

# Christian Baptism Not Founded on Proselyte Baptism.

by John Gill

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*The sermon argues that Christian baptism is not derived from Jewish proselyte baptism, highlighting significant theological and historical distinctions.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 3:6, Matthew 28:19, John 1:33, Acts 2:38, Acts 8:36-38, Acts 10:47-48, Acts 16:15, Acts 19:5, Romans 6:4, Galatians 3:27

**Topics:** "Baptism", "Authority of Christ"

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## Description

John Gill argues that Christian baptism is not derived from Jewish proselyte baptism, emphasizing that the Talmuds, which document such practices, were written long after the time of Christ and John the Baptist. He points out that the Jewish baptism lacked the divine authority and solemnity that characterize Christian baptism, and that it was often associated with immoral practices. Gill asserts that John the Baptist's baptism was a new and divine institution, distinct from any Jewish customs, and that there is no evidence of infant baptism in the Jewish tradition prior to Christ. He concludes that Christian baptism must be rooted in Christ's authority rather than human traditions.

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## Transcript

A Body of PRACTICAL Divinity

Book 5--Chapter 5

THE REASONS WHY CHRISTIAN BAPTISM IS NOT FOUNDED ON, AND TAKEN FROM,  
THE PRETENDED JEWISH BAPTISM OF ISRAELITES AND PROSELYTES

Having traced the admission of the Jewish proselytes by baptism, or dipping, to the spring head of it, the Jewish Talmuds; I shall now proceed to give reasons, why Christian baptism cannot be thought to be taken from such a custom; nor that to be a rule according to which it is to be practised. 1. First, the Talmuds are of too late a date to prove that such a custom obtained before the times of John and Christ, since they were written some centuries after those times, as has been shown; and besides, there is in them a plain chronological mark, or character, which shows that this custom took place among the Jews since they were driven out of their own land, and scattered among the nations, and suffered reproach and persecution; for among the interrogatories put to persons who came to them to be made proselytes, this

question was asked[1], "What dost thou see to become a proselyte? dost thou not know, or consider, that the Israelites are 'now' hzh Nmzb 'at this time', in sorrowful circumstances, driven about and scattered, and loaded with reproaches and afflictions?"

If he says, I know this; and I am not worthy (that is, to be joined to them) they receive him immediately." Many are the surmises and conjectures of learned men concerning the original and rise of this custom. It is scarce worth while, to take notice of the notion of Grotius[2], that this custom was taken up on account of the flood, and in commemoration of the world's being purified by it: nor of Sir John Marsham's[3], that it was taken up by the Israelites, in imitation of the Egyptian's manner of initiating persons into the mysteries of their goddess Isis, by washing them; for which he cites Apuleius.

A goodly pattern of Christian baptism this! it is much it never entered into the thoughts of these learned men, or others, that the Jews took up this rite of dipping their proselytes, as they found it among the Medes and Persians, when they lived in their countries, and so brought it into Judaea, some hundreds of years before the coming of Christ, and his forerunner John the Baptist; since of the eighty rites the Persians used in the initiation of men into the mysteries of Mithras, their chief deity, the first and principal was baptism.

They "dipped" them in a "bath", and "signed" them in their "foreheads", and had a sort of an "Eucharist", an oblation of bread, as Tertullian has it, and an image of the resurrection (that is, in their baptism); promising the expiation of sins by the laver; and also had an imitation of martyrdom[4]. Some say[5], this custom of the Jews was taken up by them out of hatred to the Samaritans, and was added to circumcision, to distinguish them from them: but if so, it is very much that Symmachus the Samaritan, when he came over to the Jews, was not only circumcised again, as he was, but also baptized, or dipped; of which Epiphanius, who gives an account of his becoming a proselyte to them, and of his being circumcised, but not of his being baptized, as before observed.

Dr. Owen thinks[6] this custom was taken up by some Antemishnical Rabbins, in imitation of John the Baptist; which is not very probable, though more so than anything before advanced. To me it seems a clear case, that this custom was framed upon a general notion of the uncleanness of heathens, in their state of heathenism, before their embracing the Jewish religion; and therefore devised this baptism, or dipping, as a symbol of that purity, which was, or ought to be, in them, when they became Jews, of whom they might hope to gain some, they being now dispersed among the nations; and of some they boast, even of some of note: and this was first introduced when they digested the traditions of the elders into a body, or pandect of laws; and were finishing their decisions and determinations upon them, to be observed by their people in future time.

