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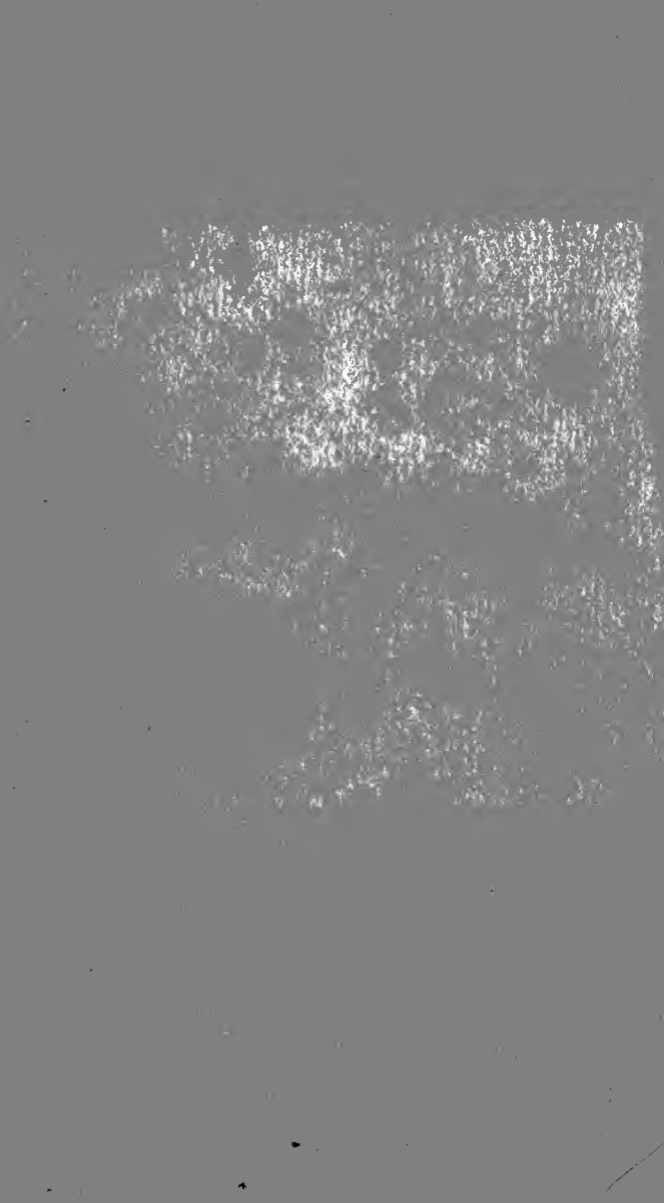
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Presented by Mr. Samuel Agnew of Philadelphia, Pa.

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*\*Agnew Coll. on Baptism, No. ....*

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*Edm. P. Bacon*

1806



SERMONS,

ON THE

MODE AND SUBJECTS

OF

*CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,*

OR

AN ATTEMPT TO SHEW THAT POURING OR SPRINKLING IS A SCRIPTURAL MODE; AND THE INFANTS OF BELIEVERS ARE PROPER SUBJECTS OF THE BAPTISM INSTITUTED BY CHRIST :

WITH AN

EXAMINATION OF VARIOUS OBJECTIONS,

Particularly those contained in a Course of Anonymous Letters to *Bishop Hoadly*.

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BY JOSEPH LATHROP, D. D.

Pastor of the First Church in West-Springfield.

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THE FOURTH EDITION.

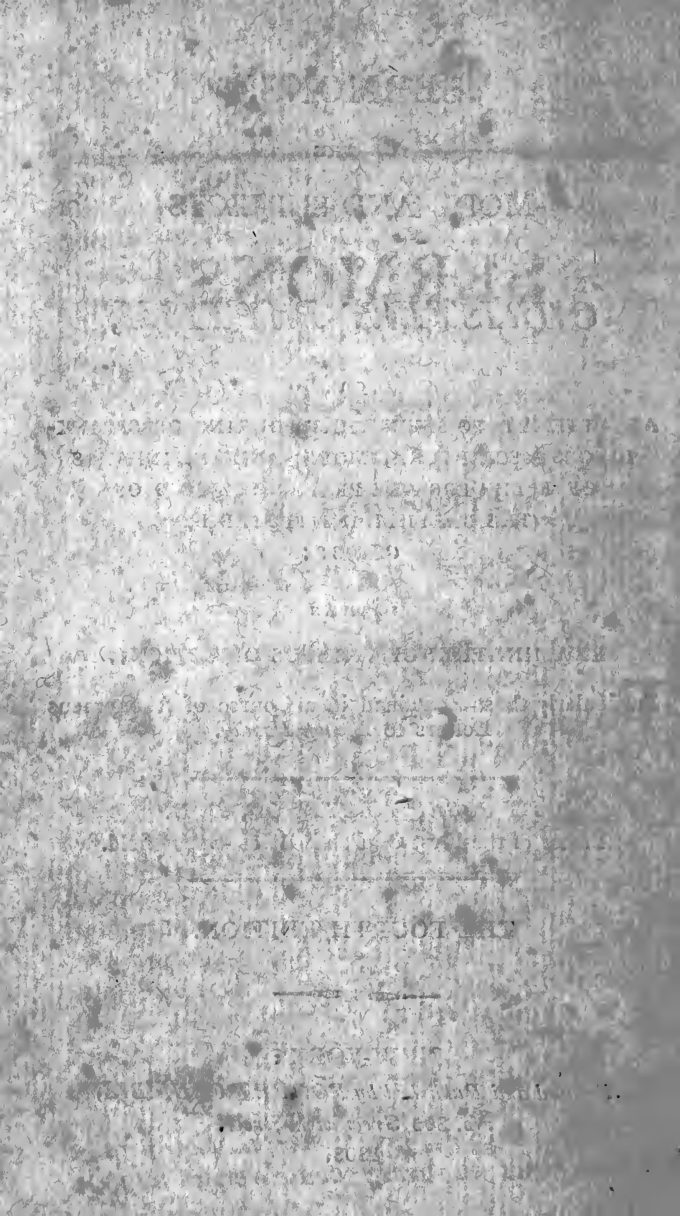


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# SERMONS.

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EPHESIANS IV. 5.

ONE BAPTISM.

DISCOURSE I.

**T**O persuade the Ephesians to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, the Apostle urges this, among other arguments, that they had received *one Baptism*. If *this one Baptism* was designed to be a bond of peace and unity among christians, how unhappy it is, that it should become an occasion of division and separation? Some will say, 'It is not *one* baptism, but *different* baptisms that cause divisions.' It is true, baptism is administered in different *modes*, and to different *subjects*; but still, I hope, it will appear to be *one* baptism; and if so, then this difference is no just reason for disunion.

You are sensible, my brethren, that I have not been wont to bring controversies into the

pulpit. I have purposely avoided the controversy concerning *baptism* in years past, and should have done so still, had it not been lately revived among you.—It is not any prejudice against our brethren who differ from us, but a regard to your present circumstances, and to the desire of many among you, that now induces me to enter upon it; and I hope to handle it in such a manner, as, at least, not to offend, if I should not convince. I shall not call in question the validity of the baptism of our brethren: I only aim to vindicate *our own*. And surely when we are charged with having essentially changed a divine institution—when we are represented as being in an unbaptised state—when we are treated as unfit for christian communion, we have a right to plead in our defence.

There is a late pamphlet which many of you have read, written by way of Letters to *Bishop Hoadly*, the author of which labours to disprove the validity both of *sprinkling*, and of *infant baptism*, and treats them both with great contempt. I shall pay particular attention to this piece, and take notice of every thing that is material in it.

The questions before us are two; whether *sprinkling* is a scriptural mode: and whether *infants* are proper subjects of baptism? These questions have no necessary connection with each other. But as the validity of our baptism is denied on account of the *mode* in which it was administered, as well as of the *age* at which we received it, I shall distinctly consider both questions; and shall begin with the former.

## PART I.

**W**E will first enquire, what is the true scriptural mode of Baptism ?

There are two Ways, in which this ordinance is administered; one is *immersion*, or plunging the whole body into water: The other is *affusion*, which is pouring or sprinkling water upon the subject. We do not deny the *validity* of immersion; we only deny the *necessity* of it: But our brethren (at least many of them) deny the *validity* of *affusion*, and represent it as no baptism to whomsoever administered. It is therefore of some importance that we enquire, whether there be not such evidence, that *affusion* is a scriptural mode, as may justify our use of it, and satisfy those who have received baptism in this manner.

I shall first examine the import of the *Greek* word used for baptism—then consider the uses of baptism and the allusions of scripture to these uses—next enquire what was the apostolic practice—and lastly take some notice of the usage of the church after the apostolic age.

I. We will examine the import of the word *baptizo*, which is the *usual*, if not the *only* word by which the writers of the New Testament express the christian ordinance of baptism.

It is agreed, that the word *baptizo*, signifies *to wash* by the application of water: But then, *how* the water is to be applied, whether by plunging the subject *into* water, or by pouring or sprinkling water *upon* the subject, is the question: This will best be determined by considering how the word is used upon common occasions.

The author of the Letters to Bishop *Hoadly* tells us, 'that the writers of the New Testament borrowed their phrases from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the *Septuagint*.' He refers us to this for the sense of the words, which they have used for baptism. He allows that '*baptizo* is the offspring of *bapto*;' and consequently may be taken in the same sense. Zealous as he is for immersion, he is constrained to acknowledge, that '*bapto* is never used in the *Septuagint* for the rite of washing a person's *whole* body:' But on the contrary, is sometimes used for wetting the body by sprinkling; as in Dan. 4. 33. and chap. 5. 21. where *Nebuchadnezzar's* body is said to be *wet with the dew of heaven*. Now he says, 'We all know, that a person is wet with dew, not by immersion into it, but by its distillation in gentle drops; we are sprinkled with it.' And if *bapto* is never used for plunging the whole body, but sometimes for sprinkling it probably *baptizo*, 'its offspring,' is generally used in the same sense. Accordingly this author concedes that 'the word *baptizo*, is never *but once* used, in those very numerous places of the Old Testament, where *bathing* the person is commanded.' The one instance he mentions is in 2 King. 5. 14. where *Naaman* is said to have *dipped* (or baptised) *himself seven times in Jordan*, for the cure of the leprosy. But this *one* instance, at best, is but a doubtful one; for the law prescribed that the leper should be *sprinkled* seven times for his cleansing. The Prophet says, *wash seven times and thou shalt be clean*. If the Prophet had any respect to the law, as it seems he had, by his enjoining him to *wash seven times*, then by *washing* he meant



*sprinkling*; so that this example will by no means prove, that the word *baptizo*, signifies to *plunge*. We have then *no* instance of *bapto*, and but one (and that a very doubtful instance) of *baptizo*, used in *all* the Old Testament for immersion or bathing the body: But some instances of the former's being used for sprinkling. Thus the matter stands according to the concessions of this writer.

Let us now consult the New-Testament.— There we shall find clear and direct evidence, that the word *baptizo*, signifies to *pour* or *sprinkle*.

It is said, in the beginning of the 7th Chap. of Mark, That *the Pharisees, when they saw some of the disciples eat bread with defiled (that is to say, with unwashen) hands, found fault; for the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not. And when they come from the market, except they wash, (ean me baptizontai, except they are baptised) they eat not.* What in the former clause, is called *washing the hands*, is here called *being baptised*. The usual manner of washing hands among the *Jews*, we learn from 2 Kings 3. 11. where it is said, *Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah.* Here then you see, persons are said to be *baptised*, when only a part of the body is washed by the *pouring on* of water. It is added, *Many other things there are, which they have received to hold, as the washings (baptismous, baptisms) of brazen vessels and tables or beds, i. e. the seats on which they used to recline at meals, which were so large, that they could be washed only by pouring water on them.*

It is said, Luke 11. 37. *A certain Pharisee asked Jesus to dine with him. And he went in and*

sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner: Not washed his whole body, but only his hands, according to the Jewish custom mentioned in the before cited passage in *Mark*. And this is expressed by the same word, which is used for baptising. He marvelled that he had not been baptised, *ebaptisthe*, before dinner.

The *Jews*, by divine appointment, observed divers kinds of purifications, the greater part of which were *sprinklings*. And these are expressly called *baptisms*. The Apostle, in the 9th chap. to *Heb.* 10th verse, speaking of the *Jewish* ritual, says, *It stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings, (diaphorois baptismois, divers baptisms.)* By these divers *baptisms*, plainly means the various ceremonies of *sprinkling*; for so he explains them in the following verses. *The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh. Moses took the blood of calves and goats with water—and sprinkled the book and all the people. He sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are, by the law, purged with blood, i. e. with the sprinkling of blood.* Now as the Apostle speaks of divers *baptisms*, and then immediately illustrates them by divers *sprinklings*, and mentions no other purifications, but *sprinklings*, as instances of these divers *baptisms*, it is evident, that if the sacred writer understood *Greek*, *sprinkling* is baptism.

And since the word, wherever it is used in scripture for any thing besides the christian ordinance, plainly signifies *pouring* or *sprinkling*, except in

the *single* instance of *Naaman's* dipping himself in *Jordan*, which at most is a very doubtful one, we must naturally suppose, it is used in the same sense, when it is applied to the christian ordinance. This conclusion may have the more weight, because it is deduced from the concessions of a critical writer on the other side of the question.

There is another Greek word, *louo*, supposed to be sometimes used for baptism, on which the author of the letters lays more weight: for, 'This, he tells us, is almost the constant word of the *Septuagint*, in those very numerous places where bathing, or washing the *whole* body is commanded.'

This word is indeed frequently used for washing the body; sometimes for washing the *whole* body; And if this were the constant and *only* word for baptism in the New Testament, here would be a plausible argument for washing the whole body in baptism.—But it should be observed, that this word is very seldom, if ever used for baptism. The author of the letters has cited about *sixty* passages in the New Testament, as speaking of baptism: Among all these, there are but *four* where this word is used. It is not certain, that baptism is the thing intended in *these*: But if it is, yet no argument can be drawn from them in favour of immersion; but perhaps the contrary. Let us consider them.

One is in Heb. 10. 23. *Let us draw near having our body washed, (léloumenoi soma, being washed in the body) with pure water.* Now a person is washed in his body, though water be poured only on a part of it. Thus when the woman poured ointment on Christ's *head*, she is

said to have anointed his *body*. And this washing is, in the preceding clause, expressed by *sprinkling*.—*Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water.*

Another passage is in Titus 3. 5. *He hath saved us (dialoutrou) by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he hath shed, or poured on us.* Now if baptism is here intended by the *washing of regeneration*, this text affords a plain argument for *affusion*, or *pouring* in baptism: For this washing denotes the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, which is *poured on us*; and therefore, that there may be some resemblance between the sign and the thing signified, baptism should be performed by *pouring*. The phrase of *the pouring of the spirit* is an allusion to the *pouring of water in baptism*.

A Third passage is in Eph. 5. 26. *That he might sanctify it (the church) having cleansed it with the washing of water by the word.* Now if baptism be here intended by washing, then the church is said to be sanctified and cleansed by the baptismal washing: But how this washing is performed, whether by sprinkling or plunging, is still the question. The Apostle says,\* *sprinkling—sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.* If then we will allow the Apostle to interpret his own phrases, it is *sprinkling* that sanctifies and cleanses the flesh, and consequently is the *washing* intended, when the church is said to be *sanctified and cleansed by the washing of water*. In the 51st Psal. 2d verse, the Psalmist prays, *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from sin.*

He adds ver. 7. *Purge me*, (in the *Greek* it is *sprinkle me*) and *I shall be cleansed*. What in the 2d ver. is called *washing thoroughly*, is in the 7th ver. called *sprinkling*; and the latter is said to *cleanse*, as well as the former. The other passage is in 1 Cor. 6. 11. *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, &c.* This is so nearly parallel to the former, that the same remarks are applicable to both, and therefore nothing further needs to be added. It appears, I think, that the word which our author chiefly depends on to prove immersion entirely fails him, and finally determines in favor of *affusion*.

This now is the result of our enquiry. The word *baptizo*, is but *once*, and perhaps *never* used in all the Old Testament, where bathing the body is commanded. It is often used, in the New Testament, for *sprinkling or pouring*. This is the *usual*, if not the *only* word for baptism. It is used to be sure, in near sixty passages. The word, *louo*, is sometimes used for bathing the body, but never *certainly* used for baptism: There are but four passages, where it is pretended to be so used: And even here it is plainly synonymous with *pouring or sprinkling*.

It is indeed very remarkable, that the writers of the New Testament, when they speak of the christian ordinance of baptism, have generally (if not always) avoided that word, which in the *Septuagint* is used for bathing the body; and chosen a word of a more general signification; and if they have ever used the former, they have joined with it *sprinkling or pouring* as if it were on purpose to teach us, that plunging the whole body is a ceremony not required under the gospel.

II. I apprehend we may obtain some satisfaction in the point before us, if we attend to those passages of scripture, in which the uses of baptism are manifestly alluded to.

1. One use of it is to represent the sanctifying influence of the spirit. Christians are said to be *born of water and of the spirit*; and to be saved *by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. Peter says to the convicted Jews *Be Baptised and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*.\*

The influence of the Spirit represented in baptism is often expressed by *pouring* and *sprinkling*; as in the before cited passages to Titus, and to the Hebrews. *The renewing of the Holy Ghost which he hath poured on us*. *Having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience*. This *pouring out* of the Spirit is called, being *baptised* with it. That promise, *Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost*, is said to have been fulfilled when Christ *shed or poured forth the Spirit*†.

2. Baptism represents the forgiveness of sins. Hence these directions. *Be baptised for the remission of sins--Be baptised and wash away thy sins*‡ our sins are washed away in Christ's blood. *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin*. *He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood*.§ And this application of Christ's blood is expressed by *sprinkling*. *Ye are come—to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling*. *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God through sanctification of the spirit unto—sprinkling of the blood of Christ*¶.

\* Act 2, 38

† Act 1. 5, and ch 2. 33.

‡ Act. 2. 38. and ch. 22. 16.

§ 1 Joli. 1. 7, and Rev. 1. 5.

|| Heb. 12. 24. 1 Pet. 1. 2.

3. Baptism with *clean* water may denote the *simplicity* of the Gospel dispensation.

The writer of the letters says, 'There does not appear, in all the five books of *Moses*, any rite of sprinkling *mere* water, but it was water mixed with blood, ashes, &c.'" The *Mosaic* institution was of a mixed nature: It consisted both of *moral* and *ceremonial* precepts. And the rites of purification were of a piece with the dispensation itself; for they were performed by water mixed with other ingredients. But the Gospel dispensation is pure and simple, charged with few external rites, and these plain and easy. Thus, Ezek. 36. 25. God, foretelling the happiness of his people in the Gospel times, says, *Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean.* 'This expression,' says the author before mentioned, 'alludes to some *watery* purification in the law of *Moses*.' But he says, 'There was no ceremony of unmixed water.' He thinks, 'it alludes to the water of separation.' And yet he says, 'This was a *composition* of various ingredients.'

The meaning of the passage then must be this. In the latter times I will give you a *pure* and *spiritual* dispensation, not burdened with such rites and ceremonies as the present. The simple nature and spiritual design of it shall be represented by the great rite of initiation, which shall be the *sprinkling* of *pure* water, and not the application of such mixed compositions as are now in use.

Observe here: *Sprinkling* is said to *cleanse* the person. *I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean, and from all your filthiness will I cleanse you.* So washing Peter's feet only, was washing him. Peter says, *Thou shalt never wash*

my feet. Jesus replies, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.* When he moved, that his hands and head might be washed too, Christ answered, *He that is washed, need not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.\**

It has been said, 'A minister may as well wash the hands or feet, as sprinkle the face of a person, in the name of the Trinity, and call it baptism.' I am far from asserting, that the validity of baptism depends upon the part to which the water is applied. There is however an obvious propriety in applying it to the head. This is the principal part of the body. It is the part which is usually *uncovered*; and the water doubtless should be applied to the *person*, rather than to his *clothes*. The ceremony of *benediction* was performed by laying the hands on the head. *Uction* was performed by pouring oil on the head, which was called anointing the *body*. The Holy Ghost was communicated by the *imposition* of the Apostles hands: And they who had the Spirit communicated to them, were said to be *baptised* with it; which makes it highly probable that baptism, the token of this communication, was performed by putting water on the heads of the persons baptised. Accordingly, the Apostle to the *Hebrews* speaks of the doctrine of *Baptisms and laying on of hands* †

4. The Apostle, in 1 Cor. 10. speaking of the Jews who came out of Egypt, says, *They were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.* the Apostle here undoubtedly alludes to christian baptism, and therefore we may suppose there was some resemblance between baptism unto Christ and that ancient baptism unto Moses.—Now how

\* John 13. 8, 9, 10.

