





# S E R M O N S,

ON THE

M O D E A N D S U B J E C T S

O F

## CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

OR AN ATTEMPT TO SHEW

THAT POURING OR SPRINKLING,

IS A SCRIPTURAL M O D E;

And the INFANTS of BELIEVERS are proper SUBJECTS  
Of the BAPTISM instituted by CHRIST;

WITH AN EXAMINATION OF

V A R I O U S O B J E C T I O N S

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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TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A N A P P E N D I X,

CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE ANABAPTISTS,  
IN FOUR LETTERS,

BY NATHAN PERKINS, A. M.

Pastor of a Church in Hartford.

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# SERMONS, &c.



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 unbaptized state—when we are treated as unfit for christian communion, we have a right to plead in our defence.

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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 a 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.

## P A R T 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 person.—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  $\text{Βαπτίζω}$ , 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  $\text{Βαπτίζω}$  signifies *to wash* by the application of water : But then, *how* the water is to be applied, whether by plunging the subjects *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.

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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 ' Βαπτίζω is the offspring of Βαπτίω ;' and consequently may be taken in the same sense. Zealous as he is for immersion, he is constrained to acknowledge, that ' Βαπτίω 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 Βαπτίω is never used for plunging the whole body, but sometimes for sprinkling it, probably Βαπτίζω, ' its offspring,' is generally used in the same sense. Accordingly this author concedes that ' the word Βαπτίζω, 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 baptized) himself seven times in *Jordan*, for the cure of his 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 Βαπτίζω, signifies to *plunge*. We have then no instance of Βαπτίω, and but one (and that a very doubtful instance) of Βαπτίζω, 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 Βαπτίζω, 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 un washed) 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, (επι μη βαπτισώμεναι, except they are baptized) they eat not. What in the former clause, is called

called *washing the hands*, is here called *being baptized*. 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 *baptized*, 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* (*βαπτισμοὺς*, 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 not be washed only by pouring water on them.*

It is said, Luk. 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 baptizing. He marvelled that he had not been baptized* *εβαπτισθη*, *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.* (*διαφοροῖς βαπτισμοῖς*, divers baptisms) By these divers *baptisms*, he 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 same reasons of a critical writer on the other side of the question.

There is another *Greek* word, *ἄβυς*, supposed to be sometimes used for *baptism*, when the author of the letters lays more weight; for,

‘ This



‘ 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, (ἀηλουμένοι σωμα, 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 (διὰ Λούσου) 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 phrase, 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*

\* Heb. 9. 13,

fn. 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 favour of *affusion*.

This now is the result of our enquiry. The word *βαπτίζω*, 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, *λουω*, 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 *Jew*, *Be baptized and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Ghost*.<sup>\*</sup> 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 *baptized with it*. That promise, *Ye shall be baptized with the holy Ghost*, is said to have been fulfilled when *Christ shed or poured forth the Spirit*.<sup>†</sup>

2. Baptism

\* Act. 2. 38.

† Act. 1. 5. and ch. 2. 33.

2. Baptism represents the forgiveness of sins. Hence these directions. *Be baptized—for the remission of sins.—Be baptized 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 ‡*

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 *meer* 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.‡*

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\* Act. 2. 38. and Chap. 22. 16.

† 1 Joh. 1. 7. and Rev. 1. 5.

‡ Heb. 12. 24. 1 Pet. 1. 2.

§ John 13. 8, 9, 10.

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*. *Unction* 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 *baptized* 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 baptized. 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 *Jerws* who came out of *Egypt*, says, *They were all baptized 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 were they baptized 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 sprays 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 baptized 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.

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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 baptized 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 baptism*, 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 *spirit's 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 a 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 resembles 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

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\* Isa. 22. 16. † Joh. 11. 44. ‡ Joh. 19. 40. § Mat. 26. 7.

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 unction from the Holy One, which teacheth them of all things.*\* What is elsewhere called the *pouring of the spirit on them* ; and being *baptized 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 *immersion* was the mode practised in those times, because the persons baptized are, in one or two instances, said to go *into*, and come *out of* the water ; because some were baptized *in a river* ; and because places *abounding with water* were chosen for baptizing.

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 baptized came up out of the water.* The Greek phrase ( $\alpha\pi\omicron\upsilon\ \upsilon\delta\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ ) 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 whatever mode he was baptized. 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 baptized, it could not be for 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 baptized. 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 shalt thou bring to the door of the tabernacle, and shalt 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*

\* 1 Cor. 12. 13. and 1 Joh. 3. 10. 27.

*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 justify 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 baptized 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 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 *baptize*, 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 favor 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, Act. 8. 38. *They (Philip and the Eunuch) went down both into the water, and he baptized him, and they came up out of the water.* This passage is thought to favor 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 stepped into the edge of it. The words do not necessarily imply even so much as that; for 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

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

† Isai. 61. 1.

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 out from under ground; and yet the Greek particles here rendered *to and from* are the same, which in the case of the *Eunuch* are rendered *into and out of*. All therefore than we can conclude from this passage is, that they went down from the chariot to the water, there *Philip* baptized him, and then they returned: But in what manner he baptized 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 baptize 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 baptized 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 baptized in *Jordan*, if only *some* of the water of the river was *poured* on their faces.

We read John 3. 23. that *John baptized in Enon because there was much water there*. It is asked, 'Why should he chuse a place abounding with water to baptize in, if he did not baptize by immersion?' I answer, These words (*πολλα υδατα*) 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* baptized only by *affusion*, a considerable quantity of water would be necessary to baptize 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 baptized, 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 supposable, that *such numbers* could, here in the desert, be provided with change of apparel proper for immersion; and surely, in such a *numerous* and *mixed* assembly, they were not baptized *naked*. The circumstances of the case therefore lead us to suppose, they were baptized by *affusion*.

We

\* Job. 9. 7.



We read, *Aët. 2.* Of *three thousand* baptized, 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 endeavoring by all means to suppress.

When we read of whole families baptized in their houses, particularly of the *Taylor* and his family baptized 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 baptized ?\**

*Paul* seems to have been baptized 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 baptized.†*

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 baptized in a fountain or river. They who were baptized 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 baptized.

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 author 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 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 departed from.

The

\* *Aët. 10. 47.*

† *Aët. 9. 18.*

The truth is, The manner of baptizing 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 1300 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 practised 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 don't say, immersion is unlawful, or a mere 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.

PART



## P A R T II.

## 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 rebaptization, &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, that 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 *Isaiab*, *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* baptizing them ; and the exhortation of *Peter*, *be baptized—for the promise is to you and your children*, are commands to admit infants to baptism ; as we shall endeavor 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 baptized. 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 profelytes should be baptized ? But whether the infants of professed believers should be baptized ? 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 baptized in infancy. And the Apostles’ baptizing *such* is no argument that *they* did not baptize *infants*, any more than our missionaries’ baptizing adults among the natives, is an argument, that *they* do not baptize infants. The question is merely this ; are the infants of baptized 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 baptized ; I ask, Where is your example ? Did the Apostles refuse to baptize *such* ? Or among the adults which they baptized, do you find any that were born of christian parents ? The history of the Acts contains a period of above 30 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 baptized after he grew up ; or that any one of those adults whom the Apostles baptized, was born of believing parents. It is plain then, there is not one example, that, in the least, favours the opinion of our brethren, which is this, *That the children of believers must be left to grow up before they are baptized.* They ask ; ‘ Is it

is not a little strange, that we *no where* find children mentioned, if it were the Apostles' custom to baptize them with their parents? And I ask; is it not very strange, that we *no where* find the children of believers baptized after they grew up, if it was the Apostles' custom to leave them unbaptized till they grew up? There is no example of this kind. But, we think, we have examples, and just such examples in favour of our practice, as we should have, upon supposition, the Apostles did baptize children with their parents.