Since I wrote the preceding chapters, I have met with a quotation; for I will not conceal anything that has occurred to me in reading, relative to this custom of dipping Jewish proselytes; I say, I have met with a quotation by Maimonides[7], out of a book called Siphri, an ancient commentary on Numbers and Deuteronomy, which has these words: "As the Israelites did not enter into covenant but by three things, by circumcision, dipping, and acceptance of sacrifice; so neither proselytes likewise."

Now if this is the ancient book of Siphri, from whence this passage is taken, as may seem, which is a book of an uncertain author and age; and is allowed to be written after the Misnah[8]; yet if it is the same that is referred to in the Babylonian Talmud[9], it must be written before that was published, though it might be while it was compiling, and it may be, by some concerned in it; since the rite referred to is expressed in the

same words in the one as in the other[10]; and is founded upon and argued from the same passage of scripture, (Num. 15:15) and seems to be the language and reasoning of the same persons.

However, "if" the passage quoted by Maimonides stands in that book, which is a book I never saw, though printed; "if", I say, these several things can be made plain; it is indeed the earliest testimony we have of this custom; especially if the book was written before the Jerusalem Talmud, which yet is not certain: but be it as it may, it is a testimony of the same sort of persons, and of no better authority than what has been before produced, and serves to confirm, that this custom is a pure device of the Jewish doctors, and is merely "Rabbinical"; and besides, at most, it can only carry up this custom into the "fifth" century, which is too late for John Baptist and Christ to take up the ordinance from it; and on account of these testimonies not being early enough for such a purpose, the late Dr.

Jennings[11] has given up the argument from them, in favour of infant baptism, as insufficient. His words are, "After all, it remains to be proved, not only that Christian baptism was instituted in the room of proselyte baptism; but that the Jews had any such baptism in our Saviour's time: the earliest accounts we have of it, are in the Mishna (but in that we have none at all) and Gemara." And again he says, "here wants more evidence of its being as ancient as our Saviour's time, than I apprehend can be produced to ground an argument upon it, in relation to Christian baptism." 2.

Secondly, this custom, though observed as a religious action, yet has scarce any appearance of religion and devotion in it; but looks rather like a civil affair, it being in some cases under the cognizance and by the direction of the Sanhedrim, or court of judicature. There was no divine solemnity in the performance of it. It was not administered in the name of the God of Israel, whom the Jews professed; nor in the name of the Messiah to come, expected by them, as was the baptism of John; nor in the name of the Three divine Persons in the Trinity, which yet the ancient Jews believed.

They dipped their proselytes indeed, according to their account, Mvb "in the name" of a proselyte, or as one; and a servant, "in the name" of a servant, or on account of servitude; and a free man, "in the name" of a free man; but neither of them in the name of any divine Person, or with the invocation of the name of God; so that it had no appearance of a religious solemnity in it. To which may be added, that this custom gave a licence to things the most impure and abominable, things contrary to the light of nature, and not to be named among the Gentiles, and which must make it detestable to all serious persons.

According to the Jews, it dissolved all the ties of natural relations, which before subsisted among men; for according to them, "As soon as a man is made a proselyte, a soul flies out of a (celestial) palace, and gets under the wings of the Shechinah, (or divine Majesty) which kisses it, because it is the fruit of the righteous, and sends it into the body of a proselyte, where it abides; and from that time he is called a proselyte of righteousness[12]; so that now he has a new soul, and is a new man, another man than he was before; " not a better man, but, to use our Lord's words, he is made "twofold more the child of hell".

For, according to them, all his former connections with men are broken, and all obligations to natural relations are dissolved; and he may, without any imputation of crime, be guilty of the most shocking incest, as to marry his own mother or his own sister. But hear their own words, "When a Gentile is made a proselyte, and a servant made free, they are both as 'a newborn babe'; and all the relations which they had when a Gentile or a servant, are no more relations to them; " or their kindred and relation by blood is no more; as brother, sister, father, mother, and children, these are no more to be so accounted; insomuch, that, "when one becomes a proselyte, he and they (his quondam kindred) are not guilty, by reason thereof,

on account of incest, at all; so that it is according to law (the civil law of the Jews) that a Gentile may marry his own mother, or his sister, by his mother's side (his own sister), when they become proselytes."

