

# Some Strictures on a Late Treatise, Called, a Fair and Rational Vindication of the Right of Infants to the Ordinance of Baptism.

by John Gill

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*The speaker argues that the grounds of infant baptism are false, and that the covenant of circumcision is not the covenant of grace, which is the main ground on which the right of infants to baptism is founded.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 17:7, Jeremiah 31:33, Matthew 19:14, Matthew 28:19, Mark 10:13, Acts 2:39, Romans 4:11, 1 Corinthians 7:14, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12

**Topics:** "Baptism", "Covenant Theology"

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## Description

John Gill critiques David Bostwick's treatise on the right of infants to baptism, arguing that the scriptural basis he presents, particularly Acts 2:39, is misinterpreted and does not support infant baptism. Gill emphasizes that the promise in the text is directed towards those who repent and believe, not infants, and that the covenant of circumcision does not equate to the covenant of grace. He asserts that the practice of infant baptism lacks biblical command and historical precedent, and he challenges the notion that infants can partake in the covenant relationship without the capacity for faith and repentance. Gill concludes that the arguments for infant baptism are built on a false foundation and that true baptism is reserved for those who can profess their faith.

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## Transcript

Some

STRICTURES ON MR. BOSTWICK'S

FAIR AND RATIONAL VINDICATION

of the right of infants

to the ordinance of baptism

Along with Mr. Clark's Defense of the divine Right of Infant-baptism, to which what is written above is a Reply, there has been imported from America a treatise called, A fair and rational Vindication of the Right of Infants to the Ordinance of Baptism; being the substance of several discourses from Acts 2:39, by

David Bostwick, A.M. late minister of the Presbyterian church in the city of New York, which has been reprinted and published here; and as it comes in company with the former, it is but a piece of civility to take some notice of it, and make some few strictures (severe criticisms, ed.) upon it, though there is nothing in it but what is answered in the above Reply; to which I shall greatly refer the reader.

There is scarce a single thought through the whole of it, that I can discern, is new; nothing but crumbe repetita, old stale reasonings and arguments, which have been answered over and over; and yet this, I understand, has been cried up as an unanswerable performance; which I do not wonder at, that any thing that has but an appearance of reasoning, candor, and ingenuity, as this will be allowed to have, should be so reckoned by those of that party; when the most miserable pamphlet that comes out on that side of the question, has the same epithet bellowed upon it.

And, First, This Gentleman has mistook the sense of his text, on which he grounds his discourse concerning the Right of infants to baptism (Acts 2:39), for the promise is unto you, and to your children; and to all that are afar off; even as many as the Lord our God shall call; by which promise, he says, p. 14, 15, must be understood," the covenant-promise made to Abraham, which gave his "infant-children a right to the ordinance of circumcision;" when there is not the least mention made of Abraham, nor of any covenant-promise made to him in it; nor was ever any covenant-promise made to him, giving his infant-children a right to the ordinance of circumcision, but the covenant of circumcision; and that can never be meant here by the promise; since this is said to be to all that are afar off; by whom, according to this Gentleman, Gentiles are meant; to whom the covenant of circumcision belonged not; nor did it give to them any right to the ordinance of circumcision, except they became proselytes to the Jewish religion: besides, be the promise here what it may, it is observed, not as giving any right or claim to any ordinance whatever; but as an encouraging motive to persons in distress under a sense of sin, to repent of their sin, and declare their repentance, and yield a voluntary subjection to the ordinance of baptism; when they might hope that remission of sin would be applied to them, and they should receive a larger measure of the grace of the Spirit; and therefore can only be understood of adult persons; and the promise is no other than the promise of life and salvation by Christ, and of remission of sins by his blood, and of an increase of grace from his Spirit: and whereas the persons addressed had imprecated the blood of Christ, they had shed, upon their posterity, as well as on themselves, which greatly distressed them; they are told, for their relief, that the same promise would be made good to their posterity also, provided they did as they were directed to do; and to all their brethren the Jews, in distant parts; and even to the Gentiles, sometimes described as afar off, of the same character with themselves, repenting and submitting to baptism; yea, to all, in all ages and places, whom God should now, or hereafter call by his grace; see my Reply to Mr.

Clark, p. 50, 51.[1] This text is so far from being an unanswerable argument for the right of infants to baptism, as it is said to be, that there is not the least mention of Infant-baptism in it; nor any hint of it; nor any thing from whence it can be concluded. The baptism encouraged to by it is only of adult persons convinced of sin, and who repented of it. The passage in Acts 3:25, brought for the support of the author's sense of his text, is foreign to his purpose; since it refers not to the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham (Gen. 17), but to the promise of the Messiah of Abraham's seed, and of the blessing of all nations in him (Gen. 22:18), and which was fulfilled in the mission and incarnation of Christ, and in the ministration of his gospel to Jews and Gentiles; which same promise of Christ, of life and salvation by him, is meant in Acts 13:26, 32, 33, and which is also a proof, that the children to whom it belongs, are to be understood, not of infant-children, but of the adult posterity of the Jews; since the apostle says, God hath fulfilled the same to us their children; for surely the apostle Paul must not be reckoned an infant-child.

