



Contending for Truth in Love

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- *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism*. By Pierre Ch. Marcel. Translated from the French by Philip Edgcumbe Hughes. London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1959, 256 pp.
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The Founders Journal

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Contending for Truth in Love

Tom Ascol

One of the most poignant scenes of the Protestant Reformation comes from the Marburg Colloquy in 1529. The conference was convened in hopes that it might unite what was becoming an increasingly fragmented Protestant movement. In Zurich, the Swiss Brethren (later to be known as Anabaptists) had become convinced of believers' baptism and fully separated from the Protestant movement led by Zwingli. In Switzerland and beyond Protestants began to further divide along what came to be called "Lutheran" and "Reformed" lines.

One of the key issues of contention was the nature of the Lord's supper, specifically, the nature of Christ's presence in the supper. All of the reformers were united in the rejection of the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation. Decreed at the Council of Trent and based on Aristotelian metaphysics, Roman Catholic doctrine asserts that when the priest consecrates the elements the substance of the bread and wine is changed into Christ's flesh and blood, respectively. These elements, which do not change their "accidents" (ie. their form, shape, texture or taste) are then offered as a repetitive bloodless sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ.

The reformers rejected this notion and argued that the supper was not an offering of Christ's body and blood but a feasting on that which has been once and for all time offered on the cross. The reformers further agreed that Christ is present in the supper. Precisely how He is present was and remains a subject of debate and in the sixteenth century became the basis of division.

Luther argued for the real presence of Christ in the supper. While the elements are not changed into different substances, the body and blood of Jesus are present "in, with and under" the bread and wine. "This is My body" can only be taken literally, according to Luther. Zwingli, on the other hand, argued that Christ's words at this point must be taken figuratively and that His presence in the supper is symbolic and spiritual.

A literary debate on the subject reached its height in 1527 and 1528 with charges and counter-charges being made in the strongest of language. Luther accused Zwingli of teaching heresy and the devil's doctrine. The Zwinglian camp responded with accusations that the Lutherans were flesh-eaters, blood-drinkers whose communion bread was a "baked God."

The religious divisions made it difficult to maintain political and military alliances among the Protestant regions of Europe. In hopes that the political coalitions might be restored Philip of Hesse exerted his influence to convene a meeting of Protestant leaders for the purpose of discussing points of theological difference and coming to points of theological agreement.

Zwingli readily accepted the invitation to meet at Marburg. Luther reluctantly agreed to participate after being pressured by the Elector of Saxony. Together with delegates from Basel, Strassburg, Nürnberg, Augsburg and Swabia, the reformers met at Philip's castle during the first three days of October 1529.

The debate, though more civil and gentlemanly than the previous literary one, rehashed well-known positions. It was obvious that the disagreement over the presence of Christ in the supper constituted, at least in the minds of Luther and his cohorts, an insurmountable barrier to fellowship.

At Philip's insistence Luther drew up a confession consisting of fifteen articles, including statements on the Trinity, Christ's person and work, sin, justification by faith and the Holy Spirit. On all these points there was perfect agreement among the participants.

The fifteenth article deals with the Lord's Supper. On the main points even of this article, both the Reformed and Lutheran parties were agreed. At the prompting of Philip, a final paragraph was added which states,

And although at present we are not agreed on the question whether the real body and blood of Christ are coporally present in the bread and wine, yet both parties shall cherish Christian charity for one another, so far as the conscience of each will permit; and both parties will earnestly implore Almighty God to strengthen us by His Spirit in the true understanding. Amen.

All the participants signed the confession--including Luther and Zwingli.

On Monday morning, after the conference ended, the two reformers met together for one final time. It would be their last meeting on earth. With tears in his eyes, Zwingli held out his hand toward Luther as an expression of brotherly fellowship. But Luther refused to grasp it and instead said, "Yours is a different spirit from ours."

I disagree with what Luther did. But I deeply cherish the reason he did it. Truth matters. It is more important than political alliances. If we love God then we must be committed to the affirmation and defense of His revealed truth. But, if we love God, we must also love people--especially "the brethren."

Devotion to truth, a necessary, noble Christian characteristic, is what motivated Luther to leave Zwingli's hand awkwardly extended in front of him. He had purchased the truth too dearly to sell it cheaply. And in Luther's mind, to have embraced Zwingli's hand would have signaled a compromise on the Word of God.

In our day and age of "can't we all just get along" spirituality Luther's action appears repugnant and utterly indefensible. Strong currents within western Christianity encourage us simply to forget about the issues which we see differently from others who name the name of Christ and pretend that differences do not exist, or if they do exist that they do not really matter. Politeness trumps conviction.

This is the spirit of that slobbery ecumenism to which more and more warm-hearted but wrong-headed evangelicals are being attracted. Truth is sacrificed on the altar of what is mistakenly believed to be unity (but which could more accurately be described as conspiracy). Where such a spirit obtains, no serious consideration of biblical teachings can be proposed because "it will only cause division." To those who are caught up in this spirit, Luther at Marburg looks only like a prideful ogre. But that is not an accurate portrait of the reformer. He did what he did because he was convinced that God's truth was at stake.

Nevertheless, even though it was a commendable love of God and truth which motivated his actions, Luther cannot be completely exonerated. His refusal to allow room for disagreement on the sacrament caused him to write Zwingli off as an unbeliever. On the final day of the Colloquy he professed astonishment that the Swiss contingency considered him to be a brother. He turned to them and said, "You do not belong to the communion of the Christian Church. We cannot acknowledge you as brethren."

At this point Luther illustrates the following maxim: The greatest strength of Christians who take doctrine seriously can easily become their greatest weakness. Devotion to truth and a passion to have an accurate understanding of it

can lead a believer to dismiss all those who do not agree with him at every point. Love for truth, however, is never an excuse for not loving people. And genuine love for people, especially for brothers and sisters in the faith, necessarily requires a willingness to forebear with weaknesses, including weaknesses in understanding.

The theological pugilism which sometimes accompanies doctrinal Christianity is contrary to the very content and spirit of the gospel. Is not the heart of our message that God loves His enemies and Jesus Christ has humbled Himself to the point of death in behalf of people who deserve divine wrath? The obligations of humility, deference--extended even toward weaker brothers--and genuine love even for enemies stem from biblical teachings which cannot be set aside in the pursuit to affirm and defend other doctrines of the Bible.

At this point I think Luther failed at Marburg. He could not conceive that he himself might not understand the Lord's Supper perfectly. Neither could he allow for the possibility that Zwingli could be orthodox in his Christology and yet mistaken in his understanding of the sacrament. So Luther refused to extend his hand in Christian fellowship.

Better by far to recognize the difference between doctrinal essentials and doctrinal distinctives without giving up either. What is necessary to be a Christian? Repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ? Yes. Submission to Christ as Lord and Savior? Yes. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit? Yes. All true Christians everywhere would agree.

But what about baptism by immersion as a believer? Is this necessary to be a Christian? No. What about commitment to a free church in a free state? No. Local church autonomy? No. But Baptists historically have argued that all of these are distinctive ingredients which help define their faith.

Obviously, Presbyterians, Reformed churches and Methodists would disagree with these distinctives. Do our differences in these areas mean that Baptists should renounce all paedobaptists as unbelievers and have no fellowship with them on that basis? No! But neither should we pretend that we do not disagree, or that our disagreements are not worth mentioning.

A better course is to recognize that all those who hold to the essentials of the faith are to be received as brothers and sisters in Christ, even if they hold to distinctive ideas with which we disagree. Furthermore, while we unashamedly affirm our own distinctive beliefs which we find in the Bible, we should afford that same privilege to other believers, admitting that none of us has yet perfectly understood all that we ought about everything that God has revealed. Sin has affected not only our affections and wills, but also our minds. Therefore we are liable to make mistakes in our understanding and are in constant need of having our thinking reformed by the Word of God.

For this very reason Christians who disagree on certain distinctives ought to argue their points of contention with a desire not only to be understood but to understand those with whom we disagree. It is possible to be both rigorous and humble. All who love Christ and His Word should welcome the efforts of those who strive to clarify revealed truth at any point.

From its inception the *Founders Journal* has been committed to Baptist distinctives. We have never been ashamed to align ourselves in that historic stream of evangelical Christianity known as Baptist. We do so knowing that the river of orthodox Protestant Christianity is much broader than our Baptist stream, and we have openly acknowledged our agreement with Presbyterian and Reformed brethren on the nature of salvation and the doctrines of the gospel.

We see ourselves as a part of that greater work which God is doing in recovering the gospel of God's grace to a generation of evangelicals who seem to have doctrinal amnesia. And we applaud and try to encourage all who are working for reformation and renewal--regardless of whether or not they agree with us on baptism. The essentials are

more important than the distinctives.

But we are Baptist by conviction. And our convictions are informed by the Word of God. For that reason we have taken up the theme of baptism in this issue of the *Founders Journal*. The foundations of our faith, including the distinctive elements of that faith, are always worth examining and clarifying. Our paedobaptist brothers and sisters with whom we disagree need to know why we believe what we do. And those who disagree with us need to be challenged to reexamine the Word of God to see if their beliefs are properly grounded. Obviously, we cannot both be right.