† Chap. 6. 2.



were they baptised in the cloud and sea? Surely not by being *plunged* all over in water; for they went over dry shod; but only by being *sprinkled* with some spray of the sea and drops from the cloud. This appears to me the most natural sense of the expression. The author of the letters indeed ridicules such an interpretation, and says; Here is an allusion to the custom of *immersion*, the *Israelites* being covered by the cloud over, and by the water on each side of them.' But I think he has not mended the matter; for though the waters surrounded them, yet (as he would have it understood) not even a spray touched them, nor a drop fell on them; for then they would have been *sprinkled*. It was a *dry* baptism: A baptism without water. *Jonah* might as well have been said, to be baptised in allusion to *immersion*, when he went down into the sides of the ship, and there lay, while a storm hung over him

5. Baptism signifies our obligation to renounce sin and put on the character of Christ.

The Apostle says, Rom. 6. 4. *We are buried with Christ by baptism into his death*. And Col. 2. 12. *Buried with him in baptism*. The plain meaning is; by baptism we are bound to die to sin, and walk in newness of life, in conformity to the death and resurrection of Christ. Our brethren imagine, these two passages afford a strong argument for immersion. They tell us, 'The phrase of being *buried with Christ in baptism*, alludes to the manner of baptism, which was a burial in the water; for if there were nothing like a burial, the phrase would be very improper. But as well might they say, 'The mode of baptism must resemble his *crucifixion*; for in the same passage

the Apostle says, *We are baptised into his death, planted together in the likeness of his death—our old man is crucified with him.* But I am willing their argument should have its full weight; for if they think *immersion* can be proved from these *two* passages, where our conformity to Christ is expressed by our being *buried with him in beptism*, they must if they will be consistent with themselves, allow that *sprinkling* can be more clearly proved from those *numerous* passages, where our justification through Christ's blood is expressed by the *sprinkling of his blood*; and our sanctification is expressed by the *sprinkling of clean water—by the heart's being sprinkled—by the spirits being poured on us, &c.* The conclusion then from this argument will be, that *both* modes were admitted by the Apostles--both are valid and agreeable to the institution. Let us no longer contend. This argument bids so fair to reconcile our brethren to our practice, that I could willingly leave them in full possession of it.—I wish it good success.—But if it be attended to, I am afraid, it will appear to have little weight.

How was Christ buried? Not as the dead are usually buried among us, but as rich men were among the *Jews*, in an apartment cut out in the side of a rock. Such tombs were called *sepulchres on high*;\* because they were made above ground. *Lazarus's* grave was of this sort; and he was laid in it in such a position, that, upon his revival, *he came forth while he was bound hand and foot*; but he could not *walk*, till he was loosed. 'Loose him and let him go.† *Plunging* then no more resem-

\* Isa. 22, 16.

† Joh. 11 44.

bles Christ's *entombment* than *sprinkling* does. If there were any circumstances in his burial, which baptism can resemble, it must be his *embalment*. It is said, *Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, and wound the body of Jesus in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.\** And after this, *the women prepared spices and ointments and came to anoint his body.* The expression of being *buried with Christ in baptism*, may allude to his body's being anointed with aromatic ointments at the time of his burial; and this was done by *pouring* and *rubbing* them on the body. Accordingly when the woman *poured* the precious ointment on Christ's head, He says, *In that she poured it on my body, she did it to my burial. She is come to anoint my body to the burying.†* Observe; her pouring it only on his *head*, he calls pouring it on his *body*; as on another occasion, a woman's *dropping her tears* on his feet, he calls *washing* his feet; and washing Peter's *feet* was washing *him*.—Now in allusion to this manner of anointing, christians are said, *to be anointed with the spirit*, and *to have an union from the Holy One, which teachest them all things.‡* What is elsewhere called the *pouring* of the spirit on them; and being *baptised* with the spirit; is here expressed by the *anointing* of the spirit, in allusion to the manner of anointing by *pouring* oil on the head.

III. It is time that we proceed to enquire, in what manner baptism was administered in the times of our Saviour and his Apostles.

Our brethren, and particularly the gentleman before mentioned, think it very manifest, that

\* John 19. 40.  
1 Joan. 2 20 27

† Mat. 26. 7.

‡ 2 Cor. 1. 21 and

*immersion* was the mode practised in those times, because the persons baptised are, in one or two instances, said to go *into*, and come *out of* the water; because some were baptised *in a river*; and because places *abounding* with water were chosen for baptising.

But let us not be carried away by the meer *sound* of words without examining their sense.

It is said, Mat. 3, 16. *Jesus being baptised came up out of the water.* The Greek phrase (*apo udatos*) properly signifies, *from the water*; and therefore implies no more than, that he went down to *it*; which he might properly be said to do in what ever mode he was baptised. And as all natural collections of water are in low places, so the motions *to* and *from* them, must be *descending* and *ascending*, which is sufficient to account for the expression, *he went up from the water.*

As Christ was without sin, his baptism could not be in token of repentance and forgiveness; and, as he came to John after all the people were baptised, it could not be an example of baptism to them: but it was evidently his public consecration to the ministry, on which he was now entering. He chose this ceremony of consecration, in conformity to the law of God, which had instituted a similar form, for the separation of the high priest to his office. And therefore he says *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.*

The priests under the law, were to enter on the public service of God at the age of *thirty years*; Christ, *when he began to be about thirty years of age* was baptised. They were consecrated to their office by *washing with water*, and by *anointing with oil*: He was publicly inaugurated into his

ministry, by *baptism* and the *unction of the Holy Ghost*. God says to Moses; *Aaron and his sons shall thou bring to the door of the tabernacle, and shall wash them with water;—and thou shalt pour the anointing oil on his head. Thou shalt make a laver of brass and put water therein; for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet therein. And Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water, and he poured the anointing oil on Aaron's head, and anointed him to sanctify him.\**

The priests were washed, not by the immersion of their bodies into a fountain, but by the application of water to their *hands* and *feet* from a laver; they were *anointed* by oil poured on their *heads*; thus they were publicly instated in their office. Christ was baptised at Jordan; after his baptism he was anointed with the Holy Ghost, which visibly descended upon him; and then he was declared from heaven to be the Son of God, and the people were commanded to hear him. Alluding to the manner, in which the priests were consecrated, the prophet in the person of Christ, says, *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel.* † Peter, speaking of the word which God sent to Israel by Christ, says, *That word ye know, which began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power.*

Now as in the account given by the Evangelists concerning Christ's baptism there is nothing which necessarily imports an immersion; as his baptism was in compliance with the instituted usage of

\* Exod. 29. 4, &c, Chap. 30, 19, &c. Lev. 8, 6, 12,

† Isai, 61, 1,

consecrating the ancient priests, and as there is no mention of their *total* immersion, but express mention of their *partial* washing; we may, with great probability, conclude, that his baptism was by the application of water to a *part* of his body.\*

But though he had been washed by immersion, this would no otherwise be an argument for immersion now, than as an instance of the use of the word *baptise*, because his baptism was a different thing from that which he afterwards instituted.—And as it appears highly probable, that his baptism was a *partial* washing, it was an example in favour of our opinion, that *baptism* does not signify a *total immersion*; but may properly be performed by pouring or sprinkling water on a part of the body.

Again, Acts 8, 38. *They* (Philip and the Eunuch) *went down both into the water, and he baptised him, and they came up out of the water.*—This passage is thought to favour immersion: But it no more proves that the *Eunuch* was covered with water, than that *Philip* was; for one is said to go *into* the water, as much as the other. They might be said to go *into* the water, if they only step into the edge of it. The words do not necessarily imply even so much as that; is or the particles rendered *into* and *out of*, very often signify no more than *to* and *from*; as where Christ bids *Peter*, go to the sea and cast his hook—and where the *Queen of the South* is said to come from the utmost parts of the earth. Now no man supposes, that *Peter* plunged himself into the sea; or that the *Queen of the South* crept up from under ground; and yet the Greek

\* The laver in which the priests were washed was a portable vessel of brass, standing on a single foot, and not of sufficient capacity for the immersion of a human body.

particles here rendered *to* and *from* are the same, which in the case of the *Eunuch* are rendered *into* and *out of*. All therefore that we can conclude from this passage is, that they went down from the chariot to the water, there *Philip* baptised him, and then they returned: But in what *manner* he baptised him we can no more learn from this passage, than from any other in the bible. But if the accounts of ancient and modern writers are true, he could baptise him only by *pouring* or *sprinkling* water on him; for they say, that in the place here mentioned, nothing more than a small spring can be found.

It is said, Mark 1. 5. They were baptised of *John in the river of Jordan*. Hence some have concluded that they were *plunged* in the river. But this is a *forced* conclusion. Christ says to the blind man, whose eyes he had anointed with clay, *Go wash in the pool of Siloam*.\* Here the phrase of washing *in the pool*, intends no more than washing his *eyes* with the water of the pool, And with equal propriety *John's* hearers may be said to be baptised *in Jordan*, if only *some* of the water of the river was *poured* on their *faces*.

We read John 3, 23, that *John baptised in Enon because there was much water there*. It is asked, 'Why should he chuse a place abounding with water to baptise in, if he did not baptise by immersion?' I answer, These words (*polla udata*) rendered *much water* properly signify *many waters*, and may be understood of various rivulets or springs, which, travellers say, are the only waters there to be found, and not any large collections convenient for immersion. If *John* baptis-

\* John 9. 7

ed only by *affusion*, a considerable quantity of water would be necessary to baptise such multitudes, as went out to him from *Jerusalem* and all *Judea*, and all the region round about *Jordan*.—Yea, though ever so few of them had been baptised, there was good reason why he should chuse a place to preach in, that was well supplied with water; for the multitudes that attended on his preaching, in the wilderness at a distance from their homes, would need much water for their refreshment. It is by no means supposeable, that *such numbers* could, here in the désart, be provided with change of apparel proper for immersion; and surely, in such a *numerous* and *mixed* assembly, they were not baptised *naked*. The circumstance of the case therefore lead us to suppose, they were baptised by *affusoin*.

We read, Act. 2. Of *three thousand* baptised, in *only part of a day*, at the feast of pentecost. It cannot rationally be thought, that these were plunged. There does not seem to have been time for it; nor is it likely they had change of raiment, as they came to the feast without any expectation of such an occasion; nor is it probable, they could be accommodated there with any convenient place for immersion. If there were baths sufficient for the purpose in the temple, yet it is very incredible, that the priests and officers of the temple should be willing to accommodate the Apostles with them, in order to initiate these converts into a religion, which they were endeavouring by all means to suppress.

When we read of whole families baptised in their houses, particularly of the *Jailor* and his family baptised at home, and at midnight too, in



the same hour in which he believed, we cannot think, that a sufficiency of water, and other conveniences for a decent immersion, could be procured on so sudden an occasion.

When *Cornelius* and his friends received the gospel, *Peter* asks, not whether any man could hinder them from going to a fountain or river; but whether any man could forbid water, i. e. hinder water from being provided, that they should not be baptised?\*

*Paul* seems to have been baptised in the house of *Judas*. There *Ananias* found him, delivered his message to him, and laid his hands on him; And he received sight forthwith and arose and was baptised. †

It is worthy to be remarked, that though we read of baptisms in various places, yet we have no account of any person's going from the place where he was, in order to be baptised in a fountain or river. They who were baptised in streams and natural collections of water, are such as were found abroad, either in the wilderness, or on the road, when they first discovered their desire to be baptised.

IV. It now remains, that we consider, what was the usage of the primitive Church, upon which our brethren lay great weight, in this controversy.

The auther of the letters says, 'The whole christian church, for 1300 years successively from the time of the Apostles, understood by baptism, immersion, and so practised; Sprinkling being only permitted on extraordinary occasions' This argument he often repeats, and depends much upon, as do most of the advocates for immersion: for they reckon, that the early practice of the Church

\* Acts 10. 47.

† Acts 9. 18.

in this matter may shew, what was the practice of the Apostles, because it is not likely, the apostolic practice would be early and generally disused.

The truth is, The manner of baptising among the ancients was looked upon circumstantial, and no way essential to the validity of the ordinance. In the times near the Apostles, immersion was much practiced, but never asserted to be necessary: Far from this; sprinkling was expressly allowed, and frequently used, especially in cases of infirmity, haste, or want of water or other conveniences. This the Author himself concedes, that from the Apostles times for 1800 years, 'sprinkling was permitted on extraordinary occasions.' *Cyprian* (who wrote within about 150 years of the Apostles) speaking of sprinkling, says, 'in the sacrament of salvation (i. e. baptism) when necessity compels, the *shortest* ways of transacting divine matters, do, by God's grace, confer the whole benefit,' And it may not be impertinent to observe, that the ancients, who practiced immersion, did usually, after the body had been plunged, apply water to the face. So far therefore as the practice of the ancients is of weight, it proves all that we contend for. We do not say, immersion is unlawful, or a meer nullity: We say, it is not necessary, but affusion is sufficient and agreeable to the divine word. And so said the ancient church.

I hope what has been offered is sufficient to justify the mode of baptism admitted in our churches, and to satisfy all who have received baptism in this mode, that they have no need to seek immersion. The question concerning the mode is really of small importance in itself, and

nothing but the controversy about it has made it otherwise. If our baptism is treated as a nullity, it is of importance to satisfy our minds : And if any have been thrown into doubts, I hope, the consideration of what has been said, will give them satisfaction.

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PART II.

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DISCOURSE II.

I COME now to the second part of my design, which is to vindicate the right of Infants to baptism.

The method in which I shall proceed is as follows. I shall first consider the usual objections against infant-baptism.—Next produce our arguments in vindication of it.—Then briefly touch upon the reasonableness and usefulness of it.—After which I shall give a short view of the practice of the church soon after the Apostles.—And then by way of conclusion shall shew the absurdity of separations in churches on account of differences respecting baptism, the unwarrantableness of re-baptisation, &c.

I. I will distinctly consider all the material objections of our brethren against infant baptism, as I collect them from their writers, and particularly from the author of the letters before mentioned.

1. It is said, 'Christ has fully and plainly declared his mind about baptism; and because he has not *commanded* the baptism of infants, he has *virtually forbidden* it.'

Now though it should be allowed, that there is

no express command, yet if we can find a *virtual, consequential* command for it, that, I trust, will be a sufficient warrant: Otherwise what warrant shall we have to admit females to the Lord's Supper? To observe the first day of the week as holy? To maintain public worship? *These* and many other things, are no where enjoined, *in so many words*, but yet can clearly be shewn to be agreeable to the will of God. What command have our brethren to justify their practice? Where is the passage, which tells us, that baptism must be confined to the adult; and infants, though formerly admitted to the seal of the covenant, must now be admitted no more? They can find nothing of this sort. But, I trust, it will appear, that there is what may properly be called a command for *our* practice. If that passage in *Isaiah*, *Lo, I have set thee for a light to the Gentiles*, was a *command* to the Apostles, to go and preach to the Gentiles, as it is said to be;\* then the direction given to *Abraham* our Father, to affix the token of the covenant to his *infant seed*; the commission given to the Apostles to disciple *all nations* baptising them; and the exhortation of *Peter*, *be baptised—for the promise is to you and to your children*, are commands to admit infants to baptism; as we shall endeavour to shew hereafter.

2. It is objected, 'that in all the history of the New Testament there is no *example* of infant-baptism; but the baptisms we have an account of, are the baptisms of professed believers.'

But if there is no express mention of infant-baptism, yet we cannot hence conclude, it was never practised; any more than we can conclude, that

some whole churches were formed without any baptism at all, because it is no where said, they were baptised. If a plain direct example be insisted upon, our brethren must certainly give up their notion of baptism; for *they* can find no example in their favor, whatever *we* can; as will be evident, if we only consider what is the question between us. It is not, whether adult proselytes should be baptised? But whether the infants of professed believers should be baptised? There are, it is true, instances enough of the baptism of adults, who had been converted from *Judaism* or *Paganism*: But *these* are nothing to the point; for we allow baptism to all adult believers, who have not been baptised in infancy. And the apostles' baptising *such* is no argument, that *they* did not baptise *infants*, any more than our missionaries' baptising adults among the natives, is an argument, that *they* do not baptise infants. The question is merely this; are the infants of baptised believers to be admitted to baptism? Or to be rejected? If you say, they must be rejected and suffered to grow up before they are baptised; I ask, Where is your example? Did the apostles refuse to baptise *such*; Or among the adults whom they baptised, do you find any that were born of christian parents? The history of the Acts contains a period of above thirty years, and the New Testament, a much longer period. There was time enough for two or three generations of infants to grow up to adult age. We have all along accounts of baptism. But it is remarkable, that in all this time, there is no intimation, that any one of the children of the early believers was baptised after he grew up; or that any one of those adults whom the Apostles baptised, was born of

believing parents. It is plain then, there is not one example, which in the least, favors the opinion of our brethren, which is this, *That the children of believers must be left to grow up before they are baptised.* They ask, 'Is it not a little strange, that we no where find children mentioned, if it were the Apostles' custom to baptise them with their parents?' And I ask; is it not very strange, that we no where find the children of believers baptised after they grew up, if it was the Apostles' custom to leave them unbaptised till they grow up? There is no example of this kind. But, we think, we have examples, and just such examples in favor of our practice, as we should have, upon supposition, the Apostles did baptise children with their parents.

Let us suppose infants were baptised: And what account should we have of it? Would the history tell us, such an infant by name of such an age, and such an one of such an age, was baptised? No: This minuteness could not be expected concerning infants, who are seldom known, by their names or ages, out of the families, to which they belong. All we could expect to be told is this; such a man was baptised and his family—such a woman and her household. And this we are told; *Stephanus's* household, *Lydia* and her household, the *Jailor* and all his were baptised; which are plain examples of families baptised upon the faith of their respective heads; as I shall shew more fully hereafter.

3. It is argued, 'that faith and repentance are the conditions of baptism; infants are not capable of these, and therefore not capable of baptism.'

But as well might our brethren say, 'Faith and repentance are conditions of salvation, and there-

fore infants, being incapable of these cannot be saved.' It is expressly said, *He that believeth not shall be damned.* It is no where said, He that believeth not, or repenteth not, shall not be baptised. Faith and repentance are required on several particular occasions, when baptism was to be administered to adult persons; but we find no general rule given to exclude from baptism such as are incapable of faith and repentance. Our brethren will not exclude infants from salvation, upon the authority of those texts, which make faith the condition of it; and surely, if they will be consistent with themselves, they cannot exclude them from baptism, upon the authority of those texts, which make faith the condition of *that*; especially since these texts plainly respect adult proselytes. That *such* must profess their faith we allow. But the apostolic practice shews, that upon their profession, not only *they*, but their *households* also should be baptised; as under the ancient dispensation, when a *Gentile* became a proselyte, not only he himself, but all his male children were circumcised.

The instances in which faith, or repentance is enjoined previously to baptism, are only when adult persons enquired what was necessary for *themselves*. The question was not concerning the qualification for baptism in *general*; but what was requisite in *their own* case. 'What shall we do?'—'What hinders *ME* to be baptised?' The Apostles answer the question, as it respected those who proposed it. *Repent ye and be baptised—If thou believest, thou mayest be baptised.* These directions only prove, that a profession of faith and repentance is necessary to the baptism of adults, which none deny; but, in no degree affect the right of infants.

Faith was as much required under the Old Testament in order to circumcision, as it is under the new in order to baptism; but still infants were circumcised. The Gentile proselyte was not admitted to this rite, till he professed his faith in the God of Israel; neither was the adult Jew. During the forty years that circumcision was intermitted in the wilderness, a new generation came on the stage. These were circumcised, soon after they passed over Jordan.\* But previously to this, they had solemnly avouched the Lord to be their God. Now because faith was a pre-requisite to the circumcision of adults, shall we conclude that no infants were circumcised? This would be contrary to known fact. But this conclusion would be as just as the other, which determines against the baptism of infants, because a profession of faith was required in proselytes. The truth is, all arguments drawn from special and particular cases, are impertinent to an enquiry concerning a general rule of practice.

The author of the letters lays particular weight upon that passage, 1 Pet. iii. 21. *The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.* 'Here,' he says, 'such a condition of baptism is required, as infants are not capable of. The filth of their flesh may be put away: But how shall they answer the good conscience?' But it should be observed, that the answer of a good conscience is made the condition of *salvation*: Not of *baptism*. He might therefore rather have said, such a condition of *sal-*



vation is required as infants are not capable of. This is a condition of salvation and baptism too in adults, but of neither in infants, who are not yet moral agents. The Apostle says, *Circumcision is that of the heart*; but surely he did not mean, that *Jews* were incapable of the fleshly circumcision, until they were capable of professing the circumcision of the heart. Baptism, which is externally *the putting away the filth of the flesh*, signifies our obligation to answer a good conscience toward God. This obligation immediately takes place with respect to all, who are moral agents, and with respect to infants, when they become such. Here is then no argument against the baptism of infants.