Secondly, The ground on which the right of infants to baptism is founded by this author is a false one; which is the covenant made with Abraham, that which gave his infant-children a right to circumcision, and is said to be the covenant of grace, the same under which believers now are. This he looks upon to be the grand turning point, on which the issue of the controversy very much depends; that it is the main ground on which the right of infants to baptism is asserted; and he freely confesses, that if this covenant is not the covenant of grace, the main ground of infants right to baptism is taken away, and consequently, that the principal arguments in support of the doctrine are overturned (pp. 18, 19).

Now that this ground and foundation is a false and sandy one, and will not bear the weight of this superstructure laid upon it, will appear by observing, 1. That the covenant of grace gives no right to any positive institution; either circumcision or baptism: not to circumcision; the covenant of grace was in being, was made, manifested, and applied to many, from Adam to Abraham, both before and after the flood, who had no right to circumcision, nor knowledge of it; the covenant of grace did not give to Abraham himself a right to circumcision; he was openly interested in it, it was made, manifested, and applied unto him, many years before circumcision was enjoined him; and when it was, it was not the covenant of grace, but the express command of God, that gave him and his male seed a right to circumcision; I say his male seed, for his female seed, though no doubt many of them were interested in the covenant of grace, yet their covenant-interest gave them no right unto it: as there were also many, at the same time that circumcision was enjoined Abraham and his natural seed, who were interested in the covenant of grace, and yet had no right to circumcision; as Shem, Arphaxad, Lot, and others: and on the other hand, it may easily be observed, that there were many who had a right to circumcision, and on whom it was practiced, who, without any breach of charity, it may be concluded, had no interest in the covenant of grace; not to mention particular persons, as Ishmael, Esau, etc. many of the idolaters and rebels among the Israelites in the wilderness, of those that bowed the knee to Baal in the times of Ahab, and of the worshippers of Jeroboam's calves; those that are called the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah in the times of Isaiah, and that worshipped the queen and host of heaven in the times of Jeremiah; and those whose characters are given in the prophecy of Malachi, as then living; with the Scribes and Pharisees, who committed the unpardonable sin in the times of Christ; these cannot be thought to be in the covenant of grace.

In short, all were not Israel that were of Israel, and circumcised: it is therefore clear to a demonstration, that interest in the covenant of grace did not give right to circumcision, but the special, particular, and express command of God: nor does it give right to baptism; it gave the Old Testament-saints no right unto it, who were four thousand years without it, and yet in the covenant of grace; and since baptism is enjoined as an ordinance of the New Testament, a person may be in the covenant of grace, and yet not known to be so by himself or others; and while he is in such a state, and in such circumstances, he cannot be thought to have any right to baptism.

It is a command of God, that those that repent and believe, be baptized; the covenant of grace provides faith and repentance for those interested in it, and bestows them on them; whereby they are qualified for baptism according to the divine command. But it is not the covenant of grace, nor these qualifications, that give the right to baptism; but the command of God to persons so qualified, to profess the same, and be baptized: for men may have faith and repentance, yet if they do not make a profession of them, they have no right to baptism, nor a minister any authority to administer it to them.

No doubt but the apostle Peter was satisfied that the three thousand pricked in their hearts were truly penitents; yet insisted on the profession of their repentance, as antecedent to baptism; and Philip, I make no question, was satisfied of the Eunuch's being a believer in Christ by the conversation he had with him;

yet required a confession of his faith in him, in order to his baptism; for with the mouth confession is to be made unto salvation. Nor even according to our author's sentiment does the covenant of grace give a right to baptism; since, according to him, persons are not in covenant before they are baptized; for he expressly says, pp. 12, 30. that by baptism they enter into the covenant, and are taken into the covenant by baptism; and therefore baptism rather gives them a right to the covenant, than the covenant a right to baptism, according to this Gentleman: so far is it from being true what he elsewhere says (p. 32), that the covenant of grace gave Abraham and his children a right to circumcision under the law; and that this it is that gives parents and children a right to baptism under the gospel. 2.