Truth is worth disagreeing over. It is worth maintaining ecclesiastical separation. On that, both Baptists and paedobaptists agree. It is to be hoped that we can also agree, in our pursuit of the truth, with Zwingli's prayer which he prayed upon entering the conference at Marburg:

Fill us, O Lord and Father of us all, we beseech Thee, with thy gentle Spirit, and dispel on both sides all the clouds of misunderstanding and passion. Make an end to the strife of blind fury. Arise, O Christ, Thou Sun of righteousness, and shine upon us. Alas! while we contend, we only too often forget to strive after holiness which Thou requirest from us all. Guard us against abusing our powers, and enable us to employ them with all earnest for the promotion of holiness.



Infant Baptism and the Regulative Principle of Worship

Fred Malone

Our Presbyterian friends often state that the authority for infant baptism comes from "good and necessary inference" of Old Testament circumcision of infants, not from positive command, example, or institution in the New (Warfield, Berkhof, Murray, et al). In fact, they candidly and regularly admit that there is no command or example of infant baptism in the New Testament, or indeed, in all the Scriptures.

Baptists often reject Presbyterian infant baptism by showing that the Paedobaptist ("infant Baptist") brand of covenant theology erroneously allows "good and necessary inference" from Old Testament circumcision to overrule the only positive institution of baptism in the New Testament, namely, that of disciples alone. This is a proper argument. However, few recognize that this Presbyterian error is a violation of their own "regulative principle of worship." Yet, the practice of infant baptism does just that.

This may not seem to be a very significant statement at first, but since the regulative principle is taught and championed by our Presbyterian brethren, it actually is a very serious charge. It means that they contradict their most important principle of worship every time they baptize an infant.

Baptists have held historically to the very same regulative principle of worship, though many have forgotten that today. In fact, we ultimately practice "the baptism of disciples alone" because of it. I am convinced that one reason that some Baptists are becoming Presbyterians is because Baptists do not understand the regulative principle any more.

Obviously, Baptists and Presbyterians cannot both be right on the question of baptism. Granted, this issue is not essential to salvation (as is, for example, justification by faith alone), but it does concern a sacrament of the church and thus cannot be dismissed as unimportant (though some ministers have tried to do just that in order to serve in the Presbyterian ministry). Baptists who are tempted to forsake the theologically troubled Baptist Zion for more comfortable Presbyterianism may not realize that they must violate the Presbyterian (and Baptist) regulative principle of worship to do so.

In order for me to prove my thesis I will first define "the regulative principle" from Presbyterian sources and then show why I believe that infant baptism is a clear violation of that principle.

What is the regulative principle of worship?

According to the Westminster Presbyterian and the 1689 London Baptist Confession (the mother confession of American and Southern Baptists),

the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that *he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men*, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, *or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture* (WCF 21:1; italics mine).

This regulative principle teaches that God-approved Christian worship includes only elements and practices "instituted by God Himself limited by his own revealed will [and not] any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture." In other words, speculation, invention, imagination, and uncommanded practices, etc., cannot be permitted to change or neglect instituted worship. Therefore, the only elements of worship approved in the regulative tradition, according to Scripture, are:

Prayers: The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching, and conscionable hearing of the word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments *instituted by Christ*; are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God: besides religious oaths and vows, solemn fasting, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in a holy and religious manner (WCF 21:4-5; italics mine).

Prayer, the reading and preaching of Scripture, singing, the sacraments, vows, thanksgivings, etc., are the only authorized elements of Reformed worship. It should be noted that the only sacraments which are approved as elements of worship are those which have been "instituted by Christ" himself, not by "good and necessary inference."

On the other hand, the "normative principle of worship" is practiced by Lutherans, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and, apparently, by many charismatic and fundamental Baptists. They are joined by a growing number of Southern Baptists who, sometimes ignorantly, have turned from their theological heritage in the regulative.

The normative principle teaches that worship must consist of that which is commanded by God and may also include that which is not specifically prohibited by Scripture. This opens the door to many uncommanded activities which often limit the practice of those commanded elements. The result too often is seen in public worship which has very little Scripture reading and twenty minute sermonettes.

Obviously, the normative principle invites invention, creativity, and new elements of worship which are never commanded or mentioned in Scripture. It also permits practices which are prescribed in Old Testament worship to be used in New Testament Christian worship by "good and necessary inference," even if these practices are not prescribed for Christian worship. This accounts for the traditional differences in worship between those from normative versus regulative backgrounds. It also explains the normative additions of pageantry, altars, priesthoods, vestments, prayer books, mariolatry, prayers to saints, and other practices not instituted by Scripture for Gospel worship. Others today add drama, dance, puppets, clowns, movies, magicians, comedians, weight lifting, high-pressured "altar calls," entertainment, and whatever else their heart desires. When one holds to the normative principle, another must ask: "Where will it end up?"

The regulative principle has always included "that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed" (WCF 1:6). However, these circumstances of worship are always limited to time, place, order of worship, length of worship, language, pews, air conditioning, etc., issues which are common to any human society (see *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, by G. I. Williamson, 161). They have never included new uncommanded activities such as those mentioned above.

Adding to the confusion, others who claim to hold to the regulative principle have redefined the simpler elements of worship to include creative "applications" of those elements by "good and necessary inference." Thus they justify new practices such as drama as a form of preaching and dance as a form of praise. These are justified by "good and necessary inference" even though such practices are never commanded in either Old Testament worship or New Testament Christian worship. Such teachers have, whether unwittingly or purposefully, returned to the normative principle of worship by adding what Scripture has not specifically prohibited. No amount of protesting to the contrary can change this fact.

In summary, the Reformed regulative principle of worship allows only those elements of worship which have been positively instituted and commanded by God in Scripture.

What does the regulative principle have to do with infant baptism?

Infant baptism violates the regulative principle of worship. Baptism is one of the sacraments which has been "instituted by

Christ." Thus it is regulated by God, limited by His revealed will, and prescribed by Holy Scripture. This regulation extends to the subjects of baptism. Who are to be baptized? How are they to be baptized? Why are they to be baptized? To answer these questions we must ask a more basic one: What has been "instituted by Christ?"

Christ's institution of baptism, in its mode, meaning, and subjects is to be regulated by the Word of God. Yet, as Baptists and Paedobaptists agree, the only subjects of baptism which can be conclusively determined by Scripture are professing disciples. Infants are included only by "good and necessary consequence," a normative addition which is never commanded in the Bible. The practice of baptizing babies violates the regulative principle.

Amazingly, Paedobaptist apologist, Pierre Marcel, actually states that God only gives us general instructions concerning the doctrine of baptism and then leaves it up to us to determine its practical application to infants. This is done, he argues, by "normative principles." He compares the practice of infant baptism to the work of application in preaching. This is a woefully inadequate comparison when one considers the Westminster Confession's inclusion of sacraments under the regulative principle of worship. Marcel writes,

The Church never confines herself merely to the letter, but, working from the data of Scripture and under the control of the Holy Spirit, she affirms normative principles and elaborates the consequences and applications which make her life and development possible and effective. Were it not so, the exercise of the pastoral ministry, the cure of souls, preaching, discipline, and so on, would be absolutely impossible! It is thus that the Church operates when she passes from adult to infant baptism. Scripture affords general instruction on baptism, its meaning and value, and the Church applies it concretely in life. If Scripture assigns to the children of believers the enjoyment of the same privileges as are experienced by those who are of an age to confess their faith, and since it nowhere makes mention of a baptismal ministry which should have been applied to adults born of Christian parents, it has said sufficient on this point, without needing to have prescribed literally the baptism of infants.[\[1\]](#)

It is astonishing that Marcel admits that infant baptism is practiced on "normative principles" and therefore does not need to be prescribed literally by Scripture! This is clearly an application of the normative principle, not the regulative, to a sacrament "instituted by Christ." It is even more astonishing to see how he uses the lack of biblical instruction concerning the baptism of adults who were born to Christian parents. He makes these adult children of believers a special class and then cites the Bible's silence regarding their baptism to justify the baptism of infants.

It is not true that the Scripture is silent on the baptism of "adults born of Christian parents." They, along with adults born of non-Christian parents as well as men and women, boys and girls of every age are commanded by the Lord through the Scripture to repent and believe the gospel. Those who do, regardless of their backgrounds, should, like the first century believers of the New Testament, be baptized (Acts 2:41).

To make a special class out of the adult children of believers and then to equate the Scripture's silence regarding them with its silence on infant baptism is preposterous. Such thinking can lead anywhere, even back to the seven sacraments of Roman Catholicism. After all, the Scripture is no more silent on infant baptism than it is on the administration of last rites.

One fundamental question remains: if Christ did not actually *institute* infant baptism, how can it be, in the language of the confession, a sacrament "instituted by Christ?" Marcel's explanation of infant baptism on "normative principles" constitutes a Paedobaptist affirmation of what has been maintained in this article, that infant baptism is a violation of the regulative principle of worship and is based upon the normative principle.