Let us see if there be not a plain argument for it. The Apostle is here speaking of the preservation of *Noah* and his family in the flood by means of the ark. The Apostle to the *Hebrews* says, *By faith, Noah, prepared an ark to the saving of his house*. It was by *Noah's* faith, that his family was brought into the ark, and preserved in the flood. *The like figure whereunto, even baptism doth now save us*. Where is the likeness? Plainly here. As *Noah* by faith prepared an ark, by which his house was saved; so the faith of the *christian* parent brings his family within the privileges of the covenant. Salvation came to *Zaccheus's* house, in consequence of his believing. They enjoyed some special privileges on account of his faith.

4. We read, Acts viii. 5. that *when the Samaritans believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, they were baptised both men and women*. Upon this our author observes, 'The history is so particular as to mention both men and women; but there stops.—Had the

sacred historian been a little more explicit, and said, *men women and children*, if the fact were really so; it would have prevented much doubt and controversy.'

In answer to this, it is sufficient to say; as the seal of the covenant under former dispensations had been affixed *only* to males, so there was good reason, why the historian should be so particular, as to mention both *men* and *women*, i. e. males and females, (for these terms are in scripture applied to persons of all ages) that it might appear, that the covenant-seal was, for the future, to be affixed to persons of both *sexes*. But as the seal had *always* been applied to *children*, there was no occasion for his being so explicit, as to say, *men, women and children*, if the fact were really so; for children's right to the covenant-token had not then been made a question; and they who knew the immemorial and universal usage of admitting *Jewish* infants by circumcision, and the infants of *Gentile* proselytes by baptism, did not need to be instructed, that infants were entitled to baptism, under the christian dispensation. They must naturally suppose it, unless expressly told the contrary.

5. It is urged by some, 'that Jesus Christ, who came to be our example, was baptised at adult age, and that we ought to imitate him herein.'

But his example is no more an argument against *infant* baptism, than against all baptism under the age of thirty years; for this was his age, when he was baptised, though he was certainly capable of understanding the nature of baptism before he was *twelve*. Do our brethren think, that all are bound, in imitation of Christ, to live, unbaptised twenty years after they arrived to the age of understanding?

The objection before us is founded in the supposition, that the baptism which Christ received, was the same, in its nature and design, with that which he himself afterwards appointed. If it was a different thing, no argument can be drawn from it in the present question. If it was the same, then it at once removes the principal objection against the baptism of infants, taken from their incapacity for faith and repentance. For Jesus was as incapable of faith in a mediator and repentance of sin, as infants are; though from a different cause.

But, as I have before shewn, Christ's baptism was his public inauguration into his ministry, and therefore is impertinently adduced to disprove the baptism of infants. When we are asked, why Christ was not baptised in his infancy, it is sufficient to answer because he did not take on him his public ministry in his infancy. To argue, that because Christ was publicly consecrated to his priesthood at the age of thirty years, therefore none should be given to God by baptism in their childhood, is an inconclusive way of reasoning.

Let it, however be observed, that though he was not *baptised* in infancy, yet he was *dedicated* to God, by such rites as were then in use. He was *circumcised* on the eighth day; and on the fortieth day, he was brought by his parents into the temple, and there presented to God, according to the law, which required, that every first-born male should be holy to the Lord. This example shews, that parents ought publicly to dedicate their children to God in his appointed way; and, since baptism is now the appointed ceremony of

dedication, it shews, that they should present their children to him in baptism.\*

\* If it could be proved, which certainly it never can, that John baptised only adults, yet no argument could hence be deduced against the right of infants to baptism under the gospel dispensation; for the baptism which John administered, was not properly christian baptism.

Though before Christ's time, baptism was in use among the Jews, yet it was not made the only initiating seal of the covenant, until after his resurrection.

John was sent to preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, and thus to prepare men for that new dispensation of God's kingdom, which was not yet come, but was then *at hand*.—Christ instituted his baptism after this dispensation was come. John's baptism materially differed from this. The baptism which Christ instituted was, *in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. John did not baptise in the name of the *Holy Ghost*; for some who had received his baptism, confessed that *they had not so much as heard, whether there were any Holy Ghost*. He did not baptise in the name of the *Son*, or in the faith, that *Jesus was the Christ*; but *with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people, that they should believe on him who should come after him; that is, on Jesus Christ*. Nor did he baptise into *Christ's death*, for this event had not then taken place. Had John taught that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, and baptised the people in his name, and into this faith, they would not have *mused in their hearts whether John were the Christ*; nor have asked him, *Why baptisest thou, if thou art not the Christ?* Nor would Jesus have cautioned his disciples, *to tell no man, that he was the Christ, till after his resurrection*. John's baptism was designed to prepare men for the faith in Christ, when he should be made manifest to Israel.

But what is decisive in the case is, that some who had received John's Baptism, were *afterwards* baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Among the many thousands *from all Judca and Jerusalem*, to whom Peter preached on the day of pentecost, it cannot be doubted, that there were multitudes, who had been baptised by John; for *there went out to him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and all the region round about*

6. The incapacity of children for the ends of baptism or for any benefit from it, is often urged as an argument against their being baptised.

But really the question is, Whether there be any divine warrant for their baptism? If there is, it becomes us to practise accordingly, and not to arraign the wisdom of God. That there are some rational ends to be answered by infant baptism, and that it is a gracious and beneficial institution, I trust will appear under another head, where this

*Jordan, and were baptised of him.* And yet Peter says to them, without distinction, *Repent and be baptised*, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.

An instance still more plain we have in the beginning of the 19th Ch. of Acts. Paul finding at Ephesus twelve disciples, said to them, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* And they said, to him, *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.*—And he said to them, *Unto what then were ye baptised?* And they said *Unto John's baptism.* Then said Paul, *John verily baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him, who should come after him, that is on Jesus Christ.* *When they heard this they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.* *And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, &c.*

*When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.* The meaning cannot be, that when the people heard, *John*, they were by *him* baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus; because then it will follow, that Paul laid his hands on all the people whom John baptised; for they, who are here said to be *baptised*, are evidently the persons on whom Paul *laid his hands*. But the sense must be, that when these twelve disciples who had been baptised by John, now heard Paul, they were baptised by him. It follows then that John's baptism, being neither in the name of Christ, nor of the Holy Ghost, was different from that which Christ instituted; and no argument can be drawn from the former, to determine the mode, or subjects of the latter; nor can the repetition of christian baptism be justified from this example of Paul.

objection will receive a full answer. In the mean time it may suffice to observe, that infants are now as capable of the ends of baptism, as they were anciently of the ends of circumcision. They may be brought into covenant with God—may have privileges made over to them—may receive the seal and token of privileges—may be laid under obligations to obey the gospel, as the *Jewish* infants by circumcision became debtors to obey the law—and may become subjects of that justification through Christ's blood, that renovation of the Spirit, and title to eternal life, which are signified and represented in baptism.

I have now given you a view of all the material arguments, which are brought to disprove infant baptism. And what has been said in answer to them is, I think, sufficient to shew, that they have no real weight. The way is now prepared to bring forward our arguments in vindication of this point, which was the second thing proposed.

II We will here take a distinct view of the principal arguments in defence of the right of believer's infants to baptism, and endeavour to establish them against the cavils of our opponents, and particularly the author of the letters before mentioned.

1. Our first argument shall be taken from the *Abrahamic* covenant together with the Apostle's explanation of it.

In the 17th chap. of Gen. we find, that God made a covenant with *Abraham* and his seed, into which his infants were expressly taken, together with himself, by the same rite and token: This covenant comprehended not only his natural seed, but the stranger who was not of his seed. It was a *spiritual* covenant. The capital promise of it was

*I will be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee.* This was the same covenant, which now subsists, and which we are now under in this gospel-age, as the apostle expressly teaches us, in the 4th chap. to Rom. and 3d chap. to Gal. where he argues from the covenant with *Abraham*, to shew the nature and extent of the gospel-covenant. He testifies, that all believers under the gospel, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, are the spiritual seed of *Abraham* and consequently *heirs of the promise* made to him that the covenant made with *Abraham* was confirmed of God in Christ—that the law which was given afterwards did not disannul the covenant. or vacate the promise—that the gospel was preached to *Abraham*, in that promise of the covenant, with him, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*—that the blessing of *Abraham* is come upon the *Gentiles* through Christ—that the promise made to *Abraham* is sure to all the seed, not only to that which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of *Abraham*, who is the father of us all, as it is written, *I have made thee a father of many nations*—that they who are of faith are the children of *Abraham*, and to *Abraham* and his seed. were the promises made—and much more to the same purpose.

No v if we are the seed of *Abraham*, for whom the covenant with him was established, and are still under the self same covenant, then the same privileges that were herein granted to him, belong to us. One grant of that covenant was, that infants should be received with their parents by the same sign and seal; and therefore we, as the seed of *Abraham*, may claim this privilege for our infants. Yea, God not only allowed, but commanded, that the appointed token of the covenant

should be affixed to every male child who was not under eight days old. Here then is a plain command given to *Abraham* our father, and consequently to us his children, to apply the token of this very covenant, which we are now under, to our infant seed. The only question is, whether there be now any token of the covenant? Had circumcision been continued, none could doubt but infants were still subjects of it by virtue of the command given to *Abraham*, unless they would expunge the 4th chap. to Rom. and 3d to Gal. Circumcision has ceased. But has Christ appointed any token of the gospel covenant? Baptism is certainly such. *This* then is to be applied to the same subjects as *that* was. If there was an express command to affix the covenant seal to infants in *Abraham's* time, and the covenant still remains; then the covenant-seal, whatever it is, ought to be affixed to infants now, unless the command has been repealed. The change of the *seal* makes no change of the *subject*. There must be a command to warrant our rejecting the *old subject*, as well as to justify our dropping the *old seal*. If our brethren ask, Why we have discontinued circumcision, and now make use of baptism? We answer, Christ has so commanded. Let them produce as good authority for affixing this *new seal* of the same covenant to believers *only*, and *not* to their children, and we will comply with them. We demand of them to shew us some plain, positive order of Christ to deny the seal of the covenant to those subjects, to whom it was first ordered to be applied. Until such order appears, we boldly affirm, that the old command remains, and to act in disobedience to it is presumption.



To evade the force of this argument, our brethren assert, that 'the christian church is an institution entirely new; a structure erected on a new foundation, distinct from, and unconnected with the foundation of the patriarchal and Jewish church;' for they easily see, that if the christian church is the ancient church, continued under the same covenant which was made in ancient times, then the admission of children with their parents into this church, will stand secure on the foot of the former institution. It may not therefore be improper to pursue our present argument a little farther

The foundation of the ancient church is, *the discovery of God's mercy to fallen men through a redeemer*. This discovery was first made to Adam in the sentence on the tempter; and afterward more fully to Abraham in the promise already mentioned. *This* God expressly calls his *everlasting* covenant. *This* is always considered by Moses and the prophets, as the ground on which the faith and hope of the Jewish church rested. Moses says,\* 'Ye stand all of you before the Lord, your *wives* and *little ones*, that thou shouldst enter into covenant with him, that he may be a *God to thee*, as he hath sworn to Abraham: The prophet Jeremiah,† foretelling the gospel dispensation. describes it by an allusion to the covenant with Abraham, which he distinguishes from the covenant of peculiarity made with the Jews at Sinai, when they came out of Egypt. The apostle to the Hebrews‡ applies the prophets description to the gospel-state. The old covenant, which, he says, was decayed and ready to vanish, is not the

\* Deut. 92

† Chap. 31. 31.

‡ Chap. 8.

covenant with *Abraham*; for *this* he calls the covenant which God would make in the latter days, or would explicitly renew in the gospel time, promising, *I will be their God*; but the old covenant, which was to vanish away, no more to be renewed, is the *ceremonial* covenant, or that which God made with the Jews, *when he brought them out of Egypt*.

When the prophets foretell the call of the gentiles, they speak of them as joining themselves to the church then subsisting. In the 49th chap. of Isaiah, God comforts Sion, the Jewish church in her despondency, with a promise that he will never forsake her, but her walls shall be continually before him. 'Lift up thine eyes round about,' says her God, 'and behold! All these gather themselves together, and come unto THEE. The children, which thou shalt have after thou hast lost the other, shall say, The place is too straight for me.—Then shalt thou say, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my other children? Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles—and they shall bring thy sons, in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.'—The children of these Gentiles proselytes are called the sons and daughters of the church. They are brought in the arms of their parents to the church 'to be nursed at her side.'—No words can more plainly describe the admission of Gentile proselytes into the very church which was then in being, and the solemn dedication of their children, as members of the church with them. Similar representations are frequent in the prophetic writings.

The words of our Saviour, in 10th chap. of John, are full to our purpose, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring.' I must bring them into this fold, the Jewish church; for what other fold was there then existing? 'And they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.'

The Apostle Peter,\* exhorting the Jews to repentance, points them to the Saviour, whom the prophets foretold, and says, 'Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant, which God made with our fathers, saying, *In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*: unto you first God hath raised up his son, and sent him to bless you.'

Paul, in the epistle to the Ephesians, treats explicitly on this subject. He says, 'Ye were once afar off, without Christ, aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise. But now in Christ ye are made nigh. Christ is our peace, who hath made *both one*;' i. e. hath united both Jews and Gentiles. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but *fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*; and are built on the foundation of the *apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.' The prophets and apostles laid the same foundation. The prophets foretold a Saviour to come; The predictions of the former, and the doctrines of the latter are the same foundation, the corner-stone of which is Christ himself. The apostle adds, 'Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, that the Gentiles should be *fellow heirs*,

\* Acts 5.

and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

The Jews who were baptised on the day of pentecost, believed that Jesus was Lord and Christ, on evidence derived from the prophets; and were admitted to baptism on the foot of the promise made to their fathers. The same promise which was the foundation of the ancient church and of which circumcision was the seal, is alledged by the apostle, as a reason for the baptism of these Christian Jews and their children, and as many as God should call from among the Gentiles. The christian church here stands on the old foundation; and to this church were added those who afterwards were baptised.

In the 11th chap. to the Romans the apostle expressly declares, that the Gentile believers are grafted into *the same olive-tree* from which *some* of the Jews the natural branches, were broken off by unbelief. 'If some of the branches, were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wert grafted in among them,' the branches that remained, 'and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches; for thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. They were broken off by unbelief, and thou standest by faith.' It is the same root, which beareth the natural, and the ingrafted branches. *Some* of the natural branches were broken off—not all—The believing Jews continued still in the same old stock, in which they had before stood, and in which believing Gentiles were ingrafted. The Gentiles were not inserted into a *new* stock, a tree lately grown up; nor were believing Jews lopt off from the old tree to be inserted with Gentiles into a new one; but the former *remained* in the old stock,

and the latter were grafted in *among them*, to partake *with them* of the root and fatness of the *same olive*, which had formerly nourished them. And it is observable, that these Jews, who immediately and readily submitted to the gospel, on its being proposed to them, seem not generally, if in any instance, to have received christian baptism. Heathens and Samaritans, who were not of the church of God, and those Jews, who by obstinate unbelief, and open opposition to the gospel, had broken themselves off from the church were on their professed repentance, baptised. The other *continued* in God's covenant and church. This thought, we shall have occasion to resume hereafter. When the unbelieving Jews shall, in the latter days, turn to the Lord, they shall be grafted again—into what?—another tree? no; into THEIR OWN olive-tree; for the covenant which God made with their fathers, is *the same*, which he will make with *them* in the *latter* days, when he shall take away their sins.

We have now an obvious answer to a question, which our brethren often puts to us. 'If the children of believers are subjects of the covenant-seal under the gospel, as they were under former dispensations, why have we not some direct, positive institution, which might have prevented all controversy?'

The fact is, the gospel found the children of God's people already in covenant by virtue of the ancient institution: and a new institution of that, which had been plainly instituted before, and was not then so much as questioned, would have been superfluous: not to say, absurd. The gospel has made it as plain as language can make any thing, that the ancient covenant with Abraham is still continued: and if children were, by divine command,

to receive the seal of the covenant formerly, they are to receive it still, unless the command is somewhere in the gospel expressly revoked. We need no new institution to warrant our applying the seal to them; but we evidently need a new institution to justify our excluding them from it.

Infant baptism stands on the same ground as the christian sabbath. If it be asked, why the gospel has not, in so many words, instituted a weekly sabbath, the answer is, it found a weekly sabbath already instituted; and a formal institution of that, which had been instituted before, was wholly unnecessary. The apostles took the sabbath as they found it, only observing a different day, after Christ's resurrection, in memory of that glorious event. So they continued the ancient usage of applying the seal of God's covenant to children, as well as parents; only they changed the external form of the seal, substituting baptism for circumcision. The ancient institution unrevoked, if we had nothing more, would be sufficient to justify the application of the seal to infants. But we have still farther warrant.

Let us view the argument in another light.

2. Circumcision was of old, by divine command, applied to infants: And if baptism stands now in the place of circumcision, then this is also to be applied to the same subjects. The consequence is plain and undeniable. The only question is, Whether baptism does now stand in the place of circumcision? This is the point to be proved.

That circumcision was the seal of the covenant with *Abraham*, and was, by divine appointment, administered to infants, is well known—that the *Abrahamic* covenant still subsists, and is the same

as the *Gospel* covenant, the apostle plainly teaches, that baptism is now the appointed token of the gospel covenant, none will deny: The consequence is obvious; baptism now stands in the place of circumcision, for it is the initiating seal of that very covenant, of which circumcision was the seal formerly.

Again. The Apostle says, Rom. 4. 11. *Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith.* It is plain from this passage, that circumcision was a sign of spiritual blessings, the blessings of the covenant of grace: And not (as some absurdly pretend) merely a sign of worldly privileges, such as a right to the land of *Canaan*, a numerous issue, &c. There were, it is true, temporal blessings promised to *Abraham* and his seed. But to argue from hence, that the covenant with him was a meer temporal covenant, and that circumcision was only a seal of it *as such*, is as absurd, as it would be to say, 'The gospel is a meer worldly institution, because it has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. The apostle, in this passage, represents circumcision in quite a different light, as especially and eminently a seal of *spiritual* blessings.—That *baptism* is such, all allow: And therefore it comes in the room of circumcision, and stands in the place in which that once stood. Farther; These two rites, though different in their outward form, are the *same* in their spiritual use and significancy. Circumcision signified our native corruption: so does baptism. Circumcision pointed out the necessity of inward purity and spiritual renovation: so does baptism. *That* represented our justification by the blood of Christ: so does *this*. *That* was a ceremony of admission

into God's church: so is *this*. *That* denoted men's relation to God and obligation to obey his law. *This* also denotes our relation to Christ and obligation to obey his gospel.

But the apostle puts this matter out of all doubt, when he calls *baptism the circumcision of Christ*, and urges christians being *baptised*, as a reason why they need not be *circumcised*.

He says, Col. 2. 11, 12. *Ye are complete in him, (in Christ) in whom ye also are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism.* But he calls it by this name without any propriety, unless it stands in the place of circumcision.

The author, whom I have several times mentioned, labours much to evade the force of this passage. He says, *By the circumcision of Christ is meant, 'the spiritual circumcision,' or renovation of the heart, in distinction from 'the literal circumcision.'* But this cannot be the meaning of the phrase: For the inward spiritual circumcision is mentioned in the preceding branch of the sentence, under the name of *the circumcision made without hands*. And if we take both phrases to signify the *same*; then we shall make the words to run thus. *Ye are circumcised with the spiritual circumcision, in being circumcised by the spiritual circumcision.* Such an unmeaning repetition never dropt from the apostle.

The writer says, 'That to guard the Colossians against the danger of being seduced to the observance of circumcision, the apostle tells them.' 'They had received the *spiritual* circumcision—and therefore the *literal* circumcision was not ne-



cessary.' But how did this spiritual circumcision or internal renovation prove, that the literal circumcision was not necessary? Circumcision used to be necessary for good men: Why not now? According to this interpretation, external ordinances are not needful for true christians, but only for sinners. Those among the Colossians, who were not sure they had received the *spiritual* circumcision, could not apply this argument; and therefore, according to our author, must still observe the *literal* circumcision. Besides; the same argument would prove, that they need not be baptised; for if they had received the spiritual washing of sanctification, what occasion was there for the literal washing of baptism? And yet, according to him, none must be baptised, but actual believers; so that, if we admit his construction of the passage, we must disallow of all baptism.