Let us suppose infants were baptized: 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 baptized? 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 baptized and his family—such a woman and her household. And this we are told; *Stephanas's* household, *Lydia* and her household, the *Faylor* and all his were baptized; which are plain examples of families baptized 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 therefore 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 baptized.* 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 baptized; 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 baptized?' The Apostles answer the question, as it respected those who proposed it. *Repent ye and be baptized—If thou believest, thou mayst be baptized.* 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. 3. 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 *salvation* 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 fleshy 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.

\* Josh. 5.

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, *Act. 8. 5.* that *when the Samaritans believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, they were baptized 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 baptized 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 baptized, though he was certainly capable of understanding

understanding the nature of baptism before he was *twelve*. Do our brethren think, that all are bound, in imitation of Christ, to live, unbaptized, twenty years after they arrive 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 baptized 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 *baptized* 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.\*

## 6. The

\* If it could be proved, which certainly it never can, that John baptized 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,*



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 baptized. But

Son, and of the Holy Ghost. John did not baptize 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 baptize in the name of the *Son*, or into 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 baptize into *Christ's death*, for this event had not then taken place. Had John taught that *Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ*, and baptized 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 baptizest 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 they who had received John's baptism, were *afterward* baptized in the name of the *Lord Jesus*.

Among the many thousands *from all Judea and Jerusalem*, to whom Peter preached on the day of pentecost, it cannot be doubted, that there were multitudes, who had been baptized by John; for *there went out to him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him*. And yet Peter says to them, without distinction, *Repent and be baptized, 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 to what then were ye baptized?* And they said, *Unto John's baptism*. Then said Paul, *John verily baptized 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 baptized 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 baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*. The meaning cannot be, that when the people heard *John*, they were by him baptized *in the name of the Lord Jesus*; because then it will follow, that Paul laid his hands on all the people whom John baptized; for they, who are here said to be *baptized*, are evidently the persons on whom Paul *laid his hands*. But the sense must be, that when these twelve disciples who had been baptized by John, now heard Paul, they were baptized 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 arguments 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.

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 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 believers' 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 to 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 afterward 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.

Now 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 that 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, what ever 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 *subjects*. There must be a command to warrant our rejecting the *old subjects*, 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 prophet’s description to the gospel-state. The old covenant, which, he says, was decayed and ready to vanish, is not the 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 foretel 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 dependency, 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 strait 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 Gentile profelytes are called the sons and daughters of the church. They are brought in the arms of their parents to the  
church

\* Deut. 29.

† Chap. 31. 31.

‡ Chap. 8.

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 of 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 apostles preached this Saviour already 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*, and of the *same body* and *partakers of his promise* in Christ by the gospel.'

The Jews, who were baptized 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 christ an church here stands on the old foundation; and to this church were added those who afterward were baptized.

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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, baptized. 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 put to us. 'If the children of believers are subjects of the covenant-*ical* 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 cove-

nant 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  
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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 *baptized*, 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.* The apostle here calls *baptism*, the *circumcision of Christ*, or the christian circumcision. 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 necessary.' 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.



ners. 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 baptized; 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 baptized, 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 right*, 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 bring them off. He does not oppose circumcision *simply*; if he had, he would not have circumcised *Timothy*; but he opposed it, in the *Jewish* sense, 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 them 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 superceded the law. Thus he reasons with the *Colossians* 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 no more be subject to circumcision

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and the rites of the ceremonial law. 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 satisfi'd 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 baptism, 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 consider'd 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 diminish'd 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 enjoy'd 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 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 discover'd by *Urim* and *Thummim*.—Such *occasional* discoveries now are not needed, since we have a *complete, standing* revelation.

The author of the letters tells us, that circumcision, 'that Old Testament rite, was a *useless, burthensome, injurious* ceremony, and treat'ed as such by the Apostles.' And hence he concludes, baptism cannot come in its room to be administered to infants, as that was. But

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\* Act. 21. 21.

Where do the Apostles treat circumcision in this manner? The ceremonial law indeed is considered as a yoke of bondage; as burdensome, 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 Jew? 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*, 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

\* Rom. 3. 1.

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.\* But

\* ‘ 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 12 years old, their parents were bound to bring them 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 *mothers* arms to be carried to, and detained at the temple, during the continuance of so long a solemnity.

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 *Abramic* 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 *Abramic* 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?—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 baptized, 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 does not appear to be a fact, that circumcised believers were *universally* baptized. That the first disciples were baptized, 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,

3. There was a manifest propriety in baptizing *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 instituted 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, especially 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 baptized, 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

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.

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.

3. **T**HE right of infants to baptism may be clearly inferred from the words of our Saviour, Mark 10. 14. compared with those, John 3. 5. *Suffer little children to come to me—for of such is the kingdom of God.—And, Except a man (εαν με τις, 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 baptized : So the author of the  
letters

\* Levit. 12. 1. 2.

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 this kingdom. *Except any one 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 baptized. 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 promise 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 endeavoring 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,

\* 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 baptized 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 sign 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.

† *Lk.* 5. 26.

‡ *Act.* 2. 38.



Well, 'but the christian rite of baptism was not given to these children, they were bro't to Christ for his blessing 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 this 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 subjects 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. 28. 19. gives a plain warrant for admitting infants to baptism. It runs thus. *Go, and teach all nations, baptizing 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. *Baptize 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 *μαθητευσατε* 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 *proselyte* or *make disciples*. The commission then is this. *Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them—teaching them to observe all things, &c.* Here are two words in the commission rendered, *Teaching*. The latter *διδασκουσας*, 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.

Now if we can shew, that *Infants* are ever considered as *disciples*—as *belonging to Christ*, then it will appear that they come within the commission, *Disciple all nations, baptizing them*. We are told Mat. 18. 5. That Jesus having set a *little child* before him, said, *Whoever shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. To receive one in*

*Christ's*

\* 1 Pet. 2. 9.

*Christ's name*, is to receive him as being *Christ's disciple* and as *belonging* to him. So the phrase is explained, Mark 9 41. *Whoever shall give you a cup of water in my Name, because ye belong to Christ.* And Mat. 10. 42. *Whoever 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*, Act. 15. 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, baptizing 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 acquainted with the institution of baptism, for they baptized 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 baptize 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

well acquainted with it. They don't ask him, What meanest thou by this *new* ceremony? *But why baptizest thou, if thou art not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that Prophet?* Their question implies, that the *Prophets* had been wont to baptize, 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* profelytes. 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 unto 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, baptizing 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 baptize infants.

5. Childrens right to baptism is very clearly taught, in these words of *Peter* to the awakened *Jews*, *Act. 2. 38. Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is to you and to your children.* He don't 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 baptized. 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 baptized—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 baptized, his childrens interest in it, is just as good a reason, why *they* should be baptized. 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 baptized—and the same promise is equally to your children, yet they must *not* be baptized.

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 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 baptized.

ed. It is expressly promised, *Isai. 44. 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 also. *Let them be baptized—for the promise is to them.* Note here; their receiving the Spirit was not a condition, but a consequence of their baptism. *Be baptized and ye shall receive, &c.* So upon the *Samaritans* mentioned, *Act. 8.* the Spirit was poured out after they were baptized: So that children are to be baptized 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, *Isai. 65. 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 baptized, 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 baptized, 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 baptized and their families: And so much we are told. *Paul* baptized the household of *Stephanas*, *1 Cor. 1. 16. Lydia*, when the Lord opened her heart to receive the word, was baptized and her household, *Act. 16. 15.* The *Jaylor*, upon his believing was baptized, he and all his, *ver. 33.* This

This *Lydia* was in 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* baptized upon *her* faith; and this is all that is to the purpose. It will be suggested perhaps, that they might be baptized 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 baptized upon *her* being judged faithful to the Lord.

