

# The Divine Right of Infant-Baptism, Examined and Disproved.

by John Gill

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*The pamphlet argues that infant baptism is not a divine institution and has no warrant in the Bible, and that renouncing it does not affect one's place in the covenant of grace.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:19

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

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## Description

John Gill examines and disproves the notion of the divine right of infant baptism, arguing that there is no scriptural basis for the practice. He critiques a pamphlet that defends infant baptism, asserting that it is a human invention lacking divine endorsement. Gill emphasizes that true baptism, as per the scriptures, is for believers who can consciously affirm their faith, and he challenges the idea that infant baptism is necessary for covenant inclusion. He also addresses the historical context of baptism practices, highlighting the absence of infant baptism in the early church and the misinterpretation of the covenant with Abraham as a basis for it.

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## Transcript

The

DIVINE RIGHT OF INFANT BAPTISM,

Examined And Disproved;

Being an Answer to a Pamphlet, Entitled,

A brief Illustration and Confirmation of the Divine Right of Infant-Baptism.

PRINTED AT BOSTON IN NEW-ENGLAND, 1746.

CHAPTER 1.

The Introduction, observing the Author, Title, method and occasion of writing the Pamphlet under consideration.

Many being converted under the ministry of the word in New-England, and enlightened into the ordinance of believers baptism, whereby the churches of the Baptist persuasion at Boston and in that country have been much increased, has alarmed the paedobaptist ministers of that colony; who have applied to one Mr. Dickenson, a country minister, who, as my correspondent informs me, has wrote with some success against the Arminians, to write in favor of infant sprinkling; which application he thought fit to attend unto, and accordingly wrote a pamphlet on that subject; which has been printed in several places, and several thousands have been published, and great pains have been taken to spread them about, in order to hinder the growth of the Baptist interest.

This performance has been transmitted to me, with a request to take some notice of it by way of reply, which I have undertook to do. The running title of the pamphlet, is The Divine Right of Infant-Baptism; but if it is of divine right, it is of God; and if it is of God, if it is according to his mind, and is instituted and appointed by him, it must be notified somewhere or other in his word; wherefore the scriptures must be searched into, to see whether it is so, or no: and upon the most diligent search that can be made, it will be found that there is not the least mention of it in them; that there is no precept enjoining it, or directing to the observation of it; nor any instance, example, or precedent encouraging such a practice; nor any thing there laid or done, that gives any reason to believe it is the will of God that such a rite should be observed; wherefore it will appear to be entirely an human invention, and as such to be rejected.

The title-page of this work promises an Illustration and Confirmation of the said divine right; but if there is no such thing, as it is certain there is not, the author must have a very difficult task to illustrate and confirm it; how far he has succeeded in this undertaking, will be the subject of our following inquiry. The writer of the pamphlet under consideration has chose to put his thoughts together on this subject, in the form of a dialogue between a minister and one of his parishioners, or neighbors.

Every man, that engages in a controversy, may write in what form and method he will; but a by-stander will be ready to conclude, that such a way of writing is chose, that he may have the opportunity of making his antagonist speak what he pleases; and indeed he would have acted a very unwise part, had he put arguments and objections into his mouth, which he thought he could not give any tolerable answer to; but, inasmuch as he allows the person the conference is held with, to be not only a man of piety and ingenuity, but of considerable reading, he ought to have represented him throughout as answering to such a character; whereas, whatever piety is shewn in this debate, there is very little ingenuity discovered; since, for the most part, he is introduced as admitting the weak reasonings of the minister, at once, without any further controversy; or if he is allowed to attempt a defense of the cause and principles he was going over to, he is made to do it in a very mean and trifling manner; and, generally speaking, what he offers is only to lead on to the next thing that presents itself in this dispute: Had he been a man of considerable reading, or had he read Mr.

Stennett, and some others of the Antipaedobaptist authors, as is said he had, which had occasioned his doubt about his baptism, he would have known what answers and objections to have made to the minister's reasonings, and what arguments to have used in favor of adult-baptism, and against infant-sprinkling. What I complain of is, that he has not made his friend to act in character, or to answer the account he is pleased to give of him: However he has a double end in all this management; on the one hand, by representing his antagonist as a man of ingenuity and considerable reading, he would bethought to have done a very great exploit in convincing and silencing such a man, and reducing him to the acknowledgment of the truth; and, on the other hand, by making him talk so weakly, and so easily yielding to his. arguments, he has acted a wise part, and taken care not to suffer him to say such things, as he was

not able to answer; and which, as before observed, seems to be the view of writing in this dialogue-way.  
CHAPTER 2

Of the Consequences of renouncing Infant baptism.

The minister, in order to frighten his parishioner out of his principle of adult-baptism, he was inclined to, suggests terrible consequences that would follow upon it; as his renouncing his baptism in his infancy; vacating the covenant between God and him, he was brought into thereby; renouncing all other ordinances of the gospel, as the ministry of the Word, and the sacrament of the Lord's-Supper; that upon this principle, Christ, for many ages, must have forsaken his church, and not made good his promise of his presence in this ordinance; and that there could be no such thing as baptism in the world now, neither among Paedobaptists, nor Antipaedobaptists. 1st, The first dreadful consequence following upon a man's espousing the principle of believers baptism, is a renunciation of his baptism; not of the ordinance of baptism, that he cannot be laid to reject and renounce; for when he embraces the principle of adult-baptism, and acts up to it, he receives the true baptism, which the word of God warrants and directs unto, as will be seen hereafter: But it seems it is a renunciation of his baptism in his infancy; and what of that? it should be proved first, that that is baptism, and that it is good and valid, before it can be charged as an evil to renounce it; it is right to renounce that which has no warrant or foundation in the word of God: But what aggravates this supposed evil is, that in it a person in his early infancy is dedicated to God the Father, Son, and holy Ghost; it may be asked, by whom is the person in his infancy dedicated to God, when baptism is said to be administered to him?

Not by himself, for he is ignorant of the whole transaction; it must be either by the minister, or his parents: The parents indeed desire the child may be baptized, and the minister uses such a form of words, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the holy Ghost; but what dedication is here made by the one, or by the other? However, seeing there is no warrant from the word of God, either for such baptism, or dedication; a renunciation of it need not give any uneasiness to any person so baptized and dedicated. 2dly, To embrace adult-baptism, and to renounce infant-baptism, is to vacate the covenant into which a person is brought by his baptism, [page 4] by which covenant the writer of the dialogue means the covenant of grace, as appears from all his after-reasonings from thence to the right of infants to baptism. 1.