Our author says, 'In the apostles days, the christians converted from Judaism were zealous to incorporate circumcision with christianity.—Do the apostles instruct them, that they need not be so tenacious of *one rite*, since another is appointed *in its stead*? Such an observation would have been much to the purpose—but nothing can be found of it in their reasonings to dissuade christians from circumcision.'

But the gentleman is under a great mistake. The *Jewish* converts were zealous to incorporate, not merely circumcision, but the whole ceremonial law, with christianity. They contended for circumcision as a rite binding to the observance of the whole law, without which, they imagined, christianity would be incomplete. From this notion *Paul* labors to reclaim them, and secure others. He does not oppose circumcision *simpliciter*; if he had, he would not have circumcised *Timothy*, nor have ap-

proved infant circumcision among the Jewish believers; but he opposed it, in the sense above mentioned as binding men to keep the ceremonial law in order to acceptance with God. Though he had, upon prudential reasons, circumcised *Timothy*, yet he gave no place to those who would *compel Titus* to be circumcised, that they might bring him and others into bondage to the law. Now, what argument does he use to dissuade the Colossian believers from circumcision and the observance of the law? It is this; They had received *baptism*, the christian circumcision, and were now bound to obey the gospel, which, being a complete institution, had superseded the law. Thus he reasons with them in the place before referred to. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ—for ye are complete in him,* and so need not add the ritual law to his gospel: *in whom ye are circumcised—with the circumcision of Christ, or christian circumcision, being buried with him in baptism—Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world; if by baptism into his death ye are freed from the rites of the Mosaic dispensation, why, as though living in the world, or under that dispensation, are ye subject to ordinances?* You see, that the Apostle urges their baptism into Christ, as a reason why they should not be subject to circumcision, and the rites of the ceremonial law, for which the Jews contended. He uses the very argument to dissuade them from circumcision, which this author says, he would use, if baptism came in its place: And therefore, by his own concession, baptism does come in its place. And if so,

then it is undeniably to be administered to the same subjects, even the infants of believing parents.

We are told,\* that some of the believing *Jews* at *Jerusalem* were much displeas'd, when they heard that *Paul* taught the *Jews*, who were among the *Gentiles*, that they ought not to *circumcise* their children. Would it have satisfied such zealous contenders for infant circumcision, to have told them, baptism now came in the place of that ancient ceremony, but yet must not be applied to their children? This would but have provok'd them the more. Had it not been the usage of the apostles to admit children with their parents into covenant by the same rite, certainly the *Jews* among other objections against the gospel, would have urg'd this, that it excluded their children from covenant privileges. They were apt enough to make objections, and since we find none of this sort, we may conclude, there was no room for any.

That infants, under the *patriarchal* and *mosaic* dispensations, were admitted into covenant by a particular token, is certain. It is evident, this was considered as a privilege. It is allow'd, that the gospel confers greater privileges than former dispensations: But if children are now shut out of covenant, then the gospel, instead of enlarging, has in this respect diminished our privileges.

But says our author, 'The infallibility of the *Roman* church may be proved in the same manner; as thus: The people of God under the Old Testament enjoyed the benefit of infallibility. The High Priest had the *Urim* and *Thummim*, by which the mind of God was known, &c. consequently there must be infallibility in the christian

\* Acts xxi. 21.

church; otherwise the less perfect dispensation of *Moses* will have a great privilege beyond the *christian*.

The truth is, The *christian* dispensation has this privilege far beyond the *mosaic*. The additional revelation of the gospel discovers the mind of God as infallibly, and far more fully and extensively than ever it was discovered by Urim and Thummim. Such *occasional* discoveries now are not needed, since we have a *complete, standing* revelation.

The author of the letters tell us, that circumcision, 'that Old Testament rite, was a *useless, burthensome, injurious* ceremony, and treated as such by the Apostles.' And hence he concludes, baptism cannot come in its room to be administered to infants, as that was. But where do the Apostles treat circumcision in this manner? The *ceremonial law* indeed is considered as a yoke of bondage; as *burthensome*, not *injurious*, for it would ill become the teachers of religion to represent God as *injuring* his people by his institutions: But *circumcision*, considered as a token of the covenant, is treated as a great privilege.\* *What advantage hath the Jews? And what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way.* It was a great privilege for the children of *Jews* to have God for their God, in such a sense as he was not the God of *heathen* children; to be born to the enjoyment of the oracles and ordinances of God; and to be under the care of parents, who were solemnly bound to bring them up in the knowledge and service of the God of *Israel*. And if the profit of circumcision was *much every way*,

\* Rom. iii. 1.

then the loss by its abolition is *much every way*, unless there be something appointed in its room.

It is often said, 'Circumcision was applied only to *males*: Baptism is designed for both sexes, therefore they are not parallel ordinances, nor can we argue from the one to the other.'

But it is certain, they are parallel in their main design, as initiating seals of the same covenant. And *females* were admitted into covenant, as well as *males*, though no visible token was appointed for them. Every *first-born* male was to be publicly presented to God in token of the obligation of the *whole family* to be holy to him; for *if the first fruits be holy, so is the lump*. So the parent's dedicating his *males* to God by circumcision, was a token that *all* his children belonged to God. Accordingly God equally claims an interest in children of both sexes, by virtue of the covenant relation of their parents. God says to the *Jewish church*, Ezek. 16. 7. *I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine*. And then he complains, ver. 20. *Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, which thou hast born unto me, and these thou hast sacrificed. Thou hast slain MY CHILDREN*. So Deut. 29. 10. *Ye stand this day before the Lord—all the men of Israel, your little ones, and your wives, that thou shouldst enter into covenant, that he may be unto thee a God—as he hath sworn to Abraham*. They were all admitted into covenant, though the *males only* received the visible token. But under the gospel there is no distinction of male and female, but all are one in Christ, the visible seal being affixed to one as well as the other. In this respect the gospel dispensation is more large and free than the former, that it makes no distinction,

of nation or sex. And shall we think it was intended to be contracted in another respect, by cashiering *all children*, who are more than half of mankind?

The author before mentioned tells us, that 'children were admitted to the passover; and hence we may infer their right to the Lord's Supper; as well as from their circumcision infer their right to baptism.'

It seems probable, that persons of all ages partook of the *first* passover mentioned, Exod. 12. which was in some respects singular, and different from succeeding passovers. But it appears from Luke 2. 42. that it was not the *custom of the feast*, for parents to bring their children to it, until they were about *twelve years old*; at which age, they might be able to enquire of their parents, *What mean ye by this service?* And at this age, no doubt, many are capable of understanding the nature and end of the Lord's Supper.\*

\* Children at the age of 12 years were brought by their parents to the temple: And from that time they began to eat of the passover and other sacrifices. Hyrcanus in Josephus, B. 12. Chap. 4. says, The Jewish law forbids the son to eat of the sacrifices, before he has come to the temple, and there himself presented an offering to God. (Pol. Synop. in Exod. 12. 26.)

The law prescribed, that when the Jews were come into the land, which God would give them, all their males should appear before him every year at the passover, in the place which he appointed. But it is added, *They shall not appear before me empty, but every one according to the gift of his hand.* (Deut. 16. 16. and alibi. vide. Marg.)

The male, or men children, who were to appear before God, in their appointed place, to eat of the passover were only such as could bring a gift in their hand; or present an offering for themselves. This probably is the law to which Hyrcanus alludes. Bp. Patrick, who was very learned in the Jewish laws and customs, says, 'When children were twelve years old, their parents were bound to bring them

But if infants had been usually admitted to the passover, it would not in the least weaken our argument from circumcision; for the passover was not a seal of the *Abrahamic* covenant (it being appointed more than 400 years after that covenant was made) but one of the *mosaic* rites. Now the ritual law is superseded by the gospel; but the *Abrahamic* covenant remains. The Lord's Supper is a commemorative sign, intended to shew forth Christ's death, and bring him to our remembrance. But baptism is a token of admission to the visible privileges of God's people; and therefore infants are capable of *this*, though not of the other.

Some perhaps will ask, How could baptism come in place of circumcision, when it appears to have been in use before circumcision, ceased?

to the temple, at the passover, where, seeing what was done in this festival, they would be led to enquire, what mean ye by this service?' (Comment, in Exod. 12.)

As the end of the passover was to perpetuate the memory of the deliverance from Egypt, and as the express reason why children were to attend it in the appointed place, was that they might be instructed in that wonderful deliverance, parents could not view themselves as bound to bring their children to the solemnity, before they were capable of enquiring and understanding what was meant by it. Luke tells us, (Chap. 2. 42.) that the parents of Jesus went up every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover; and when he was 12 years old, they went up *after the custom of the feast*. Their going *after the custom of the feast*, doubtless intends their taking their son with them, who was now 12 years old: for it appears that he accompanied them; and this is the first time we hear of his going to the festival. It may also be observed, that the *males* only were required to appear before God at the passover; and none can imagine, that infants and sucklings were taken from their *mother's* arms to be carried to, and detained at the temple, during the continuance of so long a solemnity.

Let me ask another question, How could *Solomon* reign in the place of *David* as his successor, when he began to reign before *David* was dead? There is no more difficulty in one question, than in the other. Though baptism was in use, yet it was not made the peculiar initiating seal of the gospel-covenant until after Christ's resurrection.

It has been enquired, 'If baptism succeeds circumcision, why were those baptised, who had already been circumcised?' We answer,

1. We think it has been proved, that both these ordinances were instituted as seals of the same gracious covenant; and therefore the right of infants to baptism will not at all depend on the solution of this question.

2. It is evident from the 15th, and 21st, chapters of Acts, that *infant circumcision* was practised, with apostolic approbation, by the *Jewish* believers in the *Christian* church in Jerusalem, and in other churches, by the *Jews* who were members of them. For though the apostles and elders agreed, that infant circumcision ought not to be required of *Gentile* believers; yet they allowed and approved it among the *Jewish* converts, who, having been accustomed to it, and knowing it to have been a usage from the time of Abraham, could not at once, be persuaded to relinquish it for another rite.

That infant circumcision was not now regarded by the apostles merely as a *ceremony* of the *Mosaic* law, is manifest; because, in this view, as we have before shewn, they utterly disallowed it, and strenuously opposed those who contended for it. They must therefore have regarded it, as that 'seal of the righteousness of faith,' which was appointed to Abraham, and continued under the patriarchal



and mosaic dispensations. In the christian church, it for a time held the same place among the *Jewish*, as baptism held among the *Gentile* believers. Hence it follows, that the seal of the covenant was applied to the *infants* of believers, in the time, and with the approbation of the apostles, and that baptism succeeded in the place of circumcision; as a seal of the same covenant.

It is no objection to this argument, that the apostles, *in some instances*, complied with Jewish customs, for these compliances were only *occasional*: But the observance of infant circumcision among believing Jews was *general and constant* for a *course* of years, probably for thirty years together, and this under the eye, and with the advice of all the apostles.

They recommended to the *Gentile* believers a charitable and pacific condescension to their Jewish brethren in matters, which interfered not with the institutions or doctrines of the gospel, particularly, in an abstinence from offensive meats, and in the observance of favorite days: But they never required or advised the *Gentiles* to conform to the *Jews* in the observance of the Abrahâmic rite of infant circumcision, though this was a rite, of which the Jewish christians were as tenacious as of any other. The reason is obvious: The *Gentile* believers observed another rite instituted in its place, namely, *infant baptism*.

If under the christian dispensation, infant circumcision had been, *in itself*, wrong, it would not have been allowed to the *Jewish* believers. If it had been, under present circumstances, an *indifferent* ceremony, like abstinence from meats, shaving the head, and purification in the temple, it would, for peace sake, have been recommended

to the *Gentile* believers. But as another ordinance was by them used in its place, there would have been an impropriety in their adopting this, and therefore it was not required of them.

3. It is an undeniable fact, that *circumcised* believers were *frequently*, if not *generally*, received to fellowship, in the christian church, *without baptism*; for all churches have fellowship with the church in Jerusalem, and Jewish and Gentile believers had communion in the same churches. That Christ's first disciples were baptised, we have no evidence. That the *twelve* partook of the first supper, before christian baptism was so much as instituted, is undeniable; for it is evident from Acts 19. 5. and the author of the letters himself concedes, that *John's* baptism was not *christian* baptism. Now if circumcision was, in the case of the disciples, sufficient for their admission to the great gospel ordinance of the supper, then certainly it was a seal of the gospel-covenant; and therefore the baptism of believers, already circumcised, was a matter not of universal necessity, but only of particular expedience. It seems to have taken place chiefly in the case of the Jews, who after Christ's resurrection, had for a time openly opposed the gospel, and the superior evidence which then attended it. Now

4. There was a manifest propriety in baptising *some* who had been circumcised, although baptism and circumcision are supposed to be seals of the same covenant.

The long expected Messiah had now appeared; a clearer dispensation of the covenant of grace, attended with larger promises and more liberal privileges, was now introduced; the way was opened for the admission of all nations into the church of God: and baptism was insituted to be a seal of

the covenant, and a badge of distinction between the church and the unbelieving world. Though circumcision had been, and still might be a mark of discrimination between the worshippers of the true God and idolatrous heathens, yet, after the institution of baptism, the former rite would not so clearly discriminate between christians and unbelievers in general; for unbelieving Jews would still use circumcision. It was therefore proper, that the circumcised Jew, when he embraced the gospel, if he had before openly opposed it, should submit to baptism, to testify his belief that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had rejected, was the promised Messiah; that the doctrine preached by the apostles, in his name, was divine; and that the ancient distinction of Jew and Gentile, male and female, was abolished, and all were to become one in Christ. Had *none* of the believing Jews been baptised, there might have remained too great an appearance of a distinction between *them* and *Gentile* believers; a distinction which, after all, many of the Jewish christians were strongly inclined to preserve, and which the apostles were no less solicitous to extinguish. It was Christ's design, that his church should be, and *appear* to be one; that, while it was distinguished from the world, it should harmonize with itself, and keep a unity of spirit in the bond of peace.

Suppose a prince, who had appointed a particular uniform for his soldiers, should think proper, on the introduction of a new discipline, and the acquisition of new subjects, to appoint for *these* another uniform; might we not expect, that he would allow, and in case of a rebellion raised on this occasion, would require many of his *former* subjects to adopt the same, that there might

be no distinction kept up between old subjects, and new, but all might become one harmonious body? And would any man, in this case, imagine that the new livery came not in the place of the old? Or that the one had not been, as the other was now, a badge and token of allegiance?—No more can we, on this ground, pretend, that baptism succeeds not in the place of circumcision.

It will perhaps be asked, ‘Why then ought not baptism to be administered on the eighth day according to the law of circumcision?’

We answer; It was not essential to the *validity* of circumcision, that it should be administered on the eighth day. It was not to be delayed beyond that day without occasion; nor ought we, without occasion, to delay baptism. But where circumstances admitted not so early an application of the seal, the delay was not faulty then, nor would it be now. Circumcision, indeed, might not be performed earlier than the eighth day: but for this delay there were particular reasons, not applicable to baptism. One reason might be the tenderness of the infant, and the weakness of the mother, which would render an immediate operation of this kind dangerous to both. But the principal reason was the legal impurity of the mother, and the consequent impurity of the child for the first seven days. This reason is expressly assigned in the divine law; \* *If a woman have born a man child, she shall be unclean seven days, and on the eighth day he shall be circumcised.* But as the legal impurities have ceased under the gospel, there is no such reason for the delay of baptism.

\* Levit. xii. 1, 2.

Thus, I think, it undeniably appears, that baptism stands in the place of circumcision, and that the arguments, to the contrary, are futile and impertinent. And if it stands in the same place, it is certainly to be applied to the same subjects, the infants of God's people—I proceed to another argument.

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DISCOURSE III.

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3. **T**HE right of infants to baptism may be clearly inferred from the words of our Saviour, Mark x. 14. compared with those, John iii. 5. *Suffer little children to come to me—for of such is the kingdom of God.—And, Except a man (ean me tis, except any one) be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

By the *kingdom of God* must be understood either the *Church*, God's visible kingdom on earth; or *Heaven*, his invisible kingdom above. Into the *former* we are admitted by baptism, which is the sign of that spiritual renovation, by which we are prepared for the *latter*. These *little children* are called *infants*; they were brought to Christ; were *taken up in his arms*; doubtless therefore they were under the age of discretion. They who brought them were *believers*; otherwise they would not have sought a *blessing* from Christ for them. The phrase being *born of water*, signifies being *baptised*: So the author of the

letters understands it, and numbers it among the passages that speak of baptism.\*

Now if, by the *kingdom of God*, we understand the *church*, then here is an express declaration, that infants belong to the church, are *Christ's* disciples and visible members of his body: And consequently have a right to *baptism*, the only instituted sign of admission into his kingdom. *Except a man be born of water, he cannot enter into this kingdom.* Hence the christian church is said to be *cleansed by the washing of water.*† If by the *kingdom of God*, we understand the *invisible kingdom* above, then here is a plain declaration, that infants belong to *that*, and consequently may be *born of the spirit*; for *except one be born of the spirit, he cannot enter into that kingdom*, which flesh and blood do not inherit. And if they may be *born of the spirit*, doubtless they may be *born of water*, or baptised. As the church is the *gate* of heaven, so baptism is the *sign* of regeneration. And if they may be admitted into heaven *by regeneration*, they may be admitted into the church *by baptism*. If the *things signified* belong to them, the *sign* and *token* must be supposed to belong to them. The apostle *Peter*‡ plainly teaches us, that they, to whom the pro-

\* The author of the letters says, 'Christian baptism was not yet instituted.' This is doubtless true: but John preached, saying, *The kingdom of God is at hand*; and he baptised with the baptism of repentance to prepare the people for this kingdom. It was therefore very seasonable for Christ now to instruct *Nicodemus*, that baptism, or *being born of water*, was soon to be the rite of admission into his kingdom. But whether we understand the phrase of *outward baptism*, or inward sanctification, our argument from it will be equally conclusive.

† Eh. v. 26.

‡ Acts ii. 38.

mise of the spirit pertains, have a right to baptism, the sign of the promise. In whatever sense therefore we understand the *kingdom of God*, the conclusion is the same, That infants are subjects of baptism.

It cannot reasonably be said, that the words—*of such*—intend only persons of a childlike disposition: For then how would this be a reason why little children should be brought to Christ; and why he should be displeas'd with his disciples for endeavouring to hinder them? This makes our Lord's argument run thus. Suffer infants to be brought to me, for my kingdom consisteth *only* of adult persons resembling children in their disposition. He elsewhere makes *Lambs* and *Doves* emblems of a christian temper; and according to this interpretation, he might as well have said Suffer *Lambs* and *Doves* to come to me, for *of such* is the kingdom of God; i. e. it consists of persons of a lamb-like and dove-like temper.

Well, 'but the christian rite of baptism was not given to these children; they were brought to Christ for his blessings and prayers, accompanied with imposition of hands.' True: but our Saviour declares, that such, i. e. the infants of believers, belong to this kingdom, into which none are admitted, but by being *born of water*; so that here is a plain declaration, that infants were to be introduced into his church by baptism. And by taking them into his arms, praying for them, and blessing them, he shewed that *such* are capable subjects of the influence and blessing of the Spirit, which are the things represented in baptism. He did not pour water on them; but he performed a ceremony quite as sacred and solemn, and thus shewed, that infants are meet sub-

jects of that external rite, which denotes the conveyance of spiritual blessings; and such a rite is the ordinance of baptism.

4. The baptismal commission, Mat. xxviii. 19. gives a plain warrant for admitting infants to baptism. It runs thus. *Go, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe, &c.*

Some will say, 'Infants are not expressly mentioned here.' True: neither are *Adults*. But Christ uses the word, *nations*, which is a collective term, and must naturally be understood as including *both*. And had he intended to teach his apostles, that persons of every age must be admitted to baptism, he could not have chosen any single word to express it better. *Baptise all nations*. The christian church is called a *nation*, a *people*, because it consists of persons of every age.\*

But it is objected; 'Teaching is required previous to baptism, which infants are not capable of.'

Here let it be observed, that the word *Mathe-tysate*, rendered *Teach*, is not the same which is commonly used for *teaching*, but of a more general signification. The proper import of it is, to *pro-selyte* or *make disciples*. The commission then is this. *Go, disciple all nations, baptising them—teaching them to observe all things, &c.* Here are two words in the commission rendered, *Teaching*. The latter *didaskontes*, signifies to *indoctrinate*; the other is more general, and signifies to *make disciples*, which may be done by introduction into a school in order to future teaching.

\* 1 Pet. ii. 9.