When God instituted circumcision, He was very specific to identify its subjects. This is why infants were circumcised. This is in keeping with the regulative principle. Now in this New Testament era are we to assume that the regulative principle concerning the subjects of the sacraments "instituted by Christ" (baptism and the Lord's Supper), limited by God's revealed will, and prescribed by Holy Scripture, are to be left to our application as if it were an uncommanded circumstance of worship? If words mean anything, obviously not. According to the regulative principle, the only subjects

of baptism "instituted by Christ" and prescribed in Holy Scripture are disciples.

I am convinced that the "good and necessary inference" which establishes infant baptism, has opened the door to other difficulties within the Reformed and evangelical Christian world. Theonomy, paedocommunion, and more recently, stated applications of the regulative principle of worship which in fact have transformed it into the old normative principle, are three such examples. Or could it be that infant baptism was always based upon the normative principle instead of the regulative? That is my conclusion. Perhaps we all, Presbyterians and Baptists alike, need to recommit ourselves to the biblically based regulative principle of worship and follow it where it leads us.

Neither Baptists nor Paedobaptists have a corner on the truth. Both need to examine our beliefs and practices in the light of God's Word. The heritage which we share in the Protestant Reformation reminds us that the church must be "reformed and always reforming according to the Word of God." Why do we do what we do in worship? How are the sacraments of the church to be observed? What does the Word specifically say about the subjects of baptism? These questions must be answered from the Bible. Such an exercise will prove beneficial for every child of God. Further, it should make us careful not to violate Scripturally regulated worship through the incorporation of uncommanded, uninstituted, unrevealed, and unprescribed practices.



¹*The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism*; trans. by Philip E. Hughes (London: James Clark & Co., Ltd., 1959), 190.



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The Covenant of Circumcision: No Just Plea For Infant Baptism

W. T. Brantly

(This article has been slightly modified from its 1843 format to make it more readable for those who are accustomed to modern rules of style and grammar.)

Is there in the word of God any requisition upon Christians to attempt the introduction of their infant offspring into the visible church? Is the rite of baptism to be administered to them with this view? And though they cannot answer for themselves, nor exercise faith and repentance, are they to be baptized upon the alleged faith of their parents? To these questions all Baptist reply, NO. They thus place themselves in opposition to the prevalent belief and practice of a large portion of the Christian world. Nor is it only the current belief and practice of the Christian world to which they stand opposed, but to the opinions and customs of past ages. The position which they assume is in bold and open contradiction to the authority and learning of very many names, venerable for piety and usefulness, both in ancient and modern times. For it cannot be dissembled that the authorities for infant baptism date as far back as the close of the second century and the beginning of the third,^[1] so that it has at least the sanction of antiquity. And were it not that New Testament authority is wanting to it, that the sacred scriptures neither implicitly nor explicitly teach it, and that reason dissuades it, Baptist might be justly alarmed at the singularity of their attitude, and urged to compliance with a custom so ancient and respectable. They persuade themselves that they love their infants as much as others, that they as earnestly desire their salvation, and that they are as ready as others, to promote and facilitate by every lawful means their conversion to God; but they cannot be persuaded to adopt as a religious rite any tradition how ancient soever, nor to conform to a custom which, in its very institution, presupposes a defect in the Divine Law and Testimony. They conceive the inspired code of the Lord to be too perfect to leave space for any supplementary acts on their part, and therefore feel it solemnly binding on them to abjure the presumption of practicing uncommanded ordinances.

The Paedobaptist Position

It has been assumed that the connection subsisting between believing parents and their children, under the gospel dispensation, is precisely similar to that which previously intervened between parents and their offspring under the covenant of circumcision. Or, to express the matter more definitely, it is asserted by the advocates of infant baptism, that among all those embraced in the covenant of circumcision there was, between parents and children, a certain connection by virtue of which the children were circumcised, and admitted to all the blessings of the said covenant. This being the covenant of grace, and circumcision the seal of it; and the covenant of our Lord and Saviour being also the covenant of grace, and baptism being the seal of it, therefore, they allege, that the infants of those under the gospel covenant should be brought within the pale of the visible church by the ordinance of baptism.

To show that I do not mistake their views I shall here adduce the language of a few of their most judicious writers.

"The perpetuity of the Abrahamic covenant, and of consequence the identity of the church under both dispensations, is so plainly taught in scripture, and follows so unavoidably from the radical scriptural principles concerning the church of God, that it is indeed wonderful how any believer in the bible can call in question the fact. Every thing essential to ecclesiastical identity is evidently found here. The same Divine Head, the same precious covenant, the same great spiritual design, the same atoning blood, the same sanctifying Spirit, in which we rejoice as the life and glory of the New Testament church were also the life and the glory of the church before the coming of the Messiah. It is not more certain that a man arrived at a mature age, is the same individual that he was when an infant on his mother's lap, than it is that the church, in the plenitude of her light and privileges, after the coming of Christ, is the same church, which many centuries before, though with a much smaller amount of light and privilege, yet as we are

expressly told in the New Testament, Acts vii. 38, enjoyed the presence and guidance of her divine head in the wilderness." [2]

"The point of primary importance in the present argument is, the connection established under the former economy between parents and their infant offspring. By virtue of that connection infants were circumcised, and if that connection has never been by divine appointment dissolved or diminished, then by virtue of that connection infants should be baptized. It is a connection in the covenant of grace, the covenant of redemption, the everlasting covenant, embracing all that man can desire, and all that Jehovah can impart." [3]

"Abraham was admitted to the rite of circumcision which was a testimony of his dependence upon the covenant of grace, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised." Rom. iv. 11. That ordinance is now abolished. But we celebrate another which has succeeded it, and which is the standing means of admission into the Christian church. [4]

"The covenant with Abraham being in reality the gospel covenant, set forth in types and figures according to the manner of ancient times, may we not from the use and efficacy of circumcision, believe that baptism the rite of initiation into the Christian church, is like it, a seal of the gospel covenant, and a declaration on the part of God, that he will count the faith of the baptized person for righteousness? And that like circumcision it may be administered to infants, to assure their parents that their future faith shall be accounted, and rewarded as righteousness, or if they die in infancy, that they shall be raised to eternal life? In this view the baptizing of infants is a reasonable rite, and must afford the greatest consolation to all pious parents." [5]

The production of authorities to prove the reliance of paedobaptists upon the Abrahamic covenant for the justification of infant baptism might be carried to an indefinite extent. All their writers, so far as I know, make this the main hinge of the whole argument. If there be any material disagreement among them I am not aware of it. Their comments upon the rite of circumcision from very ancient times, as may be seen both in the Greek and Latin writers, unite generally in assigning to it an import typical of baptism. The ancients in this particular have been followed by the moderns, and as often as the vindication of infant baptism has been attempted, so often the old Abrahamic seal has been re-proclaimed as an unanswerable argument. This has been pointed to as a standing monument whose inscription was to be known and read of all men, whose meaning was to admit of no doubt, and whose expressive evidence was to silence all disputation. Baptist and those of similar opinions have often examined and re-examined this Abrahamic monument with a view to ascertain its import; and after the most impartial investigation, and sober inquiry, and wakeful scrutiny, have brought back the solemn report, that it points to nothing bearing even the semblance of baptism.

We have reached and established (at least in our own minds) this conclusion by a careful discussion of the grounds and positions assumed and methodized by our opponents into what they consider, one irrefragable argument. The argument as we understand it is this.

"Under the former economy there existed betwixt parents and their infant offspring, a certain connection or relation, by virtue of which infants received circumcision, the then apparent sign or seal of the covenant of grace, and henceforth became entitled to all the benefits of that covenant. That connection or relation has not been dissolved under the gospel dispensation, the church of the former, being identical with the church of the latter, and differing from it only, as an infant on it mother's lap, differs from the adult man. Therefore infants under the gospel dispensation are entitled to receive baptism--the seal of the new covenant and, consequently, it is the duty of their parents to have it administered to them."

The foregoing paragraph contains as far a reduction of the several propositions as can be made under the circumstances of the case. It is a faithful abstract of the authorities referred to, and in my judgment, of all other reasonings and comments

instituted with the view of substantiating the same propositions. Let the reader now revert to the three members of the formula and keep them steadily in view while the discussion is proceeding.

Parents and Children in the Old Testament

The first member of the argument asserts that under the former economy there existed between parents and their infant offspring, a certain connection or relation, by virtue of which infants received circumcision, the then visible sign or seal of the covenant of grace, and henceforth became entitled to all the benefits of that covenant. To the truth and justness of this proposition several exceptions occur which must be fatal to it. Let them emerge from obscurity and the whole argument is lost.