He supposes that unbaptized persons are, as to their external and visible relation, strangers to the covenants of promise; are not in covenant with God; not so much as visible Christians; but in a state of heathenism; without hope of salvation, but from the uncovenanted mercies of God, [pages 4, 5, 6]. The covenant of grace was made from everlasting; and all interested in it were in covenant with God, as early, and so previous to their baptism, as to their secret relation God-wards; but this may be thought to be sufficiently guarded against by the restriction and limitation, "as to external and visible relation:" But I ask, are not all truly penitent persons, all true believers in Christ, though not as yet baptized, in covenant with God, even as to their external and visible relation to him, which faith makes manifest?

Were not the three thousand in covenant with God visibly, when they were pricked to the heart, and repented of their sins, and gladly received the word of the gospel, promising the remission of them, though not as yet baptized? Was not the Eunuch in covenant with God? or was he in a state of heathenism, when he made that confession of his faith, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, previous to his going down into the water, and being baptized? Were the believers in Samaria, or those at Corinth, in an uncovenanted state, before the one were baptized by Philip, or the other by the apostle Paul?

Was Lydia, whole heart the Lord opened, and who attended to the things that were spoken; and the Jailer, that believed and rejoiced in God, with all his house, in an uncovenanted state, before they submitted to the ordinance of baptism? Are there not some persons, that have never been baptized, of whom there is reason to believe they have an interest in the covenant of grace? Were not the Old Testament saints in the covenant of grace, before this rite of baptism took place? Should it be said, that circumcision did that then, which baptism does now, enter persons into covenant, which equally wants proof, as this; it may be replied, that only commenced at a certain period of time; was not always in use, and belonged to a certain people only; whereas there were many before that, who were in the covenant of grace, and many after, and even at the same time it was enjoined, who yet were not circumcised; of which more hereafter: From all which it appears, how false that assertion is. 2.

That a man is brought into covenant by baptism, as this writer affirms; seeing the covenant of grace is from everlasting; and those that are put into it, were put into it so soon; and that by God himself, whole sole prerogative it is. Parents cannot enter their children into covenant, nor children themselves, nor ministers by sprinkling water upon them; it is an act of the sovereign grace of God, who says, I will be their God, and they shall be my people: The phrase of bringing into the bond of the covenant, is but once used in scripture; and then it is ascribed to God, and not to the creature; not to any act done by him, or done to him (Ezek. 20:37), and much less, 3.

Can this covenant be vacated, or made null and void, by renouncing infant-baptism: The covenant of grace is ordered in all things, and sure; its promises are Yea and Amen in Christ; its blessings are the sure mercies of David; God will not break it, and men cannot make it void; it is to everlasting, as well as from everlasting; those that are once in it can never be put out of it; nor can it be vacated by any thing done by them. This man must have a strange notion of the covenant of grace, to write after this rate; he is said to have wrote against the Arminians with some success; if he has, it must be in a different manner from this; for upon this principle, that the covenant of grace may be made null and void by an act of the creature, how will the election of God stand sure? or the promise of the covenant be sure to all the seed?

What will become of the doctrine of the faints perseverance? or of the certainty of salvation to those that are chosen, redeemed, and called? 3dly, Another consequence said to follow, on espousing the principle of adult-baptism, and renouncing that of infants, is a renouncing all other ordinances of the gospel, as the ministry of the word, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper, practically denying the influences of the Spirit in them, and all usefulness, comfort and communion by them.

All which this author endeavors to make out, by observing, that if infant-baptism is a nullity, then those, who have received no other, if ministers, have no right to administer sacred ordinances, being unbaptized; and, if private persons, they have no right to partake of the Lord's supper, for the same reason; and so all public ordinances are just such a nullity as infant-baptism; and all the influence: of the Spirit, in conversion, comfort, and communion, by them, must be practically denied, [pages 5, 6].

To which may be replied, that though upon the principle of adult-baptism, as necessary to the communion of churches, it follows, that no unbaptized person is regularly called to the preaching of the word, and administration ordinances, or can be a regular communicant; yet it does not follow, that a man that renounces infant baptism, and embraces believers baptism, must renounce all other ordinances, and look upon them just such nullities as infant-baptism is, and deny all the comfort and communion he has had in them; because the word may be truly preached, and the ordinance of the Lord's supper be duly administered, by an irregular man, and even by a wicked man; yea, may be made useful for conversion

and comfort; for the use and efficacy of the word and ordinances, do not depend upon the minister or administrator; but upon God himself, who can, and does sometimes, make use of his own word for conversion, though preached by an irregular, and even an immoral man; and of his own ordinances, for comfort, by such an one, to his people, though they may be irregular and deficient in some things, through ignorance and inadvertency. 4thly, Another consequence following upon this principle, as supposed, is, that if infant-baptism is no institution of Christ, and to be rejected, then the promise of Christ, to be with his ministers in the administration of the ordinance of baptism, to the end of the world (Matthew 28:19, 20), is not made good; since for several ages, even from the fourth to the sixteenth century, infant baptism universally obtained, [pages 6-8].

To which the following answer may be returned; That the period of time pitched upon for the prevalence of infant, baptism is very unhappy for the credit of it, both as to the beginning and end; as to the beginning of it, in the fourth century, a period in which corruption in doctrine and discipline flowed into the church, and the man of sin was ripening apace, for his appearance; and likewise as to the end, the time of the reformation, in which such abuses began to be corrected: The whole is a period of time, in which the true church of Christ began gradually to disappear, or to be hidden, and at last fled into the wilderness; where she has not been forsaken of Christ, but is, and will be, nourished, for a time, and limes, and half a time; this period includes the gross darkness of popery, and all the depths of Satan; and which to suffer was no ways contrary to the veracity of Christ, in his promise to be with his true church and faithful ministers to the end of the world.

Christ has no where promised, that his doctrines and ordinances should not be perverted; but, on the contrary, has given clear and strong intimations, that there should be a general falling-away and departure from the truth and ordinances of the gospel, to make way for the revelation of antichrist; and though it will be allowed, that during this period infant-baptism prevailed, yet it did not universally obtain. There were witnesses for adult-baptism in every age; and Christ had a church in the wilderness, in obscurity, at this time; namely, in the valleys of Piedmont; who were, from the beginning of the apostasy, and witnessed against it, and bore their testimony against infant-baptism, as will be seen hereafter, and with these his presence was; nor did he promise it to any, but in the faithful ministrations of his word and ordinances, which he has always made good; and it will lie upon this writer and his friends, to prove the gracious presence of Christ in the administration of infant-baptism. 5thly, It is said, that, upon these principles, rejecting infant-baptism, and espousing believers-baptism, it is not possible there should be any baptism at all in the world, either among Paedobaptists or Antipaedobaptists; the reason of this consequence is, because the madmen of Munster, from whom this writer dates the first opposition to infant-baptism; and the first Antipaedobaptists in England, had no other baptism than what they received in their infancy; that adult-baptism must first be administered by unbaptized persons, if infant-baptism is no ordinance of Christ, but a mere nullity; and so by such as had no claim to the gospel ministry, nor right to administer ordinances; and consequently the whole succession of the Antipaedobaptist churches must remain unbaptized to this day; and so no more baptism among them, than among the Paedobaptists, until there is a new commission from heaven, to renew and restore this ordinance, which is, at present, lost out of the world, [pages 6, 8, 9].