Now if we can shew, that *Infants* are ever considered as *disciples*—*is belonging to Christ*, then it will appear that they come within the commission, *Disciple all nations, baptising them.* We are told Mat. xviii. 5. That Jesus having set a *little child* before him, said, *Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.* To receive one in *Christ's name*, is to receive him as being *Christ's disciple* and as *belonging* to him. So the phrase is explained, Mark ix. 41. *Whosoever shall give you a cup of water in my name, because ye belong to Christ.* And Mat. x. 42. *Whosoever shall give to one of these little ones a cup of water only in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward.* It is plain here that *infants*, who are to be received in *Christ's name* may be *his disciples* and *belong to him*, to his church and kingdom. Accordingly they who contended, that persons under the gospel ought to be circumcised after the manner of *Moses*, are said to *tempt God to put a yoke on the necks of the disciples*, Acts xv. 10. *Infants* were to be circumcised after the manner of *Moses*, and therefore are comprehended among the *disciples*, on whom the yoke would be laid. The commission then must respect infants as well as others. The apostles had before been instructed to receive not only adults, but also little children in *Christ's name*, and as *his disciples*. Now a particular *rite* is appointed, by which they should receive or disciple them in his name. *Disciple all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, &c.*

But the author of the letters says, 'The disciples of Christ, during his ministry on earth, as well as the disciples of *John*, were well acquaint-

ed with the institution of baptism, for they baptised great multitudes; but they administered a baptism in which infants had *no part*. When therefore our Lord instituted his sacrament of baptism, if infants were to be received into it, it cannot be doubted but he *declared* this; otherwise men, who had been used to exclude infants, would not think of them as coming within this fresh commission.'

He expressly allows, that the apostles would be determined very much by former usages, in judging whether infants came within this commission. Whether the disciples of *John* and of *Christ* had been wont to baptise infants, it is not expressly said. And therefore to judge how the apostles would understand their commission, we must go farther back than to *John's* ministry. These apostles were *Jews*. They had been educated in the *Jewish* religion. They knew, that from the days of *Abraham*, and all along through the *Mosaic* dispensation, infants had been taken into covenant with their parents by the same initiating rite.—They knew, this had ever been esteemed a great privilege; and they would naturally suppose, the privilege was still to continue, as the *Abrahamic* covenant was yet in force. They knew it had been the constant immemorial practice of the *Jewish* church, to receive *Gentile* proselytes and their infant children with them by baptism. This the ancient *Jewish* writers testify. Baptism, we know, was no new thing in *John's* time. The *Jews* appear to have been well acquainted with it. They don't ask him, What meanest thou by this *new* ceremony? *But why baptisest thou, if thou art not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that Prophet?* Their question im-

plies, that the *Prophets* had been wont to baptise, and they expected *Christ* and *Elias* would do the same. *John* probably took up baptism, as he found it practised in the *Jewish* church, where it had been constantly administered to the *infants* of *Gentile* proselytes. And it is not only without proof, but against probability, that this author asserts, ' *Infants* had no *part* in *John's* baptism.' Farther, these apostles had been taught to look upon infants as *belonging to Christ*, and to treat them as *his disciples*. They had heard *Christ* pronounce them subjects of his kingdom, and give directions, that they should be brought to him. They had been reprimanded for attempting to hinder infants from being brought. They knew, that *Christ* came not to lessen the privileges of the church, (of which the admission of infants was one) but to enlarge them; and that *baptism* was now the *rite* of admission into it. Under these circumstances, how must they understand their commission? Certainly, upon this author's principles, they must suppose it to include infants; for he allows, they would understand it according to former usage. We may then retort his argument. When *Christ* instituted his sacrament of baptism, if infants were *not* to be received to it, it cannot be doubted, but he sufficiently *declared* this; otherwise men, who had always been used to see infants admitted into the church of *God* by the same token with their parents, would consider them as coming within this fresh commission, *Go, disciple all nations, baptising them.*

Besides, When they saw the doors of the church now enlarged to admit *new* subjects, even *all* nations, they would not imagine, that the subjects

who had ever been admitted, were in future to be excluded. The commission therefore must be understood as a virtual command to baptise infants.

5 Children's right to baptism is very clearly taught, in those words of *Peter* to the awakened *Jews*, Acts ii, 38. *Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is to you and to your children.* He does not say, The promise is to you, and will be to your children when they become believers; but it is to both, to you and the children which you now have: *And to all them that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call, i. e. wherever God sends the gospel to call the Gentiles, it carries this promise, which is in like manner to them and their children.* The promise being made to *them*, is urged as a reason why *they* should be baptised. And the same reason holds for the baptism of all to whom the promise belongs? and consequently for the baptism of their *children*, for the promise is to *them*. *Be baptised—for the promise is to you and to your children.* The reason assigned for baptism is such as equally takes place with respect to both. If the parents interest in the promise is a reason why *he* should be baptised, his childrens interest in it, is just as good a reason, why *they* should be baptised. To suppose this promise is a just ground for the baptism of *believers*, but not for the baptism of *their children*, is to make the apostle talk thus absurdly and incoherently. The promise is to you, therefore be ye baptised—and the same promise is equally to your children, yet they must *not* be baptised.

Well, but our brethren say, 'You and your

children is nothing more than you and your posterity, or your children when they become adult.

But a little attention will convince us, this cannot be the meaning. This is contrary to the natural construction of the words—*The promise is—to your children*; not *shall be to them*, when they become believers. The people, to whom these words were spoken, were *Jews* and *Proselytes*, who had always been used to see infants comprehended with their parents in covenant transactions, and therefore would naturally suppose, their infants to be intended. To suppose that by *your children*, the apostle meant only their adult descendants, is to make him speak nonsense; for then he must be understood thus, ‘The promise is to you and your children, but not as *your children*, or as being related to you, any more than if they were children of *Pagans*; but if they should live to adult age, should be called by the gospel, and should believe, then the promise *will be* to them, as it is *now* to you.’

Now why are children joined with their parents, as joint partakers of the same promise, if they derive no benefit from this relation, but are to stand upon precisely the same footing with the children of *heathens* and *infidels*? Farther; it should be remembered, that the great promise of the *Abrahamic* covenant, which probably is here referred to, and called by way of eminence, **THE PROMISE**, viz. *I will be a God to you and your seed*; this promise, I say, did certainly belong to the infant children of *Abraham*, and of his *spiritual* seed; and the seal of this promise was expressly ordered to be applied to such. But our brethren generally say, ‘The promise here intended is the promise of the spirit, contained in the foregoing words,

*Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* Be it so. If then it appears that the promise of the Spirit is in fact made, not only to believers, but also to their children; even to infants; the reason will hold, why *they* should be baptised. It is expressly promised; Isa. xliv. 3. *I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; i. e. thy little ones,* as the following words shew; and *they* (thine offspring) shall **SPRING UP** as among the grass and as willows by the water-courses. They shall grow up under the influences of my Spirit and blessings of my covenant, as grass under the kindly smiles of heaven, and as willows by the fertile banks of rivers.

There can be no doubt with any one who believes the scriptures, but the divine Spirit often has great influence in forming the mind into a preparation for virtue and usefulness, even in its infant state. *John* was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. *Isaiah* was called and formed from the womb. *Jeremiah* was sanctified from the womb. *Samuel* grew up before the Lord. I question not but all, who are born and educated under the gospel covenant, have, even in early childhood, some gentle excitations to virtue from the Spirit of grace, as a fruit of this promise to believers and their children. Now since the promise of the Spirit does in fact belong to little children, baptism, the sign of the promise, belongs to them. *Let them be baptised—for the promise is to them* Note here; their receiving the Spirit was not a *condition*, but a *consequence* of their baptism. *Be baptised and ye shall receive, &c.* So upon the *Samaritans* mentioned; Acts 8. the Spirit was poured out as if they were baptised: So that children are to be baptised upon

this general promise, even before they can, by a holy life, give evidence of their having actually received the Spirit. That in the gospel-age, as well as in former dispensations, children should be received into covenant together with, and upon the faith of their parents, is plainly foretold, Isa. lxxv. 22. *They are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.* And chap. 49. 18. 22. *They (the Gentiles) shall gather themselves together, and come to thee— And they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.*

6. The accounts we have of some whole families being baptised, upon the faith of their respective heads, afford an argument of considerable weight, that the apostles understood their commission as extending to infants, and practised accordingly.

If infants were baptised, it is by no means probable, we should be informed of their names or ages; we could expect only to be told in general, that such persons were baptised and their families: And so much we are told. Paul baptised the household of *Stephanas*, 1 Cor. i. 16. *Lydia*, when the Lord opened her heart to receive the word, was baptised and *her household*, Acts xvi. 15. The *Jaylor*, upon his believing was baptised, he and *all his*, ver. 33.

This *Lydia* was of the city of *Thyatira*; but she now dwelt at *Philippi*; here she had a house, in which she lodged the apostles for some time, and she had a household with her. Whether they were children or servants, or both, and what their exact ages were, it is not said, nor is it material. The story represents *them* as baptised upon *her faith*; and this is all that is to the purpose. It will

be suggested perhaps, that they might be baptised upon *their own* faith. But the story gives no intimation of any one's believing, but *Lydia*. Take the account as *Luke* has left it, and *they* were baptised upon *her* being judged faithful to the Lord.

The story of the *Jaylor* is to the same purpose. He enquired of the apostles, *what must I do to be saved?* They say, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thine house.* In the same sense, salvation is said to come to the house of *Zaccheus*, because *he* was a son of *Abraham*, i. e. a believer. So such as are added to the church are called, *The saved*. There were doubtless some present on this occasion besides the *Jaylor's* family; and some of his family might be adults; and therefore it is said, *They spake the word to him, and to all that were in his house.* It is added, *He was baptised.* He and all his *straitway*. It is not said, All that were *in his house* were baptised; but he and all his, i. e. such as were at his disposal—under his government—subject to his command. These were properly *his*. No mention is made of any one's believing, but the *Jaylor* himself. But do not the next words, *He rejoiced believing in God with all his house*, import, that all his family believed as well as he? I think not. The Greek words *egalliasato panoiki pepisteukos to theo* are literally rendered thus, *He rejoiced in all his house, having believed God.* The idea conveyed is this: After he had believed God, he rejoiced and gave thanks in the presence, and in behalf of his whole family.

Now as it had been the ancient universal practice, to receive infants with their parents into the church of God, they who should read these accounts of households baptised, would naturally con-



clude, that infants (if there were such) were baptised as well as others. If a Missionary sent from this country, where infant baptism is generally practised, to gospelize the heathen, should write back an account of his success; and therein should say, he had baptised so many hundreds, and amongst the rest, such a noted person and his *houshold*—such an one and *all his*; who would doubt, but there were some children, under the age of discretion; whom he meant to include? But if an Antipædobaptist Missionary should publish an account of the households he had baptised, he would naturally except infants, to prevent mistakes.

7. The right of infants to baptism is farther confirmed by several particular passages of scripture.

It may be inferred from those words of the apostle, Rom. xi. 16, 17: *If the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches (the Jews) be broken off, and thou (a Gentile) being a wild olive, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not, &c.*

The *olive-tree* is the church of God, built on the covenant made with *Abraham*. Of this tree the *Jews* were the *natural*; the *Gentiles*, the *ingrafted* branches. The *root* and *fatness* of the tree, are the privileges and blessings of the covenant. It was one privilege of the covenant, that children should be admitted into the church with their parents and consecrated to God as his children. Therefore if the *Gentiles* are *grafted* into the *same* stock, from which some of the *Jews* are *broken off*, and *with them* who remain, partake of the *root and fatness*, they certainly partake of this privilege of having their children grafted with

them. Accordingly the *Gentiles* are declared to be *fellow-heirs*, with the *Jews*—to be of the *same body*—to be *joint-partakers* of the promise. God promised, that he would be a God to *Abraham* and his seed. And is he a God of the *Jews* only? And not of the *Gentiles*? Doubtless of the *Gentiles* also. God appointed a token of this promise to be applied to *Abraham's* infants, and to the infants of his seed: And if we stand in the same place as his natural seed, and are partakers with them of the same privileges, then the token of the promise is to be applied to our infants.

To this passage we may add that remarkable one, in 1 Cor. vii. 14. *The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.* It is plain here, that the children of *believers* are, in some sense or other, *holy*, or *saints*, by virtue of their parents faith. They are distinguished from the children of *unbelievers*, who are called *unclean*, in the same manner as *christians* are distinguished from *heathens*. Now what is this infant-holiness, which results from the parents' faith? It cannot be *legitimacy*, as some pretend; for surely the apostle did not mean to *bastardise* all children born of heathen parents. It cannot be *real, inherent* holiness; for in this sense, *they are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God*: It can then be no other, than *relative* or *covenant* holiness. The children of *believers* are holy, as all the people of *Israel* were holy, by a special covenant-relation to God. The christian church is called a *holy nation* and *peculiar people*, in the same sense. They are holy, as all the first born under the law are holy, by a solemn dedication to

God in his temple. In allusion to the dedication of the first-born infants, the christian church is called, *The church of first-born persons*. They are holy, as being *God's children, born to him* of his own covenant-people. Now if they are in this sense holy, by what rite or ceremony are they declared so, but by the washing of baptism? *The church is cleansed by the washing of water*. If they are holy as being *Gods children*, and within *his covenant*, they are certainly entitled to the *mark* of his children and the *token* of his covenant, which is baptism.

The manner in which the author of the letters endeavours to evade these passages, shews that he felt himself embarrassed with them. I am 'very willing, says he, that children should be as holy as the most benevolent person can wish them. I have no inclination to lay a stain upon that innocent age.—But here is not a word about their baptism.' The gentleman doubtless knew how we argue from these texts to prove infant baptism. Why has he not shewn, that they must, or *may* be taken in some other sense? Why has he not told us, how the branches are holy by the holiness of the root: how children are holy by their parents faith, in some other sense than as being intitled to the privileges and seal of the covenant? How the *Gentiles* can be partakers of the same promise, and of the same root and fatness with *Abraham's* natural seed, and yet not be admitted to the same privileges? The truth is, the argument from these texts is unanswerable.\*

\* To evade the argument from this passage, some have said 'The same holiness, which is ascribed to the *children* of the believer is also ascribed to the *unbelieving partner*, who is said to be *santified* as well as the offspring said to be holy.'

Again; The apostle, in the 4th chap. to Gal. tells us, that *Isaac was born after the Spirit, and born by promise.* By this he illustrates the gospel covenant; and says; *As Isaac was, so are we the children of the promise: i. e. we are born children of the promise, as being born of covenanted* Why then is not the unbelieving husband or wife, a member of the church by virtue of the faith of the correlate, as well as the children, by virtue of the faith of the parent?

In answer to this I would observe; infants, under the Old Testament, had ever been received as members of God's church. But when the Jews, in the time of Ezra, had, contrary to an express law married strange wives, by whom children were born to them, it was ordered that these children, with their heathen parents, should be put away, as unclean; and the men, who refused to put away their strange wives, were themselves to be separated from the congregation.

In the Corinthian church a doubt had arisen, whether a believer might continue with an unbelieving correlate. This question the apostle answers in the affirmative. For though he advises christians to marry only in the Lord, yet a marriage, contracted when both the parties were unbelievers, is not dissolved by the subsequent faith of one of them. But it might farther be enquired, whether children born of parents, of whom one was a heathen, ought not to be excluded from the church with the unclean or heathen parent, as had been determined in the time of Ezra? To this the apostle answers in the negative. *If a brother have a wife who believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away, and so of the wife, who hath an unbelieving husband. For the unbelieving husband is, or hath been sanctified by the wife; or rather, sanctified, in or to the wife; and the unbelieving wife hath been sanctified in, or to the husband.* The unbelieving is sanctified in respect of, and in relation to the believing party, so that the latter has a lawful use and enjoyment of the former; for as the apostle says elsewhere, *to the pure all things are pure; and every creature of God is good, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*—*Else were your children unclean.* If the unbelieving partner were not sanctified to the use of the believer, both the parents must be rejected from the church, the former as a heathen and unclean, the latter as criminally living in cohabitation with a heathen; as, in the time of Ezra, those who refused to put

parents. Accordingly the Apostle to the *Hebrews* speaks of the privileges of the covenant, as being the *birth-right* of christians, and cautions them, that they do not profanely sell *their* birth-right, as *Esau* did *his*.

away the strange wives, whom they had unlawfully taken, were to be separated from the congregation. Consequently the children would be unclean, because both the parents would be so. But since the unbeliever is sanctified in relation to the believer, the children are *holy*, and so to be accounted members of the church.

The unbeliever is here said to be sanctified, not in relation to God, but only in relation to his, or her yoke fellow. But the children are said to be *holy*, in opposition to the *unclean*, or to *heathen*. A person's being sanctified in a particular respect, or for a certain purpose, as the unbeliever is here said to be sanctified only in relation to the husband, or the wife, does not denominate him a *holy one*, which is, in scripture, the appropriate title of those who belong to the church. Therefore, though children are members of the church, as descended from, and under the care and government of a believing parent, yet a heathen becomes not a member of the church by marriage with a believer. The words of the apostle can carry no such idea. For he calls children *holy* in opposition to the *unclean*; but he expressly defines and limits the sense, in which the unbeliever is sanctified. It is merely in respect of, and in relation to the believing correlate.

The sense which we have given of the phrase, *sanctified by, or to the wife*, is approved by critical expositors, particularly by *Whitby*, who says, it is the sense given by the *Greek interpreters*; and it is certainly agreeable to the phrase in the original. The apostle cannot intend, that the unbeliever is *converted to the faith* by the believer; for this sanctification is something which *has already* taken place, while the subject was an unbeliever. The conversion of the unbeliever by the influence of the believing correlate, the apostle afterward mentions, as an additional reason for cohabitation; but he speaks of it as a change which *hopefully may*, not as what *already has, or certainly will* take place. *What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? And how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?*

And it is worthy to be noted, that the same titles, by which *christians* are distinguished from *heathens* are expressly applied to the children of converted parents. Are christians called *saints*? So are their children.\* Are they called *disciples*? So are their children.† Do they belong to God's kingdom? So do their children.‡ Are they called *believers*? So christian families which were supported by a common stock, in which infants were included, are called *the multitude of them that believe*.§ And Christ speaks of those *little ones which believe in him*.|| Are christians called the *children of God*? So are the infants of professors.¶ They that belong to the church are called *the saved*; so salvation comes to the *house* of the believer.†† Who, that considers, how these titles are promiscuously given to *adult* christians and *their* children, can doubt, but that children are brought into covenant with their parents in the gospel-time, as they used to be before, and consequently are subjects of baptism, the only initiating seal?

8. I shall add to the preceding arguments, one more taken from 1 Cor. 10. 2. The Apostle here, speaking of the *Jews* who came out of *Egypt*, says, *They were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*

That this passage alludes to christian baptism, our brethren, particularly the author of the letters, allow. The Apostle plainly considers *their* baptism into *Moses* as typical of *our* baptism into *Christ*; for he adds, *They did all drink of the*

\* 1 Cor. 7. 14. † Act. 15. 10. ‡ Mark 10. 14.

§ Act. 4. 32. || Mat. 18. 6. ¶ Ezek. 16. 21.

†† Luke 19. 9.

same spiritual drink ; for they drank of the rock, which followed them, and that rock is Christ, or a type of Christ. All these things happened to them for examples, or types, and are written for our admonition. The Jewish writers say, 'The people were baptised in the desert, and admitted into covenant with God before the law was given.' Now if the Apostle has any respect to christian baptism, as it is plain he has, here is an undeniable proof of the right of infants to baptism. For he says; *They all, the whole congregation, of which infants then in their parents arms were a great part, they all were baptised into Moses. All were under the cloud: All passed through the sea. &c.* He repeats the universal term *all* because it is *emphatical* here. Now if this baptism into Moses was a type and written for our admonition, it typically admonishes us, that we *all* should be baptised into Christ, not *believers only*, but *their children* also.

As the whole congregation were baptised and admitted into covenant at the sea, when *Moses* took the command of them, so this covenant was again renewed with *all*, both men, women and *little ones*, just before he left them. Deut. 29. 10. *Ye stand, all of you before the Lord your God, your Elders, your little ones, your wives, that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord, that he may establish thee for a people unto himself, and may be unto thee a God, as he hath sworn to thy Father, to Abraham, &c.* This covenant with *Abraham*, which is so expressly renewed with *little ones*, is descended to us and our children.

I shall now briefly recapitulate the arguments that have been offered, and present them in one view.