The story of the *Taylor* is to the same purpose. He enquired of the Apostles, *what must I do to be saved?* They say, *Believe on the Lord, 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 *Taylor'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 baptized, He and all his straitway.* It is not said, *All that were in his house* were baptized; 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 yet made of any one's believing, but the *Taylor* himself. But don't 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 *ἠγαλλίασεν ἐν παντὶ οἴκῳ πιστεύων ἐν τῷ Θεῷ* 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 baptized, would naturally conclude, that infants (if there were such) were baptized 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 baptized so many hundreds, and amongst the rest, such a noted person and his *household*—such an one and *all his*; who would doubt, but there were some children, under the age of discretion, which he meant to include? But if an Antipedobaptist Missionary should publish an account of the households he had baptized, 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. 11. 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. 7. 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*, which 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 *bastardize* 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

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 *God's 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.\*

Again. 7

\* 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 *sanctified*, as well as the offspring said to be holy. 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,



Again. The Apostle, in the 4th chap. to Gal. tells us, that *Ishaac* 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*

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 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 yokefellow. 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 convey 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 had 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?*

of the promise : i. e. we are *born* children of the promise, as being born of covenanted 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 *Ejau* did his.

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 baptized 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 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 ensamples, or types, and are written for our admonition.* The *Jewish* writers say, ' The people were baptized 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 baptized 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

\* 1 Cor. 7. 14.

§ Act. 4. 22.

† Act. 15. 10.

|| Mat. 18. 6.

†† Luke 19. 9.

‡ Mark 10. 14.

¶ Ezek. 16. 21.

written for our admonition, it typically admonishes us, that we *all* should be baptized into Christ, not *believers only*, but their *children* also.

As the whole congregation were baptized 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 shouldest 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 baptized the head of any family in his own house, they baptized 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 baptized 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.

HAVING 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 to 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,

I. 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

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 man, 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 this 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.\* God

\* 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 to thee and to 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 favor 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

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

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 water-courses.* (Isai. 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 church, till they have passed under the appointed ceremony. When we speak of persons being admitted into the church by 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 unbaptized person is to be cut off, or excluded from the privileges of the christian church.

thus dedicated, 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 *Samson's* parents bound *him* to be a *Nazarite* forever—If *Hannah's* vow bound *Samuel* to attend upon God in the sanctuary; as well may the act of the *christian* parent, 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 ingenuous 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 say, '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 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 adapts this passage from Dr. *Wall*, 'All christians in the world, who ever 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 *baptized* them. This practice is of much  
more

\* Prov. 31. 2.

† Psal. 11. 6.

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 *profelytism*.

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 it was 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 40 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 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 60 and 70 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 baptizing them*. If they were *made disciples*, they were doubtless baptized.

*Irenæus*, who wrote about 67 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 by himself, who by him are regenerated (i. e. *baptized*) unto God, infants, little ones, youths and elderly persons.' That *Irenæus* used the word *regenerated* to signify *baptized*, 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 *baptizing* them, &c.'

*Tertullian*, who flourished about 100 years after the Apostles, gives a plain testimony, that the church admitted infants to baptism in his



his time. It is true he advises to *delay* their baptism; not because it was *unlawful*, for he allows of it in cases of necessity; nor 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 baptized, 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 baptized soon after their birth. So that he fully enough witnesses to the *fact*, that it had been the practice of the church to baptize 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*, baptized, if there is nothing in them that needs forgiveness?’

Further he says, ‘Infants are baptized 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 baptized.’

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 baptized, 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 65 Bishops convened at *Carthage*, who unanimously resolved, that the baptism of infants

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

Now in this assembly of Ministers, doubtless there were some 60 or 70 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 baptized, seems not to have been at all a question, but only whether their baptism needed to be deferred to the 8th 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 baptized to consecrate them to Christ ‘ in their infancy,’ *Ambrosè*, ‘ that the baptism of infants had been ‘ the practice of the Apostles and of the church till that time.’ *Chryso-  
stom*, ‘ 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 baptized 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 baptized 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 man-  
‘ kind?’ 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 12th 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 unbaptized, 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 alledge, that many corruptions were early admitted into the christian church under pretence of *Apostolic* traditions, and prevailed without opposition; such as *Infant-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 unbaptized, 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 born 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 agreeably to their own principles. Though we with 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 chuse so 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 unbaptized; 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 baptized 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 baptisms. If we trace adult baptisms back, we

must come to the time when they were administered by those who were baptized 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 authorized ministers, nor regular churches, nor baptized 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 nowhere 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 baptized in infancy, without requiring them to be rebaptized. 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 practice 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?

\* Clark's Defence, page 34.

ions?—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* used 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 pretend, that there are no real christians in *our* churches? That the word and ordinances administered in them, have never been blessed to men's conversion 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 effusions of his spirit? Has there 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 ministrations 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 discourses teach us the unwarrantableness of re-baptization. It is agreed on both sides 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 baptized.

tized. 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 is become a real penitent and believer. Ought this person to be rebaptized? Every one will say, No; because he has been baptized, 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 baptized 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 baptized again: Whereas he says to the unbaptized *Jews*, *Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins*. But there is just the same reason, why this hypocrite should be baptized again upon his repentance, as why the infant should; because he no more had faith before baptism, and no more consented to any religious obligation, when he was baptized, than an infant. If a profession of repentance is all that is necessary to our receiving this baptized hypocrite, a profession of faith and obedience, at adult age, is all that is necessary to our receiving one baptized in childhood. So that rebaptization 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 *theirs* welfare no way depends upon it? Their welfare much depends on their being religiously educated—their education will chiefly lie with you—by  
their

their baptism 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 unbaptized 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 unbaptized 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 baptized 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 benefited 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 there-  
in.’



in? 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 agreeable 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.

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AN  
APPENDIX,

CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE ANA-  
BAPTISTS: IN FOUR LETTERS TO A FRIEND, WHO HAS  
SOME SCRUPLES CONCERNING THE DIVINE RIGHT OF  
INFANT BAPTISM.

*Written by particular request.*

BY NATHAN PERKINS, A. M.  
PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN HARTFORD.

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LETTER I.

SIR,

YOU have been blessed with the advantages of a public liberal education, for which, you say, you can never be adequately thankful. Much of your time, since you received the honors of the university, has been devoted to reading and thought. And what has given me no small satisfaction, is that you are extremely solicitous to form just notions of the great subject of Religion in general, and to derive your sentiments, concerning any doctrines or rites in particular, purely and solely from the inspired volume, the source of celestial wisdom.

In our last interview, the topic of our conversation, you will recollect, was the practice of our churches, in dispensing the ordinance of baptism to infants.

In the course of our reasoning, I informed you that I had, of late, been particularly attentive to the rise of the sect, who are commonly distinguished among us, by the name of baptists. I have found it more difficult to investigate their origin, than I expected, when I first examined the subject. With great care and pains, have I endeavoured, for the satisfaction of candid minds, to ascertain the time, manner and occasion of their rise:—have aimed at a true, faithful honest account, extracted from a number of very learned authors, whose names will be mentioned in their proper place. Brevity and candor have been studied: a large volume might have easily been compiled.

I would applaud your purpose to abide by the truth, let it make for or against you, let it be on which side of the litigated question it may.—Happy for the world! happy for the church! and happy for individuals!

individuals! if all, who have scruples upon their minds about the validity of infant baptism, were equally candid, moderate and unprejudiced. If it be not a scripture practice, I would be among the most zealous to explode it. In the mean time, I would treat our honest, but erring antipædobaptistical brethren, with tenderness. Beyond a doubt the aim of many of them is pure; and their wish to preserve the ordinances from pollution, and the gospel from mixtures of human inventions and traditions, deserves commendation. But persons, who act from the best motives, may labour under many and gross errors.—The following history of the first appearing and behaviour of the sect, called anabaptists, is certainly interesting to all: I flatter myself will be pleasing to you, and may tend to throw light on what has been involved in a degree of obscurity.