As for the madmen of Munster, as this writer calls them, and the rife of the Antipaedobaptists from them, and what is said of them, I shall consider in the next chapter. The English Antipaedobaptists, when they were first convinced of adult-baptism, and of the mode of administering it by immersion, and of the necessity of letting a reformation on foot in this matter, met together, and consulted about it: when they

had some difficulties thrown in their way, about a proper administrator to begin this work; some were for sending messengers to foreign churches, who were the successors, of the ancient Waldenses in France and Bohemia; and accordingly did send over some, who being baptized, returned and baptized others.

And this is a sufficient answer to all that this writer has advanced. But others thought that this was a needless scruple, and looked too much like the popish notion of an uninterrupted succession, and a right conveyed through that to administer ordinances; and therefore judged, in such a care as theirs, there being a general corruption as to this ordinance, that an unbaptized person, who appeared to be otherwise qualified to preach the word, and administer ordinances, should begin it; and justified themselves upon the same principles that other reformers did, who, without any regard to an uninterrupted succession, let up new churches, ordained pastors, and administered ordinances: It must be owned, that in ordinary cases, he ought to be baptized himself, that baptizes another, or preaches the word, or administers other ordinances; but in an extraordinary care, as this of beginning a reformation from a general corruption, where such an administrator cannot be had, it may be done; nor is it essential to the ordinance that there should be such an administrator, or otherwise it could never have been introduced into the world at all at first; the first administrator must be an unbaptized person, as John the Baptist was.

According to this man's train of reasoning, there never was, nor could be any valid baptism in the world; for John, the first administrator, being an unbaptized person, the whole succession of churches from that time to this day must remain unbaptized. It will be said, that he had a commission from heaven to begin this new ordinance; and a like one should be shewn for the restoration of it. To which I answer, that there being a plain direction for the administration of this ordinance, in the Word, there was no need of a new commission to restore it from a general corruption; it was enough for any person, sensible of the corruption, to attempt a reformation, and to administer it in the right way, who was satisfied of his call from God to preach the gospel, and administer ordinances, according to the word.

I shall close this chapter with the words of Zanchy,[1] a Protestant Divine, and a Paedobaptist, and a man of as great learning and judgment, as any among the first reformers: "It is a fifth question, he says, proposed by Augustin, [contra Parmen. 1.2. c. 13. col. 42] but not solved, whether he that never was baptized may baptize another; and of this question he says, that is, Austin, nothing is to be affirmed without the authority of a council. Nevertheless, Thomas (Aquinas) takes upon him to determine it, from an answer of Pope Nicholas, to the inquiries of the Dutch, [as it is had in Decr. de Consec. dist. 4. can. 22] where we thus read; "You say, by a certain Jew, whether a Christian or a heathen, you know not, (that is, whether baptized or unbaptized) many were baptized in your country, and you desire to know what is to be done in this care; truly if they are baptized in the name of the holy Trinity, or only in the name of Christ, they ought not to be baptized again."

And Thomas confirms the same, by a laying of Isidore, which likewise is produced in the same distinction, [can. 21] where he says, "that the Spirit of Christ ministers the grace of baptism, though he be a heathen that baptizes. Wherefore, says Thomas, if there should be two persons not yet baptized, who believe in Christ, and. They have no lawful administrator by whom they may be baptized, one may, without sin, be baptized by the other; the necessity of death obliging to it.

All this, adds Zanchy, proceeds from hence, that they thought water-baptism absolutely necessary; but what cannot be determined by the word of God, we should not dare to determine. But, says he, I will propose a question, which, I think, may be easily answered; supposing a Turk in a country where he could not easily come at Christian churches; he, by reading the New Testament, is favored with the knowledge

of Christ, and with faith; he teaches his family, and converts that to Christ, and so others likewise; the question is, whether he may baptize them whom he has converted to Christ, though he himself never was baptized with water-baptism?

I do not doubt but he may; and, on the other hand, take care that he himself be baptized, by another of them that were converted by him; the reason is, because he is a minister of the Word, extraordinarily raised up by Christ; so that such a minister may, with them, by the consent of the church, appoint a colleague, and take care that he be baptized by him." The reason which Zanchy, gives, will, I think, hold good in the case of the first Antipaedobaptists in England. CHAPTER 3.

Of the Antiquity of Infant- baptism; when first debated; and concerning the Waldenses.

The minister, in this dialogue, in order to stagger his neighbor about the principle of adult-baptism, he had espoused, suggests to him, that infant-baptism did universally obtain in the church, even from the apostles times; that undoubted evidence may be had from the ancient fathers, that it constantly obtained in the truly primitive church; and that it cannot be pretended that this practice was called in question, or made matter of debate in the church, till the madmen of Munster set themselves against it; and affirms, that the ancient Waldenses being in the constant practice of adult-baptism, is a mere imagination, a chimerical one, and to be rejected as a groundless figment, [pages 7, 9].

I. This writer intimates, that the practice of infant-baptism universally and constantly obtained in the truly primitive church. The truly primitive church is the church in the times of Christ and his apostles: The first Christian church was that at Jerusalem, which consisted of such as were made the disciples of Christ, and baptized; first made disciples by Christ, and then baptized by his apostles; for Jesus himself baptized none, only they baptized by his order (John 4:1, 2; Acts 1:15).

This church afterwards greatly increased; three thousand persons, who were pricked to the heart under Peter's ministry, repented of their sins, and joyfully received the good news of pardon and salvation by Christ, were baptized, and added to it; these were adult persons; nor do we read of any one infant being baptized, while this truly primitive church subsisted. The next Christian church was that at Samaria; for that there was a church there, is evident from Acts 9:31. This seems to have been founded by the ministry of Philip; the original members of it were men and women baptized by Philip, upon a profession of their faith in the things preached by him, concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12); nor is there the least intimation given that infant-baptism at all obtained in this church.