The covenant, which God made with *Abraham* and his seed, expressly included *infants*; and the seal thereof was, by God's command, applied to *them*. We, believing *Gentiles*, are the seed for whom the covenant with *Abraham* was made; and therefore *our* infants as well as *his*, are entitled to the privileges of the covenant, and subjects of the seal of it, by virtue of the original grant to *Abraham*, in as much as that grant has never been recalled. This covenant was renewed at the *red sea*—and again, in the plains of *Moab*, and still infants are expressly included.—All along under the Old Testament, children are comprehended, with parents in all covenant-transactions between God and his people, and the token of the covenant is still applied to them. The Prophets often foretell, that the case would be the same in the gospel time; that Christ should gather the *lambs* with his arms—that God would pour his Spirit upon the *offspring* of his people, who should be the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their *offspring* with them. In the *Jewish* church, it was a custom, long before our Saviour's appearance, to receive *gentile* proselytes with their children, by baptism, as well as circumcision. Christ also himself took infants into his arms and blessed them, and directed that they should be brought to him, because of such was his kingdom, that kingdom, into which persons were to be admitted by being born of water. He ordered his Apostles to receive them in his name, and treat them as his disciples. When he gave the baptismal



commission, he expressed it in such universal terms as must naturally include infants: And the Apostles, knowing what had been the constant usage concerning infants, and how Christ had ever treated them, must understand the commission as extending to such. Accordingly, soon after, when they invited the convicted *Jews* to baptism, they placed their right to it upon the foot of a promise which equally belonged to them and their children. When they baptised the head of any family in his own house, they baptised his family with him. They constantly taught, that the covenant with *Abraham*, of which circumcision was the seal, is the same which we are now under, and that the blessings of it are come upon us *Gentiles*—that the *Gentiles* are grafted into the same stock, from which the *Jews* were broken off—that children are holy by virtue of their parents faith—that baptism is the christian circumcision, and therefore they who are baptised into Christ, are freed from the literal circumcision, and all other ancient rites—that circumcision, as a seal of the *Abrahamic* covenant, was a great privilege; but the gospel-dispensation confers greater.—

They illustrate the gospel-covenant by ancient examples of covenant-transactions, in which infants were included; by the case of *Isaac*, who was born after the promise, by *Noah's* ark, in which his whole family were saved in consequence of his faith; the like figure whereunto even baptism now saves us; and by the baptism of the whole congregation, infants and all, at the Red sea, which was a type, and written for our admonition. When we consider these things, we think the evidence

abundantly clear, that the infants of believers are entitled to baptism.

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DISCOURSE IV.  
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**H**AVING laid before you the arguments by which the right of infants to baptism is vindicated, I shall now, as I proposed,

III. Shew you the rational ends and moral uses of infant baptism.

If baptism be a divine institution for the infants of believers, it ought to be applied to them, whether we can see the uses of it or not: But still it may give us some satisfaction to understand what good ends it can answer.

We are often asked, 'What good can baptism do to *infants*?' It might suffice to reply, As much good as circumcision could do them formerly; or as much as the public presentation of first-born infants to God could do *them*. The Apostle says, The profit of *circumcision*, (which was usually administered to infants) was much every way. The profit of *infant baptism* may be as much.—Particularly,

1. It is evident, that God treats infants as sinners for *Adam's* transgression. In consequence of *his* apostacy, *they* suffer a sad variety of pains and diseases, which often issue in early death. And from that bias and inclination to evil, which they soon discover, there is reason to suppose they are infected with some moral disorder, which needs to be removed in order to

their entrance into the world of glory. *By one man*, says the Apostle, *sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passes upon all men, for that all have sinned.—By one man's offence, judgment came upon all to condemnation.—In Adam all die.—By his offence many are made sinners* In this language, he speaks in the 5th chap. to the Romans.

Now the gospel assures us, that Christ has obtained redemption from the condemnation of sin, and that in this redemption, all who believe, are unfailingly interested. But we see, that a very great part of the human race are cut off in infancy, while they are incapable of actual faith. What becomes of *them*? Is any provision made for *their* salvation? Or must *they* perish and be lost for ever? This is a natural enquiry. Now to comfort our minds concerning *such*, God has seen fit to assure us, that they may become partakers of redemption by Christ, and be made heirs of the kingdom above, notwithstanding their incapacity for an *actual* compliance with those terms which are proposed to the adult. And to confirm our faith and hope in his promise, he has appointed, that they shall be received with their believing parents into his visible kingdom, the church, and have the seal of his covenant affixed to them.

The great promise of the covenant is, that God will be a God to believers and *their* seed. This promise is often explained in scripture to import the happiness of the life to come. And God's appointing the seal of his promise to be applied to our infant seed, is a most comfortable ground of our faith and hope, that if they should be removed by an early death, they will be transplanted into

that happy clime, where they will spring up in everlasting life.\*

\* The children of believing parents, may be said to be born in covenant, as they are born under that promise of the covenant, *I will be a God unto thee and thy seed.* Accordingly, God calls them his children, born to him. To those who die in infancy this promise may be understood as importing a resurrection to eternal life. As the Apostle argues concerning the patriarchs, (Heb. 11.) so we may reason concerning these; since they enjoy no distinguishing favour in this world, there must be some good reserved for them in another; else the promise fails. *Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.* To those who arrive to moral agency, the promise may import, not only the enjoyment of the external means of religion, but the attendant influences of the divine spirit. The Apostle tells us, that among the many advantages of circumcision, this is one of the chief, *that to them are committed the oracles of God,* (Rom. 3. 1.) And God expressly promises to Jacob his servant, and to Israel whom he has chosen, *I will pour my spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the watercourses* (Isa 44. 3.) Their interest in this promise, as the children of God's servants is one ground of their admission to baptism, the token of God's faithfulness, and of their obligation to serve him. But then it is by baptism, that they are declared to be within the church, and entitled to the visible privileges of it. Persons may be *virtually* in covenant by *their own* or their parents' faith; but they are not *visibly* and *professedly* in covenant, or in the church, till they have passed under the appointed ceremony. When we speak of persons being admitted into the church of baptism, we mean not, that this conveys the right of admission; for it presupposes the *right*, and the *qualification* or *relation*, in which the right by divine institution is founded: but that it *declares* the right, and thus introduces to *visible* privileges. God says, 'The uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from among his people, he hath broken my covenant.' He was previously in covenant, else he could not be said to break it by his uncircumcision. So also the unbaptised person is to be cut off, or excluded from the privileges of the christian church.

God is said to have established his covenant with the cattle and the fowls, when he engaged no more to drown the earth, with a flood; and as a token of this covenant, he appointed his bow in the cloud. And surely he may, in as just and rational a sense, establish the covenant of grace with infants, engaging to pour his spirit and blessing upon them; and appointing the seal of this covenant to be affixed to them, in token of his faithfulness to fulfil his gracious promise.

2. The parent, by dedicating his children to God in baptism, solemnly binds himself to give them a religious and christian education, and to use his influence, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, and not put themselves out of that covenant, into which they have been thus visibly introduced. Now if it is any privilege for children to have a religious education, it is a privilege that such an education should be secured to them; and consequently a privilege that the parent, by this public transaction, should *covenant* and *engage* to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

It may be asked, perhaps, How a parent can covenant for his children? But the answer is obvious. He can covenant for *himself* to discharge such and such duties to them, and can commend them to God, in hope of the divine blessing upon his pious endeavours. In this sense may every religious parent, as Joshua did, covenant for his house, *As for me and my house we will serve the Lord*.

3. As the parent, who dedicates his children, should consider himself bound, by his own act, to educate them religiously; so children thus dedi-

eated, when they come to the age of reflection, should realize, that, having been given to God, they are not *their own*, but *his*; and are bound to live, not to *themselves*, but to *him* whose they are; and that a wicked, irreligious life is a practical renunciation of their baptism, and disavowal of their relation to the God of their Fathers.

If the *Jewish* parent, by circumcising his children, bound them to own and serve the God of *Israel*.—If the vow of *Sampson's* parents bound him to be a *Nazarite* for ever.—If *Hannah's* vow bound *Samuel* to attend upon God in the sanctuary; as well may the act of the *christian* parents in bringing his children to baptism, bind them to serve the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The religious parent may urge his children to a godly life by this argument, that he has given them to God. Thus the mother of king *Lemuel* expostulates with him.\* *What my son? And what the son of my womb? And what the son of my vows?* And this argument will have weight with children of an ingenious temper. Thus the Psalmist reasons with himself.† *I will walk before the Lord. I will call on his name. I will pay my vows in the presence of his people. O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid.*—I pass on,

IV. To consider the practice of the christian church with respect to infants immediately after the *Apostolic* age.

The author of the letters says, ‘It is of small importance to christians to know what the many writers upon this subject, since the time of the Evangelists and Apostles, have affirmed.’ But

\* Prov. 31. 2.

† Psal. 11. 6.

yet to know what they have affirmed concerning the *mode* of baptism, he thinks to be of no small importance.

He asserts, upon their authority, that the church for 1300 years practised *immersion*; though indeed he allows that, *sprinkling* was practised too in extraordinary cases. Upon the same authority it may be asserted that the church, for many hundreds of years, practised *infant baptism*; and not a single person, much less a church, can be produced which denied the *lawfulness* of it. And the practice of the church is as good an evidence in favour of *infant baptism*, as it would have been in favour of *immersion* in case that, *alone*, had been practised.—This gentleman himself (perhaps inadvertently) allows the early, constant universal practice of admitting infants to baptism. For he adopts this passage from Dr. Wall, ‘All christians in the world who never owned the Pope’s authority, do now, and *ever did*, dip their *infants* in the *ordinary* use.’ (Not universally, but *ordinarily* dip them.) If they *dip* infants, they *baptised* them. This practice is of much more weight to prove *infants* are the *subjects* than to prove *dipping* is the *mode* of baptism; because dipping was but the *ordinary* use, whereas infant baptism, for ought that appears, was the *universal* practice of the ancient church, except in cases of *proselytism*.

We do not pretend to rest the proof of infants right to baptism upon the practice of the church, but upon the authority of scripture’ However if, it appears, that the church, soon after the Apostles, did admit them, and there is no account of any church that rejected them, or any person who denied the *lawfulness* of the practice, or pretended,

that itw as an *innovation*, this will be an argument of considerable weight, that it was derived from the Apostles: For the early christians, they who lived in the ages next after the Apostles, must have known what *their* practice was in such a matter as this, which was of a most public nature, and concerned the very being of the church. What the usage of the church was, in the earliest times after the Apostles, we can learn only from the ancient writers, who are here produced, not as *examples*, but only as *historians*, or witnesses to a plain matter of fact.

*Justin Martyr*, who wrote about forty years after the apostolic age, says, 'We have not received the carnal, but the spiritual circumcision by baptism—And it is enjoined to all persons to to receive it in the same way.' Here he plainly considers baptism as succeeding in the place of circumcision, and consequently as being designed for infants as *that was*; which opinion he could not easily have fallen into, if the Apostles had universally, both in doctrine and practice rejected infants. In one of his apologies for the christians, he says, 'Several persons among us, of sixty and seventy years old, who were *made disciples to Christ from their childhood*, do continue uncorrupt.' *Made disciples*. He uses the same word which is used in the commission; *Disciple all nations baptising them*. If they were *made disciples*, they were doubtless baptised.

*Irenæus*, who wrote about sixty-seven years after the Apostles, and was born it is said, before the death of St. *John*, and was acquainted with *Polycarp*, who was *John's* disciple, says concerning Christ, 'He came to save all persons who by



him are regenerated (i. e. *baptised*) unto God, infants, little ones, youths and elderly persons.' That *Irenæus* used the word *regenerated* to signify *baptised*, is plain from his own words, where he says, 'When Christ gave his disciples the command of *regenerating* unto God, he said, Go and teach all nations, *baptising* them, &c.'

*Tertullian*, who flourished about 100 years after the Apostles, gives a plain testimony, that the church admitted infants to baptism in his time. It is true he advises to *delay* their baptism; not because it was *unlawful*, for he allows it in cases of necessity? not merely upon the foot of their *infancy*, for he advises also, that *unmarried* persons be kept from this ordinance, until they either marry or are confirmed in continence; but because the *Sponsors* were often brought into a snare; and because, he imagined, sins committed *after baptism* were next to unpardonable. But his advising to delay it, supposes it, to have been the practice; for otherwise there would have been no room for the advice. He does not speak of it as an *innovation*, which certainly he would have done, had it *begun* to be practised in his time. His words rather imply the contrary. His speaking of *Sponsors*, who engaged for the education of the infants that were baptised, shews that there had been such a custom. And his asking, Why that innocent age *made such haste* to baptism, supposes that infants had usually been baptised, soon after their birth. So that he fully enough witnesses to the *fact*, that it had been the practice of the church to baptise infants. And his advice, to delay their baptism till they were grown up and married, was one of those odd and

singular notions, for which this father was very remarkable.

*Origen*, who was contemporary with *Tertullian*, expressly declares infant baptism to have been the constant usage of the church from the Apostles. He says, 'The baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness of sins: But why are infants, by the usage of the church, baptised, if there is nothing in them that needs forgiveness?'

Further he says, 'Infants are baptised for the remission of sins; for none is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one day upon earth. And it is for that reason, because by baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that *infants* are baptised.'

Again he observes, 'The church had from the Apostles an order to give baptism to infants; for they, to whom the divine mysteries were committed, knew that there was in all persons the natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by water and the Spirit.'

Now as *Origen*, in these passages, argues from infant baptism to prove original sin, we may conclude, it was an uncontroverted usage of the church; for otherwise he could not, with propriety, have used it as an argument to establish another point.

*Cyprian*, who wrote about 150 years after the Apostles, gives a fuller testimony to this fact. In this time a question was started by one *Fidus*, (not whether infants might be baptised, but) whether baptism ought not to be given them on the eighth day, according to the law of circumcision? This question was proposed to a council of sixty-six Bishops convened at *Carthage*, who

unanimously resolved, that the baptism of infants out not to be deferred to the eighth day, but might be given to them at any time before. And a large letter to this purpose, containing the reasons of the resolve, was written and designed by *Cyprian*, in the name of the council.

Now in this assembly of ministers, doubtless there were some sixty or seventy years old, who could remember within less than 100 years of the Apostles. And therefore, if infant-baptism had been a usage lately introduced, *some* or *all* of them must have known it.—And if so, it is very strange that not one of them intimated any scruple about it. Whether infants should be baptised, seems not to have been at all a question, but only whether their baptism needed to be deferred to the eighth day, which, without hesitancy, was determined in the negative.

A little more than 100 years after this time, *Gregory Nazianzen* taught, ‘that infants should be baptised to consecrate them to Christ in their infancy.’ *Ambrose*, ‘that the baptism of infants had been the practice of the Apostles and of the church till that time.’ *Crysostom*, ‘that baptism had no determinate time, as circumcision had, but one in the beginning of life, or one in the middle of it, or one in old age might receive it.’

But not to multiply citations; I shall add but one more, *Austin*, about 300 years after the Apostles, had a controversy with *Pelagius* about original sin; and to prove it, he frequently urges infant baptism, demanding Why infants are baptised for the remission of sins, if they have none? *Pelagius* though greatly puzzled with the argument, yet never pretends, that infant baptism

was an unscriptural *innovation*, or a *partial* usage in the church; which, had it been true, a man of his very extensive acquaintance with the world, must have known, and had he known it, he doubtless would have said it, when he found himself embarrassed with the argument. But far from intimating any such thing, when some charged upon him the denial of infant baptism, as a consequence of his opinion, he disavows the consequence and complains, that *he had been slanderously represented as denying baptism to infants*. He asks, 'Who can be so impious as to hinder infants from being baptised and born again in Christ?' And citing those words, *Except one be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, he says, 'Who can be so impious as to refuse to an infant, of whatever age, the common redemption of mankind?' And many other expressions he uses, which plainly suppose, that infant baptism had been practised universally, and time out of mind.

And from this time till the year 1522, (as Dr. Wall, upon a most careful enquiry, assures us) there is not so much as a man to be found, who has spoken against, or even pleaded for the delay of the baptism of infants, except a small number in *France*, in the twelfth century, who denied the possibility of their salvation, and consequently their right to baptism. But this sect soon disappeared.

Now if all the first churches were every where established by the Apostles, upon the plan only of adult baptism, and children were every where left unbaptised, how could infant-baptism begin so early, and spread so extensively as it seems to

have done? How could such a speedy and total alteration take place in a matter of such public notice and great importance, and yet no noise be made about it; no opposition raised against it? Such a thing would be absurd to imagine. The early and universal usage of the church is then an argument of very considerable weight, that infant baptism was an Apostolic practice.

To invalidate this argument our brethren allege, that many corruptions were early admitted into the christian church under pretence of *Apostolic* traditions, and prevailed without opposition; such as *Infants Communion, Exorcism, Trine-Immersion, Unction after baptism, &c.* But supposing *these* had prevailed as early and universally as we find *infant baptism* to have done (which truly was not the case) yet there is this mighty difference, *These* were but circumstantial errors, which did not destroy the being of the church, or nullify men's christianity, and therefore it is no wonder that we have no account of any warm controversy about them. But *infant baptism*, in the opinion of our brethren, does, so far as it prevails, unchurch the church of Christ: For they look upon those, who have received no other baptism, as being unbaptised, and unfit for christian communion. Now if the first christians had viewed it in this light, would they have sat silent, when they saw it get footing, and prevail? Would not some, alarmed at the dangerous innovation, have borne their testimony against it? Would there not have been some churches, which preserved the primitive usage, and renounced communion with such as had so essentially departed from it? The different sects

of christians were often inflamed against each other by smaller differences. It is therefore utterly unaccountable, that there should be no dispute, when this supposed *fundamental* innovation was introduced, nor the least remains of any controversy about it, until within these two or three centuries.

There were indeed some great corruptions introduced into the church, which in time considerably prevailed, such as *Image-worship, Transubstantiation, &c.* But *these* never prevailed so *universally, so early, nor so without opposition,* as we have seen *infant baptism* must have done. A great part of the christian church has *always* rejected them and protested against them. Many Synods and Councils have publicly condemned them. And in the times when, and places where they most prevailed, it was by the protection and support of civil and military power; which cannot be pretended in the case of infant baptism.

It is time that we draw to a conclusion. I have only to lay before you a few deductions from what has been offered.

It has, I think, been proved, that *our* baptism is one with that of our *brethren*, and that we have neither changed the baptism instituted by Christ into another *rite*, nor introduced a *new* set of *subjects*: And therefore,

1. I beg leave seriously to enquire, Whether our brethren have any just occasion to withdraw themselves from our communion? Surely the candid among them will acknowledge, that our opinion is not so wholly without foundation, but that it may consist with an honest and good heart. And can it be for the interest of christianity,

which we on both sides profess to regard, that we should renounce fellowship with each other on account of this difference? We are willing they should commune with us, and yet enjoy the liberty of acting agreeable to their own principles.

Though we wish they might think with us, yet we would by no means constrain them to bring their infants to baptism contrary to their consciences. And, I apprehend, few ministers would scruple to administer baptism by immersion to any suitably qualified, who choose to receive it. For though they think affusion warranted by scripture, yet they are far from denying the validity of immersion. Since therefore our brethren may enjoy their own principles with us, what occasion can they have to separate from us?

Perhaps some will say, We cannot commune with you, because, in our opinion, you are unbaptised; nor can we receive baptism from your ministers, because *they* have received no other than infant baptism, which is a nullity: And since they have not been regularly baptised themselves, they cannot administer valid baptism to others.

It were to be wished, that persons of such narrow sentiments would realize the consequence. Infant baptism was undoubtedly the universal practice of the christian church for many hundreds of years together. History does not inform us, when it first began to be practised; but we have particular accounts when it was first opposed. And if it be a nullity, there is not, nor can be again, any regular baptism in the world; for there is not the least ground to pretend to a succession of adult baptism. If we

trace adult baptisms back, we must come to the time when they were administered by those who were baptised in infancy, and who, upon the principles above mentioned, could not administer valid baptism. Our brethren therefore, by nullifying *our* baptism, nullify *their own*; and by unchurching *us*, unchurch *themselves*. Yea, upon these principles, there were no authorised ministers, nor regular churches, nor baptised christians, for many centuries together, nor are there now, nor ever will be again, without a new commission from heaven. How then has Christ fulfilled his promises, that he will be with his ministers always to the end of the world, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church? We may rest assured, that these promises have not been forgotten, and consequently, that baptism did not cease, nor the church fail; when infant baptism became so much the general practice, that a succession of adult baptisms was no where preserved. Our brethren then must allow, that baptism, as administered in our churches, is valid, and consequently, that the above mentioned plea, for declining communion with us, is of no weight.

