenant right. That if Christ were now on earth, and we brought an infant to him; he would receive and embrace him: and he will now receive such into his kingdom of heaven. But if we bring him to be admitted into his church, or mystical body, he will reject him for his incapacity. That he that has now his angel in heaven beholding (e) the face of God, is not worthy to have his guardian or sponsor in the church on earth. That in so many families (f) mentioned in scripture to have been baptized (such an one and all his) there were no children. That all

(e) *Matt.* xviii. 10. (f) *Acts* xvi. 15, 35. *1 Cor.* i. 16.

the christian world should be in an error, Protestants, Papiſts, Greek church, all the (g) national churches in the world; and they only in the right. May we not ſay with St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 36. *What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? Or as he ſays, chap. xi. 16. If any man ſeem to be contentious, we have no ſuch cuſtom, neither the churches of God.*

A. Thoſe conſequential proofs of a thing are in doctrines of morality, &c. of good uſe. But you know the Antipædobaptiſts ſay; that in a ſacrament of poſitive inſtitution we are to expect direct orders, and are to keep cloſe to the letter.

P. They are in this reſpect the moſt unfair arguers in the world. When they produce the poſitive inſtitution, “Disciple all the nations, baptizing them,” they cannot deny but in the literal and grammatical ſenſe, infants are part of the nations as well as kings, &c. (who are no more particularly named than infants are;) and when we bring Chriſt’s poſitive determination, *No perſon that is not born of water can enter, &c.* they own that infants are perſons; but then they come with their proofs by conſequence from other places, that we muſt in all reaſon except infants. And yet when we uſe the ſame method in answering any place that they can bring, then conſequences are nothing. Can they think that God meant that

in reading his word, we should supersede all use of our own understandings?

For baptism itself indeed to be a christian sacrament, there was need of an express precept: but for the subject of it, we may argue by parity of reason, that those who formerly were admitted to it, may be now.

The resurrection is a fundamental: yet Christ proved it (*b*) by a consequence. The alteration of the day of sabbath is a matter of *positive* worship: yet we use consequences in proving it; and those more liable to exception (if we would cavil) than the baptism of infants.

But to come nearer to this very matter, the fit subjects of baptism: St. *Peter* thought that Gentiles, unless they were circumcised, were not fit subjects of baptism. Now the way that he was convinced by, in *Acts* x. was not by any positive order, or express words: "Baptize this *Cornelius*;" or, "Baptize Gentile men, though uncircumcised." But when he was told that they were no longer *unclean*, ver. 28. and saw the Holy Spirit come on them, he concluded by consequence, ver. 37. *Can any one forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit, &c.* He went by this rule; one that is capable of the ends of baptism, should be baptized. So we say; the children of christians are not *unclean*; but capable of several of the ends of baptism; and conclude (though not from these only) that they are not to be denied water.

(*b*) *Matt.* xxii. 31, 32.

Mr. *Toms* himself says, (i) “ If it should be
 “ made known to us that infants are sanctified,
 “ I should not doubt but that they are to be
 “ baptized: remembering the saying of St.
 “ *Peter*.” Meaning this saying.

A. It cannot be denied but St. *Peter* argued here by consequences. But I believe that will happen to me, which has often happened to me: when I have at any time heard or read such reasonings as these of yours, I have been for the present moved, and inclined to return to my old opinion of Infant-Baptism. But when I come again to reading of the scripture itself, and find there the tenor of baptism generally to run thus; *Repent and be baptized—He that believeth, and is baptized—Baptized, confessing their sins—If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest be baptized—*then, methinks, I see plainly that infants have nothing to do with it. And then the answer which the Pœdobaptists do give to this, is so groundless and precarious, that it turns my stomach. They distinguish and say; “ Baptism is of two sorts, “ adult-baptism and infant-baptism; these “ places speak of adult and not of infant- “ baptism.” But when we say, “ Where “ then are the places that speak of the other?” they can produce none. If I should maintain that infants may receive the communion, and you should confute me with that scripture, *Let a man examine himself, and so eat, &c.* and I should distinguish, “ Communicants are of

“two sorts, adult communicants, and infant communicants,” would you not say that I begged the question? adult baptism: why that is all the baptism that the scripture any where sets forth!