Another truly primitive Christian church, was the church at Philippi; the foundation of which was said in the two families of Lydia and the Jailer, and which furnish out no proof of infant-baptism obtaining here, as we shall see hereafter; for Lydia's household are called brethren, whom the apostles visited and comforted; and the Jailer's household were such as were capable of hearing the word, and who believed in Christ, and rejoiced in God as well as he (Acts 16:14, 15, 32-34, 40).

So that it does not appear that infant-baptism obtained in this church. The next Christian church we read of, and which was a truly primitive one, is the church at Corinth, and consisted of persons who, hearing the apostle Paul preach the gospel, believed in Christ, whom he preached, and were baptized (Acts 18:8): but there is no mention made of any infant being baptized, either now or hereafter, in this truly primitive church state. These are all the truly primitive churches of whole baptism we have any account in the Acts of the apostles, excepting Cornelius, and his family and friends, who very probably founded a church at Caesarea; and the twelve disciples at Ephesus, who very likely joined to the church there, and who are

both instances of adult-baptism (Acts 10:48; Acts 19:1-7).

Let it be made appear, if it can, that any one infant was ever baptized: in any of the above truly primitive churches, or in any other, during the apostolic age, either at Antioch or Thessalonica, at some, or at Colosse, or any other primitive church of those times. But though this cannot be made out from the writings of the New Testament, we are told, II. That undoubted evidence may be had from the ancient fathers, that infant-baptism constantly obtained in the truly primitive church.

Let us a little inquire into this matter: 1. The Christian writers of the first century, besides the evangelists and apostles, are Barnabas, Herman, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius and Polycarp. As to the two first of these, Barnabas and Hermas, the learned Mr. Stennett[2] has cited some passages out of them; and after him Mr. David Rees;[3] for which reason, I forbear transcribing them; which are manifest proofs of adult-baptism, and that as performed by immersion; they represent the persons baptized, the one[4] as hoping in the cross of Christ, the other[5] as having heard the word, and being willing to be baptized in the name of the Lord; and both as going down into the water, and coming up out of it.

Clemens Romanus wrote an epistle to the Corinthians, still extant; but there is not a syllable in it about infant-baptism. Ignatius wrote epistles to several churches, as well as to particular persons; but makes no mention of the practice of infant-baptism in any of them: what he lays of baptism, favors adult-baptism; since he speaks of it as attended with faith, love and patience: "Let your baptism, says he[6] remain as armor; faith as an helmet, love as a spear, and patience as whole armor."

Polycarp wrote an epistle to the Philippians, which is yet in being; but there is not one word in it about infant-baptism. So that it is so far from being true, that there is undoubted evidence from the ancient fathers, that this practice universally and constantly obtained in the truly primitive church, that there is no evidence at all that it did obtain, in any respect, in the first century, or apostolic age; and which is the only period in which the truly primitive church of Christ can be said to subsist.

There is indeed a work called The constitutions of the apostles, and sometimes the constitutions of Clemens, because he is laid to be the compiler of them; and another book of Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite, out of which, passages have been cited in favor of infant-baptism; but there are manifestly of later date than they pretend to, and were never written by the persons whose names they bear, and are condemned as spurious by learned men, and are given up as such by Dr.

Wall, in his History of Infant Baptism.[7] 2. The Christian writers of the second century, which are extant, are Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian, Minutius Felix, Irenaeus, and Clemens of Alexandria; and of all these writers, there is not one that lays any thing of infant-baptism; there is but one pretended to, and that is Irenaeus, and but a single passage out of him; and that depends upon a single word, the signification of which is doubtful at best; and besides the passage is only a translation of Irenaeus, and not expressed in his own original words; and the chapter, from whence it is taken, is by some learned men judged to be spurious; since it advances a notion inconsistent with that ancient writer, and notoriously contrary to the books of the evangelists, making Christ to live to be fifty years old, yea, to live to a senior age: The passage, produced in favor of infant-baptism, is this; speaking of Christ, he says,[8] "Sanctifying every age, by that likeness it had to him; for he came to save all by himself; 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; therefore he went through every age, and became an infant, to infants sanctifying infants; and to little ones a little one, sanctifying those: of that age; and likewise became

an example of piety, righteousness, and subjection:" Now, the question is about the word *renascuntur*, whether it is to be rendered born again, which is the literal sense of the word, or baptized; the true sense of Irenaeus seems to be this, that Christ came to fare all that are regenerated by his grace and spirit; and none but they, according to his own words (John 3:3, 5), and that by assuming human nature, and parting through the several stages of life, he has sanctified it, and let an example to men of every age.

And this now is all the evidence, the undoubted evidence of infant-baptism, from the fathers of the first two centuries; it would be easy to produce passages out of the above writers, in favor of believers-baptism; I shall only cite one out of the first of them; the account, that Justin Martyr gave to the emperor Antoninus Pius of the Christians of his day; though it has been cited by Mr. Stennett and Mr. Rees, I shall choose to transcribe it; because, as Dr. Wall says,[9] it is the most ancient account of the way of baptizing next the scripture.

"And now, says Justin,[10] we will declare after what manner, when we were renewed by Christ, we devoted ourselves unto God; lest, omitting this, we should seem to act a bad part in this declaration. As many, as are persuaded, and believe the things, taught and said by us, to be true, and promise to live according to them, are instructed to pray, and to ask, fasting, the forgiveness of their past sins of God, we praying and fasting together with them. After that, they are brought by us where water is, and they are regenerated in the same way of regeneration, as we have been regenerated; for they are then washed in water, in the name of the Father and Lord God of all, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the holy Spirit."

There is a work, which bears the name of Justin, called *Answers to the orthodox*, concerning some necessary questions; to which we are sometimes referred for a proof of infant-baptism; but the book is spurious, and none of Justin's, as many learned men have observed; and as Dr. Wall allows; and is thought not to have been written before the fifth century. So stands the evidence for infant-baptism, from the ancient fathers of the first two centuries. 3. As to the third century, it will be allowed, that it was spoken of in it; though as soon as it was mentioned, it was opposed; and the very first man that mentions it, speaks against it; namely, Tertullian.

The truth of the matter is, that infant-baptism was moved for in the third century; got footing and establishment in the fourth and fifth; and so prevailed until the time of the reformation: Though, throughout these several centuries, there were testimonies bore to adult-baptism; and at several times, certain persons rose up, and opposed infant-baptism; which brings me, III. To consider what our author affirms, that it cannot be pretended that this practice was called in question, or made matter of debate in the church, until the madmen of Munster let themselves against it, [page 7].

