

# The Argument From Apostolic Tradition, in Favor of Infant-Baptism, Considered.

by John Gill

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*The speaker argues that infant-baptism is not supported by apostolic tradition or scripture, and that we should rely on scripture rather than tradition.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19-20, John 14:6, Acts 2:38-39, 1 Corinthians 15:3, Galatians 1:8-9, Ephesians 2:8-9, Colossians 2:8, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12

**Topics:** "Authority of Scripture", "Infant Baptism"

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## Description

John Gill addresses the debate surrounding infant baptism, arguing against the reliance on apostolic tradition as a basis for the practice. He emphasizes that the arguments presented in favor of infant baptism are not new and have been previously countered, asserting that the Bible should be the sole authority for faith and practice. Gill critiques the notion of unwritten apostolic tradition, questioning its validity and consistency, and calls for a return to scriptural evidence rather than tradition. He highlights the lack of clear historical support for infant baptism in the early church and challenges the claims made by proponents of the practice. Ultimately, Gill advocates for a faith grounded in Scripture alone, rejecting any traditions that cannot be substantiated by biblical texts.

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## Transcript

The

ARGUMENT FROM APOSTOLIC TRADITION,

In Favor Of Infant Baptism

With OTHERS,

advanced in a late Pamphlet, called,

The Baptism of Infants a reasonable Service, etc. considered;

It is with reluctance I enter again into the controversy about baptism; not from any consciousness either of the badness or weakness of the cause I am engaged in; but partly on account of other work upon my hands, which I chose not to be interrupted in; and partly because I think there has been enough written

already, to bring this controversy to an issue; and it is not our fault that it has not been closed long ago; for there has been scarce any thing wrote by us these fifty years past, but in our own defense; our Paedobaptist brethren being continually the aggressors, and first movers of the controversy; they seem as if they were not satisfied with what has been done on their fide, and therefore are always attempting either to put the controversy upon a new foot, or to throw the old arguments into a new form; and even say the same things over and over again, to make their minds, and the minds of their people easy, if possible.

If persons are content to search the scriptures, and form their judgment of this matter by them, there has been enough published on both sides of the question to determine themselves by; and we are willing things should rest here: but this is our care; if we reply to what is written against us, then we are litigious persons, and lovers of controversy; though we only rise up in our own vindication, for which surely we are not to be blamed; and if we make no reply, then what is written is unanswerable by us, and we are triumphed over.

No less than half a dozen pamphlets have been published upon this subject, within a very little time; without any provocation from us., that I know of. Some of them indeed are like mushrooms, that rise up and die almost as soon as they live; it has been the luck of the pamphlet before me, to live a little longer; and which is cried up as an unanswerable one, for no other reason, that I can see, but because it has not yet been answered in form; otherwise the arguments advanced in it, have been answered before it was in being; for there is nothing new throughout the whole of it.

Is there any one argument in it, but what has been brought into the controversy before? not one. Is the date of infant-baptism, as it appears from the writings of the ancients, from antiquity, for which this performance is mostly boasted of, carried one year, one month, one day, one hour, or moment higher, than it was before? not one. Is there any one passage of the ancients cited, which has not been produced and been under consideration before? not one. What then has this Gentleman been doing? just nothing at all.

However an answer would have been made to him before this time, had not some things in providence prevented. My late worthy friend, the Reverend Mr.. Samuel Wilson, intended to have drawn up one, as he signified to me; for which reason, I did not give myself the trouble to read this pamphlet: His view was first to publish his Manual, and then to take this under consideration; but he dying before the publication of the former, prevented his design; nor did he, as I could ever find, leave any materials behind him relating to this affair.

Some time after Mr. Killingworth published an answer to Dr. Foster on the subject of communion, and added some remarks upon this pamphlet; when I ordered my Bookseller to get me that, and the strictures on it; upon reading of which, I found that Mr. Killingworth expected a formal answer to it was preparing, and would be published by a Gentleman he represents as the occasion of its being written; which for some time I have been waiting for: but hearing nothing of it, and the boasts of the party increasing, because of no answer, determined me to take it under examination in the manner I have done; but whether after all I am not too forward, I cannot tell; but if any thing is preparing or prepared by another hand, I hope what I have written will not hinder the publication of it.

Infant-baptism is sometimes put upon one footing, and sometimes on another; as on the covenant of grace; on circumcision; on the baptism of Jewish proselytes; on scripture consequences; and by our author it is rested on apostolic tradition. This he says is an argument of great weight;<sup>[1]</sup> and that it is

principally for the sake of this, that his performance appears in the world;[2] for which reason, I shall chiefly attend unto it. Whatever weight this argument may be thought to have in the present controversy, it has none in others; not in the controversy with the Papists, nor with the church of England about rites and ceremonies, this Gentleman himself being judge; who I understand is the author of The dissenting Gentleman's answer to Mr.

White's Three Letters. In his controversy with him, Christ is the only lawgiver and head of the church, and no man upon earth, or body of men, have authority to make laws, or prescribe things in religion, or to set aside, alter or new-make any terms fixed by him; and apostolical authority, or what is directed to by the apostles, as fallible and unassisted men, is no authority at all, nor obligatory as a law on men, they having no dominion over their faith and practice; and the scriptures are the only, common, sufficient and perfect rule: but in the controversy about infant-baptism, apostolic tradition is of great weight; if the dispute is about sponsors and the cross in baptism, then fathers and councils stand for nothing; and the testimonies of the ancients for these things, though clear and indubitable, and about the sense of which there is no contest, and are of as early antiquity as any thing can be produced for infant-baptism, are not allowed sufficient; but if it is about infant-baptism itself, then fathers and councils are called in, and their testimonies produced, insisted upon, and retained, though they have not one syllable of baptism in them; and have senses affixed to them, strained and forced, contrived to serve an hypothesis, and what the good old fathers never dreamed of; is this fair dealing? can this be said to be sincerity, integrity and honesty? no surely.

This Gentleman should know that we, who are called Anabaptists, are Protestants, and the Bible is our religion; and that we reject all pretended apostolic tradition, and every thing that goes under that name, not found in the Bible, as the rule of our faith and practice. The title of the pamphlet before me is, The baptism of Infants a reasonable service, founded upon Scripture, and undoubted Apostolic Tradition; but if it is founded upon scripture, then not upon tradition; and if upon tradition, then, not on scripture; if it is a scriptural business, then not a traditional one; and if a traditional one, then not a scriptural one: if it can be proved by scripture, that is enough, it has then no need of tradition; but if it cannot be proved by that, a cart-load of traditions will not support it.--This put me in mind of what I have heard, of a countryman offering to give the Judge a dozen reasons why his neighbor could not appear in court; in the first place, my Lord, says he, he is dead; that is enough, quote the Judge, I shall spare you the trouble of giving me the rest: so prove but infant-baptism by scripture, and there will be no need of the weighty arguments from tradition.