But though they allow it to be lawful, they have so much modesty and regard to decency, or rather to their own character, that it is added; "But the wise men forbid this, that they (the proselytes) may not say, we are come from a greater degree of holiness to a lesser one; and what is forbidden today is free tomorrow; and so a proselyte who lies with his mother or his sister, and they are in Gentilism, it is no other than if he lay with a stranger[13]." Now can any man, soberly thinking, judge that the New Testament ordinance of baptism was taken up by John and Christ from such a wretched custom, which gave licence to such shocking immorality and uncleanness; or that Christian baptism is built on such a basis as this? 3.

Thirdly, to suppose that John took up the practice of baptizing as he found it among the Jews, and from a tradition and custom of theirs, greatly detracts from the character of John, his divine mission, and the credit of baptism, as administered by him; and is contrary to what the scriptures say concerning him. They represent him as the first administrator of baptism, and, for a while, the sole administrator of it; for, for what other reason do they call him the Baptist, and distinguish him by this title, if it was then a common thing, and had been usual in time past, to baptize persons?

The scriptures say he was a man sent of God, and sent by him "to baptize with water" (John 1:6, 33). But what need was there of a mission and commission to what was in common use, and had been so time out of mind? The Jews hearing of John's baptizing persons, sent messengers to him, to know who he was that took upon him to baptize; who asked, "Why baptizest thou, if thou art not that Christ, nor Elijah, nor that prophet?" As if it was a new thing; and that it was expected he should be some extraordinary person who baptized.

But why should such questions be put to him, if this was in common use, and if any ordinary person, however any common doctor or Rabbi, had then, and in former times, been used to baptize persons[14]? The scriptures speak of John's baptism as the "counsel of God": but according to this notion, it was a device and tradition of men; and had this been the case, the Jews would not have been at a loss, nor under any difficulty, to answer the question Christ put to them, nor indeed, would he ever have put such an one; "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or from men?" for his putting the question thus, supposes the contrary, that it was not from men, but from God: and if it was not of God, but a tradition of men, they could have readily said, "Of men"; without being confuted by him, or exposed to the people; but being thrown into a dilemma, they took the wisest way for themselves, and answered, "We cannot tell".

Dr. Wall[15] says, If John had been baptizing proselytes, and not natural Jews, the Pharisees would not have wondered at it, it being so well known to them; and he suggests, that the wonder was, that natural Jews should be baptized: but why so! for according to this notion, the original natural Jews were received into covenant by baptism; they as the proselytes, and the proselytes as they; the case, according to them: was similar. But let us examine this affair, and see how the fact stands.

When John first appeared baptizing, the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were natural Jews, came to his baptism, and were not admitted to it, but rejected from it, as unfit and improper persons; and others of the same nation and profession, in their turn, "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized by John", (Matthew 3:7; Luke 7:30). On the other hand, publicans, the Roman tax gatherers, of whom some indeed were Jews, others heathens, both equally odious, and therefore joined together, these "justified God", being baptized with the baptism of John; and these "went into the kingdom of God", into

the gospel state, before the Pharisees, and embraced its doctrines, and submitted to its ordinances, (Luke 7:29 3:12; Matthew 21:31) and even soldiers, Roman soldiers, for no other soldiers were then in Judea, were among the multitude who came to be baptized by him, to whom he gave good instructions, but did not refuse to baptize them, (Luke 3:7, 14) and our Lord Jesus Christ, whose forerunner John was in his ministry and baptism, gave orders to his disciples to baptize indiscriminately persons of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, who believed in him; and who accordingly did baptize them: so that baptism, in those early times of John, Christ, and his apostles, was not confined to natural Jews; the wonder and the question upon it, as above, were not about the persons baptized, whether Jews or Gentiles, but about baptism itself, and the administrator of it, as being altogether new.

The account which Josephus[16], the Jewish historian, who lived soon after the times of John, gives of him, and his baptism, agrees with the sacred scriptures; and which testimony stands not only in the common editions of that historian, but is preserved by Eusebius[17], as a choice piece of history; in which, he not only says John was a religious and good man, but, with the scriptures, that he was surnamed the Baptist, to distinguish him from others; and that he ordered the Jews who lived righteous and godly lives to come to baptism, and such only did John admit of; and that baptizing was acceptable to God, when used not for removing some sins (by which his baptism is distinguished from Jewish baptisms, which were used to purge from sin in a ceremonial sense) but for the purity of the body, the soul being before purified by righteousness.