Let us examine this matter, and, 1. It should be observed, that the disturbances in Germany, which our Paedobaptist writers so often refer to in this controversy about baptism, and so frequently reproach us with, were first begun in the wars of the boors, by such as were Paedobaptists, and them only; first by the Papists, some few years before the reformation; and after that, both by Lutherans and Papists, on account of civil liberties; among whom, in process of time, some few of the people called Anabaptists mingled themselves; a people that scarce in any thing agree with us, neither in their civil, nor religious principles; nor even in baptism itself; for if we can depend on those that wrote the history of them, and against them; they were for repeating adult-baptism, not performed among them; yea, that which was administered among themselves, when they removed their communion to another society; nay, even in the same community, when an excommunicated person was received again;[11] besides, if what is reported of them

is true, as it may be, their baptism was performed by sprinkling, which we cannot allow to be true baptism; it is laid, that when a community of them was satisfied with the person's faith and conversation, who proposed for baptism, the payor took water into his hand, and sprinkled it on the head of him that was to be baptized, using these words, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the holy Ghost:[12] And even the disturbances in Munster, a famous city in Westphalia, were first begun by Bernard Rotman, a Paedobaptism minister of the Lutheran persuasion, assisted by other ministers of the reformation, in opposition to the Papists in the year 1532; and it was not till the year 1533, that John Matthias of Harlem, and John Bocolodus of Leyden came to this place:[13] who, with Knipperdolling and others, are, I suppose, the madmen of Munster this writer means; and he may call them madmen, if he pleases; I shall not contend with him about it; they were mad notions which they held, and mad actions they performed; and both dip avowed by the people who are now called Anabaptists; though it is not reasonable to suppose, that there were the only men concerned in that affair, or that the number of their followers should increase to such a degree in so small a time, as to make such a revolution in so large a city: However, certain it is, that it was not their principle about baptism, that led them into such extravagant notion, and actions: But what I take notice of all this for, is chiefly to observe the date of the confusions and distractions, in which these madmen were concerned; which were from the year 1533 to 1536: And our next inquiry therefore is, whether there was any debate about the practice of infant-baptism before this time.

And, 2. It will appear, that it was frequently debated, before these men set themselves against it, or acted the mad part they did: In the years 1532 and 1528, there were public disputations at Berne in Switzerland, between the ministers of the church there and some Anabaptist teacher:[14] in the years 1529, 1527 and 1525, Oecolampadius had various disputes with people of this name at Basil in the same country:[15] in the year 1525, there was a dispute at Zurich in the same country about Paedobaptism, between Zwinglius, one of the first reformers, and Balthasar Hubmeierus,[16] who afterwards was burnt, and his wife drowned at Vima, in the year 1528; of whom Meshovius,[17] though a Papist, give, this character; that he was from his childhood brought up in learning; and for his singular erudition was honored with a degree in divinity; was a very eloquent man, and read in the scriptures, and fathers of the church.

Hoornbeck[18] calls him a famous and eloquent preacher, and lays he was the first of the reformed preachers at Waldshut: There were several disputations with other, in the same year at this place; upon which an edict was made by the senate at Zurich, forbidding rebaptization, under the penalty of being fined a silver mark, and of being imprisoned, and even drowned, according to the nature of the offense. And in the year 1526, or 1527, according to Hoornbeck, Felix Mans, or Mentz, was drowned at Zurich; this man, Meshovius says,[19] whom he calls Felix Mantscher, was of a noble family; and both he, and Conrad Grebel, whom he calls Cunrad Grebbe, who are said to give the first rise to Anabaptism at Zurich, were very learned men, and well skilled in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages.

And the same writer affirms, that Anabaptism was set on foot at Wittenberg, in the year 1522, by Nicholas Pelargus, or Stork, who had companions with him of very great learning, as Carolostadius, Philip Melancthon, and others; this, he says, was done, whilst Luther was lurking as an exile in the cable of Wartpurg in Thuringia; and that when he returned from thence to Wittenberg he banished Carolostadius, Pelargus, More, Didymus, and others,[20] and only received Melancthon again.

This carries the opposition to Paedobaptism within five years of the reformation, begun by Luther; and certain it is, there were many and great debates about infant-baptism at the first of the reformation, years before the affair of Munster: And evident it is, that some of the first reformers were inclined to have

attempted a reformation in this ordinance, though they, for reasons best known to themselves, dropped it; and even Zwinglius himself, who was a bitter persecutor of the people called Anabaptists afterwards, was once of the same mind himself, and against Paedobaptism.

But, 3. It will appear, that this was a matter of debate, and was opposed before the time of the reformation. There was a set of people in Bohemia, near a hundred years before that, who appear to be of the same persuasion with the people, called Anabaptists; for in a letter, written by Costelecicus out of Bohemia to Erasmus, dated October 10, 1519,[21] among other things said of them, which agree with the said people, this is one; "such as come over to their sect, must every one be baptized anew in meer water;" the writer of the letter calls them Pyghards; so named, he says, from a certain refugee, that came thither ninety-seven years before the date of the letter.

Pope Innocent the third, under whom was the Lateran council, A.D. 1215, has, in the decretals, a letter, in answer to a letter from the bishop of Arles in Provence, which had represented to him,[22] that "some Heretics there had taught, that it was to no purpose to baptize children, since they could have no forgiveness of sins thereby, as having no faith, charity, etc." So that it is a clear point, that there were some that let themselves against infant-baptism in the thirteenth century, three hundred years before the reformation; yea, in the twelfth century there were some that opposed Paedobaptism.

Mr. Fax, the martyrologist, relates from the history of Robert Guisburne,[23] that two men, Gerhardus and Dulcinus, in the reign of Henry the second, about the year of our Lord 1158; who, he supposes, had received some light of knowledge of the Waldenses, brought thirty with them into England; who, by the king and the prelates, were all burnt in the forehead, and so driven out of the realm; and after were slain by the Pope. Rapin[24] calls them German Heretics, and places their coming into England at the year 1166: But William of Newbury[25] calls them Publicans, and only mentions Gerhardus, as at the head of them; and whom he allows to be somewhat learned, but all the rest very illiterate, and says they came from Gascoigne; and being convened before a council, held at Oxford for that purpose, and interrogated concerning articles of faith, said perverse things concerning the divine sacraments, detesting holy baptism, the Eucharist and marriage: And his annotator, out of a manuscript of Radulph Picardus, the monk, shews, that the Heretics, called Publicans, affirm, that we must not pray for the dead; that the suffrages of the saints were not to be asked; that they believe not purgatory; with many other things; and particularly, afferunt isti parvulos non baptisandos donec ad intelligibilem perveniant etatem; "they assert that infants are not to be baptized, till they come to the age of understanding." [26] In the year 1147, St Bernard wrote a letter to the earl of St Gyles, complaining of his harboring Henry, an Heretic; and among other things he is charged with by him, are there; "the infants of Christians are hindered from the life of Christ, the grace of baptism being denied them; nor are they suffered to come to their salvation, though our Savior compassionately cries out in their behalf, Suffer little children to come unto me, etc." and, about the same time, writing upon the Canticles, in his 65th and 66th sermons, he takes notice of a sort of people, he calls Apostolici; and who, perhaps, were the followers of Henry; who, says he, laugh at us for baptizing infants; [27] and among the tenets which he ascribes to them, and attempts to confute, this is the first, "Infants are not to be baptized:" In opposition to which, he affirms, that infants are to be baptized in the faith of the church; and endeavors, by instances, to show, that the faith of one is profitable to others; [28] which he attempts from Matthew 9:2 and Matthew 15:28; 1 Timothy 2:15.