1. It is assumed that the covenant of circumcision is mainly and primarily the covenant of grace. But, had not the covenant of grace existed long before Abraham? And had it not been imparting its blessings to those who lived and died in faith long before that patriarch? By what covenant was it that righteous Abel was accepted and justified; that Enoch was raised to the dignity and privilege of walking with God; that Noah, impelled by faith in God's revelations, prepared an Ark to the saving of himself and family and became a preacher of righteousness; and that the Spirit of God, when once his long suffering waiting in the days of Noah, sustained the litigation, the strife in human hearts, against human depravity? Surely it were an impossible presumption that faith and repentance, and all godly affections were produced and nurtured under a covenant of works. The promise of Jehovah to Abraham that he should be the honored progenitor of the Messiah; and the consequent extension of blessings to all the nations of the earth through him, did but define and ratify the gracious promise according to which he had been already justified while in uncircumcision, Rom. iv. 11. The former part of Hebrews xi. shows that the whole plan and process of justification by faith, was in operation for nearly two thousand years before circumcision was known.

2. The position to which we are now attempting to apply the test of truth affirms that the infant offspring of parents under the Abrahamic covenant had a title to all the benefits and blessings of that covenant and by consequence to the covenant of grace. From this we are left to infer most inevitably that the infant offspring of all believers anterior to Abraham had not this title; and therefore, if they participated at all in the provisions of the covenant of grace, it must have been a sort of unauthorized intrusion upon a province to which they had no claim. At this rate the children of the righteous men who were the very contemporaries of Abraham, such as Job and Melchizedek, would have been lawfully excluded from the consolations of that religion which had cheered and supported their parents in this life, and had fixed their hopes upon a glorious future. The truth, however, is, that Jehovah has never been, and never will be, a respecter of persons; but in every nation he that fears God is accepted of him, irrespectively of all external distinctions and privileges. Circumcision then, could have brought the descendants of Abraham no nearer to grace, than uncircumcision, which latter was no bar to grace.

3. We are now prepared to deny the assumption, that the covenant of circumcision was mainly, or primarily, the covenant of grace. That it was collaterally and inferentially so is admitted. But if it were primarily and mainly so [then] the exclusion from grace of all mankind not embraced with the *seal* must follow as a necessary consequence. And this consequence has been not only admitted but strenuously urged by a large majority of those who have maintained the notion of identity of the Abrahamic dispensation with that of the Evangelical. According to them, infant baptism has been held as a rite, without the due administration of which, there was no obvious possibility of salvation to infants. They are at least consistent with themselves. If I could believe that baptism has come in lieu of circumcision, and that the latter rite was necessary to secure an interest in the covenant of grace under the former economy, then should I most assuredly believe that baptism is necessary to the salvation of the infants of all believing parents.

If it be asked, what was then the Abrahamic covenant of which circumcision was the seal, if it were not the one, true, and only covenant of grace? I reply: It did embrace prospectively the blessings of the Messiah's Kingdom, and these blessings were to be irrespectively of ceremonial marks, or limitation--and it did actually embrace the temporal provision of good things for those descendants of Abraham, who should bear the impress of the *seal*. The *seal* then had nothing to do with the spiritual and gracious import of the covenant, but only with its political and temporal bearing.

The learned Photius, patriarch of Constantinople about the middle of the ninth century, though admitting circumcision in a secondary sense to be a type of baptism, yet maintains its primary meaning to be political. He says, "Circumcision appears to me to intend three things. The *first* without doubt, is, that as a sign or seal it might separate, and distinguish from other nations, the posterity of Abraham." [6] Chrysostom, 39th Homily on Genesis, assigns the same reason for it. "The sign of circumcision," he says, "separated the Jews from the other nations." Theodoretus writes to the same effect. "The Jews in Canaan were about to be in the immediate proximity of nations differing from them, wherefore, they required of necessity a certain sign or mark to distinguish them from other nations." [7] Many other quotations might be presented, clearly indicative of the opinions of the most learned Greek fathers on the design of circumcision. But these may suffice.

The only portion of scripture which will be thought to oppose the foregoing opinion, is Rom. iv. 11, to which allusion has been already made. "And he, Abraham, received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised." This scripture in no wise opposes the ground now taken. To Abraham as an individual, as one believing and acting for himself, and for no body else, circumcision was the seal of his justification by faith. It was to him the remembrancer of God's unmerited grace in his election to salvation through faith and that not of himself, but the gift of God. But when this seal came to be applied to male infants of the children and posterity of Abraham, did it speak to them the same language that it did to him? In that case, many thousands of confirmed reprobates must have had, all the time of their profligacy and ungodliness, the seal of their justification by faith.

4. A certain connection or relation between believing parents and their offspring, is made a plea for infant baptism. To be sure, there is a certain connection or relation between all parents and their infant offspring. This cannot be denied. But is this anything more than a physical relationship? Does one imagine that gracious dispositions are transmissible by consanguinity? It is without doubt a great mercy to be descended of pious parents, a privilege by no means to be despised; but it is a privilege dependent wholly upon external circumstances. The child of the greatest saint on earth is naturally no nearer to God, than that of the greatest reprobate.

5. The argument of our Paedobaptist brethren takes for granted that baptism is the seal of New Testament blessings and therefore to be applied to infants. Against this position we must likewise raise the strong voice of protestation. We have only to deny their assumption and it instantly ceases to avail anything--for in the absence of proof, we may boldly deny any principle or any inference unless it be self evident. But in the whole New Testament history of baptism there is not the remotest intimation of such an idea. It appears not to have entered into the mind of our Lord, nor of his disciples, nor immediate successors, ever once to drop a hint which, even by allusion, can be so interpreted. Still the sacred word is not silent respecting the seal. Believers are sealed unto the day of redemption, and they are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, and hence derive a permanent, indelible character, which is true circumcision of the heart in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. This is the only act of obsignation which can be reasonable and proper; that which it is supposed baptism constitutes is preposterous, for if it can be called a seal, it is a seal for the ratification of a nonentity--nothing is sealed.

On this head there is some diversity of opinion among Paedobaptists. A large class of them hold and defend the idea that the obsignatory act of baptism, as they term it, does seal something; that some grace is imparted to the recipient and a new character impressed upon him. The baptismal service in the liturgy of the Episcopal Church requires the return of thanks to God for the presumed regeneration of the child by the act of baptism. This class of Paedobaptists are much opposed by their brethren who, on the other hand, deny the communication of any spiritual or moral qualifications in the baptismal administration to infants.

In my opinion the baptismal-regeneration class are more consistent at least with the principle assumed by both, and that is: that baptism is the seal of character and the evidence of title to privileges. Those advocates for infant baptism who admit that no spiritual or inward grace is conveyed thereby to the soul of the recipient seem to me to be inconsistent with themselves when they contend that baptism is a sealing ordinance. To call it the outward sign of an invisible grace is truly a misnomer, since no grace is thereby imparted. Should it be said that the grace derived from their pious parents, is that on which the seal is impressed, in the baptism of infants, the matter is still more inexplicable. The taint of original sin appears to run in the blood from father to son; and has assumed this order of propagation from Adam down to the present time. But

if the word of God makes a true representation, there is no channel except that of regeneration, through which can flow those sanctifying virtues that go to correct this taint and cleanse the soul from its inherent pollution.

6. But if all the intents and purposes of circumcision be responded to and verified by baptism, how are we to account for the remarkable declarations in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians touching the subject of circumcision? In chapter the fifth he strongly deprecates the imputation of preaching circumcision and clears himself of the charge by repeated denials. In declining to preach it he had suffered persecution, had in a manner expatriated himself from his nation, and become the demolisher of that which he once built up. His Jewish brethren converted to the Christian faith and others who thought that the covenant of circumcision should be still observed, is the part with which he is contesting the important point.

Had it been a fact that baptism had taken the place of circumcision, it is wonderful that Paul refrained, under such circumstances, from its assertion. As the party which he labored to convince, attached so much importance to circumcision, and were therefore almost pertinacious in their purpose of retaining it, to satisfy their scruples, he could have said, and in my judgment should have said, "It is true that circumcision was the seal of the Abrahamic covenant, that all the male descendants of that patriarch, received this seal, and were thereby admitted to the blessings and privileges of the covenant; but NOW, a new seal is introduced, a new ordinance, more befitting the diffusive nature of gospel blessings, and more reasonable in point of signification; that ordinance is baptism, which is applied not only to the male but to the female offspring of all believers who become in consequence the spiritual seed of Abraham." There is, however, no such intimation in anything which the apostle utters. Wherever he mentions circumcision as having a typical sense, it is invariably referred to the work of moral renovation by the spirit of God. "He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God," Rom. ii. 29. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ," Col. ii. 11. "For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Phil. iii. 3. This transfer of the literal and external idea of the rite to the characteristics of the spiritual and internal grace, is most forcible and apposite. As an illustration it is replete with a meaning that must reach every heart. But the same idea transferred to baptism whether of infants, or of adults, falls vapid and insignificant upon the understanding of everyone.

7. In the baptismal controversy much reliance has been placed upon the assumed identity of the Jewish and the Christian church. It is urged that they differ in no other respect than that in which the periods of infancy and mature age differ in the same individual. The church of God, it is said, was in its minority under the former dispensation, and in the latter, it is the same church having attained the manly age and freedom. From this identity it is argued that the infant offspring of those within the gospel church, have a sort of a birth-right privilege, founded upon their descent.