P. If you say thus (and I know that many Antipædobaptists do with a broad assurance say so; but if you say thus) then you must say that all the places of scripture which I have now produced, and others which others do produce, do signify nothing at all to the matter. And to say that, unless you could disprove them, is either begging the question, or denying the conclusion, when you cannot overthrow the premises.

A. I did not design to undervalue your reasonings. But you cannot deny that the history of the baptisms in scripture runs with those clauses which I mentioned.

P. It is true, for the most part. But you do not seem to consider the state of those times, and of the people then. They were all of them people and nations that had had no gospel or christian baptism before. In such a state of things, the first and main work was to persuade the adult persons to believe the gospel: and that order of words was in that case necessary, “Preach it to them; he that believes it, and is baptized, shall be saved.” For those people must be baptized after they were taught; having had no fathers that believed the gospel, to baptize them into it before. In the case I put before, if circumcision instead of baptism

had been appointed, yet in sending apostles to these people, our Saviour could hardly have expressed it after any other manner than thus: "Go, profelyte the nations, circumcising them: he of them that believes the gospel, and is circumcised, shall be saved." And the history of their success would have run much as it does now; "Such a heathen man, or such a number of them, in such a city, upon such preachings and arguments, *repented, confessed their sins, believed with all their heart, and were circumcised.*" And yet all this is no argument that they should not, or did not circumcise their children.

A. I confess that in such a state of things, the converting and baptizing the grown persons was the principal work, and that there was more occasion for mentioning that, both in the commission and in the history, than the baptizing of the infants. But methinks, there would have been some mention of the infants (one at least) as baptized, if they had been generally baptized: especially when at some places it might have come in so naturally, that the context does seem to require it, if it had been true. And in *Acts* viii. 12. *They were baptized, both men and women.* Here one word added [*and children*] would have ended all this dispute. Can we think that God would have suffered such an omission of one word in the recital, which would have been of such use for the quiet of future ages? this would not have swelled the book. For that, I know, is your
pretence,

pretence, that in a history, which must be short, the particular things that were of course, could not be all set down.

P. We are not to give rules how the scripture should have been expressed. In many other controversies, as well as this, a few words added to the text, might (as we should think) have ended the dispute. But we see the contrary: for baptism itself is plainly expressed, and so is the other sacrament; and yet you see a world of people in *England* deny them both. God might, for aught we know, leave some things more difficult to be traced, that we might be under the necessity of studying his word, and the nature of his covenant to us therein declared, more frequently and attentively. There must be heresies, *St. Paul* says, that they which are approved may be made manifest. We are thankfully to take his word as it is; and to follow that sense of it, which, upon a diligent search and weighing of the whole, seems to us his true meaning; whether set down expressly, or gathered by good consequence.

A. You speak piously: we must do so. But that is a reason against our taking Infant-Baptism to be his true meaning, that there are no plain examples of it in his word. That which you urge of households baptized, is not a *certain* one. And the other, of some children of the christians at *Corinth* mentioned by *St. Paul* to have been baptized (as you interpret it) is an *obscure* one.

P. It is obscure to us now, only for this reason: it is not common with us now, to use the word *sanctified* for [*baptized*] but it was in those times a very ordinary use of it. I am (*k*) told, that it is not so little as an hundred times, that St. *Austin*, for one, when he is to speak of persons baptized, expresses it [*sanctified*] as you saw he did in the passage I recited to you. And Mr. *Walker* has taken the pains (*l*) to produce quotations out of the New Testament, and almost all the antient christian writers, to shew that it was a common phrase with them to say *sanctified* instead of *baptized*, and *saints* instead of *baptized christians*. If you have a conscientious desire to understand the true meaning of a scripture passage, you must be at the pains to satisfy yourself by reading such quotations: else, if a word in the scripture times signified one thing, and in our common use another thing; mistakes will be unavoidable. I profess to you sincerely, that I am now fully persuaded that that is the true sense of the place; though at first it seemed as new to me, as it does now to you. It must have been some *visible holiness* of the children, from which St *Paul* draws an argument to satisfy the parents of the expediency of their cohabitation; some known and customary privilege which such children had in the opinion and practice of that church: and I know of no such that they could have