Also he observes, with the scriptures, that multitudes flocked to him; and that Herod, fearing that by his means his subjects would be drawn into a revolt, put him to death. But why such flockings to him, if baptism had been a common thing? And what had Herod to fear from that? He might reasonably conclude, that if this was no other than what had been usually practised, the people would soon cease from following him. Nay, Josippon Ben Gorion[18]; the Jew's Josephus, the historian whom they value and prefer to the true Josephus, says of that hlybj hve "he made", instituted, and performed baptism, as if it was a new thing, founded by him; and for which later Jews express their resentment at him.

One of their virulent writers says[19], "Who commanded John to institute this baptism? in what law did he find it? neither in the old nor in the new." Now this would not be said by the Jews, if John had taken up his baptism from a custom of theirs; nor would they speak of the ordinance of baptism in such a scandalous and blasphemous manner as they do, and in language too shocking to transcribe[20]. 4. Fourthly, the Jews will not allow that any proof of baptism can be produced out of the writings of the Old Testament, nor out of their Talmuds.

Such passages in the Old Testament which speak of washing, and in which men are exhorted to "wash" and be "clean", as Isaiah 1:16 it is said, are to be understood of men cleansing themselves from their sins, and not of plunging in water; "To plunge a man in water, is no where written; why therefore did Jesus command such baptism," or dipping[21]? and whereas the passage in Ezekiel 16:9, "Then washed I thee with water", is by some interpreted of baptism; the Jew observes[22] the words are not in the future tense; "I will wash thee": but in the past tense; "I have washed thee"; and so cannot refer to baptism.

And whereas the promise in Ezekiel 36:25, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness", &c. is brought by some, I suppose he means some popish writers, as another proof of baptism the Jews replies[23], "What sin and uncleanness does baptism take away? and what sin and uncleanness are there in newborn babes? Besides, says he, you do not do so; you do not sprinkle, but you are plunged into water:" which, by the way, shows that sprinkling was not used in baptism when

this Jew wrote, which was in the twelfth century, as Wagenseil, the editor of his work, supposes.

The same Jewish writer[24] asks, "If the law of Jesus, and his coming, were known to the prophets, why did not they observe his law? and why did not they 'baptize themselves', according to the law of Jesus?" And he represents[25] David as praying (it must be supposed, under a prophetic spirit) for those who should, in this captivity of the Jews, be forced, against their wills, to baptism, and that they might be delivered from it (Ps. 69:1, 15, 144:7). Nor does this writer take any notice of receiving proselytes by baptism; though he makes mention of receiving men proselytes[26], yet by circumcision only; and also of women proselytes, but not a word of baptism of either; and had he thought the baptism their Talmud speaks of, had any affinity with our baptism, and was the ground of it, he would not have been so gruelled with an objection of the Christians, as he was; which is put thus[27], "We baptize male and female, and hereby receive them into our religion; but you circumcise men only, and not women:" to which he appears to be at an entire loss to answer; whereas he might have readily answered, had the case been as suggested, that we baptize women as well as men, when they are received proselytes among us.

But that the Jews had no notion that Christian baptism was founded upon any prior baptism of proselytes, or others, among them, as related in their Talmud, is manifest from a disputation had between Nachmanides, a famous Jew, and one brother Paul, a Christian, in the year 1263[28]. Brother Paul affirmed, that the Talmudists believed in Jesus, that he was the Messiah, and was both God and man: the Jew replied, after observing some other things, "How can brother Paul say so, that they believed in him; for they, and their disciples, died in our religion? and 'why were they not baptized', according to the command of Jesus, as brother Paul was?"

And I would be glad to hear, "says he, "'how' he learned baptism from them (the Talmudists) and 'in what place' (of the Talmud)? did not they teach us all our laws which we now observe? and the rites and customs they gathered together for us, as they were used when the temple was standing, from the mouths of the prophets, and from the mouth of Moses, our master, on whom be peace? and if they believed in Jesus, and in his law, they would have done as brother Paul has; does he understand their words better than they themselves?" 5.

Fifthly, to say, as Dr. Lightfoot does, that Christ took baptism into his hands as he found it, that is, as practised by the Jews, is greatly to derogate from the character and authority of Christ; it makes him, who came a Teacher from God, to teach for doctrines the commandments of men, which he himself condemns. It makes that "all power in heaven and in earth", said to be given him, in consequence of which he gave his apostles a commission to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; I say, it makes it to dwindle into this only, a power to establish a tradition, and commandment of men long in use before he came.

Again, who can believe that Christ, who so severely inveighed against the traditions of the Jews, could ever establish any one of them, and make it an ordinance of his; and particularly, should inveigh against those, respecting the baptisms, or dippings of the Jews then in use among them; and especially without excepting that of their baptism of proselytes from the rest, and without declaring it his will that it should be continued and observed; neither of which he has done. 6.