To exhibit the utter futility of this argument, we have only to suppose a case. A preacher of the gospel stands for the first time before a congregation of unconverted persons, of whom one half are the children of pious parents who took early care to draw over them the veil of the covenant, as they thought, by applying to them the substitute for circumcision, namely baptism. The other half are the children of parents who adopted no such precautions. The preacher opens and expounds the terms of his commission to this whole company. He informs them that, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; that God now commands all men everywhere to repent," that a free and full salvation is now proclaimed without distinction of men or nation, to all the human family; and adds with full and gracious emphasis, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely." I ask, does the preacher furnish a just view of the gospel commission? If he does, he places the whole congregation upon one footing, and offers for the conversion of the privileged portion no facilities or encouragements more than to that which stands upon uncovenanted ground. But the moment he draws a line of distinction between this ungodly assemblage and represents a part of them as being more welcome to the Saviour than the rest, he compromises his commission, and also the Truth itself. Where then, I ask, are the covenanted privileges of infant baptism? Infant baptism must either accomplish something, or nothing. If no object be attained by it, then it is a perfect nullity, if not worse. If some end, some good purpose, some benevolent intention be ensured by it, what is that end, that purpose, that design? Does it introduce the infant into the visible church? Does it more certainly procure for it the privileges of the covenant of grace? Does it supply motives and circumstances by which gracious predispositions to godliness and piety are excited within it, or else thrown about it? If it accomplish all this, or even any part of it, then baptized infants are not the same strangers from God and aliens from the covenant of promise as others. They are not sinners in the same sense as

others, they need not repentance in the same sense as others, their calling and election, require not the same efficiency of grace for their certification, and they accordingly need a less effort of grace for their justification and deliverance from the effects of sin.

It is unnecessary to proceed in developing the consequences which must unavoidably result from the assumptions of those who defend infant baptism. Such consequences are as abhorrent from the deductions of sound reason as they are from the genius of the gospel. For in real, sober, unaffected truth, the baptism of infants leaves them just where it found them. It is not possible in the nature of things nor according to the constitution of the gospel economy that it should modify either their state or moral character. We have for many centuries, as a denomination, borne our strong, and decided testimony against it. Our opinions are gaining ground, and the doctrines held by our paedobaptist brethren are surely receding from the bold stand which they once occupied. There is scarcely a Paedobaptist church, either in England or America, without some anti-paedobaptists. They are to be found where they are, from causes and circumstances wholly disconnected with Paedobaptist predilections. They are permitted to remain there in the open neglect of an alleged duty; and even while their opinions and sentiments are known to be opposed to that alleged duty. But is there a Baptist church in existence, which admits to fellowship in the privileges of the Lord's house those who neglect conformity to the requisition of Christ, in regard to baptism, and who justify themselves in that neglect? Should it be said, that this is because we are less liberal than others, we reply: Let us be forever delivered from that liberality which prostrates the authority of Christ.

Baptism and Circumcision

In the remarks for which the limits of this work allow further space, I shall prove to the satisfaction at least of the unprejudiced that there can be no proper and rational connection or similitude between circumcision and baptism. This I shall attempt by comparing the nature, uses, and ends of both.

1. Circumcision had no necessary connection with the covenant of grace, for if it had then it should have been administered to all the saints prior, and subsequent to Abraham. It is altogether admissible, nay it is manifest that the church as it existed in spiritual relation to Jehovah, and to its own members, was the same before and after Abraham. Faith in God was the common bond of union and the basis of identity. In this respect Abraham and his pious descendants were in exact agreement and similarity with Abel and Seth and Enoch and Noah and Lot, as Melchizedek and Job and all the members of the antediluvian as well as the postdiluvian church, who knew nothing about circumcision. The rite in question, therefore, was not essential to an interest in the covenant of grace. But it was indispensably necessary to an interest in the national blessings promised to Abraham and his posterity under the seal of circumcision. A linial descendant of Abraham if uncircumcised was excluded by the express command of God from citizenship in the Jewish nation and from all its attendant privileges.

From all this it follow incontestably that circumcision was the mark of nationality, that it belonged to a temporal policy, and was not the necessary obsignation of moral character. Baptism on the other hand, though not essential to salvation, [is closely attached to it] by an order of events which no man dares to change. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The first duty after faith is baptism. This is the law of the evangelical economy, and so universally binding is it, that its wilful neglect and violation must be always attended with sin in a greater or less degree. Many, it is true, may be admitted to a participation in the benefits of salvation without baptism. Their sin of omission may be excused and forgiven, on various grounds; but neither its excusableness nor its forgiveness can in any wise invalidate the order of scripture. The succession of salvation to faith and baptism stands as the permanent and unalterable gradation of events in the gospel plan. The great author and finisher of our faith has not informed us how this gradation may be disturbed without destroying the hope of salvation; but he has plainly intimated to us that the servant who knows his Lord's will and doeth it not, may expect no very favorable reception of his Lord, but may rather look for the infliction of stripes.

2. Whatever circumcision might have been, it did not distinguish the righteous from the wicked. It did distinguish one family from all other families, and nations. It was a discriminating mark, by which that one family should be kept within the line of its own proper descent from one generation to another. But amid the most open, and grievous apostacies of the Jewish people, their national *seal* continued to be impressed upon all their male offspring as strictly as in the most

prosperous times of piety; nor was it ever a doctrine among them that impiety of conduct subsequent to the reception of the seal in any manner annulled their claim to the privileges of which it was the sign. As an ordinance enjoined in the terms of the new covenant, baptism is a rite designed to distinguish between the godly and the ungodly. In it believers are buried and risen with Christ; it is the signal of their crucifixion and resurrection with their Lord and Saviour and the remembrancer of their entire consecration to his service. Deliberate and continual wickedness after baptism manifestly excludes the delinquent party from all the privileges of the visible church and places him in no better relation to that church than a heathen may possess.

3. The covenant of grace had its accomplishment in the person, offices, sufferings, and crucifixion of Christ. He undertook to fulfil its stipulations and did actually, and truly conduct it to the glorious height of a full consummation. Thus completed, thus secured against all possibility of change or retraction, it is in due course of administration under the plans and arrangements of the gospel dispensation. This is Messiah's kingdom, a kingdom not of this world, but of the spiritual, invisible world. It stands open for the reception of people of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues. It creates a holy unity among all those embraced within its influence by the infusion of a gracious spirit into their hearts and by imparting to them the cementing charities of regeneration. They have become "A chosen generation, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that they may show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness, into his marvellous light." There is henceforth "Neither Jew, nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female," but all are one in Christ. The extension of blessings to all mankind, and the wide diffusion of light and mercy in the joyful sound of salvation are the well known characteristics of the New Testament dispensation. Does any rite or ordinance, commemorative of the restrictive and circumscribed economy of an obsolete ceremonial, comport with the expansive benevolence and grace of the gospel? To our Paedobaptist brethren we must speak on this topic with great frankness and affection. When your children, on whom you have procured the administration of baptism, ask you, "What mean ye by this service?" what reply, which shall not perplex and mystify the word of God, can you make? Will you tell them that baptism is a substitute for circumcision; that they are now under the seal of the covenant of grace, and entitled to all its privileges; and that they are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise? And if they ask you again, what mean ye, by the word *seal*? You must surely tell them, if consistent with yourselves, that it is the external sign of an internal grace. But if you inform them that it is a sign that signifies nothing, that it is merely the shadow of a shade, they will surely think that an illusive mockery has been practised upon them. And if you persuade them that baptism is regeneration, and they are induced to believe what you say, as a matter of course they will seek no other regeneration and will rest in the groundless confidence that they are already secure of all the provision of the gracious covenant.

4. Circumcision preceded all knowledge and consciousness on the part of the male infants upon whom it was inflicted. According, however, to the very institution of baptism, it succeeds knowledge, faith, and the conscious persuasions of the mind. So often as baptism is mentioned in the entire New Testament, so often is it preceded by the mental and moral actions of its recipients. John baptized only upon a profession of repentance; the Saviour commanded baptism only as consequent upon faith. The apostles and primitive disciples, so far as we know, baptized none except upon profession of faith in Christ. The baptism of infants breaks the sacred order of succession in the gospel plan and inverts the scale of duty. For duty proceeds from conviction and faith, while Paedobaptism places action even before rational consciousness of any sort. Surely we do not misname it, when we say it is preposterous. It places the consequent where the antecedent should be, and thus disturbs the settled harmony of truth and obedience.

Can it therefore be imagined that circumcision which was applied to passive and unconscious subjects was intended to typify baptism, which was never applied, according to New Testament authority, to any but intelligent, conscious, and responsible agents?