(*k*) Hist. Part I. Ch. xi. § 9. Ch. xv. § 2. (*l*) *Modest Plea for Infant-Baptism*, Chap. xxix.

but their baptism. Pray let us put this case; suppose you were not an Englishman; but a foreigner, and beginning to learn the English language, and did meet in some English book with this passage; "Such a man's children are christened." The word *christened* being not used in scripture, and having no parallel to it in the Latin language, nor in several others, you might be to seek for the meaning of it. What must you do in that case?

A. Why! I must ask somebody that was more conversant in the English language and customs, what that word signified, and what was the use of it among the English; and they would tell me, that *christened* signifies, *made a christian*; and that the use of it among the English, is, to stand as another word for *baptized*. So that it is, *Such a man's children are baptized*.

P. Just so, if you or I meet in St. Paul's epistles with this passage: *Now are your children saints*; and know not what to make of it: we must ask some minister, or other person, that is more conversant in the ancient language and customs, and he would shew us by forty instances in St. Paul himself, and a thousand, if need be, in other writers about that time, that the use of that word, *saints* among the ancients, is, to be as another word for *christians*. They said; *children made saints*, or *made christians*; and we in analogy to it, say *children christened*, or *made christians*; and the

the meaning both of the one, and of the other, is *baptized*.

A. Then I also, it seems, must read those books. But pray tell me, to how many years do you reckon the history of the *Acts of the Apostles* does reach?

P. From Christ's ascension to St. *Paul's* first imprisonment at *Rome*. It is much about thirty years.

A. The christians must have had many thousand children born to them in that space of time.

P. No doubt of it. And you think, I suppose, because none of them are registered in the *Acts* to have been baptized in infancy, that they were not baptized in infancy.

A. That seems to me an argument.

P. Well. Hold fast to that argument. And we will put the case for once, that the instances which I brought from the *Acts*, of households baptized, and the other, of the *Corinthians* children, do prove nothing. And then I ask you this question; Do you think that those thousands of children were ever baptized at any time of their life at all?

A. I suppose that as they grew to years of discretion they were baptized.

P. And yet there is no such thing registered.

A. Let me see. Were none of those men, whose baptism is recited in the *Acts*, the sons of Christians?

P. Not one; if those households that we read to have been baptized, had no children in them

them. And if you conclude that none of those thousands were baptized in infancy, because it is not mentioned; and I conclude that they were not baptized at age, because that is not mentioned neither; the Quakers and Socinians (who hold that when the parents or masters of families are baptized, there is no need that their children or posterity ever after should be baptized, but that all use of baptism may cease in a christian nation) will take our conclusion, that they were not baptized at all.

A. Rather than they should do that, I would grant that there were children in the households that were baptized: and that the Corinthian infants were baptized.

P. I hope you will be serious in a thing that affects your conscience so much as you say this does. And I hope also that you will not espouse a principle which must establish the error of those grossly deluded people.

A. It seems to many, that the church of England itself has given up the cause to the Antipoedobaptists; when in the catechism they (speaking of baptism in general) do own, that there is required of persons to be baptized, faith and repentance; and that after this is established in the general, what they say afterwards of infants baptized on a promise of these, comes too late.

P. There is no doubt, but that all baptism whatsoever is on a covenant; as, of the kingdom of heaven to be given on God's part, or faith and repentance on the baptized person's part:

part: only with this difference as to infants and adults, namely, that these conditions are required to be performed *at present* of the adult; of infants, when they are, on account of age, capable of them. And this is all the church means, namely, that both adult persons and infants are baptized on the same covenant, which ought to be declared at the baptism.

A. Why then did they not express it more distinctly in the answer there given, and say “ of *adult persons* is required faith, &c. at present; of *infants*, if they live?”

P. Before the rise of any enemies to a doctrine, men are apt to be unguarded, and not so distinct in their expressions about it. Now at the time of composing this catechism, there was never an Englishman of their opinion, as the author of the aforesaid *History of Infant-Baptism* has shewn (*m*).