Sixthly, such a notion as this highly reflects dishonour on the ordinance of baptism; that one of the principal ordinances of the New Testament, as that is, should be founded on an human tradition, an invention of men; it must greatly weaken the authority of it, as well as disparage the wisdom of the

Lawgiver; and must have a tendency to bring both the author and the ordinance into contempt. Nothing can make an ordinance a Christian ordinance, but its being instituted by Christ.

If baptism is an institution of men, and received and retained from men, and regulated according to their device, it is no Christian ordinance: and, as Witsius says[29], "Whatever may be said of the antiquity of that rite (proselyte baptism, which yet with him was dubious and uncertain) there can be no divine institution of it (of baptism) before John, the forerunner of Christ, was sent of God to baptize; for to him that was expressly commanded; 'The word of God came unto John', Luke 3:2; John 1:33, &c." 7.

Seventhly, if it was the custom of the Jews before the times of John and Christ, to receive young children as proselytes by baptism, or dipping, and this was to be as a rule according to which Christian baptism was to be practised; then most surely we should have had some instances of children being baptized by John, or by the apostles of Christ, if "baptizing infants had been as 'ordinarily used' in the church of the Jews, as ever it hath been in the Christian church," as Dr.

Lightfoot says; and yet we have not one instance of this kind; we no where read of any children being brought to John to be baptized, nor of any that were baptized by him; nor of any being brought to the apostles of Christ to be baptized, nor of their being baptized by them; from whence it may be concluded there was no such custom before their times; or if there was, it never was intended it should be observed by Christians in later times; or otherwise there would have been some precedents of it, directing to and encouraging such a practice: many things would follow on such a supposition, that Christian baptism is borrowed from and founded on proselyte baptism, and the latter the rule directing the practice of the former; for then, 8.

Eighthly, Self-baptizing, or persons baptizing themselves, without making use of an administrator, might be encouraged and established; which is what the Paedobaptists charge, though wrongly, some of the first reformers of the abuses of baptism with; since it is plain, from the quotations before made, that though it is sometimes said, "they", that is, the doctors or wise men, "baptize", or "dip", yet it is also said, both of men and women, that they "dipped themselves"; as of a man lkj awl "he dipped himself", and went up from the water; and of a woman, being placed by women in the water, lkj "she dipped", that is, herself; and so Leo of Modena says[30], of a Jew proselyte, that after he is circumcised, and well of his sore, "he is to wash himself all over in water", in the presence of three Rabbins, or other persons in authority, and from thenceforth he becomes as a natural Jew; and, indeed, all the Jewish baptisms, or bathings, commanded in the law, were done by persons themselves (see Lev. 14:8, 9 Num. 19:7, 8).

And Dr. Lightfoot[31] thinks that John's baptism was so administered; he supposes, that men, women, and children came unto it; and that they standing in Jordan, were taught by John, that they were baptized into the name of the Messiah, ready to come, and into the profession of the gospel, about faith and repentance; and that "they plunged themselves into the river", and so came out. 9. Ninthly, if this Jewish custom is to be regarded as a rule of Christian baptism, it will tend to establish the Socinian notion, that only the first converts to Christianity in a nation, they and their children are to be baptized, but not their posterity in after ages; for so both Lightfoot and Selden, with others, say, who were sticklers for Christian baptism being taken from the custom of baptizing, or dipping Jewish proselytes, and their children; that only the children of proselytes, born before their parents became such, were baptized, or dipped; but not those born afterwards: baptism was never repeated in their posterity; the sons of proselytes, in following generations, were circumcised, but not baptized[32]; and, as Dr.

Jennings[33] rightly observes, "it was a maxim with the Rabbins, 'Natus baptizati, habetur pro baptizato'." This "restriction of baptism to children born before their parents' proselytism, rests on the same authority as the custom of baptizing any children of proselytes." So that if the one is to be admitted, the other is also; and so the children of Christian parents are not to be baptized, only the converts from another religion; and these the first, and their then posterity, but not afterwards. 10.