And indeed many among them, though they think infant baptism, especially when performed by sprinkling, not regular, yet do so far allow the validity of it, that they scruple not to hold communion with us. Some baptist churches in *England* are founded on this catholic plan, the church of which the late celebrated *Dr. Foster* was minister, received to her communion such as were baptised in infancy, without requiring them to be rebaptised. The famous *Mr. Whiston*, was



admitted to the communion of this church, after leaving the church of *England*, without rebaptization, which he never would submit to; for though he pronounced baptism in infancy, and by sprinkling to be wrong, yet he declared it to be 'so far real baptism, that it *ought not* to be repeated.'\* Were our brethren *all* (as indeed *many* of them are) of the same generous sentiments, we should hardly need to be known as different sects; to be sure there would be no occasion for dividing communions upon our different opinions.

With those of less generous sentiments, I beg leave seriously to expostulate. That you have the same right as we have, to judge what are the divine institutions, and to practise accordingly, none will deny. But to differ in sentiment and practice, is one thing; to renounce communion on account of this difference is another. To justify this step, it is not sufficient to prove, that you *may* be in the right: It is necessary to prove that we *must* be *fundamentally* in the wrong. You suppose us to be in an error. But is this error, in your opinion so manifest and so gross, that none who embrace it can be honest christians?—Can you demonstrate that the seal of the covenant of grace was never appointed for the children of believers; or, if such an appointment was once made, it has since been revoked? that baptism *always* signifies *immersion*, and that this mode was *invariably* pursued by the Apostles? That the age and manner of admission into the church, in use among you, is so essential, that the least deviation nullifies our christianity? Will you pre-

\* Clark's Defence, page 34.

tend, that there are no real christians in *our* churches? That the word and ordinances administered in them, have never been blessed to men's conversation and salvation? That there was nothing of the power of godliness, in and after the time of reformation? No true religion among our fathers, and in the churches founded by them? That there have been no revivals of piety in these churches since they were planted? That God has never owned them by providential protections, or by the effusion of his spirit? Has their never been any real godliness, but what was confined to *your* denomination; and none at all in that long period, when *your* sect did not exist? These things, I know you will not pretend. Nay, I will enquire farther; do not many of you date your own conversion at a time when you were in sentiment and in communion with our churches? Did not God bestow this great mercy upon you, while you attended on the ministration of his word and ordinances among us? This I know, some of you profess. You believe then, that God has owned, and still owns these as *his* churches: and will *you* disown them? Will *you* reject that which God receives? If you think it most convenient to worship and commune ordinarily with those of your own sentiments; yet why need you renounce fellowship with us? are you doing God service, when you cause divisions and offences in his churches, contrary to the doctrine of peace and unity, that we have received? Let us not my brethren, rend the body of Christ by our divisions; but with united zeal build up his kingdom in the world

2. The preceding discourse teaches us the unwarrantableness of rebaptisation, It is agreed on

bothside; that baptism is not to be repeated. If then our baptism is valid, a repetition of it is contrary to the will of God. In the baptism of an infant there is the application of water in the name of the Trinity, as well as in the baptism of an adult. If this baptism be not valid, it is *only* because the subject had not faith, and did not actually consent to the baptismal obligations. Now if the baptism of an infant is a nullity for want of these qualifications, the want of them will equally nullify an adult baptism; but yet, I presume, none of our brethren will carry the matter to this length. Let us put a case (and such a one as doubtless sometimes happens.) An adult person makes a profession of faith and obedience, and is baptised. It soon appears from the wickedness of his life and the corruptness of his principles, that he had no faith in any rational sense, and never consented to the baptismal obligations, but was influenced only by carnal views. The man afterward comes to repentance, confesses his hypocrisy in this affair, and owns he had no religious views in the whole transaction. He now gives satisfactory proofs, that he has become a real penitent and believer. Ought this person to be re-baptised? Every one will say, No; because he has been baptised, and his baptism will save him, as he has *now* the answer of a good conscience toward God. When *Simon* the sorcerer, who had been baptised by *Philip*, discovered the vile hypocrisy of his heart, *Peter* directs him to repent, that his sin might be forgiven; but says nothing of his being baptised again: Whereas he says to the unbaptised *Jews*, *Repent, and be baptised for the remission of sins*. But there is just the same reason, why this *hypocrite* should be baptised again upon his repent-

ance, as why the *infant* should; because he no more had faith before baptism, and no more consented to any religious obligation, when he was baptised, than an infant. If a profession of repentance is all that is necessary to our receiving this baptised hypocrite, a profession of faith and obedience, at adult age, is all that is necessary to our receiving one baptised in childhood. So that re-baptisation is unwarrantable and sinful even upon the principles of our brethren themselves; and much more upon supposition of infants *right* to baptism, which, I think, has been abundantly proved. Further,

3. If children are the proper subjects of baptism, then it is the indispensable duty of parents to present them to God in this ordinance, and there must be an inexcusable neglect in those parents, who, though convinced of their childrens right to baptism, delay to procure it for them.

Some will say perhaps, ' Though we dispute not their *right* to it, yet it appears to us to be a matter of very little consequence.'

But certainly it is a matter of *great* consequence, that you comply with a divine institution. He that breaks the least command shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

Perhaps you will say, ' We can't suppose the happiness of our children at all depends upon their baptism, since it is a thing out of *their* power. Be it so: Yet if it be a duty incumbent on you to bring them to baptism; *your* happiness may depend on your compliance with *this* as well as any *other* duty. But how are you sure that *their* welfare no way depends upon it? Their welfare much depends on their being religiously educated—their education will chiefly lie with you—by their bap-

tism you engage to give them a religious education—and if your bringing yourselves under public solemn obligations, will be any motive with you to educate them religiously, then their welfare, in some degree, depends on their baptism. You will say, ‘You can do your duty as well without such a promise as with it.’ With equal reason might you say, you can live a religious life without ever making a profession of religion, as well as if you did. But God has required you to make a profession, because this will be a proper motive and inducement to you to live a religious life; it is a suitable means of strengthening your obligations and keeping them in your remembrance. And your dedicating your children to God in baptism is founded on the same reason. It is a promise which you take on yourselves, and a means of reminding you of your obligations, to educate them religiously. And this will be an argument, which you may use to good advantage in your addresses to them.

With respect to unbaptised infants, we may be assured, God will do them no wrong. But if he has made their baptism a condition of the bestowment of some undeserved favours, who can say, this is unjust? It would be presumption to assert, that all who die unbaptised are lost. God’s tender mercies are over all his works. But the *promise* is to believers, and *their* children. And should we suppose, that the baptised infants of believers, have some advantages above other infants in another state, this could not be called absurd: For it is certainly a part of the scheme of God’s moral government, that some should be benefited by the piety of others. All intercession is founded in this principle. You doubtless sometimes

pray for your infant children. If you see them in danger of death, you pray, not only that their lives may be spared, but also that their souls might be saved. But why do you pray for them, if you imagine no good can redound to them from your faith and piety? How often did Christ exercise his healing mercy toward the sick on account of the faith of others? How often did he grant cures to children upon the earnest petitions of their parents? It would then be extremely rash to conclude, your infants cannot be benefitted by your dedicating them to God. Those believers, who brought infants to our Saviour, that he should bless them and pray for them, entertained another sentiment. They thought the good of these children, in some measure, depended on *their* bringing them to Christ. And Christ commended their piety, and directed others to do likewise.

Some perhaps will say, 'We believe that infants are subjects of baptism, but we question our own right to give them up to God therein.' But if you question your own right, it must be, because you question whether you have any religion. And can you be contented so?

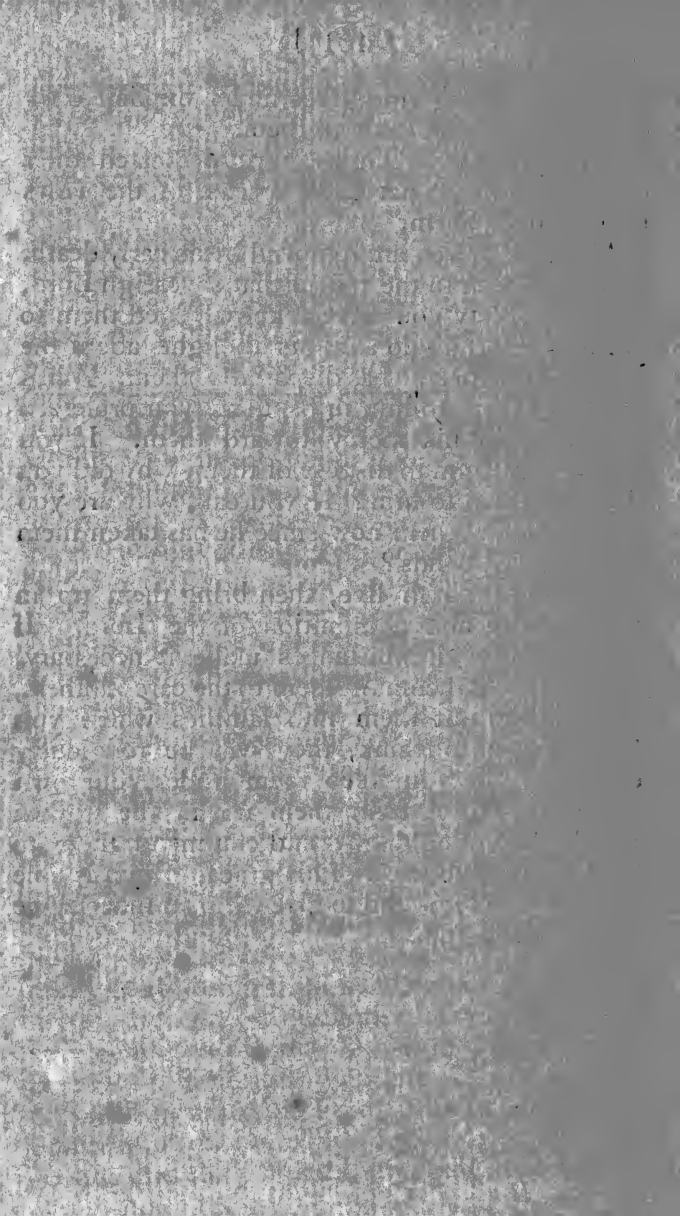
Whatever the difficulty is, which lies in your way, it should be your immediate concern to remove it. Is it not your intention to live a life of religion? Is it not your desire that your children should grow up before the Lord? Is it not your resolution to bring them up for him? If it is, then say so, by a public dedication of yourselves and your children to God. If it is not, then tremble at the thought of your own impiety and carelessness. If you have no good purposes and desires, you cannot consistently profess any; if you have good desires and purposes, strengthen and confirm

them by bringing yourselves under explicit obligations to act agreeably to them.

Finally. Let such as have dedicated their children to God, act under a sense of the vows that are upon them.

If your children are removed by an early death, quietly submit to the will of that sovereign Lord, whose property you have acknowledged them to be, and entertain no anxious thoughts about the manner in which he has disposed of them. When you gave them to him in baptism, you professed your faith in his mercy toward them. If you cannot trust him to dispose of them, why did you dedicate them to him? If you can, why are you anxious about them now since he has taken them into his own hands?

If your children live, then bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If your worldly circumstances make it necessary, that you should commit them to the care of others, see that you put them into families where you have reason to think, they will be religiously educated. If you keep them under your own immediate care, train them up in the way in which they should go; and commend them to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among the Saints.





**THOUGHTS**

**UPON**

**INFANT BAPTISM.**

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**EXTRACTED**

**FROM THE LONDON EDITION**

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CHAPTER

LIST OF NAMES

## THOUGHTS

UPON

## INFANT BAPTISM.

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**T**HE Baptism of Infants has been a troublesome dispute almost ever since the Reformation; but I shall only rehearse a few arguments commonly used to vindicate the practice of baptising children.

1. *The Covenant made with Abraham, and his seed, Gen. xvii. is the Covenant of Grace; it includes, and was designed to extend to all Believers. When God promised to be a GOD to Abraham, and to his seed, St. Paul assures us, that by Abraham's seed is meant all that should imitate the faith of Abraham, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, Gal. iii. 7. Know ye therefore, that they who are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham, ver. 29. If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

*The same spiritual promises, and blessings, which belonged to the church under the Old Testament, belong also to it under the New, Acts ii. 39. 2 Cor. i. 20. Abraham is represented as the root, or stock of the visible church, Rom. xi. 16, 17, &c. The Jewish church are the natural branches of it; the Gentiles are ingrafted into the same stock, ver. 17—24. and partake of the blessings of it,*

From these texts (and many others might easily be produced) it seems evident, that the *Jewish* and *Christian* church are but one and the same visible church in a continued succession, though under different administrations, and ordinances.

II. The *Covenant* made with *Abraham*, and with *his seed*, is still in force. This is implied in what has been already said: but it ought to be particularly considered. It is plainly asserted by the Apostle, Gal. iii. 17. To the same purpose the Apostle speaks in Rom. iv. 14—16. Here he declares, that the promise made to *Abraham*, is not made of *none effect*, or abolished, but is sure to all believers in *all ages*.

Ever since GOD called the family of *Abraham*, and settled his visible church in it, He never suffered it to fail. It was an *everlasting covenant* that he made with *Abraham*, to be his GOD, and the GOD of his seed, Gen. xvii. 7. that he might be the father both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who were brought into the church, as in Rom. iv. 11—16.

III. The *children of the Jews* were visible members of the *Jewish* church under the covenant of *Abraham*, and as such they were acknowledged, and received into it by circumcisions, as the door of entrance, Gen. xvii. 9—14.

IV. The *children of christians*, were never cut off from this privilege, when their fathers were received into the church, whether they were *Jews* or *Gentiles*; and therefore they are members of the *christian* church also under spiritual promises and blessings. When the *Jews* the *natural branches*, were cut off from the good olive-tree, their *little buds* were cut off with them also; and when the *Gentiles*, by a profession of faith, were grafted in as *foreign branches*, their *little buds* were grafted

in with them. *Christ* received the children that were brought by their parents, and laid his hand on them, and blessed them, and said, of such is the kingdom of heaven, Mark x. 13—16. The promises of the Old Testament, wherein children are included in some of the prophets, do refer to the Gentile church, as well as the Jewish, Isa. xlv. 3—5. Isa. xlv. 23. Joel ii. 28, 29. For it is the blessing of Abraham which reaches to his seed, that comes upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, Gal. iii. 14. Rom xv. 8, 9. that the Gentiles may glorify GOD for his mercy.

V. *Baptism* is now (like circumcision of old) the sign of God's covenant. This is plainly intimated by the apostle in Gal. iii 27—29. Circumcision being abolished, and baptism coming in the room of it, baptism should be applied to all those, who have any interest in the covenant, as circumcision was. Now that baptism is come in the room of circumcision, seems plain from Col. ii. 12. where the apostle argues, that being baptised, we need not be circumcised: and besides, baptism and circumcision signify the same thing, i. e. the removal of sin; one by cutting off, and the other by washing away.

VI. As this seems to manifest the *right of the children of christians* to these blessings, or that they have an interest in this covenant, so there are some considerations, which render it very probable, that children should be admitted into the visible church, by the *christian* door of entrance, that is *baptism*. As for instance:

*First*, the Gospel, which is a dispensation of greater grace, does not lessen, but increase the privileges of the church: it takes away yokes and burdens indeed, such as circumcision was, Acts

xv. 10. but does not *diminish* its honors or privileges.

Again, when the father or mother of a family believed in Christ, their households were baptised together with themselves, even where there is no mention, that the household believed in *Christ* also: as in the case of *Lydia* and *Stephanus*, Acts xvi. 15. 1 Cor. i. 16. Now children are usually a considerable part of the household.

Yet further, children under the *New Testament* are as capable of receiving the blessings signified, and fulfilling the duties enjoined, as ever they were under the *Old*. It is granted, that they neither could *then*, nor can *now* understand the blessings nor the duties; yet they might receive the Seal of Circumcision, or of Baptism, as a bond laid upon them in infancy, to fulfil the obligations and the duties of riper years, and as an encouragement to wait, and hope for the blessings. This was the case of *Jewish* infants, and why may not *christians* be favoured with it also?

The Covenant made with *Abraham*, and with his *seed*, Gen. xvii. 7. included *infants*. This Covenant is not repealed or disannulled (II. Ar.) It was intended to extend to *Christians*, and their *seed* (I.) It is confirmed by God to *Christ*, (Gal. iii. 17.) i. e. It was made with *Christ*, considered as including all his members in him. As Circumcision of old was the sign of admitting persons into this Covenant; so now *Baptism* is the sign of admitting persons into the *same* individual Covenant (V.) therefore it must be administered to the *same persons*, i. e. *infants*, as well as to the adult. When the Covenant is the *same*, the *privileges* and *promises* the *same*, the *seal* must have been the *same*, if it had not been changed, and the *seed* of

*Abraham* to inherit must be the *same* also, unless there is an alteration made in the Gospel. The seed in Covenant included *Infants* are still part of that seed of *Abraham*. The seed of *Abraham* had a right to the seal of the covenant; their right still continues as the covenant does; and therefore they are to be admitted, *Infants*; in particular, to *Baptism*, the present seal of this covenant.

If God thought fit to make any alterations in any circumstance of this covenant, it seems necessary, that he should give notice of it in the Gospel. Accordingly as he thought fit to change the old sign of circumcision for *Baptism*, so he has in the gospel, expressly warned us of the change, Acts xv. 24—xxi. 21—25. Gal. v. 2, 3. And as he chose to make one alteration, with regard to the persons to whom the seal of the said Covenant should be applied, and to ordain that *females*, as well as males, should be baptised, so he has expressly told us of this alteration in the gospel, Acts viii. 12. xvi. 14, 15. Gal. iii. 27, 28. In like manner it must be concluded, that if God would have had a further alteration made, if *Infants* of believing parents, that were formerly to partake of the seal of this Covenant were upon the coming of *Christ*, to partake of it *no more*; undoubtedly God would have given us express warning of it, and have told us in the gospel, that though *Infants*, before *Christ* came, were in the Covenant, now they are to be shut out of it. But as the gospel says no such thing, it seems to me certain, it cannot be true. It is then incumbent upon those who oppose *Infant Baptism*, if they would make their point good, positively to prove this by texts which expressly declare, that *Christ*

has cast *Infants* out of the *Covenant*, though before they were in it. But no such texts can be produced: therefore it appears *they continue in Covenant*, and have still a *right* to the *seal* of it, which is *Baptism*.

It will be in vain here to urge, that the Scripture sufficiently declares against applying this seal of the *Covenant* to infants, by making *faith* and *repentance* the *conditions* of *Baptism*. For this kind of arguing would as well prove, that *Infants* heretofore were not qualified for *Circumcision*, which yet no man will assert. As this argument would prove too much, it must be looked upon as proving nothing. It will be needful to add as a distinct head, that

VII. The texts which speak of faith as the term of *Baptism*, do not at all imply, that *Infants* are not to be baptised. In the case just now mentioned, there is a parallel between *Baptism* and *Circumcision*. If a heathen heretofore was proselyted to the Jewish religion and did hereupon desire to be circumcised, he was admitted to *Circumcision* upon the account of his faith in the God of Israel. And till he professed this faith, he could not *lawfully* be circumcised. And if a Jewish prophet had been inviting a set of heathens to Judaism, and *Circumcision*, he would have been forced to talk in such a manner as this, viz. "Believe in the one true GOD and ye shall be circumcised. He that believeth, and is circumcised, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned. Repent of your Idolatry, and other sins, and be circumcised. *Circumcision* now saveth us not, the putting away a bit of *flesh*, but the answer of a good conscience to-



ward the true God. Arise then and be circumcised, and put away your sins." In this manner, the Jewish prophet must have spoke to his *Heathen* audience. And if he had *succeeded*, and made proselytes, the history of it must have been expressed in such language as this, viz: "When the heathens believed the prophet reach in the things concerning the kingdom of God, they were circumcised. A certain *convert* said to the *Jewish* prophet, what should hinder my being circumcised? The prophet answered, If you believe with all your heart, you may. He replied, I believe that there is one GOD, and that *Moses* is his prophet. And hereupon he circumcised him. Others hearing, believed, and were circumcised." This, I apprehend, must have been the language in case the prophet had preached to a heathen nation, and proselyted them. And yet, I suppose, that no one would, from this kind of language, infer, that *Infants* were not to be circumcised, or that *actual* faith in God was so universally necessary to Circumcision, as that infants were not to receive it, for want of actual faith. As this will be allowed by every one, it must be acknowledged also, by parity of reason, that *the very same expressions*, when in the *same* circumstances applied to Baptism, cannot imply that Infants are not to be *baptised*. All I now contend for is, that they do not even seem to imply, that infants are not to be *baptised*; for this they cannot do, unless in the case above-represented, they did also imply, that infants were not heretofore to be *circumcised*. As it will be allowed, they would not have implied this, they cannot consistently be thought to imply the other.