The question before us, now is, when did the sect, who deny baptism to the infant seed of believers, arise in the church of Christ? Did the church, in its earliest and purest ages, universally receive the children of christian parents to the holy sacrament of baptism?—THEY UNDOUBTEDLY DID.—And the following ancient writers are cited and appealed to, as witnesses of this fact, (viz) the admission of the infants of believing parents to baptism, in the primitive church. Whether they were admitted or not, is a thing which could not but be publicly and perfectly known, in the times near to the Apostles. It is impossible, in the nature of the case, that christians, in the first ages, should be deceived or mistaken in this matter concerning the practice of the churches, which were formed by the Apostles, throughout the world. And, if infant baptism were not the practice of the Apostles and Evangelists, it is utterly unaccountable, how it came so soon to be adopted, as we find, by uncontrolable testimonies, it was.

To invalidate this evidence of the ancient fathers, those who oppose infant baptism, tell us, ‘They were weak men: held foolish and absurd opinions: interpreted scripture strangely and whimsically: and, after all, say but little about infant baptism.’ We do not appeal to them, in any other light, than as witnesses to a public standing fact, of which they could not but be competent judges, and which they must absolutely know,—must know, as fully and clearly, as whether the sun in the firmament rose and set, in their times, as we know it does in ours.—Justin Martyr, who wrote only forty years after the Apostolic age, in his second apology, mentions, ‘christians who in their *infancy* had been *profelyted* to Christ.’ *Profelyted* they could not be, without baptism; for all know, that the

only way of being *profelytes* to the christian religion, is by baptism.—Irenæus, who wrote sixty-seven years after the Apostles, and was born before the death of St. Jöhn, in his third book against heretics, thirty-ninth chapter, says, that ‘Christ came to save all persons by himself; all, I mean, who are BAPTIZED unto God, INFANTS, and little ones, and youths, and elder persons.’—Tertullian, who flourished about an hundred years after the Apostles, is the only person among the ancients, who advises, to ‘deser the baptism of infants, except in cases of necessity or in danger of death.’ Piece on baptism, eighteenth chapter.—Origen, who lived one hundred and ten years after the Apostles, in his 8 homily on Levit. 12. speaking of the pollution which cleaves to infants, says, ‘besides this; also let it be considered, what is the reason, that whereas the baptism of the church is given for forgiveness, INFANTS also, by the usage of the church, are baptized: when if there were nothing in infants, which wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them.’—And, again; ‘INFANTS are baptized for the remission of sin. Of what sin? Or when have they sinned? Or how can any reason of the LAVER hold good in their case? But, according to that sense before mentioned, none is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one day upon the earth. And it is for that reason, that INFANTS are baptized, because by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away.’ In another treatise he says, that the ‘church had from the Apostles a tradition or command to give baptism to INFANTS.’—This testimony from Origen is a full proof, that the baptism of INFANTS was the standing custom of his day; and he was born but eighty-five years after the age of the Apostles. He was president of the school at Alexandria in Egypt, where he principally lived. He was acquainted with the most noted churches in all the world.

Doctor Gale, a learned anabaptist, has ventured to dispute the above authorities, but presumes not to contest those which follow from Cyprian and Austin.—Doctor John Gill, of London, also, here I may remark, allows Origen’s testimony and that of Cyprian and Austin. Cyprian, who wrote 150 years after, what is called the Apostolic age, gives a most indubitable testimony to this fact, (viz.) that the baptism of INFANTS was the universal, established practice of the church, in his day.

In the year 253, a council of 66 Bishops convened at Carthage in Africa, where Cyprian was Bishop or Minister, to consider this question, whether baptism might lawfully be administered to infants, till they were eight days old, according to the law of circumcision.—The council

council unanimously decreed, that the baptism of infants was not to be delayed till the eighth day. The occasion of that famous council's being convened, was this; Fidus, a country Bishop, doubted whether infants might lawfully be baptized, till eight days old. The time of the sitting of this ecclesiastical council was only an hundred and fifty years after the Apostolic age, and some of the members who composed it, may reasonably be supposed, seventy or eighty years old; and if they were baptized in their infancy, as they undoubtedly were, it carries up the practice of receiving INFANTS to the sacrament of baptism, to within eighty years of the Apostles themselves: and, at the time of their infancy, there were many alive, who were born in the very age of the Apostles; and must infallibly know, what the Apostles practice and appointment were. The Clementine constitutions, a book thought by some to be of great antiquity, and acknowledged by all, to be extant in the fourth or fifth century, and to contain a good account of the ancient discipline and practices of the church, have this express command:—‘Baptize your infants and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; for, he says, suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.’—There are several other testimonies from Clemens Alexandrinus—Gregory Nazianzen—Basil—Ambrose—Chrysofom—and Jerom, most full to the purpose, but too long to be here inserted. I shall close this view of the witnesses from ancient monuments and records, by instancing a very singular one from the writings of Austin and Pelagius, about 300 years after the Apostles. I adduce it, to demonstrate to all unprejudiced and candid persons in the world, that BAPTIZING INFANTS was practised from the first setting up of the christian religion.—Austin and Pelagius, all will own, were two very able and subtle disputants. The former, in his controversy with the latter about the doctrine of original sin, to prove infants affected with it, frequently and with great triumph, urges their baptism, demanding, ‘why infants are baptized for the remission of sin, if they have none.’ The acute Pelagius is exceedingly embarrassed by the argument. All see how much it concerned him to deny the baptism of infants, if there had been any possible ground for it, and to do all that in him lay, to invalidate and disprove it. Had it been an INNOVATION, a DEPARTURE from the Apostolic practice, as the modern anabaptists pretend, though against all antiquity, it is impossible but so very learned and acute a man, as Pelagius, who lived so near the Apostles, and had been personally acquainted with some of the most noted churches in Europe, Asia and Africa, must have been able to discover it, and both to have, and to give some strong suspicion of it. But does this wise and strong-sighted

disputant attempt any thing of this kind? So far from it, that some of his adversaries having drawn, as a consequence of his opinion, that infants are not to be baptized, he warmly disclaims it, and, with indignation, complains that he had been slanderously represented by men, as denying the sacrament of baptism to infants, and promising the kingdom of heaven to any, without the redemption of Christ; and adds, 'that he never heard, no not any impious heretic, who would say, that which he had mentioned, (viz.) that unbaptized infants are not liable to the condemnation of the first man, and that they are not to be cleansed by the regeneration of baptism.'—He then proceeds, 'who is so ignorant of that which is read in the gospel, as I do not say, boldly to affirm, but even lightly to suggest, or even to imagine such a thing;' 'in a word who can be so impious, as to hinder INFANTS from being baptized, and born again in Christ, and so make them miss of the kingdom of God?' Austin on original sin.

Such clear, abundant, full proof is there, that infants were baptized from the beginning of christianity, and is not a novel practice, introduced by the corruptions of religion, and by lordly ecclesiastics, to serve a turn.

I am, Sir, with the greatest esteem,  
your's in the gospel.

December 3, 1788.

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## L E T T E R II.