Tenthly, if this custom, said to be practised before the times of John and Christ, is the rule to direct us in Christian baptism, there were several circumstances attending that, which should be observed in Christian baptism, to make it regular; it must be done before three witnesses, and these men of eminence; but who, of such a number and character were present at the baptism of the apostle Paul? (Acts 22:16, 9:18). Nor was it to be performed in the night; what then must be said of the baptism of the jailor, and his family? (Acts 16:33) nor on a Sabbath day; nor on a feast day; yet Lydia, and her household, were baptized on a Sabbath day, (Acts 16:13, 15) and the three thousand Christian converts were baptized on the day of Pentecost? and which was also the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, (Acts 2:1, 41).

Wherefore, if this Jewish custom was the rule of baptism, and from whence it was taken, and by which it should proceed; (for if in one case, why not in others?) these instances of Christian baptism were not rightly performed. 11. Eleventhly, if the Ethiopian eunuch Philip baptized, was a proselyte, as Grotius and others say, he must be either a proselyte of the gate, a proselyte inhabitant, or a proselyte of righteousness; not the former, for he was no inhabitant in any part of Judea; but most probably he was the latter, since he was a very devout and religious man, had an high opinion of the worship of God among the Jews, and had travelled from a far country to worship at Jerusalem; and so Dr.

Jennings[34] justly observes, that "he seems to be rather a proselyte of the covenant, or completely a Jew; not only from his reading the scripture, but because he had taken so long a journey to worship at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, one of the three grand festivals; when all the Jewish males, who were able, were, according to the law, to attend the worship of God at the national altar." He appears to have thoroughly embraced the religion of the Jews, even their whole law, and was conversant with their sacred writings; he was reading in one of their prophets when Philip joined his chariot, and was taken up into it by him: whereas a son of Noah, as the Jews called a proselyte of the gate, might not study in the law, according to their canons[35], which they say he had nothing to do with; only with the seven precepts of Noah; and, indeed, no Gentile or uncircumcised person[36].

And if the eunuch was a proselyte of righteousness, according to the pretended custom of dipping such, he must have been baptized, or dipped, when he became a proselyte; and since, according to this notion, he must have been baptized with a baptism which John and Christ took up as they found it among the Jews, and which is the basis and foundation of Christian baptism, and the rule to direct in the performance of it, it is much he should desire baptism again! and that Philip, who is thought to be a proselyte also, (Acts 6:5) and must know the custom of making proselytes, should administer it to him: and if he had been baptized before, must he not then be an Anabaptist?

And so the proselytes in (Acts 2:10) were, as Drusius and others think, proselytes of righteousness, who had embraced the Jewish religion, and were circumcised, and, according to this notion, baptized. Besides, none but proselytes of righteousness might dwell in Jerusalem; as has been observed, Chapter 1. And also proselytes of the gate were never called Jews, as these were; only proselytes of righteousness: and if any of these were among the three thousand converted and baptized by the apostles, which is not improbable, must not they be also Anabaptists?

The Grecians, or Hellenists, whose widows were neglected in the daily ministrations, are thought by Beza, and others, to be widows of Jewish proselytes, and therefore it is highly probable, that their husbands had been members of the Christian church at Jerusalem, and so must have been rebaptized; and most certain it is, that Nicholas of Antioch, who was one of the seven appointed to take care of these widows, was a proselyte, and as Grotius truly thinks, a proselyte of righteousness; and so, as he must have been baptized according to this notion, when he became a proselyte, he must have been rebaptized when he became a member of the Christian church at Jerusalem, of which he most certainly was, being chosen out of it, and appointed to an office in it, (Acts 6:1, 5). 12.

Twelfthly, it may be observed, in a quotation before made, that if a proselytess big with child was baptized, or dipped, her child needed not baptism, or dipping, the mother's baptism, or dipping, was sufficient for it: but this is not attended to by Paedobaptists; it seems, in the beginning of the fourth century, there were some of the same opinion with the Jews; but a canon in the council of Neocaesarea was made against it; which, as explained, declared that the child of such a person needed baptism, when it came to be capable of choosing for itself[37]; which canon should not have been made, if this Jewish custom is to be regarded as a rule. 13.

Lastly, As an argument "ad hominem", it may be observed, that if this custom is to be considered as a rule of Christian baptism, then sprinkling ought not to be used in it; for the baptism of Jewish proselytes, men, women, and children, was performed by dipping; as all the above quotations show. To which may be added, that one of their rules respecting proselyte baptism is, that a proselyte must dip in such a place (or confluence of water) as a menstruous woman dips herself in[38], or which is sufficient for such an one; and that, as the Gloss is, was what held forty seahs of water; and to this agrees the account Maimonides[39] gives of such a confluence of water, that it must be "sufficient for the dipping of the whole body of a man at once; and such the wise men reckon to be a cubit square, and three cubits in depth; and this measure holds forty seahs of water."