However, by putting the care as it is, we learn that this author by apostolic tradition, means unwritten apostolic tradition, since he distinguishes it from the scripture; and not apostolic tradition, delivered in the scriptures, which is the sense in which sometimes tradition is used, both in the word of God (1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Thess. 2:15), and in ancient writers.[3] So we are not at a loss about the sense of it; it is unwritten, uninspired apostolic tradition; tradition not in, but out of the scriptures; not delivered by the apostles in the sacred writings, but by word of mouth to their successors, or to the churches.

It is pretty much that infant-baptism should be called an undoubted apostolic tradition, since it has been doubted of by some learned Paedobaptists themselves; nay, some have affirmed that it is not observed by them as an apostolic tradition, particularly Curcellaeus,[4] and who gives a very good reason for it: his words are these; "Paedobaptism was unknown in the two first ages after Christ; in the third and fourth it was approved by a few; at length, in the fifth and following ages it began to obtain in divers places; and therefore this rite is indeed observed by us as an ancient custom, but not as an apostolic tradition."

Bishop Taylor[5] calls it a pretended apostolical tradition; and says, that the tradition cannot be proved to be apostolical, we have very good evidence from antiquity. Since then the Paedobaptists disagree about this point among themselves, as well as it is called in question and contested by others; one would think, this writer should not be so confident as to call it an undoubted apostolic tradition. Besides, apostolic tradition, at most and best, is a very precarious and uncertain thing, and not to be depended on; we have a famous instance of this, in the controversy that arose in the second century, about the time of keeping Easter; whether it should be observed on the 14th day of the first moon, let it fall on what day of the week it would, or on the Sunday following; the former was observed by the churches of Asia, and the latter by the church of some; both pleaded the custom and usage of their predecessors, and even ancient apostolic tradition;[6] the Asiatic churches said, they had it by tradition from Philip and John; the Roman church from Peter and Paul; but not being able to fettle this point, which was in the right, Victor, the then bishop of Rome, excommunicated the other churches that would not fall in with the practice of him and his church; this was in the year 196; and even before this, in the year 157, this same controversy was on foot; and Polycarp bishop of Smyrna, who had been a hearer and disciple of the apostle John, made a journey to some, and conversed with Anicetus bishop of that place, about this matter; they talked it over candidly, parted friendly, but without convincing each other, both retaining their former customs and tradition;[7] if now it was so difficult a thing to fix a tradition, or fettle what was an apostolic tradition, about the middle of the second century, fifty or sixty years after the death of the apostle John, and when some of the immediate successors of the apostles were living; what judgment can we form of apostolic traditions in the eighteenth century?

Moreover, it is doubtful whether there ever was any such thing as apostolic tradition; or that ever any thing was delivered by the apostles to their successors, or to the churches, to be observed by them, which was not delivered in the sacred writings; and I defy this Gentleman, and demand of him to give me one single instance of any apostolic tradition of this nature; and if no such instance can be given, it is in vain to talk of undoubted apostolic tradition; and upon what a miserable foundation must infant baptism stand, that relics upon this? unwritten apostolic tradition is a non-entity, as the learned Alting[8] calls it; it is a mere chimaera; a refuge of heretics formerly, and of papists now; a favorite argument of theirs, to prove by it what they please.

But be it so, that there is such a thing as apostolic tradition; let it be proved that infant-baptism is such; let the apostles be pointed out that delivered it. Were they all the apostles or only some of them that delivered it? let them be named who they were, and to whom they delivered it, and when, and where. The apostles Peter and Paul, who were, the one the apostle of the circumcision, and the other the apostle of the uncircumcision, one would think, should be the most likely to hand down this tradition; the one to the Christian Jews, and the other to the Christian Gentiles; or however, to their successors or companions: but is there any proof or evidence that they did so? none at all; though there are writings of persons extant that lived in their times.

If Clemens Romanus was a successor of Peter, as the papists say, it might have been expected, that it would have been delivered to him, and he would have published it; but there is not a word of it in his epistles still in being. Barnabas was a companion of the apostle Paul; and had it been a tradition of his, it might be justly thought, it would be met with in an epistle of his now extant; but there is not the least hint of it in it, but on the contrary, several passages in favor of believers-baptism.

Perhaps, as John was the last of the apostles, and outlived them all, it was left with him to transmit it to others; and had this been the care, it might have been hoped it would have been found in the writings of

Polycarp, a hearer and disciple of the apostle John; but not a syllable of it is to be found in him. Nay Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, one that was a hearer of John the elder of Ephesus, and a companion of Polycarp, and who had conversed with those who were familiar with the apostles, and made it his business to pick up sayings and facts, said or done by the apostles, not recorded in scripture, has not a word of this; which childish business would have been a very pretty thing for that weak-headed man, as Eusebius[9] represents him, to have gone prattling about with; here is an apostolic tradition then, which no body knows by whom it was delivered, nor to whom, nor when and where: the companions and successors of the apostles say nothing of it.

The[10] Jews talk of a Mosaic tradition and oral law, delivered from one to another for several thousand years running; they tell you by whom it was first given and received; and can name the persons to whom it was transmitted in succeeding ages; this is something to the purpose; this is doing business roundly; but here is a tradition no body can tell from whence it comes, nor who received it, and handed it down; for there is not the least mention of it, nor any pretended to in the first century or apostolic age.