In the year 1146, Peter Buis, and Henry his follower, set themselves against infant-baptism. Petrus Cluniacensis, or Peter the Abbot of Clugny, wrote against them; and among other errors he imputes to them, are there: "That infants are not baptized, or saved by the faith of another, but ought to be baptized

and saved by their own faith; or, that baptism without their own faith does not save; and that those, that are baptized in infancy, when grown up, should be baptized again; nor are they then rebaptized, but rather rightly baptized:"[29] And that there men did deny infant-baptism, and pleaded for adult-baptism, Mr.

Stennett[30] has proved from Cassander and Prateolus, both Paedobaptists: And Dr. Wall[31] allows these two men to be Antipaedobaptists; and says, they were "the first Antipaedobaptist preachers that ever let up a church, or society of men, holding that opinion against infant-baptism, and rebaptizing such as had been baptized in infancy;" and who also observes,[32] that the Lateran[33] council, under Innocent the II, 1139, did condemn Peter Bruis, and Arnold of Brescia, who seems to have been a follower of Bruis, for rejecting infant-baptism: Moreover, in the year 1140, or a little before it, Evervinus, of the diocese of Cologne, wrote a letter to St Bernard; in which he gives him an account of some heretics, lately discovered in that country; of whom he says, "they condemn the sacraments, except baptism only; and this only in those who are come to age; who, they say, are baptized by Christ himself whoever be the minister of the sacraments; they do not believe infant-baptism; alleging that place of the gospel, he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved."[34] There seem also to be the disciples of Peter Bruis, who began to preach about the year 1126; so that it is out of all doubt, that this was a matter of debate, four hundred years before the madmen of Munster let themselves against it: And a hundred years before there, there were two men, Bruno, bishop of Angiers, and Berengarius, archdeacon of the same church, who began to spread their particular notions about the year 1035; which chiefly respected the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's-Supper.

What they said about the former, may be learned from the letter sent by Deodwinus, bishop of Liege, to Henry I. King of France; in which are the following words:[35] "There is a report come out of France, and which goes through all Germany, that there two (Bruno and Berengarius) do maintain, that the Lord's body (the Host) is not the body, but a shadow and figure of the Lord's body; and that they do disannul lawful marriages; and, as far as in them lies, overthrow the baptism of infants:" And from Guimundus, bishop of Aversa, who wrote against Berengarius, who says, "that he did not teach rightly concerning the baptism of infants, and concerning marriage."[36] Mr.

Stennett[37] relates from Dr. Allix, a passage concerning one Gundulphus and his followers, in Italy; divers of whom, Gerard, bishop of Cambray and Arras, interrogated upon several heads in the year 1025. And, among other things, that bishop mentions the following reason, which they gave against infant-baptism; "because to an infant, that neither wills, nor runs, that knows nothing of faith, is ignorant of its own salvation and welfare; in whom there can be no desire of regeneration, or confession; the will, faith and confession of another seem not in the least to appertain."

Dr. Wall, indeed, represents these men, the disciples of Gundulphus, as Quakers and Manichees in the point of baptism; holding that water-baptism is of no use to any: But it must be affirmed, whatever their principles were, that their argument against infant-baptism was very strong. So then we have testimonies, that Paedobaptism was opposed five hundred years before the affair of Munster. And if the Pelagians, Donatists, and Luciferians, so called from Lucifer Calaritanus, a very orthodox man, and a great opposer of the Arians, were against infant-baptism, as several Paedobaptist writers affirm; this carries the opposition to it still higher; and indeed it may seem strange, that since it had not its establishment till the times of Austin, that there should be none to let themselves against it: And if there were none, how comes it to pass that such a canon should be made in the Milevitan council, under pope Innocent the first, according to Carranza;[38] and in the year 402, as say the Magdeburgensian centuriators;[39] or be it in the council at Carthage, in the year 418, as says Dr.

Wall[40] which runs thus, "Also, it is our pleasure, that whoever denies that new-born infants are to be baptized; or says, they are indeed to be baptized for the remission of sins; and yet they derive no original sin from Adam to be expiated by the washing of regeneration; (from whence it follows, that the form of baptism for the forgiveness of sins in them, cannot be understood to be true, but false) let him be anathema:" But if there were none, that opposed the baptism of new-born infants, why should the first part of this canon be made, and an anathema annexed to it?

To say, that it respected a notion of a single person in Cyprian's time, 150 years before this, that infants were not to be baptized, until eight days old; and that it seems there were some people still of this opinion, wants proof. But however certain it is, that Tertullian[41] in the beginning of the third century, opposed the baptism of infants, and dissuaded from it, who is the first writer that makes mention of it: So it appears, that as soon as ever it was set on foot, it became matter of debate; and sooner than this, it could not be: And this was thirteen hundred years before the madmen of Munster appeared in the world.

But, IV. Let us next consider the practice of the ancient Waldenses, with respect to adult-baptism, which this author affirms to be a chimerical imagination, and groundless figment. It should be observed, that the people called Waldenses, or the Vaudois, inhabiting the valleys of Piedmont, have gone under different names, taken from their principal leaders and teachers; and so this of the Waldenses, from Peter Waldo, one of their barbs, or pastors; though some think, this name is only a corruption of Vallenses, the inhabitants of the valleys: And certain it is, there was a people there before the times of Waldo, and even from the apostles time, that held the pure evangelic truths, and bore a testimony to them in all ages,[42] and throughout the dark times of popery, as many learned men have observed; and the sense of there people concerning baptism may be best understood, 1.