The covenant of circumcision, or the covenant which gave Abraham's infant-children a right to circumcision, is not the covenant of grace; for the covenant of circumcision must be most certainly, in the nature of it, a covenant of works, and not of grace. It will be freely allowed, that the covenant of grace was at certain times made, and made manifest, and applied to Abraham, and he interested in it; and that God was the God of him, and of his spiritual seed; and that the spiritual seed of Abraham, both among Jews and Gentiles, are interested in the same covenant; but not his carnal seed, nor theirs as such: and that Abraham was justified by faith, as believers now are; and that the same gospel was preached to him as now; and that at the same time the covenant of circumcision was given unto him, there was an exhibition of the covenant of grace unto him: the account of both is mixed together; but then the covenant of circumcision, which was a covenant of peculiarity, and belonged only to him and his natural male seed, was quite a distinct thing from the covenant of grace, since it included some that were not in the covenant of grace, and excluded others that were in it: nor is that the covenant that was confirmed of God in Christ 430 years before the law was; since the covenant of circumcision falls 24 years short of that date, and therefore it refers not to that, but to an exhibition of the covenant of grace to Abraham, about the time of his call out of Chaldea; besides the covenant of circumcision is abolished, but the covenant of grace continues, and ever will; see my reply (pp. 35, 36).

Now as this covenant, which gave Abraham's infant-children a right to circumcision, is not the covenant of grace, the main ground on which the right of infants to baptism is asserted, is taken away, and so no foundation left for it; and consequently the principal arguments in support of the doctrine are overturned, as this Gentleman freely confesses; and as everyone should, who is in the same way of thinking and reasoning. If the covenant of circumcision is not the covenant of grace, here of right the controversy should be closed, since this is the turning point on which the issue of it very much depends; for if this be false, all that follows as argued from it, must be so too; for, Thirdly, If the covenant of circumcision is not the covenant of grace, then circumcision is not the seal of the covenant of grace it is said to be (p. 22).

If it was, the covenant of grace must be without such a seal near two thousand years, before the covenant of circumcision was given; and why not then always without one? besides, it must be with a seal and without a seal at one and same time, which is absurd; for there were some interested in the covenant of grace as before observed, on whom circumcision was not enjoined, and so without this seal, when it was enjoined on Abraham and his natural seed, and there were such afterwards; and circumcision also must have been the seal of itself, which is another absurdity.

Circumcision was a token and sign, or mark in the flesh, which Abraham's natural posterity were to bear until the coming of the Messiah; but is never called a seal throughout the whole Old Testament; and much less is it any where said to be a seal of the covenant of grace: and indeed what blessing of grace could it seal, assure of, and confirm, to any of Abraham's natural seed as such, or any other man's natural seed? It is indeed in the New Testament called a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had, being

yet uncircumcised (Rom. 4:11.) but then it was no seal of that, nor of any thing else to others, but to Abraham only; namely, that that righteousness which he had by faith before he was circumcised, would come upon, or be imputed to the uncircumcised Gentiles; and accordingly this mark continued in the flesh of his posterity, until the gospel, publishing justification by the righteousness of faith, was ordered to be preached to the Gentiles.[2] Wherefore, Fourthly., Seeing circumcision was no seal of the covenant of grace, baptism, which it is pretended was instituted in the room of it, can be no seal of it neither, and so not to be administered as such to the children of professed believers, as is said (p. 25).

The text in Colossians 2:11, falls short of proving that baptism is instituted in the room of circumcision; since the apostle is speaking, not of circumcision in the flesh, but in the Spirit; and by which he means not the outward ordinance of baptism, that is distinguished from it,[3] but an inward work of grace upon the heart; spiritual circumcision, called the circumcision of Christ; which to understand as the same, is not to make an unreasonable tautology; it makes none at all, and much less nonsense, as this writer suggests; but beautifully completes the description the apostle gives of spiritual circumcision; first, by the manner of its performance, without hands; then by the matter and substance of it, the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh; and lastly, by the author of it, Christ, who by his spirit produces it.

The argument from analogy is weak and insufficient; though some little agreement between circumcision and baptism may be imagined, and seem to be in the signification of them, yet the difference between them is notorious; they differ in their subjects, uses, manner of administration, and the administrators of them; nor is it true, what is suggested, that they are both sacraments of admission into the church; nor are they badges of relation to God or Christ, nor signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

Nor need we be under any concern about any ordinance coming in the room of circumcision, and answering to that Jewish rite. Nor is there any necessity of any, no more than of a pope in the room of an high priest, or of any festivals to answer to those of the Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles; nor does the Lord's supper answer to the passover, and come in the room of it; it is Christ that answers to it, and is the passover sacrificed for us: but what makes it quite clear and plain, that baptism does not succeed circumcision, or come in the room of it, is, that it was in force and use before circumcision was abolished, which was not until the death of Christ, whereas John administered baptism, and Christ himself was baptized, and many others, some years before that time; and therefore baptism cannot be said, with any propriety, to succeed circumcision, when it was in force before the other was out of date: besides, if it did, it is no seal of the covenant of grace, nor to be administered to infants for such an use; for what spiritual blessing, what blessing of grace in the covenant, does baptism seal, or can seal, assure of, and secure unto the carnal seed of believers?