SIR,

I GO on with the history proposed, concerning which, you seem so anxious. All sober and honest enquirers after truth must be equally anxious, on a point so material in the dispute about the validity of infant baptism. Well then, all the churches throughout all countries, upon the first setting up of christianity, were, it is most certain, formed upon the same model, and either admitted infants to, or rejected them from, the sacrament of baptism. And how the Apostles and Evangelists organized the churches, all the members of them perfectly knew. The church at Corinth—at Ephesus—at Thessalonica—at Rome—at Coloss—and Galatia, certainly knew, whether Paul and his companions, when he baptized them, baptized also their infants, or excluded them from the covenant. In the next age, there could be no mistake or ignorance as to this fact, whether infants were or were not admitted to baptism. It was so plain a fact, and of such

a nature, as must be known by every christian then living on the earth. If the Apostles did not admit them, we cannot conceive, how they should gain admission so early, so extensively, so universally, as we find, by full evidence, they actually did. And, suppose they did not admit them, how would those, who first attempted to bring them forward, be received? Would not all cry out against such innovation; and demand ‘by what authority they acted? Do we not know they ought to be excluded? Look into all the churches throughout the world: into Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Africa, Spain, and you will find there never was such a thing known nor heard of among christians, as BAPTIZING AN INFANT.’ What, I greatly wonder, could the first baptizers of infants possibly reply?

Doctor Gill of London, who was one of the most vehement asserters of adult baptism only, that ever appeared, owns that infant baptism was the practice of the church universally, from the third to the eleventh century; but contends, with all his might, that the Piedmontese christians rejected it, and practised on the plan of adult baptism only.—To this we shall come directly. Here, however, though a digression, it may be proper to mention the famous William Whiston, who forsook the episcopal establishment, and went over to the small sect of anabaptists in England. He was a very learned man, a great astronomer, and well versed in the ancient fathers. In his address to the communion of the baptists, he declares, ‘that Dr. Wall’s history of infant baptism, as to the facts, appeared to him, most accurately done, and might be depended on by the baptists themselves.’ *Memoirs of his life*, part II. page 461. This gentleman, in a piece intitled *Primitive Infant Baptism Revived*, notwithstanding the above declaration, pretends to a *great and new discovery* (viz) that when the ancient fathers speak of infants being baptized, they mean not infants in years, but in knowledge; and says, he communicated this discovery to the learned men, Bishop Hoadly, and Dr. Clark; and they consented to it as just; and also to the great Sir Isaac Newton, desiring his opinion upon it. The answer returned was, that they both had made the discovery before.—I am not obliged to clear Mr. Whiston from his inconsistency. As to his pretended *great discovery*, it deserves only the smile of contempt. Let the fathers speak for themselves. I am sensible that some very eminent paedobaptists have expressed some doubt about the ancient practice of the church, in the ages near the Apostles, as to baptizing of infants, which may be seen in Mr. Rutherford’s *invalidity of infant baptism*. He mentions Doctor Du Veil, Hammond, Bishop Taylor, Grotius, and several others. But the evidence is not the less clear, because some have not allowed it

it to be full. It would be strange indeed, if some who had not studied the matter, should express doubts. But, of all PRETENDED DISCOVERIES, that of Whiston's above named, is most absurd, and appears to be the result of a dreadful necessity. He felt the dilemma in which he was involved. He must either give up adult baptism, and change his religion again, or find out that all the fathers, in the primitive ages, when they used the word *infants*, meant young people, or ignorant old people, metaphorical infants.—Consult the fathers; consult all ecclesiastical history, and you will find the validity and lawfulness of infant baptism, were never denied by any body of christians, or churches, till about ELEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY years after Christ. And then only by one Peter de Bruis in France, with his followers, a small sect, who held that no infants were saved, and many other strange and absurd tenets. This small sect soon dwindled to nothing. After this, there cannot be found any well vouched instance of a church or any number of christians, who denied infant baptism, unless they denied all water-baptism and external administrations, till the rising of the German anabaptists. Doctor Wall in his history of infant baptism, a most learned and judicious work, and which Mr. Whiston, the most learned of the enemies of infant baptism, allows, as above remarked, to be good and genuine, has this passage—Part II. chap. 10. sect. 1. “ 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, prac-  
 “ tise such delay in the case of his children: but no society so thinking,  
 “ or so practising, nor no one man so saying, that it was unlawful to  
 “ baptize infants. In the next SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS, there is  
 “ not so much as one man to be found, that either spoke for or prac-  
 “ tised such delay, but all on the contrary. And when, about the  
 “ year ELEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY, one sect among the  
 “ Waldenses declared against the baptizing of infants, as being inca-  
 “ pable of salvation; the main body of that people rejected their  
 “ opinion. And they of them that held that opinion, quickly dwin-  
 “ dled away and disappeared.” And there were no more heard of who held that tenet, &c. till the rising of the German anabaptists, about 400 years after, or in 1522.

This is the origin, according to the best authenticated histories of the sect, vulgarly called among us, baptists.

And to this the baptists can oppose nothing worthy of credit, except some authors, who tell about baptizing adults, which is nothing to the purpose: because all agree that unbaptized adults, as well as infants, are the subjects of the ordinance of baptism. Some



Some also have spoken against baptism of infants, who have been against all water baptism; and held that there are no outward ordinances. Mr. Dickinson, in a well written dialogue, page 7, says, 'You cannot pretend that the practice of baptizing infants, was ever called in question, or made matter of debate in the church, till the mad men in MUNSTER, who were the scandal of the reformation, set themselves against this practice, as well as the other ordinances of the gospel. You must allow therefore, that from the fourth century to the sixteenth, is more than eleven hundred years; now during this long period, what became of our blessed Saviour's promise to be with his ministers *always* in the administration of this ordinance? I now demand of you an answer, if any can be given, to this question, was our blessed Saviour with his ministers, in the administration of baptism, during this period, or was he not? If you answer in the affirmative, you acknowledge infant baptism to be his institution; if you answer in the negative, you call his veracity and faithfulness in question.'

Mr. Clark, in his answer to Dr. Gill, who attacked the above-mentioned dialogue with great fury, seems to have deeply studied the controversy, and did honor to himself and the cause; he coincides with the learned writer, and proves to the satisfaction of the candid, that it is, at least, somewhat doubtful, whether that sect among the Waldenses, who, it is pretended, denied infant baptism, upon this ground, that they were incapable of salvation, did deny it or not. For it is matter of fact, that the whole body of that people, known by the name of Waldenses, were greatly slandered by their popish opponents, who endeavored to fix upon them all the horrible tenets they could. And, perhaps, charging them with a denial of infant baptism was, among other things, a false charge. It is impossible to look into that dark age, and know the exact truth.

Mr. Clark, after a long and labored confutation of Doctor Gill, thus expresses himself—'Nor is there any account for the first 400 years after Christ, nor any shadow of proof, that there was any sect of christians, or body of men, that may be called a church, owning christian baptism, that denied it to infants—Nor any one man, in that period, that objected against it, except Tertullian, nor did he condemn it, as unlawful, but only advising the delay of it, as more profitable. Nor is there any evidence at all, that it was opposed by any one man, for the space of six or seven hundred years from that period; but the practice continued, in the universal church, without interruption or exception, so far as can be known from the writings and monuments of antiquity, till Peter Bruis and his followers in France, in the 12th century, are said to renounce it. a sect that  
' continued

continued but a short time, and dwindled away; whereof yet there is but probable evidence, at best. -- And, as to the Waldenses, Luther's forerunners, their opposing infant baptism, and being found only in the practice of adult baptism, for all that has hitherto appeared, deserves no better name, than that of a 'chimæra of groundless fiction,' pages 179, 180. But allowing the most, there is no account, in history, of any who rejected infant baptism till 1130. A few wild and fanatical individuals among the followers of Waldo, and those called Petrobrusians, from Peter Bruis, perhaps did reject infants, because they held that they could not be saved. The body of the Waldenses and Albigenes, held to infant baptism. Wall's history, part II. chap. 7. -- I shall end my letter with this account, and reserve for the subject of the next, the rising of the German anabaptists and their conduct.

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### LETTER III.

SIR,

IN my last, we looked back for a remote rise of the sect of anabaptists, but could find no hint of it, till the year ELEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY, when a few appeared for a time among the Petrobrusians. -- We come now to a more remarkable period.