But let us attend to what evidence is given of it, in the next or second century. Two passages are produced out of the writers of this age, to prove this undoubted apostolic tradition; the one out of Justin Martyr; the other out of Irenaeus. That from Justin is as follows:[11] "several persons among us, men and women, of sixty and seventy years of age, oi ek paidwn emaqhteughsan tw Criso, who from their childhood were instructed in Christ, remain incorrupt:" for so the phrase on which the whole depends should be rendered, and not disciplined or proselyted to Christ; which rendering of the words, as it is unjustifiable, so it would never have been thought of, had it not been to serve a turn; and is not agreeable to Justin's use of the word, who frequently makes use of it in the sense of instruction and teaching; as when he speaks of persons being maqhteughnaV , instructed into divine doctrines:[12] and of others being maqhteuomenouV , instructed in the name (person or doctrine) of Christ, and leaving the way of error:[13] and of Christ's sending his disciples to the Gentiles, who by them emaaqhteusan, instructed them:[14] nor should ek paidwn, be rendered in infancy, but from childhood; and is a phrase of the same signification with that in Timothy 3:15. where Timothy is said apo brefouV , from a child to know the holy scriptures; and Justin's sense is, that notwithstanding the strict and severe commands of Christ in Matthew 5:28, 29, 30, 44 as they might seem to be, and which he cites; yet there were several persons of the age he mentions, then living, who had been instructed in the person, offices, and doctrines of Christ, or had been trained up in the Christian religion from their childhood, who had persevered hitherto, and were incorrupt in their practices, and in their principles; and which is no other than a verification of what the wise man observes, Proverbs 22:6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it: and we are able in our day, to point out persons of an age that Justin mentions, who have been trained up in the Christian religion from their childhood; and who in riper years have made a public profession of it, and have held fast their profession without wavering, and lived unblemished lives and conversations; and yet never were baptized in their infancy. Behold, here the first proof and evidence of infant-baptism being an undoubted apostolic tradition; when there is not a word of baptism in it, much less of infant-baptism; nor any hint of it, or reference unto it.

Can the most sanguine Paedobaptist sit down, and in cool reflection conclude, upon reading and considering this passage, that it proves infant-baptism to be an undoubted apostolic tradition? surely he cannot. The other passage is out of Irenaeus, and stands thus:[15] "He (Christ) came to save all; all I say, qui per eum renascuntur in Deum, who by him are born again unto God, infants, and little ones, and

children, and young men, and old men." For so the words are to be rendered, and not baptized unto God; for the word *renascor* is never used by Irenaeus, or rather by his translator, in such a sense; nor had it as yet obtained among the ancients to use the words *regenerated* and *regeneration*, for *baptized* and *baptism*.

Likewise, it is certain that Irenaeus speaks elsewhere of regeneration as distinct from baptism, as an inward spiritual work, agreeable to the scriptures; which never speak of it but as such, no not in John 3:5, Titus 3:5. And what reason can there be to depart from the literal and scriptural sense of the word, and even the sense which Irenaeus uses it in; and especially, since infants are capable of regeneration in such a sense of it? besides, to understand Irenaeus as speaking of baptism, is to make him at least to suggest a doctrine which is absolutely false; as if Christ came to save all and only such, who are baptized unto God; when it is certain, he came to save the Old-Testament-saints, who never were baptized, as well as New-Testament saints; and no doubt many now are fared by him, who never were baptized with water at all: and on the other hand, nothing is more true than that he came to save all and only those, who are regenerated by the Spirit and grace of God, of whatsoever age they be.

And after all, when it is observed that the chapter out of which this passage is taken, is thought by some learned men to be none of Irenaeus', but a spurious piece; and if it is his, it is only a translation, as almost all his works be, and a very foolish, uncouth and barbarous one, as learned men observe; so that it is not certain that there are his words, or are a true translation of them; what wise and considerate man will say, that this is a proof of infant-baptism being an undoubted apostolic tradition? seeing the passage is so much contested, and so much is to be said against it; seeing, at most and best, the sense of it is doubtful; and seeing it is certain that Irenaeus uses the word *regeneration* in a different sense from *baptism*;<sup>[16]</sup> who can be sure he uses it of baptism here?

Upon the whole, what thoughtful man will affirm from hence, that infant-baptism is an undoubted apostolic tradition? And seeing these two testimonies are the only ones produced in favor of infant-baptism in the second century; and the latter Dr. Wall<sup>[17]</sup> confesses, "is the first express mention that we have met with of infants baptized;" though there is no mention at all made of it in it, any more than in the former; he must have a strong faith to believe, and a good assurance upon such evidence to assert,<sup>[18]</sup> "that the baptism of infants was the undoubted practice of the Christian church in its purest and first: ages; the ages immediately succeeding the apostles."

Let us now proceed to the third century. Tertullian is the first man that ever made mention of infant-baptism, that we know of; and as he was the first that spoke of it, he at the same time spoke against it, dissuaded from it, and advised to defer it; and though he was quite singular, as our author says, in this his advice; it should be observed, that he is also quite singular in his mention of the thing itself; there being no writings of any contemporary of his extant, from which we might learn their sense of this affair.

We allow that infant-baptism was moved in the third century; that it then began to be talked of, and became matter of debate, and might be practiced in the African churches, where it was first moved. We do not deny the probability of the practice of it then, though the certainty of it does not appear; it is probable it might be practiced, but it is not certain it was; as yet it has not been proved. Now here we stick, by this we abide, that there is no mention made of it in any authentic writer before Tertullian's time.

And this writer himself elsewhere<sup>[19]</sup> observes, that "by his time, it is well known, a great variety of superstitious, and ridiculous, and foolish rites were brought into the church." The date of infant-baptism

cannot, we apprehend, be carried higher than his time; and we require of any of our learned Paedobaptist brethren, to produce a single passage out of any authentic writer before Tertullian, in which infant-baptism is expressly mentioned, or clearly hinted at, or plainly supposed, or manifestly referred unto.

This being the care, as we own it began in this century, and might be practiced by some, it might be needless in a good measure to consider after-testimonies; however, I shall not think fit wholly to neglect them. Origen is next quoted, and three passages out of him; shewing that the baptism of infants is a tradition of the apostles, and an usage of the church for the remission of sins; but it should be observed, that these quotations are not from the Greek of Origen; he wrote much in that language, and there is much still extant in it; and yet nothing is produced from thence, that can fairly be construed in favor of infant-baptism; though many things may be observed from thence, in favor of adult-baptism.

The three passages are quoted out of some Latin translations, greatly interpolated, and not to be depended on. His Homilies on Leviticus, and exposition of the epistle to the Romans, out of which two of them are taken, are translated by Ruffinus; who with the former, he himself owns, he used much freedom, and added much, and took such a liberty in both of adding, taking away, and changing, that, as Erasmus says,[20] whoever reads there pieces, it is uncertain whether he reads Origen or Ruffinus; and Vossius observes,[21] that the former of these was interpolated by Ruffinus, and thinks therefore, that the passage cited was of the greater authority against the Pelagians, because Ruffinus was inclined to them.