Let it be named if it can.[4] Fifthly, It is not indisputably evident, as this Gentleman says (p. 29), but indisputably false, that the apostles acknowledged and allowed the covenant-relation and interest of children, under the gospel, as well as under the law; by which I take it for granted he means, their relation and interest in the covenant of grace: that relation and interest, the natural seed of Abraham, as such, had not under the law; nor have the natural seed of believers, as such, the same under the gospel.

This is not to be proved from his text, as has been shown already: nor from Romans 11:16, 17, where by the root and branches, are not meant Abraham and his posterity, or natural seed; nor by the olive-tree the Jewish church; but the gospel church-state in its first foundation, out of which were left the Jews that believed not in Christ, meant by the branches broken off; and which church was constituted of those that believed in him; and these were the root and first-fruits, which being holy, are the pledge and earnest of

the future conversion and holiness of that people the apostle is speaking of in the context; and into which church state the Gentiles that believed were received, and are the branches grafted in, which partook of the root and fatness of the olive-tree; that is, of the goodness and fatness of the house of God, the ordinances and privileges of it: and in this passage not a word is said of the covenant-relation, and interest of children under the gospel; not a syllable about baptism, much less of Infant-baptism; nor can anything in favor of it be inferred from it;[5] nor can anything of this kind be proved from 1 Corinthians 7:14, real internal holiness is rejected by our author, as the sense of this and the preceding passage; but he pleads for a federal holiness; but what that is, as distinct from real holiness, let it be said if it can: the only holiness which the covenant of grace promises and provides for, and which only is proper federal holiness, is real holiness of heart and life:[6] no other than matrimonial holiness, or lawful marriage, can be meant in the Corinthian text; it is such a holiness with which the unbelieving parent is sanctified, husband or wife; and if it is a federal holiness, the unbeliever ought to be allowed to be in covenant; and if this gives a right to baptism, ought to be baptized, as well as their carnal issue; and have as good a right to it, surely, as they who have their holiness from them, and which even depends upon the sanctification of the unbelieving parent.

I am able to prove, from innumerable instances in Jewish writings, that the words sanctify and sanctified, are used for espouse and espoused, and the apostle, being a Jew, adopts the same language; and let men wriggle and wrangle as long as they can, no other sense can be put upon the words, than of a legitimate marriage and offspring; nothing else will suit with the case proposed to the apostle, and with his answer and reasoning about it; and which sense has been allowed by many learned Paedobaptists; and I cannot forbear transcribing, what I have elsewhere done, the honest confession of Musculus: "Formerly, says he, I have abused this place against the Anabaptists, thinking the meaning was, that the children were holy for the parents faith, which, though true, the present place makes nothing for the purpose." [7] Sixthly, From what has been observed, it is not proved, as our author asserts (p. 32), that the apostles looked on the children of believing parents as having an interest in the covenant of grace; and false is it, to the last degree of falsehood, what he infers from thence, that "then we have undeniable evidence that "they did in fact baptize the children of all professing believers; and that they "understood their commission as authorizing them so to do" (Matthew 28:19).

Let one single fact be produced, one undeniable instance of the apostles baptizing an infant of any, professor or profane, and we will give up the cause at once, and say no more. Nor did the apostles, nor could the apostles understand the commission as authorizing them to baptize infants. What this Gentleman observes, that the word teach is in the original to make disciples, or learn: Be it so, it is not applicable to newborn babes, who are not capable of learning anything, and much less of divine and spiritual things, of Christ and his gospel, and the doctrines of it; of which kind of learning only can the commission be understood: nor are the children of believing parents called disciples (Acts 15:10), adult persons are meant; and by the yoke attempted to be put on their necks, not circumcision, which was not intolerable, but the doctrine of the necessity of that, and other Mosaic rites, and even of keeping the whole law in order to salvation; this was intolerable.

This author further observes, that children must be included in the words all nations, mentioned in the commission. If they are included so as to be baptized, and if this phrase is to be understood without any limitation or restriction, then not only the children of Christian parents, but the children of Pagans, Jews, and Turks; yea, all adult persons, be they who they may, ever so vile and profligate, since these are included in all nations; but the limitation is to those that are taught, and learn to become the disciples of

Christ, and believe in him, as appears from Mark 16:15, 16.[8] Nor does it appear from the scripture-accounts, that there is any probability, and much less the highest probability, as this writer says (p. 33), that it was the general practice of the apostles to baptize infants, and which he concludes from Lydia, the Jailor, and Stephanas; which instances do not afford the least probability of it.[9] To make it probable that there might be infant-children in those families, he observes, we read, when God smote the first-born in Egypt, there was not an house in which there was not one dead, consequently not an house in Egypt in which there was not a child: but he did not consider, that all the first-born of Egypt slain, were not infant-children; but many of them might be men grown, of twenty, or thirty years of age, or more; and of these, with those under such an age, and in infancy, it is not strange that there should be found one in every house.[10] Our author adds, "suppose it had been said of one proselyted to the Jewish religion, that "he and his household, or that he and all his were circumcised, would any doubt "whether his infant-children were circumcised?