Doctor Robertson, in his history of Charles V. gives a very lively and affecting description of the seditions and disturbances, occasioned by them in Germany, in 1525; and is of the opinion that they then FIRST arose. See his history of Charles V. vol. II. from page 268 to 276.

Doctor Mosheim is of the opinion, that their origin is obscure and lies concealed in the remote depths of antiquity; but after attentively weighing all the writers, on both sides, and all they have said, thinks it by far the most probable, that the anabaptists and Menonites are the offspring of the Petrobrusians, and that they first arose in the 12th century, as proved in my last letter. See his ecclesiastical history, a justly celebrated work, under the head of the history of the Anabaptists or Menonites, page 134, 135, vol. IV. 2d edition. He fixes the period of their rise in Germany soon after the dawn of the reformation, when Luther arose to set bounds to the ambition of Rome.

A little before the reformation, which was in the beginning of the 16th century, there were great discontents and murmurings among the Boors, or country peasants in Germany, who were very grievously oppressed by their tyrannical princes and opulent landlords. When Luther set on foot his reformation in the year 1517, which soon made a prodigious noise and awakened general attention, there arose several fanatical teachers, who, taking advantage of the ferments and commotions of the people, began to disseminate among them the most seditious opinions.

The most distinguished of these teachers, were Nicholas Storch; Mark Stuben, and Thomas Muntzer. They made their public appearance about the year 1521, and divulged among the discontented people, several very pernicious doctrines, among which were these: *that christians were free from all subjection to princes—: that there ought to be a community of goods—and an equal distribution of property.* By means of such doctrines, which were highly pleasing in those times of oppression and discontent, these teachers were able soon to collect an immense number of followers. Luther, in the year 1520, published his book of christian liberty, in which he asserted and maintained the right of all christians, to enjoy a freedom from that cruel yoke of papal tyranny, and that galling burden of human inventions and arbitrary superstitions, with which men's conscience had long been loaded; though, at the same time, he inculcated obedience and subjection to princes and magistrates, in things of a civil and temporal nature. But these fanatical teachers, impiously pretending to INSPIRATION and SECRET CONVERSE WITH THE DEITY, complained, that Luther had stopped short of the truth; and they extended his doctrine of liberty to things temporal, as well as spiritual. They taught their followers, not only to renounce the Romish tyranny, but to despise the authority of the civil magistrate.

Muntzer the chief leader of the party, publicly announced himself a man divinely raised up to chastise and depose wicked princes, assuming this odd and fantastic title: THE SWORD OF THE LORD AND OF GIDEON. He loudly and vehemently declaimed against the government of the princes, as cruel and tyrannical, and no longer to be endured by christians, who are called to liberty and bound to stand fast therein. And, having the multitude attached to his person and principles, he boldly inculcated on them; *that all things were by nature free and common to all: that in the kingdom of Christ, there ought to be no distinction of rich and poor, great and small, but a perfect equality: and that they were bound to shake off the dominion of*

*princes and the exacting of landlords, as well as the tyranny of the Pope, and reduce things to a righteous level.*

Inspired with these levelling principles, the multitude grew more and more tumultuous, and went on, under their enthusiastic leader, committing the most horrible disorders, deposing magistrates, riving monasteries, pillaging private houses, plundering goods, and disposing of property, according to their own wanton pleasure.

Muntzer, having set out on seditious principles against the government, was not to be restrained by the warnings of Luther and other protestant reformers, who spared no pains to reclaim him; but inveighing against Luther's reformation, as essentially defective, he began now to consult with his accomplices, about renewing the church to a more *pure and perfect model*. On this occasion, they came to a resolution to baptize anew all those who joined their party, thinking this a proper expedient, to secure them in their interest; and lest any scruples of conscience, on account of former baptism, should prove an obstacle to the design, they declaimed against infant baptism, as a nullity, both useless and unlawful, because infants were not capable of understanding the nature and design of that sacrament. They urged that the adults only, who were able to judge and chuse for themselves, ought to be admitted to it; and therefore baptism in infancy, being a nullity, could be no reason against receiving baptism at adult age.

This notion took and spread mightily, in that ignorant and enthusiastic period; especially among those, who, inflamed with political rage, wished to call in the aid of religion, to second their nefarious purposes. In a short time, Muntzer and his associates assembled a considerable army, solemnly bound to each other, by this sacramental rite. At the head of this army, he went on, committing all the enormous crimes and ridiculous follies, which the most perverse and infernal imagination could suggest, till he was defeated by the elector of Saxony, and some other princes, he himself taken and put to death, and his deluded followers scattered in various parts.

This defeat however did not terminate the delusion. After this, many who were infected with the same factious and enthusiastic disorder, and who had been associates with Muntzer, wandered about in divers parts of Germany, sowing the seeds of error and sedition. They gathered congregations in several places, and predicted, under pretence of DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS, the approaching downfall of princes, and destruction of civil magistracy: and, by their inflammatory discourses, often excited the ignorant multitude to tumults and rebellion; and provoked against themselves the vengeance of the civil authority.

Among

Among the insurrections of this sect, one of the most remarkable was, in the year 1533, about 8 years after Muntzer's defeat. A handful of men, who had gotten into their heads the visionary notion of a new and spiritual kingdom, soon to be established in an extraordinary manner, formed themselves into a society, under the guidance of a few illiterate leaders, chosen out of the populace. And they persuaded, not only the ignorant multitude, but even several among the learned, that Munster was to be the seat of this NEW AND HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, whose ghostly dominion was to be propagated thence to all the ends of the earth. The ringleaders of this furious tribe, were John Matthias, John Boccold, a Taylor of Leyden, Bernard Cnipperdoling, a citizen of rank and fortune, and Rothman, a zealous protestant preacher in the city, with some others, whom the blind rage of enthusiasm, or the still more culpable principles of sedition, had embarked in this extravagant and desperate cause. They made themselves masters of the city of Munster, deposed magistrates, and did every thing that can shock the human mind. John Boccold was proclaimed king and legislator of this new HIERARCHY: married eleven wives (all of whom he had at once) to prove the lawfulness of polygamy; and cut off the head of one with his own hands, because she doubted his heavenly call—behaved with the most shocking impiety and tyranny—committed all manner of wickedness, licentiousness, and debauchery, under pretence of civil and christian liberty.—But his reign was transitory, and his end deplorable. For the city of Munster was, in the year 1536, retaken, after a long siege, by its bishop and sovereign, Count Waldeck: the NEW JERUSALEM of the anabaptists destroyed, and its mock-monarch punished with a most painful and ignominious death. The disorders occasioned by the anabaptists at this period, not only in Westphalia, but also in other places, shewed too plainly, to what horrid lengths, the pernicious doctrines of this wrongheaded sect were adapted to lead the inconsiderate and unwary; and therefore, it is not at all to be wondered at, that the secular arm employed rigorous measures to extirpate a faction which was the occasion, nay, the source of unspeakable calamities in so many countries. These fanatics, thus often defeated and dispersed by the powers which they insulted, disseminated their tenets in various parts, whither they fled to escape punishment. And probably their sufferings, as well as seeming zeal in religion, excited some prejudices in their favour, among those who heard more of their sufferings than of their crimes; and thus contributed to their success in making proselytes. I acknowledge our brethren are not answerable for the extravagances committed above 200 years ago. Many of them, I know, condemn such irregularities

as much as we do ; and some of our own denomination have fallen in-  
 to as wild excesses as any of them. I have mentioned this piece of  
 history, not to cast an odium on the sect, but merely to show the time  
 and manner of its rise. The disagreeable circumstances attending the  
 rise would not have been introduced, if they had not been so interwo-  
 ven with the main thread of the narrative, that they could not be en-  
 tirely separated. I have cautiously avoided all reproachful and severe  
 epithets : I full well know that one man has as good a right to think  
 for himself in matters of religion, as another.