A. Let us come to the second thing, which Mr. B. told you was so useful to give light in this matter: namely, the practice of the primitive christians, who lived so nigh the times of the apostles, that they must needs know whether infants were baptized in the apostles time, or not. If I could any ways come by a true account of the practice of those ancient times, I should be much swayed by it: since these men could by a little enquiry know with ease and certainty, the matter of fact about which we are in the dark; as we Englishmen cannot but know what was done in England in

(*m*) Part II. Ch. viii. § 6.

queen ELIZABETH's time, in a practice so public and notorious. And since our question now is about a matter of fact (what the apostles did in this case of infants) let some people say what they will in slighting of human authority, it never can, nor never shall, sink into my head, but that they whose fathers or grandfathers lived in the apostles time, must know what the apostles did in this matter. And where the scripture is short, or doubtfully expressed, these mens books are, it seems, larger: so that one would think that learned men might be agreed concerning the practice of the times I now speak of. But I find so much contrariety in the accounts given, that there must be on one side or on the other, great disingenuity used by them. I wish I were able to read the books myself I would certainly give a true account, of which side soever I were. You, I perceive, are confident that the ancient practice was wholly on your side: and some books that I have read, do give the account so. But then others bring in those ancient fathers speaking all on the other side. What verdict can one give upon such contrary evidence?

P. I am afraid you have read *Danvers*. That book did me once a great deal of hurt.

A. And I thought it did me a great deal of good. For it leads one through all the first centuries with quotations, shewing, that adult baptism only was then in use.

P. You must of necessity read Mr. *Baxter's Confutation of the strange Forgeries of Mr. H. Danvers*.

Danvers. Or, Mr. *Wills's* two books on that subject; with his *Appeal* to the Antipædobaptists themselves, that they ought to renounce such a man. Or, Mr. *Whiston*: or, *The History of Infant Baptism* (n). You will find, that book (which has been so magnified and handed about among those people, and has misled several of them) to be a great shame and discredit to their cause. And in this respect, I may say, that afterwards it did me good too: for it gave me an aversion to that cause which was thought to need such forging and perverting of testimonies, as even the Papists do seldom use.

A. I shall judge of that, when I read the book, you speak of. But I must own to you my suspicion, whether that quotation you brought just now, as out of *Justin Martyr*, be genuine, where he speaks of some christians of his acquaintance that were then seventy years old, and had been baptized in their childhood.

P. The word used by *Justin*, is not the word itself [baptized] but [discipled, or made disciples] as I rehearsed it. It is as I told you, the same word that is used by St. *Matt.* xxviii. 19. *Disciple the nations, baptizing, &c.*

A. That seems to me much as one. For our reason why infants cannot be baptized, is, because they cannot be discipled. Nor do I see what *Justin* could mean by the infants being *discipled to Christ*, but their being baptized. But the reason of my questioning whether it

(n) Part II. Ch. i. and all over the book.

be genuine is, because I have used to mind how early any of the quotations are, that are brought for Infant-Baptism, and I do not remember that they brought any so early. For *Justin* wrote that *Apology* at the year after Christ's birth, 140, as I remember; that is, within 40 years of the death of some of the last apostles: and 70 years reckoned back from that time, do reach in the midst of the apostles time, and come within 36 years of our Saviour's death.

P. The quotation is genuine (as Mr. B. assured me) and the book unquestioned. You may not have met with it before. We are beholden to Mr. *Dorrington* (o) for observing a passage which so many before him had over-looked.

A. Some other passages of antiquity that you have mentioned, I will remember and examine. Especially that of those men that say, they never heard of any christians that did not baptize infants. Did Mr. B. tell you of any more?

P. Yes. He gave me an account out of the four first centuries. And in the first (p) of them (which is the age of Christ and his apostles) there are, besides the books of scripture, but two or three short pieces left. They are on other subjects, and have no discourse directly about infants. But they speak of original sin with which we are born; and one of them (who wrote before St. *John*) mentions the necessity of baptism to all persons, in order to entrance into God's kingdom, as a known christian doctrine

(o) *Vindication of the Church.*

(p) *Hist.* Part I. Ch. i.

at that time. For he says, none can come there-
without the seal; and that that seal is water.