I believe not:" and so do I too; but not for the reason given, which is a false one; for it never was a practice, either before or since Abraham's covenant, to receive children with their parents into a covenant-relation, if by that relation is meant relation to, and interest in the covenant of grace; but for this very good reason, because the Jews and their proselytes were commanded to circumcise their Infant-children; but God has no where commanded any to baptize their Infant-children; and therefore when households are said to be baptized, this cannot be understood of infants, and especially when those in these households are represented as hearers of the word, believers in it, and persons possessed of spiritual joy and comfort.

Seventhly, The evidence this author gives of the practice of Infant-baptism, from those that lived in the first, second, and third centuries (pp. 34-40), comes next. He produces no evidence from any writer of the first century, though there are several whose writings are extant, as Barnabas, Clemens Remanus, Hermas, Polycarp, and Ignatius. He begins with Irenæus, as he is twice called; Irenæus is meant, of whom he says, that he only mentions Infant-baptism transiently; but he does not mention it at all: it is not once mentioned in all his writings, as corrupted as they be; being some spurious, and for the most part translations, and these barbarous, and but few original pieces: the passage produced for his use, of the word regeneration for baptism, is not to the purpose; since by the command of regenerating, Christ gave to his disciples, is not meant the command of baptizing, but of teaching the doctrine of regeneration, and the necessity of it to salvation, and in order to baptism, the first and principal part of the commission of the apostles, as the order of the words shows.

The other testimony which, he says, is plain for the baptism of infants, there is not a syllable of it in it: Irenæus only says, "Christ came to save all; all I say, that "are born again unto God; infants, and little ones, and children, and young "men, and old men." Which is most true; for Christ came to save all of every age that are regenerated, and of which persons of every age are capable; but to interpret this of Christ's coming to save all that are baptized, is false; and is to make this ancient writer to speak an untruth: to prove that regeneration is used by him for baptism, a passage is produced out of Justin Martyr, said to be his contemporary, though Justin lived before him, in the middle of the second century, and should have been first mentioned; but will not serve his purpose: for Justin is speaking of the manner of adult-baptism, and not a word of infants; and of adult persons, not as regenerated by or in baptism; for he speaks of them before as converted and believers, and consequently regenerated; and their baptism is plainly distinguished from regeneration.

Of the sense of the passages of these two writers, see more in the Reply, p. 16-18. The argument from apostolic Tradition (pp. 13, 14). Antipaedobaptism (pp. 9-20). The next testimony produced is Origen,

placed in the beginning of the third century, though it was rather towards the middle of it that he wrote and flourished in, and should have been mentioned after Tertullian. The passages quoted from him are, the first out of his eighth homily on Leviticus, though the last clause in it does not belong to that, but is in the fourteenth homily on Luke, and the other is out of his epistle to the Romans: Now these are all taken out of Latin translations, full of interpolations, additions, and detractions; so that, as many learned men observe, "one knows not when he "reads Origen, and is at a loss to find Origen in Origen."

Now whereas there are genuine works of his still extant in Greek in them there is not the least hint of Infant-baptism, nor any reference to it, much less any express mention of it, not even as an apostolical tradition, as in the last passage produced; for so it should be rendered, not order, but tradition; on which I shall just observe what Bishop Taylor says: "A tradition apostolical, if it be not consigned with a fuller testimony than of one person (Origen) whom all after-ages have condemned of many errors, will obtain so little reputation among those, who know that things have, upon greater authority, pretended to derive from the apostles, and yet falsely; that it will be a great argument, that he is credulous and weak, that shall be determined by so weak a probation in a matter of so great concernment." [11] Tertullian is the next writer quoted as giving plain proof that Infant-baptism was the constant practice of the church in his day: he is the first person known to have made any mention of it; who, as soon as he did, argued against it, and dissuaded from it; and though it will be owned, that it was moved in his day, and debated; yet that it was practiced, and much less constantly practiced, has not yet been proved.

The next evidence produced is Cyprian, who lived in the middle of the third century; and it will be allowed that it was practiced in the African churches in his time, where it was first moved, and at the same time Infant-communion was practiced also; of the practice of which we have as early proof as of Infant-baptism; and this furnishes with an answer to this author's questions (p. 42). When Infant-baptism was introduced, and by whom? It was introduced at the time Infant-communion was, and by the same persons.