In the review of this history, you see the occasion and grounds, as well  
 as time of the rise of the sect.—A PRETENCE TO A MORE NEAR  
 INTIMACY WITH THE DEITY THAN OTHERS ENJOY : SECRET  
 COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE INVISIBLE WORLD : VISIONS,  
 DREAMS, REVELATION, AND BOLD CLAIMS TO IMMEDIATE  
 INSPIRATION, lead in all separations or factions in religion. If  
 you challenge any part of the above history, you are invited to exam-  
 ine all the FATHERS, and other writers quoted : after this, you will  
 be obliged to own the truth of what is above laid down. Candor,  
 Sir, and faithfulness, and a meek disposition should guide every con-  
 troversial pen. Whether mine has been under this guidance, is left  
 for you to decide. The above compilation was a laborious task, small  
 and inconsiderable, as it may seem to any.—I will not trespass any fur-  
 ther, dear Sir, upon your patience, and conclude, with wishing you  
 establishment in the truth, and every happiness.—Adieu.

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## LETTER IV.

SIR,

OUR correspondence on the subject of the RISE of the An-  
 baptists hath for some time been discontinued ; I would now resume  
 it, and trouble you so far as to ask you to peruse one letter more. The  
 time is now happily arrived, in which religious controversies are dis-  
 cussed with more candor and good temper than formerly. When we  
 turn over the page of polemic divinity, we are disgusted as well as  
 grieved to find so much bitterness, intollerance and evil speaking, in  
 those who profess to be honest enquirers after truth and duty ; to be  
 meek followers of a lowly Redeemer ; and to feel the power of his re-  
 ligion, which is a religion of peace and good-will, of forbearance and  
 love, of gentleness and humanity. The rights of man and the rights

of conscience, civil liberty and religious freedom, are ably pleaded in the present day; and it is hoped, in due time, by the favor of an indulgent Heaven, the progress of free enquiry, the empire of reason, and influence of grace, will be universally diffused. Happy era, if all the human race might begin to taste the sweets of civil liberty and equal government, and might behold the downfall of tyranny and superstition!

Revolutionalists multiply upon us all around; innovations are every where taking place; former practices and opinions are exploded merely, in some instances it is to be feared, because ancient, and new ones adopted only because new. The mind of philosophic benevolence ardently wishes that no revolution or innovation might take place, but what may subserve the general interests of society and human happiness, of pure religion and real sciences. A wise and discreet man will never discontinue an ancient practice in the things of religion, till fully convinced that it is wrong, nor begin a *new one* till there be a plenitude of evidence in its favor.

Perhaps the very title of these letters may disgust our brethren on the other side of the question. The self-confident and uninformed may feel an indignation and contempt at the very idea of supposing their discriminating practice and sentiments not coeval with christianity itself, or not sanctioned by apostolic example and divine precept. But we conceive we have an adequate proof, that their exclusion of the infant seed of believers from the ordinance of baptism, is in one sense novel, and not warranted by any apostolic precept or example.

I use the term *Anabaptist* not by way of reproach, but distinction; for I am sensible that the Antipædobaptists allow not of rebaptization, any more than we do, where baptism has once been administered in the right way and to the qualified subjects, according to their own ideas. And they have as good a right to believe and to practice as *they do*, as we have to believe and practice as *we do*. No man has a right to interfere by compulsion in the religion of another. Reason, fair enquiry, and the oracles of truth, should bear imperial sway and command our strict observance.

An author has lately been put into my hands, who has come forward as a champion in the field of Antipædobaptism, and carried on his attack in a manner somewhat diverse from any that have gone before him, and with great spirit and address. His zeal and ardor against the right of the infant seed of believers to baptism, and against sprinkling as a scripture mode of dispensing of ordinances, are exceeded by few or none. His confidence is equal to his ardor, and they ob-

ally go together. His art and management, if possible, are superior to his zeal. His diligence, assiduity and unwearied pains, to plead the cause in which he has embarked, challenge the gratitude of his brethren. His imagination is lively; and he possesses the descriptive talents in a pretty high degree, of which he often avails himself in the progress of his work. His reading on the litigated question is extensive; and he has, in the opinion of some, done more to defend his cause than all who have gone before him: his performance, accordingly, must be reckoned a real acquisition to the Antipædobaptistical interest. His admirers must look upon him as an able disputant, and the impartial as a high-colouring and artful writer. The author to whom I refer, is the Rev. Mr. Abraham Booth, pastor of a Baptist church in Goodmanfields, in London.

At the same time, he appears to possess real piety, and to be anxious to preserve christianity from human mixtures, useless ceremonies, unauthorized rites and forms, and vain tradition: in this he merits the esteem and love of all the friends of pure religion, of whatever communion they may be.

His grand object is to disprove Pædobaptism by the concessions of the most eminent Pædobaptist authors. He took his hint, as he informs us, from an able writer against the Roman Catholic faith in a piece intitled, *Poperly confuted by Papiſts*. Mr. Booth's labored performance of 800 pages, in two respectable volumes, is made up almost entirely of quotations from an infinite number of learned pædobaptist authors of the various communions of Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians. He has cited all their concessions on the several points and texts which respect the controversy. By these concessions he explodes all the texts which are brought to vindicate the admission of the infant seed of believers to the ordinance of baptism; and has the art and management to make the pædobaptists confute themselves. And all along he has not failed to bring in the verdict of *his honest and impartial friends*, as he calls them, the *quakers*. They, it is well known, treat all external ordinances, and among the rest, sprinkling as the mode, and the infant-seed of believers, as lawful subjects of baptism, with reproachful scorn. But it is one thing to speak contemptuously of a doctrine or practice, and another to confute it. We are all aware that these honest and impartial quakers reject with sovereign contempt all external ordinances; and I believe very few christian communions would chuse to abide their verdict. We appeal from their judgment to the inspired volume, the only standard of faith and practice, and bid Mr. Booth a cordial welcome to all the aid which he is able to derive to his cause, from *QUAKERISM*.



Mr. Booth's first object is to settle this point, that positive institutions are unalterable but by the will of the institutor.

'Those are called positive institutions or precepts which are not founded upon any reasons known to those to whom they are given or discoverable by them, but which are observed merely because some superior has commanded them.' An host of authors is adduced, who unanimously vouch the same great truth. We all give our full consent, most cheerfully, to this important truth.—No consistent protestant can refuse to admit it.

The sacrament of baptism is *next* by our author considered as a positive institution, and a multitude of writers quoted to prove it. In THIS, we perfectly agree with him, and them. So far there is a perfect coincidence of opinion.

The *next* position advanced by our author is, that BAPTISM IS PRECISELY AND ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AS PLUNGING. He contends that this is the original, first and only proper sense of the term: that plunging the body all over in water is not a mode of the ordinance, but the very ordinance itself; and that whenever βαπτίζω is used in any other sense, it is figurative and metaphorical. To prove this he quotes all the authors, lexicographers, and critics to whom he had access. Here we must dissent from the laborious and indefatigable Mr. Booth. We contend that baptism directly means sprinkling as well as plunging.\* The truth is, all that ever was, or can be proved relative to the meaning of the word baptize, is, that it denotes WASHING BY THE APPLICATION OF WATER, but whether by sprinkling water upon or plunging the subject all over in water, must be decided by the use which the inspired writers make of the word.—The only just way to learn the meaning of any word or phrase in scripture, is to find out how the sacred writers use it. They had occasion to speak of things, which the heathen had not, and accordingly must use words frequently in a sense different from the Greek orators, historians, and poets. And as *they* use words so *we* are to understand them. βαπτίζω is perhaps the only word by which they express the christian ordinance of baptism. And it is used in its several variations, if my computation be exact, and I believe it is, in about sixty passages.—And the numerous SPRINKLINGS among the Jews, the Apostle, in so many words, calls *divers baptisms*; if he understood himself the consequence will follow that SPRINKLING is BAPTISM. The word, whenever it is used in scripture but for the christian

\* For satisfaction on this point, the reader is referred to the first part of the foregoing treatise.

christian ordinance, certainly signifies **POURING OR SPRINKLING**; and why not when used for the ordinance of baptism?—But not to criticise here.