In the second (q), there are also but few books left. Yet of those few, what *Justin* says, you have heard: and he discourses moreover of baptism being to us instead of circumcision: and of original sin, &c. And *Iræneus*, who lived 30 years after *Justin*, reckoning up the several sorts of persons that are *by Christ born again unto God*, mentions infants expressly among them. And the word [born again] does with him and all old writers (and *Justin* for one) signify baptism as peculiarly as the word [christening] does with us.

A. I do not see how infants can be said to *be born again* in any other sense.

P. You observe right. In the third century (r) *Tertullian* (year after the apostles 102) who was much given to singular opinions, and opposed the received practices in many things, disputes against the custom of baptizing infants, virgins, young widows, &c. (at least except in danger of death) I counted this testimony to be as good an evidence for Infant-Baptism as any: for he so gives his reasons and opinion against the custom, as that one plainly perceives by his words that it was then actually the custom to baptize them.

Origen, ten years after, does in several places speak of Infant-Baptism, as a known and undoubted practice: and (in one of them) as having been ordered by the apostles.

(q) *Hist.* Part I. ch. ii. and iii. (r) *Hist.* Part I. ch. iv, v, vi.

A. If

A. If that were a known thing at that time, that the Apostles ordered so, *Tertullian* must have been a madman to oppose it.

P. It is probable he did not know it. He lived in a country in *Africa*, where no apostle ever came, nor nigh it. But *Origen* lived near *Judea*, and had been born of christian parents, and so might know it better. And St. *Ambrose* and St. *Austin* do affirm the same thing, that the apostles practised and ordered it. About forty years after *Origen*, one *Fidus*, a country bishop, sent a scruple of his to St. *Cyprian*, and sixty-six bishops that were occasionally assembled; "Whether the baptism of an infant
" must not always be on the eighth day after
" his birth, because circumcision was so?" They send him a letter in answer, "That his
" scruple is vain; that the child may (and
" must, if there be danger of death) be bap-
" tized sooner: and speak of the refusal of it
" as dangerous to the soul's health of the
" child." This was about 150 years after the apostles; and some of these sixty-six bishops must be supposed to be 70 or 80 years old themselves: which reaches to half the space: and it appears by their words, that not one of them made any doubt of Infant-Baptism.

A. I remember that letter: but *Danvers* would have it to be spurious.

P. There is not a piece in all antiquity that can more certainly be proved to be genuine; for St. *Hierom* and St. *Austin* do very frequently quote passages out of it.

A. What

A. What, to confirm Infant-Baptism?

P. No. I told you before that you never heard of any one that denied that: but to confirm the doctrine of original sin, which the *Pelagians* denied, though they owned Infant-Baptism.

As for the next century, it is endless to repeat their sayings: but I have here a note of their names. The council of *Eliberis* (year after the apostles 205) *Optatus* 260. *Greg. Nazianzen* 260. *St. Ambrose* 274. *Siricius* 284. *St. Austin* 290. *Paulinus* 293. Council of *Carthage* 297. Another 300. Another 401. *Innocentius* 302.

A. Hold. Was not that Pope *Innocent*?

P. Yes.

A. *Danvers* says, he was the first that decreed infants to be baptized.

P. How true that is you may guess by what I have rehearsed. And *St. Austin* (before *Innocent* was Pope) writes, "that it was not decreed in any council, but had been ever in use." And that "no christian man of any sort, had ever denied it to be useful (s)."

A. Go on with your names.

P. No. Here I will give you the note—There are a great many more of them. They do all of them (some in several places of their works, *St. Austin* in above 1000 places) shew by their words, that infants were baptized in their times: and that without controversy. There is not one man of them that pleads for it, or goes

(s) *Hist.* Part I. Ch. vii, viii. &c. to xxiii. Part II. Ch. x.

about

about to prove it, as a thing denied by any christian, except those that denied all water-baptism.

A. Were there then any Quakers in those days?

P. There were some heretics that denied all baptism. But it was only some of the grossest and most enormous ones, and such as denied the scriptures also.