And he further says[40], "that wherever washing of the flesh, and washing of clothes from uncleanness, are mentioned in the law, nothing else is meant but the dipping of the whole body in a confluence of water--and that if he dips his whole body, except the top of his little finger, he is still in his uncleanness: --and that all unclean persons, who are dipped in their clothes, their dipping is right, because the waters come into them (or penetrate through them) and do not divide," or separate; that is, the clothes do not divide, or separate between the water and their bodies, so as to hinder its coming to them; so the menstruous woman dipped herself in her clothes; and in like manner the proselyte.

Let such observe this, who object to the baptism of persons with their clothes on. Again, as an argument of the same kind, if baptism was common in all ages, foregoing the times of John, Christ, and his apostles, as is said, then it could not succeed circumcision, since it must be contemporary with it. Upon the whole, what Dr. Lightfoot[41], and others after him, have urged in favour of infant baptism from hence, is quite impertinent; that "there was need of a plain and open prohibition, that infants and little children should not be baptized, if our Saviour would not have had them baptized; for since it was most common in all ages foregoing, that little children should be baptized, if Christ had been minded to have had that custom abolished, he would have openly forbidden it; therefore his silence, and the silence of the scripture in this matter, confirms Paedobaptism, and continues it unto all ages" But first, it does not appear that any such custom was ever practised before the times of John, Christ, and his apostles, as to admit into the Jewish church by baptism, proselytes, whether adult or minors.

No testimony has been, and I believe none can be given of it. And, as some very learned men have truly observed[42], and as Dr. Owen[43] affirms, there are not the least footsteps of any such usage among the Jews, until after the days of John the Baptist, in imitation of whom, he thinks, it was taken up by some Ante-Mishnical Rabbins; and, as he elsewhere says[44], "The institution of the rite of baptism is no where mentioned in the Old Testament; no example is extant; nor during the Jewish church, was it ever used in the admission of proselytes; no mention of it is to be met with in Philo, Josephus, nor in Jesus the son of Syrach; nor in the evangelic history."

What testimony has been given of this custom, falls greatly short of proving it; wherefore Christ could have no concern about abolishing a custom which had not obtained in his time; nor was there any room nor reason for it, since it had never been practised, for ought appears: his silence about what never existed, can give no existence to it, nor to that which is founded on it, Paedobaptism; and which is neither warranted and confirmed by any such custom, nor by the word of God, in which there is an high silence about both.

This custom of baptizing little children was so far from being common in all ages foregoing the times of John, Christ, and his apostles, that not a single instance can be given of anyone that ever was baptized; if there can, let it be produced; if not, what comes of all this bluster and harangue? With much more propriety and strength of reasoning might it be retorted; that since it is plain the children of the Jews, both male and female, did eat of the passover, which was not an human custom and tradition; but an ordinance of God, common in all ages foregoing the times of John, &c. and since, according to the hypothesis of the Paedobaptists, the Lord's supper came in the room of the passover; for which there is much more reason in analogy, than for baptism coming in the room of circumcision; it should seem, if our Saviour would not have had children eat of the Lord's supper, as they did of the passover, he would have openly forbidden it.

A plain and open prohibition of this was more needful than a prohibition of the baptism of infants, if not his will, had there been such a custom before prevailing, as there was not; since that could only be a custom and tradition of men; and it was enough that Christ inveighed against those of the Jews in general, which obtained before, and in his time; and against their baptisms and dippings in particular. And after all, it is amazing that Christian baptism should be founded upon a tradition, of which there is no evidence but from the Rabbins, and that very intricate, perplexed, and contradictory, and not as in being in the times referred to; upon a tradition of a set of men blinded and besotted, and enemies to Christianity, its doctrines and ordinances; and who, at other times, reckoned by these very men, who so warmly urge this custom of theirs, the most stupid, sottish, and despicable, of all men upon the face of the earth!

If this is the basis of infant baptism, it is built upon the sand, and will, ere long, fall, and be no more. I conclude this Dissertation in the words of Dr. Owen[45], "That the opinion of some learned men concerning transferring the rite of Jewish baptism, by the Lord Jesus, which, indeed, did not then exist, for the use of his disciples, is destitute of all probability." And after all, perhaps, the Paedobaptists will find their account better in consulting the baptism of the ancient heathens, and its rites, than that of the Jews; said[46] to be in use before the times of Moses, and in ages since, and that among all nations; and being more ancient than Christian baptism, a learned writer referred to, says, it is as a sort of preamble to it. And from whom the Paedobaptists may be supplied with materials for their purpose. ENDNOTES:

[1] T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 47. 1.