As for the testimonies of Ambrose, Austin, and Pelagius, they might have been spared, since they wrote in the fourth century, when it is not denied that Infant-baptism very much prevailed; of Austin, and particularly of what Pelagius says, see Argument from apostolic tradition (pp. 19-26). Antipaedobaptism (pp. 33-37). And from hence it appears, that it is not true what this author suggests (pp. 42, 52), that infant-baptism was the universal practice of the primitive churches in the three first centuries, called the purest times; when it does not appear to have been practiced at all until the third century, when sad corruptions were made in doctrine and practice.

Eighthly, This author proposes to answer some of the most material objections against Infant-baptism (p. 43), etc. as, 1. "That there is no express "command for it in scripture, and therefore unwarrantable." To which the answer is; that if there is no express command, there are virtual and implicit ones, which are of equal force with an express one, and no less than four are observed; one command is enough, this is over-doing it, and what is overdone is not well done: but let us hear them; the first is God's command to Abraham to circumcise his infant-children, which is a virtual and implicit command to believers to baptize theirs!

The reason is, because they are Abraham's spiritual seed, and heirs according to the promise; but the command to Abraham only concerned his natural, not his spiritual seed; and if there is any force in the reason given, or the command lays any obligation on the latter, their duty is not to baptize, but circumcise their children; since the sacramental rite commanded, it seems, has never been repealed, and still remains in full force. The next virtual and implicit command is in Matthew 19:14, but Christ's permission of

children to come, or to be brought unto him, there spoken of, was not for baptism, or to be baptized by him, but for him to pray for them, and touch them, in order to cure them of diseases.[12] Another implicit, if not express command, to baptize infants, is in Matthew 28:19.

This has been considered, and disproved already; (see p. 99). The fourth and last implicit command, the author mentions, is the exhortation in his text, Acts 2:38, 39, in which, as has been shown, there is not the least hint of Infant-baptism, nor anything from whence it can be concluded. This author observes, that since virtual and implicit commands are looked on as sufficient to determine our conduct in other things, then why not in this? such as keeping the first-day-sabbath, attendance on public worship, and the admission of women to the Lord's-Supper.

To which I reply, he has not proved any virtual and implicit command to baptize infants; and as to the cases mentioned, besides implications, there are plain instances in scripture of the practice of them; and let like instances of Infant-baptism be produced, and we shall think ourselves obliged to practice it. As to what this author says of an express, irrevocable command to children, to receive the seal of the covenant, and the constant practice of the church to administer the seal of it to them; if by the covenant is meant the covenant of grace, it never had any such seal as is suggested, which has been proved; nor has it any but the blood of Christ, called the blood of the everlasting covenant. 2.

Another objection to Infant-baptism is; there is no express instance in all the history of the New-Testament of an Infant-child being baptized, and therefore is without any scripture-example. To which is replied, by observing that whole households were baptized; as there were, and which have been already considered; and these were baptized, not upon the conversion of the parent, or head of the family, but upon their own faith; and so were not infants, but adult persons; though this author thinks that such accounts would easily be understood to include children, had the same been said of circumcision.

They might so, when circumcision was in force and use; for this very good reason, because there was a previous express command extant to circumcise children, when there is none to baptize infants. He further observes, that from there being no express mention of Infant-baptism in the New Testament, it should not be concluded there was none, anymore than that the churches of Antioch, Iconium, of the Romans, Galatians, Thessalonians and Colossians, were not baptized, because there is no express account of it in the history of the New Testament: but of several of those churches there is mention made of the baptism of the members of them, of the Romans, Galatians and Colossians (Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12), but what this author might imagine would press us hard, is to give a scripture-example of our own present practice.

Our present practice, agreeable to scripture-examples, is not at all concerned with the parents of those baptized by us, whether believers or unbelievers, Christians or not Christians, Jews or Heathens, this comes not into consideration; it is only concerned with the persons themselves to be baptized, what they are. It seems, if we give a scripture-example of our practice, it must be of a person born and brought up of Christian or baptized parents, that was baptized in adult years; but our present practice is not limited to such persons.