If it had been fit to have continued *Circumcision* as the sign of God's *Covenant*, and *Christ* had actually continued it, when he gave his apostles a commission to proselyte the Gentile nations, I do not see how he could have expressed his thoughts better than this; *Go proselyte all nations, circumcising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, i. e. prove to the Gentiles, that Jesus is the Christ, and when they profess to believe this, *circumcise* them. Would the apostle, or any one else, have inferred from thence, that infants, not having actual faith, were not to be circumcised? Nay, rather on the other hand, the apostle would have reasoned thus: "The sign of GOD'S *Covenant Circumcision*, has hitherto been confined to one nation, even that of the *Israelites*: but now Christ has commanded us to extend it to *all the nations* of the earth. He has ordered us to *go and proselyte all nations*, and circumcise them. Surely it is his intention, that we should take our *pattern* from the practice of *Circumcision* among the Jews. He cannot therefore be supposed to mean, that we must only circumcise grown men, who are capable of believing the gospel and profess so to do. It is evident he intends, that when we shall have circumcised such we should next circumcise *their male children*; and that in after generations, the males among them should be circumcised the eighth day. Thus it was at the first institution. Abraham was first circumcised, then his children, of whatsoever ages they happened to be; and in after generations their children were circumcised on the eighth day. This is a direction to us. And when we are bid to *go, proselyte all nations*,

*circumcising them*, we plainly see, we are not forbidden to circumcise infants; but, on the contrary, are ordered to imitate this example of our Father *Abraham*." I observed, if *Circumcision* had been retained, as the seal of the *Covenant*, and the same *commission* had been given to the apostles, as now was given them, only the word *circumcise* used instead of *baptise*, no one would have imagined, that form of expression would in the least have interfered with the circumcision of infants. It is as certain then that the same form of words, applied to *Baptism*, cannot in the least interfere with the *Baptism of Infants*.

These considerations, I think, *fully* take off the force of all the objections that men think they find in the scripture against the baptism of infants. If there be any thing in the *nature* of baptism, as a *seal* of the *Covenant*, which confines it to such as *believe*, there must have been the same limiting nature in *Circumcision*, which was a *seal* of the *same Covenant*. But as *this* is certainly false, the other cannot be true. If an infant was not by reason of his age, *unqualified* to receive the sign of *Circumcision*, a *seal of the righteousness of faith*, an infant cannot now by reason of his age, be consistently thought unqualified for *Baptism*, which is a seal of the *same*.

Farther to confirm this point, if it needs *confirmation*, it may be observed, that the same forms of expression, which are urged out of the *New Testament*, to prove that infants are not qualified for *Baptism*, for want of actual faith and repentance, would equally prove them unqualified for *salvation*. From Christ's saying, *he that believes, and is baptised, shall be saved*, some have infer-

red, that a person must actually believe, or else he cannot be baptised. With as much strength of reason they might infer, that a person cannot be saved, unless he actually believe! especially since it is added, *He that believeth not shall be damned.* Yet it is acknowledged, that though infants do not believe, yet they shall not be damned. It is evident then to all, that this text must be interpreted, as speaking *only of the adults*, who were capable of hearing and believing the gospel. Since then it does not at all speak of infants, they may be saved, and may be baptised too, notwithstanding they are not believers. The method of proving that they may be *saved without faith*, will as necessarily demonstrate, that they may be *baptised without their own faith*, notwithstanding any thing that is laid down in this text. Thus all the objections against Infant Baptism are at once cut off.

VIII. *In the Christian Church from its earliest ages, and we think from the Apostles time, it has been the custom to baptise the infant children of professed christians.*

To prove this, I shall produce a few witnesses, among many. 1. *Justin Martyr*, who wrote about forty years after the apostles, in his dialogue with *Tripho the Jew*, page 59. plainly speaks of Baptism, as being to Christians in the stead of circumcision. And in his *Apology for the christians*, near the beginning, he says, "*Several persons among us of sixty and seventy years old, of both sexes, were discipled [or made disciples to Christ in or from their childhood.]*" Please to observe, that Justin's word *ἐμαθνευοντες* were *discipled or made disciples*, is the very same word

that had been used by St. Mat. xxviii. 19. in expressing our Saviour's command, *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη μαθητεύσατε* *disciple all nations*. And it was done to these persons, Justin says, in, or from their childhood. And he wrote that apology within forty years of the death of the apostles: and seventy years reckoned back from that time, do reach into the midst of the apostles' time.

2. *Irenæus*, born about the time of St. JOHN'S death, in his treatise, *Adv. Hæres. lib. 2. cap. 3.* speaking of Christ, says, "Not disdaining nor going in a way above human nature, nor breaking in his own person the law which he had set for mankind: but sanctifying every several age by the likeness it has to him. For he came to save all persons by himself: *All* I mean, who by him are regenerated unto God; *Infants*, and little ones and children, and youths, and elderly persons. Therefore he went through the several ages: for infants being made an infant, sanctifying infants, &c."

This testimony which reckons *infants* among those that are *regenerated*, is plain and full. Dr. *Wall* has largely shewn, that the word *regenerating* does particularly in the writings of *Irenæus*, and in the usual phrase of those times signify *Baptising*: he mentions some places, which expressly declare, that *Christ* was *regenerated* by *John*; meaning that he was *baptised* by him.

Near the time that *Irenæus* wrote the above treatise, *Clemens Alexandrius* wrote his *Pædagog* wherein he expressly says, "The word *regeneration* in the name of *Baptism*," (1. 1. c. 6. near the beginning: ) his thus plainly declaring, that *regenerating* is the common name for *Baptising*,

does very much confirm the argument taken from Irenaeus, who asserts, that Infants were regenerated unto God.

Please to take notice, how near this man was to the Apostle's time. Irenaeus himself says, l. 5. c. 30. that the revelation made to St. John in Patmos, was but a little before his time, and that revelation was five or six years before St. John's death. In an age so nigh the apostle, and in a place where one of them had so lately lived, the Christians could not be ignorant what had been done in their time, in a matter so public as the baptising, or not baptising of Infants.

3. Origen is not only express for baptising of Infants, but gives his reasons for it : in his eighth homily or sermon on *Leviticus*, c. 12. he thus says, " Hear David speaking ; *I was says he, shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me* : shewing, that every soul that is born in the flesh is polluted with the filth of sin and iniquity : and that therefore that was said which we mentioned before ; that *none is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one day.*

Besides all this let it be considered, what is the reason, that whereas the baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness of sins, *Infants are also by the usage of the church, baptised* : when if there was nothing in infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them."

Again, in his Homily on Luke xiv. he says as follows ; " Infants are baptised for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins ? or when have they sinned ? Or how can any reason of the laver in their case

hold good, but according to that sense that we mentioned even now; *none is free from pollution, tho' his life be but the length of one day upon earth?* And it is for that reason, because by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that Infants are baptised."

Yet farther in the fifth book of his commentary on the epistles to the Romans, he says thus: "And also in the law it is commanded, that a sacrifice be offered up for every child that is born; *a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons; of which one is for a sin offering, the other for a burnt offering;* For what sin is this one pigeon offered? Can the child that is new born have committed any sin? It has even then sin, for which the sacrifice is commanded to be offered: from whence even he, *whose life is but of one day,* is denied to be free.

For this also it was, that the church had FROM THE APOSTLES AN ORDER to give Baptism to Infants.

For they to whom the divine misteries were committed, knew that there is in all persons the natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by water and the spirit."

The reader is desired to observe, that *Origen* not only says that it was the *custom of the church*, to baptise Infants, but he expressly affirms, "*That the church received an order from the APOSTLES to give baptism even unto infants.*"

There is one circumstance that makes *Origen* a more competent witness to give evidence, whether the baptising of infants had been in use time out of mind, or not, than most other authors that we have left to us of that age; because he was

himself of a family that had been *christians* for a long time. The other witnesses that I mentioned, except Irenæus, must have been themselves baptised in adult age; because they were of *heathen* parents. But Origen's father was a martyr for Christ in the persecution under Severus, the year after the Apostles, 102. And Eusebius (in his history, book 6, ch. 19) assures us that his forefathers had been christians for several generations.

Now since *Origen* was born on the eighty-fifth year after the Apostles (for he was seventeen years old when his father suffered martyrdom) his grandfather; or at least his great grandfather, must have lived in the Apostles time. And as he could not be ignorant whether he was himself baptised in infancy, so he had no farther than his own family to go, to enquire what was practised in the times of the Apostles.

Besides that, he was a very learned man, and could not be ignorant of the usage of the churches; in most of which he had also travelled; for as he was born and bred at Alexandria, so it appears out of Eusebius's history, B. 6. that he had lived in Greece, and at Rome and in Cappadocia, and Arabia, and spent the main part of his life in Syria and Palestine.

5. What I apprehend very much strengthens the truth of infant baptism, that it is of a divine original; is this; "About one hundred and fifty years after the death of St. John the Apostle, there was an assembly of sixty-six Bishops, who spoke of infant baptism, as a known, established and uncontested practice." One *Fidus* ques-



tioned, whether infants were to be baptised so soon as within two or three days after their birth, and whether it would not be better to defer their baptism till they were eight days old, as was observed in *circumcision*; which scruples he proposed to this assembly, and in which he desired their resolution, which they sent in a letter to him: part of which I shall transcribe.

“Cyprian and the rest of the Bishops, who were present at the council, sixty-six in number, to Fidus our brother, greeting,

“We read your letter, most dear brother,—  
 “But as to the case of infants: whereas you judge, *that they must not be baptised within two or three days after they are born; and that the rule of circumcision is to be observed so that none should be baptised, and sanctified before the eighth day after he is born:* we were all in our assembly of the contrary opinion.

“We judge that no person is to be hindered from obtaining the grace, by the law, that is now appointed; and that the spiritual circumcision ought not to be restrained by the circumcision that was according to the flesh: but that all are to be admitted to the grace of Christ: since *Peter speaking of the Acts of the Apostles, says, The Lord has shewn me, that no person is to be called common or unclean.*

“This therefore dear brother, was our opinion in the assembly; that it is not for us to hinder any person from baptism and the grace of God, who is merciful, and benign, and affectionate to all.—Which rule, as it holds for all, so we think it more especially to be observed in reference to Infants

newly born: to whom our help and the divine mercy is rather to be granted: because by their cries and tears at their first entrance into the world they do intimate nothing so much, as that they implore compassion."

From this piece of history it appears, that both the persons that moved the doubt, and all the persons who resolved it, *unanimously* agreed in this, that *Infants were to be baptised*, and that it was the settled custom of the church to baptise them. If the assembly had been against Infant Baptism, they would have answered; *It is so far from being necessary to baptise children on the eighth day after their birth, that they ought not to be baptised at all, till they are of age to judge and act for themselves.* But none of those bishops was in this sentiment. They all looked upon it, as a thing uncontested, that infants were to be baptised.

If we look back from this time to the space that had passed from the apostles time, which was but 150 years, we must conclude, that it was easy then to know the practice of christians in the apostles days. For some of these 66 bishops may be thought to be at this time sixty or seventy years old themselves, which reaches almost to half the space: and at that time when they were Infants, there must have been several alive, that were born within the apostles age. And such could not be ignorant, whether infants were baptised in that age, when they themselves were some of those infants. And as there was no dispute, or difference of opinion, (as there must have been among so many, if any innovation had been

made: for it is here expressly said, *there was not one of Fidus's mind,*) that infant baptism must be delayed till the eighth day; much less then was there any of opinion that it was not to be at all.

“In a doctrinal point, as Mr. Baxter well observes, a mistake is easier, than in a bare narration of some one fact; but in a matter of fact of so publick notice, and which so many thousands were partakers in as baptism was, how could they be ignorant?”

Suppose it were a question now among us, whether persons were baptised at age only, or in infancy also, eighty years before we were born: were it not easy to know the truth, what by report and what by records?

I shall conclude what I have to remark on this testimony with observing, that we see here confirmed, what was said before, that baptism was reckoned to be to christians in the room of circumcision. For it was upon that account, that Fidus thought it must be the time of the old circumcision; and the Bishops of the council, tho' denying that, do call it the *spiritual* (or christian) *circumcision*.

6. Ambrose commenting on these words, Luke i. 17. where the angel prophesies of John the Baptist, *he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias*, after having shewn in several particulars, how John, in his office, did resemble Elias, and having mentioned that miracle of Elias dividing the river of Jordan, adds thus; “But perhaps this may seem to be fulfilled in our time, and in the apostles time. For that returning of the river waters backward toward the spring-head which was caused by Elias, when the river was

divided ( as the scripture says, *Jordan was driven back*) signified the sacrament of the laver of salvation, which was afterwards to be instituted : by which those *Infants that are baptised*, are reformed back again from wickedness [or a corrupt state] to the primitive state of their nature."

He means they are freed from the guilt of original sin, and in some sense reduced back to the primitive state, in which man was, before that happened. He plainly speaks of *Infants as baptised in the Apostles time*, as well as in his own; and makes St. John. in baptising infants for the reformation of their nature to the primitive purity of it, to resemble Elias in turning back the waters to their spring-head.

*Austin*, in his treatise *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, lib. 4. C. 23. having had occasion to speak of the penitent thief, who obtained salvation without baptism, shews that is no more an argument against the necessity of baptism where it may be had, than the example of baptised Infants obtaining salvation without *faith*, is an argument against the necessity of faith, where the subject is capable of it. Near the conclusion of the fourth book he says, " And as the thief who by necessity went without baptism was saved, because, by his piety, he had it spiritually: so where baptism is had, tho' the party by necessity go without that [faith] which the thief had, yet he is saved, Which the *whole body of the church* holds, as delivered to them in the case of little infants baptised : who certainly cannot yet believe with the heart to righteousness, or confess with the mouth to salvation as the thief could: nay, by their crying and noise, while the sacrament is administering, they disturb the holy myste-

ries: and yet no christian man of any sort will say, they are baptised to no purpose.

And if any one do ask for divine authority in this matter, though that which the whole church practises, and which has not been instituted by councils, but was ever in use is very reasonably believed, to be no other than a thing *ordered by the authority of the Apostles*: yet we may besides take a true estimate how much the sacrament of baptism does avail infants by the circumcision which God's former people received." In what follows, he most plainly declares, that baptism is to the Christian infants, as circumcision was to the Jewish.

Though Austin speaks of Infant Baptism in this place but occasionally, his words are a full evidence, that it was then universally practised, and had been so beyond the memory of any man, or of any record: that they took it to be a thing that had not been *enacted by any council* but had been *in use from the beginning of Christianity*.—And they had then but 300 years to look back to the times of the Apostles, whereas we now have upwards of 1600. And many writings, and records which are now lost, were then extant, and easily known.

It deserves a particular remark, that most of these witnesses for infant baptism, were not only faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, but were faithful unto death, joyfully suffering martyrdom for the truth: surely this is a great accession to the strength of their testimony.

All these things put together, seem to prove, that infant baptism was practised in the church

of Christ from the *beginning*, and consequently that it is of an *apostolical* and *divine* original.

As for the *first four hundred years*, there appears only one man, Tertullian, that advised the delay of infant baptism *in some cases* and one Gregory, that did perhaps practice such delay in the case of his children; but no society of men so thinking, or so practising: so in the next seven hundred years, there is not so much as *one man* to be found, that either spoke for, or practised such delay. But all the contrary. And when one sect among the Waldenses declared against the baptising of infants, as being incapable of salvation, the main body of that people rejected their opinion: and those of them that held that opinion, quickly dwindled away, and disappeared; there being no more heard of holding that tenet, till the rising of the German Antipædobaptists, in the year 1522. “And all the national churches *now* in the world do profess and practice infant baptism.”

This brings to my remembrance a very clear proof for the baptism of infants, which much satisfied the mind of the great and good Mr. Baxter; I shall relate it in his own words. “I am fully satisfied, that Mr. Tombs cannot shew me any society (I think not one man) that ever opened their mouths against baptism of infants, till about 200 years ago, or thereabout which confirms me much, that it is from the apostles times, or else some one would have been found as an opposer of it; even as I profess seriously, that it much satisfieth my conscience, that Christ and his apostles did never shut the infants of believing

Jews (and consequently not of believing Gentiles) from being members of his visible church, in that I never find in all the New Testament one word of exception, arguing, murmuring, or dissatisfaction against it; when as it cannot possibly be conceived, but those Jews who kept such a stir before they would let go Circumcision, the sign of church membership, when yet they had baptism, another sign, would, undoubtedly have been much more scandalized at the unchurching of all their children, and would have, much hardlier have let go that privilege of their church membership, or at least have raised some scruple about it, which might have occasioned one word of satisfaction from some one of the apostles; especially when Paul calls them holy, and Christ, *Suffer them to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.* I know not how Mr. T——, and such others think on these things; but, for my part, they stick so close to my conscience, that I dare not say, Christ would have no infants received into his visible church among the number of Christians, when I find he once placed them in the church; and neither Mr. T——, nor any man breathing, can shew me one word of scripture where ever Christ did put them out again; and yet these men pretended to stand to the determination of scripture. I would this one thing were impartially considered.”

With regard to the mode of baptising, I would only add, Christ no where, as far as I can find, requires *dipping* but only *baptising*; which word, many most eminent for learning and piety, have declared; signifies to *pour on* or *sprinkle*, as well as to *dip*. As our Lord has graciously given us

word of such extensive meaning, doubtless the parent, or the person to be baptised, if he be adult, ought to choose which way he best approves. What GOD has left indifferent it becomes not man to make necessary.

I think it proper in this place to subjoin what Dr. Watts has declared concerning the signification of this word. “The Greek word *Baptise*, (says he) signifies to wash any thing properly by water coming over it: Now there are several ways of such washing, (viz.) sprinkling water on it in a small quantity, pouring water on it in a larger quantity, or dipping it under water, either in part or in whole: And since this seems to be left undetermined in scripture to one particular mode; therefore any of these ways of washing may be sufficient to answer the purpose of this ordinance. Now that the Greek word signifies washing a thing in general by water coming over it, and not always dipping, is argued by learned men, not only from ancient Greek authors, but from the New Testament itself, as Luke xi. 38. *The Pharisee marvelled that Jesus had not first washed before dinner.* In Greek that he was not first baptised; and can it be supposed, that they would have him dip himself in water? Mark vii. 4. *The Pharisees, when they come from the market, eat not except they are washed.* In Greek except they are baptised; surely it cannot mean except they were dipped. And if this should be restrained to signify washing their hands only, yet it does not signify necessarily dipping them; for this manner of washing their hands of old, was by pouring water on them as *Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah*, 2 Kings ii. 11. Yet further they practised the washing of



*tables* (in *Greek*, *baptism of beds*) as well as *cups and vessels*. Now *beds* could not usually be washed by *dipping*, Heb. ix. 10. The Jews had divers washings prescribed by Moses, (in *Greek*, *baptisms*) which were *sprinkling* and *pouring water* on things, as well as plunging them all over in water. *The children of Israel were baptised unto Moses in the cloud and the sea, in their passage through the Red sea, at their march from Egypt*, 1 Cor. xii. 2. Not that they were *dipped* in the water, but they were *sprinkled* by the clouds over their heads, and perhaps by the water which stood up in heaps as they passed by.

Besides, pouring or sprinkling more naturally represents most of the spiritual blessings signified by baptism (viz.) the sprinkling the blood of Christ on the conscience, or the pouring out of the spirit on the person baptised, or sprinkling him with clean water, as an emblem of the influence of the spirit; all which are the things signified in baptism, as different representations of the cleansing away of the guilt or defilement of sin thereby.

I conclude, since this controversy has difficulties attending it, persons of an honest and sincere soul, in searching out the truth, may happen to run into different opinions: but the things wherein we agree, are so important, as should not suffer us to quarrel about the lesser things wherein we differ. Our brethren, who, reject infant baptism, as well as we who practise it, all agree in a belief of the sacred institution of this ordinance: we all agree, that children should be devoted to God, and should be partakers of all the privileges which scripture admits, and that they should grow up

under all possible obligations to duty : and since each of us desires to find out the will of Christ, and practice it accordingly, it is a most unreasonable thing, that we should be angry with each other, because some of us are devoted to God and Christ by this ceremony, a little *sooner* or a little *later* than others, or because some devote their children to God in baptism, as a claim of privileges, and an obligation to duties, before they can do this for themselves, and are capable of acting therein : or because some of us think, this ordinance requires much water, and that the whole body be immersed in it ; others suppose, a little is sufficient, and that he who hath the face or head washed in this solemnity, has as true a significancy of gospel benefits and obligations, as he who has his whole body put under water, since our Saviour thought so when he washed Peter's feet, John xiii. 10. In short, when faith in Christ, and love to God, and obedience to the sanctifying operations of the spirit are made necessary to salvation, and agreed upon by us all, it is pity that these lesser things should raise such unhappy contentions among the disciples of the blessed Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

FINIS.

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