Two observations will be sufficient, I apprehend, to remove the prepossessions which may be made upon the mind, by the many concessions of the most learned pædobaptist writers, which Mr. Booth has been at the pains to quote and comment upon.

I. The first is, that no system of doctrines or practice is responsible for the injudicious or unjust concessions, or weak defence of its friends. Certainly Mr. Booth has cited the concessions of some of the most learned men that ever lived, that ever filled the professor's chair, or that ever adorned the protestant pulpit: but it ought to be particularly remembered, that these concessions were made mostly, when the authors were discussing other subjects, and not professedly treating of baptism, and consequently might be inadvertant, or not so much upon their guard as they ought to have been. Mr. Booth has made it appear, too, that the antipædobaptist cause may have much said about it and for it; for he himself has travelled through nearly 900 pages, the greater part of which consists of the concessions of the friends of infant baptism.

If a doctrine or practice be answerable for the unwise concessions of its friends, it may be affirmed that no doctrine, or truth, or duty, can be supported.—For example, on this ground, which our author has been pleased to take, the scriptures themselves must be given up; so must that great first principle of all religion, the being of a God.—And even moral virtue, the inviolability of truth, and obligations of justice. No subject in morals, religion, or philosophy, but has been written upon either weakly or injudiciously. Popery may be confuted by papists—episcopalianism by episcopalians—protestantism by protestants—quakerism by quakers—and antipædobaptism by antipædobaptists, as well as pædobaptism by pædobaptists.

Let a man of Mr. Booth's reading, ingenuity, art, and vivacity of imagination, in a large course of reading, set down the concessions or weak defence of christian writers in favor of christianity, and we should have no christianity left. Soame Jenuyns, for instance, a writer in favor of christianity, much admired and celebrated, has conceded so much that we must, upon his plan, give up the whole. But are we to consider his concessions as the testimony of an enemy to the cause of infidelity, as Mr. Booth does the concessions of the pædobaptists, unwillingly and reluctantly, overpowered with the ponderous load of evidence, bearing witness to antipædobaptism and immersion?

We may make a pompous parade of concessions, and assume airs of triumph : but the fact is, they are no proof at all, unless it be of the imperfection of human reason. Scripture and argument are to decide the point in dispute. All the tedious and prolix, and numerous quotations pressed upon us by Mr. Booth, we are to set down for nought. They weigh little or nothing with the thinking mind. Their tendency is rather to embarrass than to convince.

II. The second remark is, that our author has ensnared himself, and is unfortunately slain by his own concessions. For he generously allows (and how could he help it) that many or the most of all these great and learned characters, as learned as ever the world saw, held as strongly to the validity, sufficiency, and apostolic practice of sprinkling as a scripture mode, and the infant seed of believers as the proper subjects of baptism, as they candidly conceded that immersion is signified by the word βαπτίζω. The amount of all is therefore simply this, the most pious, the most candid, the most critical, the most learned men the world ever saw, after a careful and honest investigation of the scriptures and writings of the christian fathers, Latin and Greek, believe that *immersion* and *sprinkling* are both scripture ways of dispensing the ordinance of baptism :—that the believing adult is to be baptized—and that the infant seed of believing parents are to be brought with the parents, into a covenant relation to God, and to receive the token of the covenant—and that a very considerable part of the christian world practise *immersion*. This is all Mr. Booth has gained by his laborious researches. No new strength has he added to the argument for the exclusion of infants and the necessity of immersion. The litigated subject stands where it did before ; where he found it. Men will dispute : they will differ. This is an imperfect world. We see but in part, we know but in part. Let us never reproach one another ; but always live and move under the influence of christian candor and benevolence.

With respect to the history above given in these letters, you will have the satisfaction to find it coincide with what Mr. Booth has said, under the head of *Apostolic tradition*, except his rejecting or rather laying no weight upon the testimony of Origen, because he affirms that his works have been basely corrupted. It is only needful to remark further, that Mr. Booth makes a mighty noise about *tradition*, and treats with proud disdain all arguments derived from so precarious a source, *precarious* in his view. 'Till therefore,' says he, 'it be fairly proved that infant baptism is warranted, either by precept or example in the New Testament, we need not be much concerned about the precise time when it was introduced, but may safely shelter

our cause under the wings of that divine oracle *from the beginning it was not so*. If however our opponents will pledge themselves to inform us with precision when the Jewish profelyte baptism commenced, or when infant communion first came into the church; we will engage in our turn to inform them with equal punctuality, when infant baptism was first practised. The conduct of our opposers in arguing for pædobaptism from tradition, reminds me of an old saying, with which I will conclude this chapter: *cum leonina non sufficeret, pellem vulpinam esse assuendam.*'

Mr. Booth, to ease and console him, may be told, we lay no stress at all upon *tradition merely*. Our only end is to prove from the testimonies of early writers what was the Apostolic practice. Let these testimonies weigh what they will weigh. We hold to the sufficiency of scripture; and by it alone ultimately must every controversy be decided. We contend that we have what amounts to precept and example.—I have now done with Mr. Booth, and conceive that such an answer is sufficient. To follow him through all his tedious quotations,—and remarks upon them, would be to spin out as many pages as he did. And I should here finish this letter, already protracted, perhaps, to an immoderate length, were it not for gratifying your wishes, in stating the number of the antipædobaptists in the United Confederacy of America. They are as follows.

STATES	CHURCHES	MINISTERS		MEMBERS
		<i>ordained</i>	<i>licensed</i>	
New Hampshire	32	23	17	1732
Massachusetts	107	95	31	7116
Rhode Island	38	37	39	3502
Connecticut	55	44	21	3214
Vermont	34	21	15	1610
New York	57	53	30	3987
New Jersey	26	20	9	2279
Pennsylvania	28	26	7	1231
Delaware	7	9	1	409
Maryland	12	8	3	776
Virginia	207	157	109	20157
Kentucky	42	40	21	3105
Territory S. of Ohio	1			30
North Carolina	94	81	76	7742
Deceded Territory	18	15	6	889
South Carolina	68	48	28	4012
Georgia	42	33	39	3184
Total	868	710	422	64975

Of these there are

	Assoc.	CHH's.	MINISTERS		MEM.
			ordained	licensed	
Six principle baptists	1	18	26	4	1599
Open Communion Do.	1	15	13	4	1714
General Provision Do.	3	30	26	19	1948
Seventh Day Do.		10	13	3	887
Regular or Particular Do.	30	795	632	392	58827
Total	35	868	710	422	64975

You will see, according to this enumeration, which I believe is accurate,\* that there are 264 more preachers than churches, and not quite 60 members to a preacher. The small number of persons in proportion to the preachers, will strike you with peculiar force. The number of baptists is rising of sixty-four thousand, and the whole people in America about four millions in round numbers. How surprising that the number scattered all over the United States should not be greater, about as many as would make seventy large parishes. This computation is for the year 1790. I trust this intelligence will be pleasing to you and the public. All the information we can get respecting the different persuasions of christians is interesting. And, indeed, nothing that concerns religion can be unimportant. Adieu.

August 23, 1792.

\* The above account was taken by Mr. Asplund, a preacher of the baptist denomination, who travelled through the United States for the purpose.

