We baptize many whose parents we have no reason to believe are Christians, or are baptized persons; and be it that we baptize adult persons, who are born and brought up of Christian or baptized parents, a scripture-example of such a person might indeed be required of us with some plausible pretext, if the history of the Acts of the Apostles, which this writer says continued above thirty years, had given an

account of the yearly or of frequent additions of members to the churches mentioned in it, during that space of time; whereas that history only gives an account of the first planting of those churches, and of the baptism of those of which they first consisted; wherefore to give instances of those that were born of them, and brought up by them as baptized in adult years, cannot be reasonably required of us: But, on the other hand, if Infant-children were admitted to baptism in those times, upon the faith and baptism of their parents, and their becoming Christians; it is strange! exceeding strange! that among the many thousands that were baptized in Jerusalem, Samaria, Corinth, and other places, that there should be no one instance of any of them bringing their children with them to be baptized, and claiming the privilege of baptism for them upon their own faith, or of their doing this in any short time after; this is a case that required no length of time; and yet not a single instance can be produced. 3.

A third objection is, that "infants can receive no benefit from baptism, "because of their incapacity; and therefore are not to be baptized." To which our author answers; that they are capable of being entered into covenant with God, of the seal of the covenant, of being cleansed by the blood of Christ, and of being regenerated by his Spirit: And be it so; what of all this! as I have observed in the Reply (p. 4). Are they capable of understanding the nature, design, and use of the ordinance of baptism?

Are they capable of professing faith in Christ, which is a prerequisite to it, and of exercising it in it? Are they capable of answering a good conscience to God in it? Are they capable of submitting to it in obedience to the will of Christ, from love to him, and with a view to his glory? They are not: what benefit then can they receive by baptism? and to what purpose is it to be administered to them? If infants receive any advantage, benefit, or blessing by baptism, which our infants have not without it, let it be named, if it can; if none, why administered? why all this zeal and contention about it?

A mere noise about nothing. 4. A fourth and most common objection, it is said, is, that "faith and repentance, or a profession of them at least, are mentioned in the New Testament as the necessary prerequisites of baptism, of which children are incapable, and therefore of the ordinance itself." To this it is answered; that children are capable of the habit and principle of faith: which is not denied, nor is it in the objection; and it is granted by our author, that a profession of faith is a prerequisite to baptism in adult persons, who embrace Christianity; but when they have embraced it, and professed their faith, in the apostles times, not only themselves, but their households, and all that were theirs, were baptized.

It is very true, those professing their faith also, as did the household of the Jailor, of whom it is said, that he was believing in God with all his house: His family believed as well as he, which could not have been known, had they not professed it. The instance of a professing stranger embracing the Jewish religion, in order to his circumcision, which, when done, it was always administered to his family and children, makes nothing to the purpose; since it is no rule of procedure to us, with respect to a gospel-ordinance.

Ninthly, The performance under consideration is concluded with observing many absurdities, and much confusion, with which the denial of Infant-baptism, as a divine institution, is attended. As, 1. It is saying the covenant made with Abraham is not an everlasting one; that believers under the gospel are not Abraham's seed, and heirs of his promise; that the engrafted Gentiles do not partake of the same privileges in the church, from which the Jews were broken off; and that the privileges of the gospel-dispensation are less than those of the law: all which are said to be flat contradictions to scripture.

To all which I reply, that the covenant of grace made with, and made known to Abraham, is an everlasting covenant, and is sure to all the seed; that is, the spiritual seed; and is not at all affected by Infant-baptism,

that having no concern in it. The covenant of circumcision, though called an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:7), was only to continue unto the time of the Messiah; and is so called, just in the same sense, and for the same reason, the covenant of priesthood with Phineas has the same epithet (Num. 25:13).

Believers under the gospel are Abraham's spiritual seed, and heirs of the same promise of spiritual things; but these spiritual things, and the promise of them, do not belong to their natural seed as such; the believing Gentiles, engrafted into the gospel church-state, partake of all the privileges of it, from which the unbelieving Jews are excluded, being for their unbelief left out of that state. The privileges of the gospel-dispensation are not less, yea far greater than those of the law; to believers, who are freed from the burdensome rites and ceremonies of the law, have larger measures of grace, a clearer ministration of the gospel, and more spiritual ordinances; nor are they less to their infants, who are eased from the painful rite of circumcision, have the advantage of a Christian education, and of hearing the gospel as they grow up, in a clearer manner than under the law; which are greater privileges than the Jewish children had under the former dispensation; nor are all, nor any of these affected, or to be contradicted, by the denial of Infant-baptism. 2.

It is observed, that to deny the validity of Infant-baptism, is saying that "there was no true baptism in the church for eleven or twelve hundred years after Christ; and that the generality of the present professors of Christianity "are now a company of unbaptized heathens" (p. 52, so p. 10). To which I reply, that the true baptism continued in the church in the first two centuries; and though Infant-baptism was introduced in the third, and prevailed in the fourth, yet in both these centuries there were those that opposed it, and abode by the true baptism.