5. Baptism affects the whole body, being its thorough immersion into water in the name of the adorable Trinity. Of this fact, there can be little doubt left to any reader of the New Testament, in any language. Had we been present at the administrations of this ordinance, which took place in the days of our Saviour and his apostles, and were now about to render in our testimony, as to the mode which was then adopted, we might of course speak with irresistible confidence and certainty. As eye witnesses, if our credibility in other respects were not impeachable, we should be entitled to the most explicit belief. But, neither have we been eye witnesses, nor has one come from the dead to certify to us the rectitude of our views and practice. The ground of our confidence, however, in their exact accordance with the views and practices of

the apostolic age are as strong and undeniable as if they were vouched for by eye-witnesses or by those who arose from the dead. The strong, repeated, and unambiguous terms in which the form of baptism is made known to us allow very little room even for captiousness to exert itself. It must be a mind addicted to quibbling, and exceedingly unhinged by the oscillations of doubt which can find uncertainty in the meaning of the word baptism. If is a word of full and definite import. It is expressive of an action, with accompany facts and circumstances which cannot be misunderstood. Water sufficient for immersion is, in the New Testament, often placed in direct connection with baptism and is always necessarily presupposed. The word in English most nearly equivalent to it is immersion, and though every immersion is not baptism, yet every baptism is immersion. That the baptism of the Saviour himself was the immersion of his body under the waves of Jordan's stream by John, cannot be well and fairly doubted, because it is expressly said, He *emerged*, which he could not have done unless he had been first *immersed*. And that the Saviour commanded in the great commission the administration of baptism in the same sense, in which he himself had received it, cannot be consistently questioned. Is there any expressiveness in circumcision consonant with this just and scriptural view of baptism? Can any possible analogy be traced between the two rites?

In conclusion, Let us rejoice that Christ has made us free from the covenant of circumcision, that the old Mosaic yoke is broken, that we are the subjects of a dispensation in which God deals with all men alike, and is graciously willing to accept all who come to him through Christ Jesus.



¹ The first public recognition of infant baptism was A. D. 250. It may be supposed to have existed anterior to that period, and to have been gradually working its way into the church along with other corruptions. But the grand error under the sanction of which it obtained prevalence, was that baptism and regeneration were one and the same thing. So soon as that came to be a general belief, it was deemed necessary in order to ensure the spiritual illumination of infants, to have them baptized.--See *Neander's History of the Christian Religion*, p. 361.

² S. Miller of Princeton.

³ H. F. Burder of England.

⁴ Robinson's Scripture Characters.

⁵ Macknight on Rom. iv. 11.

⁶ *Photii epist. ccv.* p. 302, as quoted by Suicer.

⁷ Vol 3.--Yy.



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Letters

Dear Friends in Christ,

I just received issue #34, the fall 1998 copy, of the *Founders Journal*. Once again I am blessed by the quality of the content of information contained within its pages.

Even though you experienced some difficulties in preparing this issue--you persevered and were able to complete the task through God's grace. This is a definite sign of your dedication to the ministry you are called to and of God's handy work in guiding his people through various challenges.

Thank you again for all you are doing. Your generosity to me in providing continual complimentary subscriptions has been a tremendous blessing to me, and all those whom I have shared the *Journal* with.

As you know, the quality of Christian educational material in prison is sometimes suspect. The *Founders Journal* has proven to be a solid, high caliber source of information and education. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to use your work for the betterment of those incarcerated as well as for my own continual growth.

May 1999 bring you much success in your ministry. You all are in my prayers. May God continue to bless you as you continue to bless others through your love for Christ.

In His Service,
J. W., Represa, CA



Baptism

[Charles H. Spurgeon](#)

BAPTISM is, we doubt not, immersion. This is taught by all Greek usage of the terms chosen by the spirit of inspiration to designate this action. It is admitted by almost every learned Paedobaptist that until the time of Christ the word *baptizo* had no other meaning. It required that "the element encompass its object."

Nor does the use of this word by heathen or Christian Greeks, in the ages immediately succeeding apostolic times, encourage the idea of a changed import adopted by inspired penmen, which some vainly imagine. Any one maintaining this change of import in inspired writ, is bound to prove that, in one or more instances, the word is divinely used in another sense, the previous import (immersion) being certainly inadmissible. There is not such an occurrence.

On Paedobaptist testimony, the immersion of "pots, cups, brasen vessels," yea, of beds, was a Jewish custom, in order to cleanliness, or purification from ceremonial defilement. So also immersion on returning from the market, or from a crowd, and often by many before eating. Facts, on Paedobaptist testimony, prove that the rich Pharisee, who expected our Saviour to baptize himself before eating, might have ample provision for immersion, and that the climate, clothing, and habits of Syrian Jews, made them ever ready for the practice of immersion without indelicacy or injury. Consequently the record of great numbers baptized by John, or by the disciples of Jesus, and the non-record as to whether or how they changed their garments, proves nothing against immersion. Bathings in the Jordan, now annually and more frequently taking place, testify its present suitability for immersion; nor can the idea that a river, flowing hundreds of miles, was either too deep or too shallow for immersion, be rationally entertained. The sufficiency of water and baths in Jerusalem, Samaria, and Damascus, for the immersion of those whose baptism in the oracles of God is recorded, has abundant Paedobaptist and every other acknowledgment.

The baptism of Israel in the cloud and in the sea, and the baptism of the Spirit by Christ, are not literal baptisms in water. By the sea and the cloud unitedly the children of Israel were covered. That the disciples as to their bodies, on the day of Pentecost, were not encompassed with the emblematic fire, is incapable of proof, whilst all admit that their souls were, as it were, immersed in the divine Spirit. The fulfillment of a predicted and abundant pouring might therefore constitute an immersion as to body and soul, or that which by no other word can be more properly designated. A prediction of the sprinkling of water, or pouring out of the Spirit by the divine Being on men, is no proof that the word which in the New Testament describes the divinely enjoined action of man towards man, is either sprinkling, or pouring, or immersion. The expression of Peter, "Can any man forbid water?" cannot be proved to mean more than, "Can any man forbid baptism?" nor dare any who are regardful of truth affirm that the jail at Philippi was not, like other Eastern jails, supplied with a bath.

The fact that the Greek words *baptizo*, *baptisma*, and *baptismos*, underwent no change of import when used by the inspired writers, is evident from such expressions as, that John baptized "*in Jordan*," and "*in Aenon, near to Salim, because there was much water there*;" that Philip and the eunuch "*went down both into the water*;" that after Philip had baptized the eunuch, they came up "*out of the water*;" that we are *buried* with Christ "*by baptism*," and "*in baptism*," in which also we "*are risen with him*." If the words buried and risen are here used figuratively, there is an allusion to the literal immersion and emersion which had taken place. The calling of the overwhelming sufferings of Christ and his apostles, a baptism, is consistent only with its being immersion. The common and necessary use of a word meaning to immerse, and the marked distinction of this from sprinkling or pouring, would necessarily prevent its change from one to the others, or to meaning the use of a liquid, as some have maintained, "*in any way*."

If inspired writers had used the Greek word in another sense, surely the practice among Christians of immediately subsequent times would have corroborated this. But neither the Greeks, who are supposed best to understand their own language, nor the Latins, nor any barbarians, afford the slightest support to a supposed alteration by divine or any other warrant of the import of *baptizo* and the words derived from it. Nor does Jewish proselyte baptism, whether it originated before, or, as many eminent Paedobaptists believe, after apostolic times, give the least countenance to anything short of immersion as baptism.

The first recorded departure from immersion for baptism is an acknowledged deviation--an acknowledged imperfection--which, it was believed, required God's mercy and special necessity for its adoption. This took place at about the middle of the third century. Baptism was then believed requisite in order to have the certainty of salvation. A dying man might be incapable of being baptized. A substitute for baptism in such circumstances was admitted, with allowed disadvantages if life should be spared. This at length has been palmed off as baptism, as the very thing that God requires, or all that from any he demands! And while there is such a cross in being once immersed for Christ's sake, especially in these cold and northern regions, the convenience and decency of sprinkling are lauded to the skies. And by some who speak of immersion as if it could not be performed without a breach of delicacy, it is maintained that immersion is *one* of the actions embraced in the word divinely chosen when "baptizing" is enjoined.

The idea of necessary indecency in the "one immersion," or of danger unless in affliction, or special circumstances, the practice of our own land and other countries is continually and loudly condemning. Where danger or incapacity really prohibit we believe God does not demand; but he authorizes no substitute in these circumstances. Nor is a more paltry subterfuge conceivable than that of pouring of a little water on the face is *substantially* baptizing a person. However great or little the importance we attach to baptism, we are bound, in observing it, to practise what God enjoins. For the servant of an earthly master to perform his own likings, instead of his master's biddings, it would be an insult which none would brook. The pretext for sprinkling and pouring that they are not forbidden, is a scandalizing of what God has enjoined, by choosing a human invention to the rejection of a divine appointment. If God is infinite in wisdom and love, a stern adherence to his precepts is our wisdom and profit. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous."