The Homilies on Luke, out of which is the other passage, were translated by Jerom, of whom Du Pin says,[22] that "his versions are not more exact than Ruffinus's." Now both there lived at the latter end of the fourth century, and it looks very probable, that these very passages, are additions, or interpolations of these men, tinct (the color of) the language agrees with those times, and no other; for no contemporary of Origen's, nor any writer before him or after him, until the times of Ruffinus, Jerom and Austin, speak of infant-baptism as an usage of the church, or an apostolical tradition; in short, as bishop Taylor observes,[23] "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 amongst 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."

Cyprian, with his council of sixty-six bishops, are brought as witnesses of infant-baptism, a little after the middle of the third century. We allow that as infant-baptism was moved for in Tertullian's time, so it obtained in the African churches in Cyprian's time; but then by Fidus the country bishop, applying to the council to have a doubt resolved, whether it was lawful to baptize infants until they were eight days old; it appears to be a novel practice; and that as yet it was undetermined, by council or custom, when they were to be baptized, whether as soon as born, or on the eighth day, or whether it was to be left to every one's liberty: and it should also be observed, that in this age, infant communion was practiced as well as infant, baptism; and very likely both began together, as it is but reasonable, that if the one be admitted, the other should.

But of this more hereafter. The Clementine Constitutions, as they are called, are next produced, as enjoining infant-baptism; but why does this Gentleman call them the Clementine Constitutions, unless he is of opinion, and which he suggests by this title of them, that Clemens Romanus was the compiler of them from the mouths of the apostles? and if so, he might have placed the passage out of them with greater advantage, at the head of his testimonies; but he must know, that there writings are condemned as

spurious, by almost all learned men, excepting Mr.

Whiston; and were not heard of till the times of Epiphanius, in the latter end of the fourth century, if so soon: and it should be observed, that these same Constitutions, which direct to the baptizing of infants, injoin the use of godfathers in baptism; the form of renouncing the devil and all his works; the consecration of the water; trine immersion; the use of oil, and baptizing, fasting; crossing with the sign of the cross in the forehead; keeping the day of Christ's nativity, Epiphany, the Quadragesima or Lent; the feast of the passover, and the festivals of the apostles; falling on the fourth and sixth days of the week; praying for saints departed; singing for the dead, and honoring their relics; with many other things foreign enough from the simplicity of the apostolic doctrine and practice.

A testimony from such a work, can be of very little credit to the cause of infant-baptism. And now we are come to a very remarkable and decisive testimony, as it is called, from the writings of Austin and Pelagius; the sum of which is, that there being a controversy between these two persons about original sin, the latter, who denied it, was pressed by the former, with an argument taken from the baptism of infants for the remission of sins; with which Pelagius seemed exceedingly embarrassed, when it greatly concerned him to deny it if he could; and had it been an innovation, so acute, learned, and sagacious a man as he was, would have discovered it; but on the contrary, when he was charged with a denial of it as the consequence of his opinion, he warmly disclaims it, and complains of a slander; and adds, that he never heard that even any impious heretic denied it, or refused it to infants; and the same says Austin, that it never was denied by any man, catholic or heretic, and was the constant usage of the church; for all which vouchers are produced.

To which may be replied, 1. However embarrassed Pelagius might be with the argument, it did not lead to a controversy about the subject, but the end of baptism, and about the latter, and not the former was the dispute; nor was he under so great a temptation, and much less necessity, nor did it so greatly concern him to deny the baptism of infants, on account of his tenet; since he was able upon his principles to point out other ends of their baptism, than that of remission of sin; and particularly, their receiving and enjoying the kingdom of heaven; and as a late writer[24] observes, this proposition "baptism ought to be administered to children, as well as to the adult; was not inconsistent with, nor repugnant to his doctrine; for though he denied original sin, he allowed baptism to be administered even to children, but only for their sanctification." 2.

It should be known and observed, that we have no writings of Pelagius extant, at least under his name, only some passages quoted by his adversaries, by which we can judge what were his sentiments about infant-baptism; and it is well known that a man's words often are misquoted, or misunderstood, or misrepresented by an adversary; I will not say that this is the case of Pelagius; I would hope better things of his adversaries, particularly Austin, and that he has been used fairly; I am willing to allow his authorities, though it would have been a greater satisfaction to have had these things from himself, and not at second hand.

Nor, 3. Would I detract from the character of Pelagius, or call in question his acuteness, sagacity, and learning; yet two doctors of the age in which he lived, are divided about him in this respect, Austin and Jerom; the former speaks of him as a very considerable man, and of great penetration; but the latter, as if he had no genius, and but very little knowledge;[25] it must be owned, that Austin was the most candid man, and Jerom a sour one, who seldom spoke well of those he opposed, though he was a man of the greatest learning, and so the best judge of it: but however acute, learned, and sagacious Pelagius was,

yet falling in with the stream of the times, and not seeing himself concerned about the subject, but the end of baptism, might give himself no trouble to inquire into the rise of it; but take it for granted, as Austin did; who perhaps was as acute, learned and sagacious as he, that it had been the constant usage of the church, and an apostolic tradition; as he had many other things, in which he was mistaken, as will soon appear. 4.

Though Pelagius complained that he was defamed, and slandered by some who charged him with denying infant-baptism; yet this, Austin observes, was only a shift of his, in order to invert the state of the question, that he might more easily answer to what was objected to him, and preserve his own opinion. And certain it is, according to Austin;[26] that the Pelagians did deny baptism to some infants, even to the infants of believers, and that for this reason, because they were holy; what others made a reason for it, they make a reason against it. 5.

Pelagius says no such thing, that he never heard, no not even any impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants. His words indeed are[27] *nunquam se vel impium aliquem haereticum audisse, qui hoc, quod proposuit, de parvulis diceret*; that "he never heard, no not any impious heretic, that would say concerning infants, what he had proposed or mentioned:" the sense depends upon the meaning of the phrase, *quod proposuit*, "what he had proposed or mentioned," of whom, and what that is to be understood; whether of Austin, and the state of the case as proposed and set down by him; so our author seems to understand it, since by way of explanation, he adds, *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:" but this gentleman has not put it as Austin has stated it, which is thus; "it is objected to them (the Pelagians) that they will not own that unbaptized infants are liable to the condemnation of the first man; & in eos tranfisse originale peccatum regeneratiane purgandum, and that original sin has passed upon them to be cleansed by regeneration:" and according to this sense the meaning cannot be, that he never heard that any heretic denied baptism to infants; but either that he never heard that any one should say, that unbaptized infants are not liable to the condemnation of the first man, and that original sin had not passed upon them to be cleansed by regeneration; but then this is to bring the wicked heretics as witnesses against himself, and to make himself worse than they: or the meaning is, that he never heard that any of them should say, that unbaptized infants are liable to the condemnation of the first man, and that original sin has passed upon them to be cleansed by regeneration, which is most likely: but then this makes rather against, than for the thing for which it is brought; since it makes the heretic as never saying that infants flood in need of being cleansed by baptism: or else, *quod proposuit*, "what he had proposed or mentioned," refers to Pelagius, and to the state of the question as he had put it; representing that he was charged with promising the kingdom of heaven to some, without the redemption of Christ; and of this he might say, he never heard the most impious heretic to say; and this seems to be the sense by what he subjoins; "for who is so ignorant of what is read in the gospel, not only as to attempt to affirm it, but even lightly mention it, or even imagine it?"