Besides, in the valleys of Piedmont, as many learned men have observed, there were witnesses from the times of the apostles, who bore their testimony against corruptions in doctrine and practice, and among whom Infant-baptism did not obtain until the sixteenth century; so that the true baptism continued in the church till that time, and it has ever since; (see the Reply, pp. 31, 32). As for the generality of the present professors of Christianity, it lies upon them to take care of their character, and remove from it what may be thought disagreeable; and clear themselves of it, by submitting to the true baptism according to the order of the gospel.

As to the salvation of persons in or out of the visible church, which is the greater number, this author speaks of, I know nothing of; salvation is not by baptism in any way, but by Christ alone. 3. It is said, if Infant-baptism is a divine institution, warranted by the word of God, then they that are baptized in their adult age necessarily renounce a divine institution, and an ordinance of Jesus Christ, and vacate the former covenant between God and them. If it be; but it is not a divine institution, nor an ordinance of Jesus Christ, as appears from all that has been said about it in the foregoing pages; wherefore it is right to renounce and reject it, as an human invention: and as for any covenant between God and them vacated thereby, it will not, it need not give the renouncers of it any concern; being what they know nothing of, and the whole a chimerical business.

Nay, it is farther observed, that renouncing Infant-baptism, and making it a nullity, is practically saying there are no baptized persons, no regular ministers, nor ordinances, in all professing churches but their own, and as elsewhere (p. 41), no gospel-church in the world; and that the administrations of the ministers of other churches are a nullity, and the promise of Christ to be with his ministers in the administration of this ordinance to the end of the world, must have failed for hundreds of years, in which Infant-baptism was practiced.

But be it so: to whom is all this owing? to whose account must it be put? to those who are the corrupters of the word and ordinances. Is it suggested by all this, that "God "in his providence would never suffer things to go such lengths?" Let it be observed, that he has given us in his word reason to expect great corruptions in doctrine and worship; and that though he will always have a seed to serve him, more or fewer, in all ages, yet he has nowhere promised that these shall be always in a regular gospel-church-state; and though he has promised his presence in his ordinances to the end of the world, it is only with those ministers and people among whom the ordinances are administered according to his word; and there was for some hundreds of years, in the darkness of popery, such a corruption in the ordinances of baptism, and the Lord's supper, in the administration of which the presence of God cannot be thought to be; nor were there any regular ministers, nor regular ordinances, nor a regular gospel-church, but what were to be found in the valleys of Piedmont; and with whom the presence of God may be supposed to be; who bore a testimony against all corruptions, and among the rest, against Infant-baptism.[13] This writer further urges, that "if Infant-baptism is a nullity, there can be now no regular baptism in the world, nor ever will be to the end of it; and so the ordinance must be lost, since adult baptism cannot be traced to the apostles times, and as now administered, is derived from those that were baptized in infancy; wherefore if Infant-baptism is invalid, that must be so too" (so in p. 42)."

To which it may be answered, that the first English Antipaedobaptists, when determined upon a reformation in this ordinance, in a consultation of theirs about it, had this difficulty started about a proper administrator to begin the work, when it was proposed to send some to foreign churches, the successors of the ancient Waldenses in France and Germany; and accordingly did send some, who being baptized, returned and baptized others: though others were of opinion this too much favored of the popish notion of an uninterrupted succession, and a right through that to administer ordinances; and therefore judged, that in an extraordinary case, as this was, to begin a reformation from a general corruption, where a baptized administrator could not be had, it might be begun by one unbaptized, otherwise qualified to preach the word and ordinances; which practice they were able to justify upon the same principles the other reformers justified theirs; who without any regard to an uninterrupted succession, let up new churches, ordained pastors, and administered ordinances.

Nor is it essential to the ordinance of baptism, that it be performed by one regularly baptized, though in ordinary cases it should; or otherwise it could never have been introduced into the world; the first administrator of it must be an unbaptized person, as John the Baptist was. All which is a sufficient answer to what this writer has advanced on this subject.[14] ENDNOTES:

[1] The Octavo Edit. he referred to all along.

[2] See the divine Right of Infant-baptism examined, etc. p. 56, etc. and the Reply, p. 43.

[3] Verse 12.

[4] See Reply. p. 44-47.

[5] See the Reply, p. 64, 65.

[6] See Jeremiah 31:33 and Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

[7] See the divine Right of Infant-baptism examined, p. 73-78, and the Reply, p. 55-58.

[8] See the Reply, page 58, 59, 62.

[9] See the Reply, p. 63, 64.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Liberty of prophesying, p. 320. See the Reply, page 19. 20. Argument from apostolic Tradition, page 16, 17. Antipaedobaptism, p. 24-29.

[12] Matthew 19:13 and Mark 10:13, of the sense of this text see the Reply, page 50-52.

[13] See Reply, p. 11, 12.

[14] See the Divine Right of Infant-baptism examined, etc. page 13-15, 8th vol. Edit.

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