A. And is there no author in all this space of time that speaks against Infant-Baptism, but only that *Tertullian*?

P. Not one among those that owned any baptism at all.

A. Nor one that do say that it was the custom of some churches to baptize only the adult?

P. No such thing.

A. Then (if I find what you say to be true) I will never believe *Danvers's* book any more. For he quotes several authors of these times to say: "That in the eastern church they baptized only the adult (t)." But then in a postscript he corrects that; and for *eastern* he says we must read *western*. And if it be true of neither of them, how gross is that?

But for the several sects (u) that were in those times, *Novations*, *Donatists*, &c. and for the *Britons* he makes a pretence. You say *St. Austin* knew of no sect that denied Infant-Baptism. Had *St. Austin* any great knowledge of

(t) *Treatise of Infant-Baptism*, cent. 4. I. p. 56. Ed. 2.
See *Hist.* Part II. Ch. i. (u) *Hist.* Part II. Ch. iv.

the sects that were or had been? You find he was ignorant that *Tertullian* had spoken against it.

P. He had so good knowledge, that he wrote a book of all the sects that were then, or had been (he reckons 88; and their several tenets) and of the *Novations* and *Donatists* writes largely: but not a word of their denying Infant-Baptism.

But it had been *Pelagius's* interest (being so hard pressed with that argument; "Why are infants baptized, if they have no sin?") to have found out some that denied it, if he could. And yet he also declares, as I told you, that he never heard of any. And he was a *Briton* born, but lived most part of his time at *Rome* and *Jerusalem*, and so must need have heard of them, if there had been any.

A. Where may I find the passages of the authors named in your note, and the rest that you refer to?

P. If you will read them at large, and in their order of time, (which I think is better than reading of scraps) you may see them in a book, called, *The History of Infant-Baptism*. That writer pretends to little more than the mere pains of collecting them; but he has done them at large, and in the author's own words, and referred to the book and chapter whence they are copied.

A. Do these fathers seem to have considered those things, which the Antipœdobaptists do now use as reasons against the baptizing of infants:

fants: as that they have no sense of the thing, no faith, &c.

P. Yes. As appears in the discourse they have about (w) the godfathers professing in the name of the child, that he does renounce, believe, &c. Where they confess that the child has not in any proper sense, faith, &c. but that it is only the godfathers declaring, in the name of the child, that part of the covenant which the child is bound to believe and perform, if he live. So far are they from thinking this a reason against the baptizing of them.

A. Then they used godfathers in those times too?

P. Yes. Your own friend *Tertullian* (year after the apostles 100) speaks of them as being then in use, where he speaks of the other. And so do many of the rest.

A. But if there was no church, sect, or society that renounced Infant-Baptism; there seems to have been a great many particular christians that let their children grow up unbaptized. For the Antipædobaptists bring many instances of emperors, as *Constantine*, &c. and many other men, as *Austin*, &c. that had christian parents, and yet were baptized at full age. And here (excuse me if I deal freely with you) I can prove the contrary of what you have said. You say St. *Austin* never had heard of any christian of our opinion: it is plain that his own father was of this opinion. I have myself read his book of Confessions; where he in

(w) *Hist.* Part II. Chap. v. § 1, 11, 16, 17.

the ninth book tells us how he was baptized at his own desire, being above thirty years old.

P. I have seen fourteen such instances brought: but I have (x) seen thirteen of them shewn to be mistakes, or to fail of proof: and the fourteenth proved to be a disputable case. But none of them more palpable mistakes than those two you mention. Did not you read in those books of St. *Austin*, that his father was a Heathen, and did not turn Christian till a little before his death?

A. I did not mind any such thing.

P. Then when you read them again, mind what he says, in the first book, ch. ii. second book, ch. iii. ninth book, ch. ix. you will find what I say to be true. And for *Constantine*, do not you remember that he was the first Christian emperor?

A. Yes. Every one has heard of that.

P. Do you think that the first Christian emperor had a Christian emperor for his father?

A. Was his father emperor?

P. Yes. (y) *Constantius Chlorus*. He died at *York*, possessed of the imperial dignity. He died a Heathen.

A. Then what makes people write such bulls? I think that after the fourth century the Antipædobaptists do confess that Infant-Baptism did generally prevail.