Moreover, who so impious that would exclude infants from the kingdom of heaven, *dum eos baptizari & in Christo renasci putat?* whilst he thinks, or is of opinion that they are baptized and regenerated in Christ?" for so it is in my edition[28] of Austin; *putet*, and not *vetat*, as Dr. Wall quotes it; and after him this Gentleman: and Pelagius further adds, "who so impious as to forbid to an infant, of whatsoever age, the common redemption of mankind?" but this, Austin says, like the rest is ambiguous; what redemption he means, whether from bad to good, or from good to better: now take the words which way you will, they cannot be made to say, that he had never heard that any heretic denied baptism to infants, but that they

denied the kingdom of heaven to them; and indeed every one must: allow, whoever is of that opinion, that infants are by baptism really regenerated in Christ; which was the prevailing notion of those times, and the light in which it is put; that they must belong to the kingdom of heaven, and share in the common redemption by Christ. 6.

Austin himself does not say, that he had never heard or read of any catholic, heretic, or schismatic, that denied infant-baptism; he could never say any such thing; he must know, that Tertullian had opposed it; and he himself was at the council of Carthage, and there presided, and was at the making of that canon which runs thus; "also it is our pleasure, that whoever denies that new-born infants are to be baptized--let him be anathema:" but to what purpose was this canon made, if he and his brethren knew of none that denied infant-baptism?

To say that this respects some people, who were still of the same opinion with Fidus, an African bishop, that lived 150 years before this time, that infants were not to be baptized until they were eight days old, is an idle notion of Dr. Wall:[29] can any man in his senses think, that a council, consisting of all the bishops in Africa, should agree to anathematize their own brethren, who were in the same opinion and practice of infant-baptism with themselves; only they thought it should not be administered to them as soon as born, but at eight days old?

Credat Judaeus Apella, believe it who will; he is capable of believing any thing, that can believe this. Austin himself makes mention of some that argued against it, after this manner:[30] "men are used to ask this question, says he, of what profit is the sacrament of Christian baptism to infants, seeing when they have received it, for the most part they die before they know any thing of it?" and as before observed, he brings in the Pelagians[31] saying, that the infants of believers ought not to be baptized: and so Jerom,[32] who was a contemporary of his, speaks of some Christians, qui dare noluerint baptisma, "who refused to give baptism to their children;" so that though infant-baptism greatly obtained in those times, yet it was not so general as this author represents it.

Austin therefore could not say what he is made to say: but what then does he say, that he never remembered to have read in any catholic, heretic, or schismatic writer? why, "that infants were not to be baptized, that they might receive the remission of sins, but that they might be sanctified in Christ:" it is of this the words are spoken, which our author has quoted, but are not to be found in the place he refers to; having through inadvertence mistaken Dr. Wall, from whom I perceive he has taken this, and other things.

This, and not infant-baptism itself, was what was transiently talked of at Carthage, and cursorily heard by Austin some little time ago, when he was there: this was the novelty he was startled at, but did not think it seasonable to enter into a debate about it then, and so forgot it: for surely it will not be said, that it was the denial of infant-baptism that was defended with so much warmth against the church, as he lays this was; and was committed to memory in writing; and the brethren were obliged to ask their advice about it; and they were obliged to dispute and write against; for this would prove the very reverse of what this gentleman produces it for.

Now, though Austin could not say that he never remembered to have heard or read of any catholic, schismatic, or heretic, that denied infant-baptism; yet he might say he never remembered to have heard or read of any that owned and practiced infant-baptism, but who allowed it to be for the remission of sin; which is widely different from the former: it is one thing what Austin says, and another, what may be thought to be the consequence of his so saying; and in the same sense are we to understand him, when

he says,[33] "and this the church has always had, has always held."

What? why, that infants are diseased through Adam; and stand in need of a physician; and are brought to the church to be healed. It was the doctrine of original sin, and the baptism of infants for the remission of it, he speaks of in these passages; it is true indeed, he took infant-baptism to be an ancient and constant usage of the church. and an apostolic tradition;[34] which perhaps he had taken up from the Latin translations of Origen by Jerom and Ruffinus before-mentioned; since no other ecclesiastical writer speaks of it as such, before those times: but in this he was deceived and mistaken, as he was in other things which he took for apostolic traditions; which ought to be equally received as this, by those who are influenced by his authority; and indeed every honest man that receives infant-baptism upon the foot of tradition, ought to receive every thing else upon the same foot, of which there is equally as full, and as early, evidence of apostolic tradition, as of this: let it then be observed, 1.

That the same Austin that asserts infant-baptism to be an apostolic tradition, affirms infant-communion to be so likewise, as Bishop Taylor[35] observes; and thus Austin says,[36] "if they pay any regard to the apostolic authority, or rather to the Lord and Matter of the apostles, who says, that they have no life in themselves, unless they eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, which they cannot do unless baptized; will sometimes own that unbaptized infants have not life;"--and a little after, "no man that remembers that he is a Christian, and of the catholic faith, denies or doubts that infants, not having the grace of regeneration in Christ, and without eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, have no life in them; but are hereby liable to everlasting punishment;" by which he means the two sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper; the necessity of both which to eternal life he founded upon a mistaken sense of John 3:5 and John 6:53 as appears from what he elsewhere says:[37] where having mentioned the first of those passages, he cites the latter, and adds; "let us hear the Lord, I say, not indeed speaking this of the sacrament of the holy laver, but of the sacrament of the holy table; whither none rightly come, unless baptized.

Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, ye shall have no life in you; what do we seek for further? what can be laid in answer to this, unless one would set himself obstinately against clear and invincible truth? will any one dare to say this, that this passage does not belong to infants; and that they can have life in themselves, without partaking of his body and blood?" And of the necessity of this, as well as of baptism to eternal life, he says[38] the African Christians took to be an ancient and apostolic tradition.