On the *subjects* of baptism greater length, and some reference to our worthy author's erring assertions, are requisite. The divinely approved subjects of Christian baptism can be ascertained only from the New Testament. Christ's commission, confirmed as to its import by previous and especially by subsequent practice, and by every reference to this ordinance in the oracles of God, is "the law," and "the testimony." An attempt to prove the rightful subjects of Christian baptism from God's word and Jewish proselyte baptism, is to imitate the Popish appeal to Scripture and tradition. Besides, no man upon earth *knows* that proselyte baptism had an existence in apostolic times, whilst every one may know that its origin is "of men," not "from heaven;" and that the Bible alone is man's rule of faith and practice. Every legitimate inference from every part of Holy Writ we admit.

We maintain that the only proper subjects of Christian baptism are believers in Christ, those proselyted to Christ, disciples of Christ; or, since we have not, and are not required to have access to the heart, those who make a credible profession of faith in Christ. This we believe to be taught in the divine precept, "Go ye therefore, and teach [*make disciples of*] all nations, baptizing them in [*into*] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;" and to be confirmed by the record, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

We maintain the sufficiency of the first Scripture, independently of the latter, on which we lay not stress in this controversy, knowing that in some manuscripts it is wanting, yet believing with almost all our opponents, that it belongs to the word "by inspiration given." The first quoted passage, the commission of Christ for the guidance of

his disciples, "unto the end of the world," does not say, first disciple, and then baptize, and then teach to observe all things, etc.; but that this is its import we maintain, from the construction of the entire precept, from what the apostles had before witnessed and practised, from their subsequent practice, and from every reference to baptism in their writings.

In understanding this passage, if we follow order, where above all places the most precise order might be expected, we must understand Christ's will to be, that we first make disciples, then baptize, etc. That order is not here to be regarded it devolves on the opponents of order to prove. In making disciples, the communication and the acceptance of truth, the teaching and the receiving of the good news, are requisite. After this and baptism, teaching is not to cease, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Nor is there anything in the passage demanding another interpretation.

It has indeed been said, that "them" after "baptizing" has "all nations" for its antecedent, that the discipling and baptizing are of equal extent, embracing the same persons, even every individual in all the nations; but that the discipling of all nations means the discipling of infants is no more apparent than that infants are included where we are taught that all nations shall call our Redeemer blessed, or when he predicted, "Ye shall be hated of all nations." Nor is the antecedent, as maintained, although grammatically admissible, a grammatical requirement. Also, "that the inspired writers, any more than other men, do not use the pronouns with such scrupulous exactness, is manifest" from an examination of the New Testament.

It is however maintained, and by some who denounce immersion as inconvenient and dangerous, that the commission teaches that we are to make disciples by baptizing and teaching, these present participles, following the command to disciple, certainly including the *accomplishment* of the discipling, and necessarily involving a *contemporaneous* act. The word "by" is however no more in Christ's words than are firstly and secondly. The word "by," though frequently admissible in such sentences without obscuring or altering the sense, is also frequently inadmissible, as involving the most obvious perversion of a writer's meaning. No one will doubt on reading, "He spake, saying," etc., or, "They cried, saying," etc., that the speaking or crying is accomplished by *saying*; but when we read, "The men marvelled, saying" (Matt. viii. 27), does any one doubt that the marvelling preceded and caused the saying, and that the marvelling was not accomplished *by* the saying? When our Saviour said, "Lend, hoping for nothing again" (Luke vi. 35), did he mean that the lending would be accomplished *by* hoping for nothing again? When we read, "Then came to him a man, kneeling down to him" (Matt. xvii. 14), do we understand that the coming to Christ was accomplished *by* kneeling, or that the kneeling was contemporaneous with the coming? No rule demands this absurdity. A thousand instances of such a construction in our own and the Greek language could be adduced as disproving the necessity of so understanding Christ's words.

Moreover, were "by" admissible before the participles "baptizing" and "teaching," infants would be excluded as incapable of being taught; or if admitted because in them it is the first part of discipling, it must be continued, if baptizing and teaching are contemporaneous with discipling and the fulfilling of it, until the baptizing and teaching have unitedly accomplished the discipling. If the baptizing commenced as soon as convenient after birth, its continuance would be, as we maintain, until Christ should be in them "the hope of glory," until they became believers in Christ, or made a credible profession of this faith. Any rule that would unite the participle "baptizing" to the verb disciple, and make it the accomplishment of discipling and a contemporaneous act, would also unite the participle "teaching."

Nor is there a noted Paedobaptist commentator, or controversialist, whom we remember, who does not interpret baptism into the name of Father, Son, and Spirit, baptism *into Christ*, or into Moses, as involving a *profession* and consecration; which interpretation necessarily excludes infants. Dr. Martensen says that "baptism, as a human ceremony, is an act of confession, by which a person is admitted into Christ's church;" that "the sacraments, as acts

of the church, are chiefly to be viewed as acts of profession (*notae professionis*), visible, sensible acts, by participating in which, each person indeed confesses his Lord and the church." Mr. Watson says: "That Christ is formed in us (Gal. iv. 19); that our nature is changed; that we are made holy and heavenly; this is to be baptized into Jesus. Rom. vi. 3." He further speaks of an "oath of allegiance" which we make to God in baptism. Yet it is also said by him on Christ's commission, "The Greek is, 'Make disciples of all nations.' If it be asked, how should we make them disciples? it follows, 'Baptizing them and teaching them.' In a heathen nation, first teach, and then baptize them; but in a Christian church, first baptize, and then teach them" (p. 380). Not only has Christ given no intimation of two ways of discipling, not only do the inspired writings contain no record of apostolic discipling in two ways, but the very records of discipling and baptizing the heathen, as at Philippi and Corinth, are the records from which our opponents advocate their first baptizing and then teaching.

We admit that in accordance with human phraseology, the word "disciples" is used in Scripture in application not only to those who were really, but also to those who were professedly disciples. Yet assuredly the Saviour did not wish his apostles, nor does he wish us, to make hypocrites; although not having access to the heart, we may sometimes baptize the unworthy, as Philip baptized Simon. This inevitable fallibility we deem no more condemnable in ourselves than in the evangelist. From this necessary weakness of humanity, we may not only sometimes receive the unworthy to baptism and the Lord's Supper, but may also induct such into the highest office in the church of Christ. We are not justified for this reason in altering the import of a disciple of Christ, solemnly and explicitly given by the Saviour himself.

The tendency of paedobaptism, as we could clearly show, is to pervert the import of a disciple of Christ, by teaching that an unconscious babe, that a child who can answer certain questions, yea, that a man or woman known to be ungodly, may, by baptism, become a disciple of Christ! Thus while certain conformists, maintaining justification by faith, are inconsistently teaching that baptism regenerates and converts into a child of God, certain nonconformists, maintaining the divine truth of salvation by grace through faith, teach that baptism disciplines to Christ! A correct interpretation of *discipling* excludes infants from the commission.

According to this natural import of Christ's words, namely, that we are to disciple to him, to baptize into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to teach obedience in all things to Christ's commands, we further conceive the apostles must have understood Christ, *on account of the baptism they had already witnessed and practised*. They knew not, so far as we are aware, any other baptism than John's, and that of Jesus through themselves. Were we to bind with the Bible all the Rabbinical lumber and all the condemned (or approved) Jewish traditions that the world contains, we should, while dishonouring the sufficiency of inspired writ, be in the same destitution of evidence that the apostles knew of any other baptisms than those recorded in the oracles of God. John "baptized with the baptism *of repentance*, saying unto the people, that they should *believe on him who should come after him*, that is, on Christ Jesus, (Acts xix. 4.) They "were baptized of him in Jordan, *confessing their sins*." (Mark i. 5.) It was a baptism "into repentance," as this was the state professed by them while confessing their sins and being baptized.

Until our Lord's commission, the Scriptures speak of no baptism from heaven in addition to John's, except that of Christ by means of his disciples. Concerning this the inspired record is, first, that "He baptized" (John iii. 22), and secondly, that "He made and baptized more disciples than John, though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples." (John iv. 1, 2.) He baptized *disciples*. He *made* AND baptized them. The instruction from this baptism can only be in favour of first making disciples, and then baptizing them. The whole of divine revelation respecting every baptism from heaven which the apostles had previously witnessed or practised, confirms our belief that they would certainly understand Christ's words according to their natural import already indicated.

We finally maintain that our view of the commission is correct, because the apostles so understood it, as their subsequent conduct and writings abundantly evidence. Peter on the day of Pentecost first preached the gospel of

Christ, and then taught the anxiously enquiring to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. They must change their minds, having been unbelieving in regard to Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour, and on this faith in Christ, to which God's Spirit was drawing and helping them, be baptized, thus in obedience to Christ, avowing their belief in him as the Messiah and their Saviour. And after further exhortation and instruction from Peter, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The next record of baptism thus reads: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."

The next recorded baptism is that of the praying "brother Saul," whom the Lord had met on his way to Damascus. The next recorded baptism is that of Cornelius and "his kinsmen and near friends," of whose baptism Peter judged all would approve, since while hearing Peter's words of divine instruction the Lord had baptized them with the Holy Ghost, and they were heard to "speak with tongues, and magnify God."