P. Yes. Mr. *Toms* says, (z) “ that St. *Austin’s* authority carried it in the following

(x) *Hist.* Part II. Ch. iii. (y) *Ibid.* 2. (z) *Examen*, Part I. §. 8.

“ ages,

“ages, almost without controul.” Which is hard, when St. *Austin* professes solemnly, that he never heard of any one in his time, or ever before, that opposed it.

A. But hark ye. Did not these ancient christians give the communion to infants, as well as baptism?

P. No. None of the most ancient (a). In St. *Cyprian's* time, there was a custom of giving it in his church to young boys or girls of about four or five years old. And afterwards mere infants received it in some churches. But not till after the year 400, as far as I can find. I believe that Pope *Innocent*, whom *Danvers* makes the first decreer of Infant-Baptism, was really the first that decreed that they must receive the communion.

A. In what manner do you find that these ancient christians administered baptism to infants and others? By dipping? or, by pouring water on the face?

P. By dipping generally (b). But if the person were weak, so that going into the water might endanger his life; or in times of great haste, want of water, or other necessity, they gave it by putting water on the face.

A. Then they did not think dipping to be of the essence of baptism, so as that a person baptized, by putting water on the face, should

(a) *Hist.* Part II. Ch. ix. § 15, 16, 17. (b) *Hist.* Part II. Ch. ix. § 2.

be accounted as not sufficiently baptized! Our Saviour in his command, used only this word, *baptize*. Now what did Mr. B. tell you was the proper signification and use of that word in other places of scripture?

P. The word, *to baptize*, in scripture (c) is used for any washing, whether in whole or in part; whether in a sacramental way or on other occasions. And the sacramental washing is sometimes expressed by the word *baptize*, and sometimes by other words, that are used for common washing.

A. What places of scripture did he bring, where the word *baptize* is used for any other washing than that of dipping?

P. Luke xi. 38. The washing of the hands is called the baptizing of the man. For where we read; *The Pharisee marvelled that he had not washed before dinner.* St. Luke's own words are; *that he was not baptized before dinner.* And so where we read; Mark vii. 4. *When they come from market, except they wash, they eat not.* St. Mark's own words are; *except they be baptized, they eat not.* Now this washing before dinner, was only the washing of the hands; as we see, *Mark vii. 5.* and that was by a servant's pouring water on the hands. He brought also several other places.

A. And where is the sacramental washing expressed by other words than are used for common washing?

(c) *Hist.* Part II. Chap. viii. § 6. page 219.

P. Eph. v. 26. *The washing of water.* Tit. iii. 5. *The washing of regeneration.* Heb. x. 22. *Having our bodies washed.* The word here used in the original, is not *baptizing*, but (as Mr. B. assured me) the same that is used *Acts* xvi. 33. *He washed their stripes.* No man will think they were put into the water for that.

A. I shall be less anxious about this ; partly because our Saviour has given us a rule, *Matt.* xii. 3, 4, 7. that " what is needful to preserve life, is to be preferred before outward ceremonies : " and partly because in the church of England (and so I suppose in other churches) any man may have his child dipped at baptism, if he will venture the life of his child.

But for the baptizing of infants, I shall consider, read, and confer on the several things you have mentioned : and what will be the result I know not : but I am resolved to take your advice in conferring with our curate, or some other minister, before I determine on any alteration : For I find that they know many things that are useful to find out the true sense of a scripture-passage, more than we do.

P. If you do so, and with an unprejudiced mind, I do not much doubt but that, by the grace of God, you will not only overcome all your scruples, but also be more confirmed in opinion of the validity of your baptism, and more thankful for the spiritual benefits conveyed to you by it, than ever you were before your doubting, as (I thank God) I am. There
are

80 *A Conference between two Men, &c.*

are many that were of our church, who are now far gone in their new ways, and become teachers in them, who wanted nothing but this to have kept them steady in the unity of the church of Christ and of its doctrines.

FINIS