Innocent the first, his contemporary, was also of the same mind; and the giving of the Eucharist to infants generally obtained; and it continued six hundred years after, until transubstantiation took place; and is continued to this day in the Greek church: and if we look back to the times before Austin, we shall find that it was not only the opinion of Cyprian, but was practiced in his time; he tells[39] a story which he himself was a witness of; how that "a little child being left in a fright by its parents with a nurse, she carried the child to the magistrates, who had it to an idol's sacrifice; where because the child could not eat flesh, they gave it bread soaked in wine: some time after, the mother had her child again; which not being able to relate to her what had passed it was brought by its parent to the place where Cyprian and the church were celebrating the Lord's-supper; and where it shrieked, and was dreadfully distressed; and when the cup was offered it in its turn by the deacon, it shut its lips against it; who forced the wine down its throat; upon which it sobbed, and threw it up again."

Now here is a plain instance of infant-communion in the third century; and we defy any one to give a more early instance, or an instance so early, of infant-baptism: it is highly probable that infant-baptism was now

practiced; and that this very child was baptized, or otherwise it would not have been admitted to the Lord's-supper; and it is reasonable to suppose, they both began together; yet no instance can be given of infant-baptism, so early as of infant-communion; wherefore whoever thinks himself obliged to receive the one upon such evidence and authority, ought to receive the other; the one has as good a claim to apostolic authority and tradition, as the other has. 2.

The sign of the cross in baptism was used by the ancients, and pleaded for as an apostolic tradition. Basil, who lived in the fourth century observes,[40] that some things they had from scripture; and others from apostolic tradition, of which he gives instances; and, says he, "because this is the first and most common, I will mention it in the first place; as that we sign with the sign of the cross those who place their hope in Christ; and then asks who taught this in scripture?"

Chrysostom, who lived in the same age, manifestly refers to it, when he says,[41] "how can you think it fitting for the minister to make the sign on its (the child's) forehead, where you have besmeared it with the dirt?" which Cyril[42] calls the royal seal upon the forehead. Cyprian in the middle of the third century relates the custom of his times;[43] "what is now also in use among us is, that those who are baptized, are offered to the governors of the church; and through our prayers and imposition of hands, they obtain the holy Spirit, and are made compleat signaculo Dominico, with the seal of the Lord:" and in another place[44] he says, "they only can escape, who are regenerated and signed with the sign of Christ."

And Tertullian, in the beginning of the same century, speaking of baptism says[45] "the flesh is washed, that the soul may be unspotted; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; caro signatur, "the flesh is signed," that the soul also may be fortified." Now this use of the cross in baptism, was as early as any instance of infant-baptism that can be produced; higher than Tertulian's time it cannot be carried: what partiality then is it, I know to whom I speak, to admit the one upon the foot of tradition, and reject the other?

The same Tertullian[46] also speaks of sponsores, sponsors, or godfathers, in baptism; which this writer himself has mentioned, and thus renders; "what occasion is there--except in cases of necessity, that the sponsors or godfathers be brought "into danger;" not to take notice of the Clementine Constitutions, as our author calls them, which enjoin the use of them; and which appear to be as early as infant-baptism itself; and indeed it is but reasonable that if infants are baptized, there should be sponsors or sureties for them. 3.

The form of "renouncing the devil and all his works," used in baptism, is also by Basil[47] represented as an apostolic tradition; for having mentioned several rites in baptism, received upon the same foot, he adds; "and the rest of what is done in baptism, as to renounce the devil and his angels, from what scripture have we it? is it not from this private and secret tradition?" Origen before the middle of the third century relates the usage of his times;[48] "let every one of the faithful remember when he first came to the waters of baptism; when he received the first seals of faith, and came to the fountain of salvation; what words there he then used; and what he denounced to the devil, non se, usurum pompis ejus, "that he would not use his pomps, nor his works, nor any of his service, nor obey his pleasures:" and Tertullian[49] before him; "when we enter into the water, we profess the faith of Christ, in the words of his law; we protest with our mouth that we renounce the devil, and his pomp, and his angels;" and in another place[50] in proof of unwritten tradition, and that it ought to be allowed of in some cases, he says; "to begin with baptism; when we come to the water, we do there, and sometimes in the congregation under the hand of the pallor, protest that we renounce the devil, and his pomp, and angels; and then we are thrice immersed;

answering something more than the Lord has enjoined in the gospel:" now this is as early as any thing can be produced in favor of infant-baptism. 4.

Exorcisms and exsuslations are represented by Austin[51] as rites in baptism, prisae traditionis, "of ancient tradition," as used by the church every where, throughout the whole world. He frequently presses the Pelagians with the argument taken from thence, and luggers, that they were pinched with it, and knew not how to answer it; he observes, that things the most impious and absurd, were the consequences of their principles, and among the rest there:[52] "that they (infants) are baptized into a Savior, but not saved; redeemed by a deliverer, but not delivered; washed in the laver of regeneration, but not washed from any thing; exorcised and exsuslated, but not freed from the power of darkness:" and elsewhere he says,[53] that "notwithstanding their craftiness, they know not what answer to make to this, that infants are exorcised and exsuslated; for this, without doubt, is done in mere show, if the devil has no power over them; but if he has power over them, and therefore are not exorcised and exsuslated in mere show, by what has the prince of sinners power over them, but by sin?"

And Gregory Nazianzen before him, as he exhorts to confession of sin in baptism, so to exorcism; "do not refuse, says he,[54] the medicine of exorcism--for that is the trial of sincerity, with respect to that grace (baptism)." And says Optatus of Milevis,[55] "every man that is born, though born of Christian parents, cannot be without the spirit of the world, which must be excluded and separated from him, before the salutary laver; this exorcism effects, by which the unclean spirit is driven away, and is caused to flee to desert places."

Cyprian, in the third century, speaking of the efficacy of baptism to destroy the power of Satan, relates what was done in his day:[56] "that by the exorcist the devil was buffeted, distressed, and tortured, with an human voice, and by a divine power." And Cornelius bishop of Rome, a contemporary of his, makes mention[57] of the same officers in the church; and this is also as early as the practice of infant-baptism. 5. Trine immersion is affirmed to be an apostolic tradition, nothing is more frequently asserted by the ancients than this.

Basil,[58] among his instances of apostolic tradition, mentions this; "now a man is thrice immersed, from whence is it derived?" his meaning is, is it from scripture or apostolic tradition? not the former, but the latter. And Jerom,[59] in a dialogue of his, makes one of the parties say after this manner, which clearly appears to be his own sense; "and many other things which by tradition are observed in the churches, have obtained the authority of a written law; as to dip the head thrice in the laver," etc.