By what their ancient barbs or pastors taught concerning it. Peter Bruis, and Henry his successor, were both, as Morland affirms,[43] their ancient barbs and pastors; and from them there people were called Petrobrussians and Henricians; and we have seen already, that there two men were Antipaedobaptists, denied infant-baptism, and pleaded for adult-baptism. Arnoldus of Brixia, or Brescia, was another of their barbs, and is the first mentioned by Morland, from whom there people were called Arnoldists.

Of this man Dr. Allix says,[44] that besides being charged with some ill opinions, it was said of him, that he was not found in his sentiments concerning the sacraments of the altar and the baptism of infants; and Dr. Wall allows,[45] that the Lateran council, under Innocent the second, in 1139, did condemn Peter Bruis, and Arnold of Brescia, who seems to have been a follower of Bruis, for rejecting infant-baptism, Lollardo was another of their barbs, who, as Morland says, was in great reputation with them, for having conveyed the knowledge of their doctrine into England, where his disciples were known by the name of Lollards; who were charged with holding, that the sacrament of baptism used in the church by water, is but a light matter, and of small effect; that Christian people be sufficiently baptized in the blood of Christ, and need no water; and that infants be sufficiently baptized, if their parents be baptized before them:[46] All which seem to arise from their denying of infant baptism, and the efficacy of it to take away sin. 2.

By their ancient confessions of faith, and other writings which have been published. In one of there, bearing date A.D. 1120, the 12th and 13th articles run thus:[47] "We do believe that the sacraments are signs of the holy thing, or visible forms of the invisible grace; accounting it good that the faithful sometimes use the said signs, or visible forms, if it may be done. However we believe and hold, that the above said faithful may be saved without receiving the signs aforesaid, in case they have no place, nor any means to use them.

We acknowledge no other sacrament but baptism and the Lord's-Supper." And in another ancient confession, without a date, the 7th article is:[48] "We believe that in the sacrament of baptism, water is the visible and external sign, which represents unto us that which (by the invisible virtue of God operating) is within us; namely, the renovation of the Spirit, and the mortification of our members in Jesus Christ; by which also we are received into the holy congregation of the people of God, there protesting and declaring openly our faith and amendment of life."

In a tract,[49] written in the language of the ancient inhabitants of the valleys, in the year 1100, called The Noble Lesson, are these words; speaking of the apostles, it is observed of them, "they spoke without fear of the doctrine of Christ; they preached to Jews and Greeks, working many miracles, and those that believed they baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." And in a treatise concerning Antichrist, which contains many sermons of the barbs, collected in the year 1120, and so speaks the sense of their ancient pastors before this time, stands the, following passage:[50] "The third work of antichrist consists in this, that he attributes the regeneration of the holy Spirit, unto the dead outward work (or faith) baptizing children in that faith, and teaching, that thereby baptism and regeneration must be had, and therein he confers and bestows orders and other sacraments, and groundeth therein all his Christianity, which is against the Holy Spirit."

There are indeed two confessions of theirs, which are said to speak of infant-baptism; but there are of a late date, both of them in the sixteenth century; and the earliest: is not a confession of the Waldenses or Vaudois in the valleys of Piedmont, but of the Bohemians, said to be presented to Ladislaus king of Bohemia, A.D. 1508, and afterwards amplified and explained, and presented to Ferdinand king of Bohemia, A.D. 1535; and it should be observed, that those people say, that they were fairly called Waldenses:[51] whereas it is certain there were a people in Bohemia that came out of the valleys, and sprung from the old Waldenses, and were truly so, who denied infant-baptism, as that sort of them called Pyghards, or Picards; who, near a hundred years before the reformation, as we have seen by the letter sent to Erasmus out of Bohemia, rebaptized persons that joined in communion with them; and Scultetus,[52] in his annals on the year 1528, says, that the united brethren in Bohemia, and other godly persons of that time, were rebaptized; not that they patronized the errors of the Anabaptist's, (meaning such that they were charged with which had no relation to baptism) but because they could not see how they could otherwise separate themselves from an unclean world.

The other confession is indeed made by the ministers and heads of the churches in the valleys, assembled in Angrogne, September 12, 1532.[53] Now it should be known, that this was made after that "Peter Masson and George Morell were sent into Germany in the year 1530, as Morland[54] says, to treat with the chief ministers of Germany, namely, Oecolampadius, Bucer, and others, touching the reformation of their churches; but Peter Masson was taken prisoner at Dijon." However, as Fox says[55] "Morell escaped, and returned alone to Merindol, with the books and letters he brought with him from the churches of Germany; and declared to his brethren all the points of his commission; and opened unto them how many and great errors they were in; into the which their old ministers, whom they called Barbs, that is to say Uncles, had brought them, leading them from the right way of true religion."

After which, this confession was drawn up, signed, and sworn to: From hence we learn, where they might get this notion, which was now become matter of great debate in Switzerland and Germany; and yet, after all this, I am inclined to think, that the words of the article in the said confession, are to be so understood, as not to relate to infant-baptism: They are these:[56] "We have but two sacramental signs left us by Jesus Christ; the one is baptism; the other is the Eucharist, which we receive, to shew that our perseverance in

the faith, is such, as we promised, when we were baptized, being little children."

This phrase, being little children, as I think, means, their being little children in knowledge and experience, when they were baptized; since they speak of their receiving the Eucharist, to shew their perseverance in the faith, they then had promised to persevere in: Besides, if this is to be understood of them, as infants in a literal sense; what promise were they capable of making, when such? Should it be said, that "they promised by "their sureties;" it should be observed, that the Waldenses did not admit of godfathers and godmothers in baptism; this is one of the abuses their ancient Barbs complained of in baptism, as administered by the Papists.[57] Besides, in a brief confession of faith, published by the reformed churches of Piedmont, so late as A.D. 1655, they have these words in favor of adult-baptism;[58] "that God does not only instruct and teach us by his word, but has also ordained certain sacraments to be joined with it, as a means to unite us unto Christ, and to make us partakers of his benefits.

And there are only two of them belonging in common to all the members of the church under the New Testament; to wit, baptism and the Lord's-Supper; that God has ordained the sacrament of baptism to be a testimony of our adoption, and of our being cleansed from our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ, and renewed in holiness of life:" Nor is there one word in it of infant-baptism. Upon the whole, it will be easily seen, what little reason the writer of the dialogue under consideration had to say, that the ancient Waldenses, being in the constant practice of adult-baptism, is a chimerical imagination, and a groundless fiction; since there is nothing appears to the contrary, but that they were in the practice of it until the sixteenth century; for what is urged against it, is since that time: And even at that time, there were some, that continued in the practice of it; for Ludovicus Vives, who wrote in the said century, having observed, that "formerly no person was brought to the holy baptistery, till he was of adult age, and when he both understood what that mythical water meant, and desired to be washed in it, yea, desired it more than once," adds the following words; "I hear, in some cities of Italy, the old custom is still in a great measure preferred." [59] Now, what people should he mean by some cities of Italy, unless the remainders of the Petrobrussians, or Waldenses, as Dr.