[2] Annot. in Matt. iii. 6.

- [3] Chronic. secul. 9. p. 200.
- [4] Witsii Aegyptiaca, l. 2. c. 16. s. 10. vid. Tertullian. de Praescript. Haer. c. 40.
- [5] Schickard. & Mayerus, apud Pfeiffer. Antiqu. Ebr. c. 1. s. 5. vid. Selden. de Syned. l. 1. c. 3.
- [6] Ut Supra & Theologoumen. p. 447.
- [7] Praefat. ad Seder Kodashim.
- [8] Mabo. Hagemara ad Calcem Halicot Olam, p. 223.
- [9] T. Bab. Kiddushin, fol. 49. 2. Beracot, fol. 47. 2.
- [10] T. Bab. Ceritot, fol. 9. 1.
- [11] Jewish Antiqu. vol. 1. p. 136, 138.
- [12] Zohar in Numb. fol. 69. 4. Ed. Sultzbach.
- [13] Maimon. Issure Biah, c. 14. s. 11, 12. Schulchan Aruch, par. 2. Yore Dea. Hilchot Gerim, Art. 269. s. 1.
- [14] "Annon plane innuunt (verba Joan. i. 25) nullum fuisse baptismi usum, et receptam fuisse opinionem inter ipsos (Judaeos), nullum debere esse, usquedum veniret Christus, vel Elias, vel propheta ille?" Knatchbul in 1 Pet. iii. 21.
- [15] Introduction to his History, p. 64. Ed. 2. 4to.
- [16] Antiqu. l. 18. c. 6. s. 2.
- [17] Eccl. Hist. l. 1. c. 11.
- [18] Ibid. Heb. l. 5. c. 45.
- [19] Vet. Nizzachon, p. 195. Ed. Wagenseil.
- [20] Vet. Nizzachon, p. 62, 64, 70, 74, 77, 150, 191, &c, vid. Maji Synops. Theolog. Jud. loc. 18. s. 2. p. 266. Edzardi not. in Avodah Zarah, c. 2. p. 266. Wagenseil. in Sotah, p. 959.
- [21] Nizzachon, p. 53.
- [22] Ibid, p. 74.
- [23] Nizzachon, p. 192.
- [24] Ibid. p. 99.
- [25] Ibid. p. 193.
- [26] Ibid. p. 242, 243.
- [27] Ibid. p. 251.

- [28] Apud Wagenseil. Tela Ignea, vol. 2. p. 25, 26.
- [29] Oeconom. Foeder. l. 4. c. 16. s. 8. p. 875. Ed. 3.
- [30] History of the Customs of the Jews, par. 5. c. 2.
- [31] Hor. Heb. in Matt. iii. 6. vol. 2. p. 122.
- [32] See Wall's History of Infant Baptism, Introduct. p. 50, 55.
- [33] Jewish Antiquities, ut supra, p. 135. Marg.
- [34] Jewish Antiq. p. 159, 160.
- [35] Maimon. Melacim. c. 10. s. 9.
- [36] T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 59. 1. Shaare Orah, fol. 18. 2.
- [37] See Stennet against Russen, p. 103, 104.
- [38] T. Bab. Yebamot, fol. 47. 2.
- [39] Hilchot Mikvaot, c. 4. s. 1. T. Bab. Eruvim, fol. 14. 2.
- [40] Mikvaot, c. 1. s. 2. 7.
- [41] Hor. Heb. in Matt. iii. 6. vol. 2. p. 119.
- [42] "Proselytorum baptismum ante Johannem extitisse nullo testimonio certe constat", Fabricii Bibliograph. Antiqu. c. 11. p. 392. ita Deylingius in ibid. p. 386.
- [43] On Heb. vol. 1. Exercitat. 19. p. 272.
- [44] Theologoumen. l. 5. Digress. 1. p. 447.
- [45] "Omni ideo probabilitate caret sententia ista doctorum quorundam virorum de translatione ritus baptismatis Judaici, qui revera eo tempore nullus erat, in usum discipulorum suorum per Dominum Jesum facienda", Theologoum. ibid.
- [46] Sperlingius de baptismo veterum Ethnicorum, p. 116, 117, 120, 129, 210.

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