And so Tertullian in the third century as above, in support of tradition, mentions[60] this as a common practice; "we are thrice immersed;" and elsewhere speaking[61] of the commission of Christ, he says, "he commanded them to dip into the Father, and the Son, and the holy Ghost; not into one, for not once, but thrice are we dipped, at each name, into each person;" and he is the first man that makes mention of infant-baptism, who relates this as the then usage of the church: and Sozomen[62] the historian observes, that it was said, that: "Eunomius was the first that dared to assert, that the divine baptism should be performed by one immersion; and so corrupted the apostolic tradition, which till now had been every where observed." 6.

The consecration of the water of baptism is an ancient rite, and which[63] Basil derives from apostolic tradition; "we consecrate, says he, the water of baptism, and the anointing oil, as well as the person that receives baptism, from what scripture? is it not from private and secret tradition?" by which he means

apostolic tradition, as he in the same place calls it; which was done, not only by the prayer of the administrator over the water, but by signing it with the sign of the cross; which rite was in use in the times of Austin,[64] who says, "baptism is signed with the sign of Christ, that is, the water where we are dipped;" and Ambrose, who lived in the same age, relates, that exorcism was also used in consecration: he describes the manner of it thus:[65] "why did Christ descend first, and afterwards the Spirit, seeing the form and use of baptism require, that first the font be consecrated, and then the person that is to be baptized, goes down? for where the priest first enters, he makes an exorcism, next an invocation on the creature of the water, and afterwards prays that the font may be sanctified, and the eternal Trinity be present."

Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, makes mention of this ceremony of consecrating the baptismal water; he says,[66] "the water must first be cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that it may, by his baptizing in it, wash away the sins of the man that is baptized." And Tertullian[67] before him, though he makes no difference between the water of a pool, river or fountain, Tyber or Jordan, yet supposes there is a sanctification of it through prayer; "all waters," he says, from their ancient original prerogative, (referring to Genesis 1:2) "obtain the sacrament of sanctification, Deo invocato, God being called upon;" for immediately the Spirit comes down from heaven, and rests upon the waters, sanctifying them of himself; and so being sanctified, they drink in together the sanctifying virtue."

This also is as high as the date of infant-baptism can be carried. 7. Anointing with oil at baptism, is a rite that claims apostolic tradition. Basil[68] mentions it as an instance of it, and asks; "the anointing oil, what passage in scripture teaches this?" Ausin[69] speaks of it as the common custom of the church in his time; having quoted that passage in Acts 10:38, "how God anointed him (Jesus) with the holy Ghost; adds, not truly with visible oil, but with the gift of grace, which is signified by the visible ointment, quo baptizatos ungit ecclesia, "with which the church anoints those that are baptized:" several parts of the body were wont to be anointed.

Ambrose[70] makes mention of the ointment on the head in baptism, and gives a reason for it. Cyril[71] says, the oil was exorcised, and the forehead, ear, nose and breast, were anointed with it, and observes the mystical signification of each of there; the necessity of this anointing is urged by Cyprian[72] in the third century; "he that is baptized must needs be anointed, that by receiving the chrysm, that is, the anointing, he may be the anointed of God, and have the grace of Christ."

And Tertullian, in the beginning of the same century, says,[73] as before observed, "the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated;" and in another place,[74] "when we come out of the laver, we are anointed with the blessed ointment, according to the ancient discipline, in which they used to be anointed with oil out of the horn, for the priesthood;" this was the custom used in the times of the man that first spoke of infant-baptism. 8. The giving a mixture of milk and honey to a person just baptized, is a rite that was used in the churches anciently through tradition; Jerom[75] makes mention of it, as observed upon this footing, and as an instance, among other things which obtained authority in that way: "as to dip the head thrice in the laver, and when they came out from thence, to taste of a mixture of milk and honey, to signify the new birth;" and elsewhere he says,[76] it was a custom observed in the western churches to that day, to give wine and milk to them that were regenerated in Christ.

This was in use in Tertullian's time; for, speaking of the administration of baptism, he says,[77] we come to the water--then we are thrice dipped--then being taken out from thence we taste a mixture of milk and honey; and this, as well as anointing with oil, he observes, was used by heretics themselves, for so he

says of Marcion;[78] "he does not reject the water of the creator, with which he washes his disciples; nor the oil with which he anoints his own; nor the mixture of milk and honey, by which he points them out as newborn babes;" yea, even Barnabas, a companion of the apostle Paul, is thought to refer to this practice, in an epistle of his still extant;[79] not to take notice of the white garment, and the use of the ring and kiss in baptism, in Cyprian and Tertullian's time.[80] Now these several rites and usages in baptism, claim their rise from apostolic tradition, and have equal evidence of it as infant-baptism has; they are of as early date, have the same vouchers, and more; the testimonies of them are clear and full; they universally obtained, and were practiced by the churches, throughout the whole world; and even by heretics and schismatics; and this is to be said of them, that they never were opposed by any within the time referred to, which cannot be laid of infant-baptism; for the very first man that mentions it, dissuades from it: and are there facts which could not but be publicly and perfectly known, and for which the ancient writers and fathers may be appealed to, not as reasoners and interpreters, but as historians and witnesses to public standing facts; and all the reasoning this gentleman makes use of, concerning the apostles forming the churches on one uniform plan of baptism, the nearness of infant-baptism to their times, from the testimony of the ancients, the difficulty of an innovation, and the easiness of its detection, may be applied to all and each of these rites.

Wherefore whoever receives infant-baptism upon the foot of apostolic tradition, and upon such proof and evidence as is given of it, as above, if he is an honest man; I say again, if he is an honest man, he ought to give into the practice of all those rites and usages. We do not think ourselves indeed obliged to regard these things; we know that a variety of superstitious, ridiculous, and foolish rites, were brought into the church in these times; we are not of opinion, as is suggested, that even the authority of the apostles a hundred years after their death, was sufficient to keep an innovation from entering the church, nor even whilst they were living; we are well assured, there never was such a set of impure wretches under the Christian name, so unfound in principle, and so bad in practice, as were in the apostles days, and in the ages succeeding, called the purest ages of Christianity.