Wall observes,[60] who continued that practice in the valleys of Piedmont: And it should be observed, that there were different sects, that went by the name of Waldenses, and some of them of very bad principles; some of them were Manichees, and held other errors: And indeed, it was usual for the Papists in former times, to call all by this name, that dissented from them; so that it need not be wondered at, if some, bearing this name, were for infant-baptism, and others not. The Vaudois in the valleys, are the people chiefly to be regarded; and it will not be denied, that of late years infant-baptism has obtained among them: But that the ancient Waldenses practiced it, wants proof. CHAPTER 4.

The Argument for Infant-baptism, taken from the Covenant made with Abraham, and from Circumcision, the Sign of it, considered.

The minister in this debate, in answer to his neighbor's requiring a plain scripture institution of infant-baptism, tells him; if he would "consider the covenant of grace, which was made with Abraham, and with all his seed, both after the flesh, and after the Spirit, and by God's express command to be sealed to infants, he would there find a sufficient scripture instance for infant-baptism:" And for this covenant he directs him to Genesis 17:2, 4, 7, 10, 12. He argues, that this covenant was a covenant of grace; that it was made with all Abraham's seed, natural and spiritual, Jews and Gentiles; that circumcision was the seal of it; and that the same institution, which requires circumcision to be administered to infants, requires baptism to be also administered to them, that succeeding circumcision, [page 10-18].

Wherefore, First, The leading inquiry is, whether the covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 17), was the covenant of grace; that is, the pure covenant of grace, in distinction from the covenant of works; which is the sense in which it is commonly understood, and in which this writer seems to understand this covenant with Abraham; for of it, he says [p. 13], "it was the covenant of grace, that covenant by which alone we can have any grounded hope of salvation:" But that it was the covenant of grace, or a pure covenant of grace, must be denied: For, 1.

It is never called the covenant of grace, nor by any name which shews it to be so; it is called the covenant of circumcision, which God is said to give to Abraham (Acts 7:8) but not a covenant of grace; circumcision and grace are opposed to one another; circumcision is a work of the law, which they that sought to be justified by, fell from grace (Gal. 5:2-4). 2. It seems rather to be a covenant of works, than of grace; for this was a covenant to be kept by men. Abraham was to keep it, and his seed after him were to keep it; something was to be done by them; they were to circumcise their flesh; and not only he and his seed were to be circumcised, but all that were born in his house, or bought with his money; and a severe penalty was annexed to it: In care of neglect, or disobedience, such a soul was to "be cut off from his people" (Gen. 17:9-14).

All which favor nothing of a covenant of grace, a covenant by which we can have a grounded hope of salvation, but the contrary. 3. This was a covenant that might be broken, and in some instances was (Gen. 17:14); but the covenant of grace cannot be broken; God will not break it (Ps. 89:34), nor man cannot: It is a covenant ordered in all things, and sure; it cannot be moved; it stands firmer than hills, or mountains. 4. It must be owned, that there were temporal things promised in this covenant, such as a multiplication of Abraham's natural seed; a race of kings from him, with many nations, and a possession of the land of Canaan (Gen. 17:6, 8).

Things which can have nothing to do with the pure covenant of grace, any more than the change of his name from Abram to Abraham [v. 5]. 5. There were some persons, included in this covenant made with Abraham, of whom it cannot be thought they were in the covenant of grace, as Ishmael, Esau, and others; and on the other hand, there were some, and even living at the time when this covenant was made, and yet were not in it; who, nevertheless, were in the covenant of grace, as Arphaxad, Melchizedek, Lot, and others; wherefore this can never be reckoned the pure covenant of grace. 6.

The covenant of grace was only made with Christ, as the federal head of it; and who is the only head of the covenant, and of the covenant-ones; wherefore, if the covenant of grace was made with Abraham, as the federal head of his natural and spiritual seed, of Jews and Gentiles; then there must be two heads of the covenant of grace, contrary to the nature of such a covenant, and the whole current of scripture: Yea, this covenant of Abraham's, so far as it respected his spiritual seed, or spiritual blessings for them, it and the promises were made to Christ (Gal. 3:16).

No mere man is capable of covenanting with God, of stipulation and restipulation; for what has man to restipulate with God? The covenant of grace is not made with any single man; and much less with him on the behalf of others: When, therefore, at any time we read of the covenant of grace, being made with a particular person, or with particular persons, it must always be understood of making it manifest to them; of a revelation of the covenant, and of an application of covenant-blessings to them; and not of any original contract with them; for that is only made with them in Christ.

To which may be added, 7. That the covenant of grace was made with Christ, and with his people, as considered in him, from everlasting; for so early was Christ set up as the mediator of it; the promise of eternal life in it was before the world was; and those interested in it, were blessed with all spiritual blessings and grace before the foundation of it; now could there be a mediator so early, a promise of eternal life so soon, and blessings of grace provided, and no covenant subsisting? wherefore the covenant made with Abraham in time, could not, strictly and properly speaking, be the covenant of grace.

But, 8. To shorten this debate, it will be allowed, that the covenant made with Abraham was a peculiar covenant, such as was never made with any before, or since; that it was of a mixed kind; that it had in it promises and mercies of a temporal nature, which belonged to his natural seed; and others of a spiritual sort, which belonged to his spiritual seed: The former are more numerous, clear, and distinct; the latter are comprised chiefly in Abraham's being the father of many nations, or of all, that believe, and in God being a God to him and them (Rom. 4:11, 12, 16, 17).

Which observation makes way for the next inquiry, Secondly, With whom this covenant was made, so far as it respected spiritual things, or was a revelation of the covenant of grace; as for the temporal things of this covenant, it does not concern the argument. It is allowed on all hands, that they belonged to Abraham, and his natural seed: But the question is, whether this covenant, so far as it may be reckoned a covenant of grace, or a revelation of it, or respected spiritual things, was made with all Abraham's seed after the flesh, and with all the natural seed of believing Gentiles?

This question consists of two parts, 1st, Whether the covenant made with Abraham, so far as it was a covenant of grace, was made with all Abraham's seed, according to the flesh? Which must be answered in the negative. For, 1. If it was made with all the natural seed of Abraham, as such, it must be with his more immediate offspring; and so must be equally made with a mocking and persecuting Ishmael, born after the flesh, the son of the bond-woman

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-gill/the-divine-right-of-infant-baptism-examined-and-disproved/>

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