We take the Bible to be the only authentic, perfect and sufficient rule of faith and practice: we allow of no other head and lawgiver but one, that is, Christ; we deny that any men, or let of men, have any power to make laws in his house, or to decree rites and ceremonies to be observed by his people, no not apostles themselves, uninspired: and this gentleman, out of this controversy, is of the same mind with us, who asserts the above things we do; and affirms, without the least hesitation, that what is "ordained by the apostles, without any precept from the Lord, or any particular direction of the holy Spirit, is not at all obligatory as a law upon the consciences of Christians;--even the apostles had no dominion over the faith and practice of Christians, but what was given them by the special presence, and Spirit of Christ, the only Lawgiver, Lord, and Sovereign of the church: they were to teach only the things which he should command them; and whatever they enjoined under the influence of that Spirit, was to be considered and obeyed as the injunctions of Christ; but if they enjoined any thing in the church, without the peculiar influence and direction of this Spirit, that is, as merely fallible and unassisted men, in that case, their injunctions had no authority over conscience; and every man's own reason had authority to examine and discuss their injunctions, as they approved themselves to his private judgment, to observe them or not: should we grant thee what you ask.--lays he to his antagonist--that the church in the present age, has the same authority and power, as the church in the apostolic age, considered, as not being under any immediate and extraordinary guidance of the holy Ghost what will you gain by it?

This same authority and power is you see, Sir, really no power nor authority at all." [81] The controversy between us and our brethren on this head, is the same as between Papists and Protestants about tradition, and between the church of England and Dissenters, about the church's power to decree rites and ceremonies namely, whether Christ is the sole head and lawgiver in his church; or whether any let of men have a power to set aside, alter, and change any laws of his, or prescribe new ones? if the latter, then we own it is all over with us, and we ought to submit, and not carry on the dispute any further: but since we both profess to make the Bible our religion, and that only the rule of our faith and practice; let us unite upon this common principle, and reject every tradition of men, and all rites and ceremonies which Christ hath not enjoined, us; let us join in pulling down this prop of Popery, and remove this scandal of the Protestant churches, I mean infant-baptism; for lure I am, so long as it is attempted to support it upon the foot of apostolic tradition, no man can write with success against the Papists, or such, who hold that the church has a power to decree rites and ceremonies.

However; if infant baptism is a tradition of the apostles, then this point must be gained, that it is not a scriptural business; for if it is of tradition, then not of scripture; who ever appeals to tradition, when a doctrine or practice can be proved by scripture? appealing to tradition, and putting it upon that foot, is giving it up as a point of scripture: I might therefore be excused from considering what this writer has advanced from scripture in favor of infant-baptism, and the rather, since there is nothing produced but what has been brought into the controversy again and again, and has been answered over and over: but perhaps this gentleman and his friends will be displeased, if I take no notice of his arguments from thence; I shall therefore just make some few remarks on them.

But before I proceed, I must congratulate my readers upon the blessed times we are fallen into! what an enlightened age! what an age of good sense do we live in! what prodigious improvement in knowledge is made! behold! tradition proved by Scripture! apostolic tradition proved by Abraham's covenant! undoubted apostolic tradition proved from writings in being hundreds of years before any of the apostles were born! all extraordinary and of the marvelous kind! but let us attend to the proof of these things.

The first argument is taken from its being an incontestable fact, that the infants of believers were received with their parents into covenant with God, in the former dispensations or ages of the church; which is a great privilege, a privilege still subsisting, and never revoked; wherefore the infants of believers, having still a right to the same privilege, in consequence have a right to baptism, which is now the only appointed token of God's covenant, and the only rite of admission into it. [82] To which I reply, that it is not an incontestable loci:, but a fact contested, that the infants of believers were with their parents taken into covenant with God, in the former dispensations and ages of the church; by which must be meant, the ages preceding the Abrahamic covenant; since that is made, to furnish out a second and distinct argument from this; and so the scriptures produced are quite impertinent (Gen. 17:7, 10-12; Deut. 29:10-12; Ezek. 16:20, 21), seeing they refer to the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensations, of which hereafter.

The first covenant made with man, was the covenant of works, with Adam before the fall, which indeed included all his posterity, but had no peculiar regard to the infants of believers; he standing as a federal head to all his feed, which no man since has ever done: and in him they all finned, were condemned, and died. This covenant, I presume this Gentleman can have no view unto: after the fall of Adam, the covenant of grace was revealed, and the way of life and salvation by the Messiah; but then this revelation was only made to Adam and Eve personally, as interested in these things, and not to their natural feed and posterity as such, as being interested in the same covenant of grace with them; for then all mankind must be taken into the covenant of grace; and if that gives a right to baptism, they have all an equal right to unto it; and

so there is nothing peculiar to the infants of believers; and of whom, there is not the least syllable mentioned throughout the whole age or dispensation of the church, reaching from Adam to Noah; a length of time almost equal to what has run out from the birth of Christ, to the present age.

The next covenant we read of, is the covenant made with Noah after the flood, which was not made with him, and his immediate offspring only; nor were they taken into covenant with him as the infants of a believer; nor had they any sacrament or rite given them as a token of Jehovah being their God, and they his children, and as standing in a peculiar relation to him; will any one dare to say this of Ham, one of the immediate sons of Noah? The covenant was made with Noah and all mankind, to the end of the world, and even with every living creature, and all the beasts of the earth, promising them security from an universal deluge, as long as the world stands; and had nothing in it peculiar to the infants of believers: and these are all the covenants the scripture makes mention of, till that made with Abraham, of which in the next argument.

This being the case, there is no room nor reason to talk of the greatness of this privilege, and of the continuance of it, and of asking when it was repealed, since it does not appear to have been a fact; nor during these ages and dispensations of the church, was there ever any sacrament, rite, or ceremony, appointed for the admission of persons adult, or infants, into covenant with God; nor was there ever any such rite in any age of the world, nor is there now: the covenant with Adam, either of works or grace, had no ceremony of this kind; there was a token, and still is, of Noah's covenant, the rainbow, but not a token or rite of admission of persons into it, but a token of the continuance and perpetuity of it in all generations: nor was circumcision a rite of admission of Abraham's seed into his covenant, as will quickly appear; nor is baptism now an initiatory rite, by which persons are admitted into the covenant.

Let this Gentleman, if he can, point out to us where it is so described; persons ought to appear to be in the covenant of grace, and partakers of the blessings of it, the Spirit of God, faith in Christ, and repentance towards God, before they are admitted to baptism. This Gentleman will find more work to support his first argument, than perhaps he was aware of; the premises being bad, the conclusion must be wrong. I proceed to, The second argument, taken from the Abrahamic

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Source:

<https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-gill/the-argument-from-apostolic-tradition-in-favor-of-infant-baptism-considered/>

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