The next baptisms on record are those at Philippi and Corinth, adduced by Mr. Watson as proving that the apostles, in baptizing "whole families," baptized "little children" and "servants" (p. 381). We admit that, in Lydia's case, we have the record that "she was baptized, and her household," and the previous record respecting her, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul," while nothing is said respecting the character of "her household." This proves not that Lydia had either husband or child. The household of this "seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira," might consist wholly of servants. Silence here neither proves nor confirms anything in favour of paedobaptism. Having no record respecting the character of this household, we are bound to believe that apostolic practice here accorded with previous and subsequent apostolic practice.

The next baptism, that of the jailor "and all his," is one from which infants are clearly excluded. Paul and Silas "spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house;" and after baptism, "he set meat before them and rejoiced, believing (having believed) in God with all his house." The next record is equally explicit, and opposed to the baptism of infants or unbelievers. "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized." The baptism of "certain disciples" at Ephesus, of whom we read, "And all the men were about twelve," equally refuses its aid to the baptism of infants; while "the household of Stephanas," of whom Paul says, "They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints," cannot be brought to the rescue of our opponents.

Arguments from references to baptism in God's word are as futile as those from precepts and examples in favour of baptizing infants. The apostle of the Gentiles appeals to all the "saints" in "Rome," that as "dead to sin," they had been "baptized into Jesus Christ," "baptized into his death," and "buried with him by baptism into death." Their having been baptized demanded that they "should walk in newness of life." Is this applicable to infants? To the churches of Galatia he wrote, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Of the Colossians he writes, "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." The last mention of baptism is by Peter, who speaks of baptism as "the answer of a good conscience toward God." Thus condemnatory of paedobaptism is the entire New Testament.

But to another refuge the advocates of paedobaptism usually resort. Hence, in answer to the question,

"How does it appear that children have a right to baptism?" we read, "Children are parties to the covenant of grace. The covenant was made with them. 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.' Gen. xvii. 7. 'The promise is to you and to your children.' The covenant of grace may be considered either, 1. More strictly, as an absolute promise to give saving grace; and so none but the elect are in covenant with God. Or (2.) More largely, as a covenant containing in it many outward glorious privileges, in which respects the children of believers do belong to the covenant of grace," and "cannot justly be denied baptism, which is its seal. It is certain the children of believers were once visibly in covenant with God, and received the seal of their admission into the church. Where now do we find this covenant interest, or church membership of infants, repealed or made void? Certainly Jesus Christ did not come to put believers in a worse condition than they were in before. If the children of believers should not be baptized, they are in worse condition now than they were in before Christ's coming" (p. 380).

In this extract from Watson, God's gracious covenant with Abraham, or one of God's covenants with him, is styled "the covenant of grace." But the covenant of grace commenced with Adam, whether we restrict it to "the elect," those chosen to salvation, or regard it "more largely" as referring to "outward glorious privileges." Again, God's covenant with Abraham was not a covenant with the elect of mankind, nor with the whole race, nor with Abraham and the elect descending from him, nor with Abraham and exclusively the children of believers, nor with any children for the sake of their parents, excepting Abraham's own children.

Nor can the Pentecostal promise of Peter be proved to have any connection with, or reference to, the Abrahamic covenant, admitting that, as some promises resemble others, this and the immediately following may remind us of the predictions that in Abraham and his seed all the nations and all the families of the earth shall be blessed. That all Abraham's descendents were elected to salvation no one believes; nor is it less apparent that the children of wicked parents received the token of the covenant, as well as the children of believing parents; and in every instance beyond that of Abraham's children, not from filial relationship, but from relationship to Abraham.

"The sons of David," as says Dr. Halley, "were circumcised according to the same law, and therefore, for the same reason as the sons of that worshipper of Baal, Ahab, and of that wicked woman, Jezebel." Nor was the covenant of God with Abraham and his seed a covenant with his seed *as infants*, but with his descendants. If the token of the covenant had been disobediently neglected, it might at any age, and irrespective of character in its recipient or the parent, be performed from relationship to Abraham. Not one of Abraham's natural seed is another Abraham, nor is one believer. But all believers may be spoken of as the (believing) children of faithful Abraham. That God graciously entered into covenant with all Abraham's descendants for his sake, and instituted a sign to be fixed on every male, is no evidence that God has entered into covenant with the natural children of every believer, and with each child for the parent's sake, and that the baptism of male and female *infants* of believers is the appointed sign of this covenant. Where is such a law but in the writings of Paedobaptists?

The "covenant interest" of "the children of believers" as such, or of "infants" of believers, or the "church membership of infants," and "the seal of their admission into the church," giving to the word "church" any idea resembling its New Testament use in application to the church, or a church of Christ, needed not to be "repealed or made void," because they had never existed. If God's covenanting with Abraham and his seed, and instituting the sign of circumcision in males, proves the church membership of the seed of Abraham, it proves an Ishmaelitic as well as an Israelitic church of God, and a church to which ungodly adults, equally with the infants of believers, belonged. If circumcision is the *seal of admission into the church*, there has been not only a Jewish church, but an Edomite, a Moabite, an Ammonite church. Did Episcopalians and all others who believe a church of Christ to be "a congregation of faithful men," always speak consistently with this, we should hear less of any *nation* at any period,

or of any *building* in any place, as a church. Why should we not, except where the idea of assembly exists, after the manner of inspired writers, speak of those who anciently enjoyed the divine favour, as saints, as the people of God, as those that feared the Lord, as the righteous, etc., instead of confoundingly speaking of the church before the flood, the patriarchal, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, the Jewish (etc.) church?

The children of believers, if not baptized, are not in "a worse condition" than were the circumcised children of believers before the Christian dispensation. Grace is not, and never was, hereditary. The "sons of God" have ever been those "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." In every age have men become "the children of God by faith." This faith has been stronger, and has shone more conspicuously and gloriously, in some than in others; but "without faith it is impossible to please" God, and it ever has been (Heb. xi., 6, etc.). The application of this to those only who are capable of believing, none can doubt. It is equally clear that the faith of some must have had reference to a Messiah to come, and of others to a Messiah who had appeared. We doubt not that the children of believers, they and their parents being spared, have had, and to the end of prevailing and parental ungodliness will have, advantages not possessed by the children of unbelievers. Parental piety superadded to parental affection necessitates this. Nor can there be hindrance--we shall not now speak of the encouragement and help--from him who has left it on record, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

There is not however the slightest intimation in God's word that "the children of believers," or "the infant seed of believers," in distinction from the children or infant seed of unbelievers, constitute or belong to "the election of grace." The attempt to found such an hypothesis on the covenant with Abraham and his seed, requires the belief that grace is hereditary; that all Abraham's posterity were in infancy the children of God and heirs of heaven *through their relationship to Abraham*, whatever their subsequent piety or ungodliness, salvation or damnation; that divine grace through Abraham naturally and efficaciously descended through all his seed, or, if it is preferred, through all his seed in the line of Isaac and Jacob, until the coming of Christ, when the infant seed of believers have the same "claim to the covenant of grace as their parents; and having a right to the covenant, they cannot justly be denied baptism." What inference is possible from this reasoning, but that the infant seed of all from Abraham to Christ, who descended not from Abraham, were heirs of hell? and that it is now, and from the time of Christ has been, the condition of all infants having unbelieving parents? Besides, unless circumcision introduced into the covenant of grace, or confirmed spiritual blessings, or promoted spiritual along with its temporal good, and unless the baptism of infants secures temporal or spiritual good to the same extent, which also the lack of baptism by infants prevents, the implied retaining of the same blessings since by baptism, and the inferred diminution of blessings by the omitted infant baptism, fall to the ground. We might also inquire of some, Can the blessings of the covenant, to those born in the covenant, and who have its blessings signed and sealed to them, slip out of their hands?

It has probably been reserved to Dr. Bushnell, while saying many good things on parental influence and obligations, in advocating the baptism of infants, to carry filial relationship and its effects to their most absurd and monstrous extent. He teaches, in his *Christian Nurture*, that "until the child comes to his will, we must regard him still as held within the matrix of the parental life" (p. 97); that the covenant with Abraham "was a family covenant, in which God engaged to be the God of the seed as of the father. And the seal of the covenant was a seal of *faith*, applied to the whole house, as if the continuity of faith were somehow to be, or somehow might be, maintained in a line that is parallel with the continuity of sin in the family" (p. 106); that "the old rite of proselyte baptism, which made the families receiving it Jewish citizens and children of Abraham, was applied over directly to the Christian uses, and the rite went by 'households'" (p. 107); that by "organic unity in families," we have "the only true solution of the Christian church and of baptism as related to membership" (p. 108); that "baptism is applied to the child on the ground of its organic unity with the parent, imparting and pledging a grace to sanctify that unity, and make it good in the field of religion" (p. 110); that the child "is taken to be regenerate, not historically speaking, but presumptively, on the ground of his known connection with the parent character, and the divine or church life, which is the life of that character" (p. 110); and "that the child is *potentially* regenerate, being regarded as existing in connection with

powers and causes that *contain* the fact before time, and separate from time" (p. 110). Thus the "seal of *faith*" has belonged to infants and unbelievers, and now belongs, and is restricted to, believers and their children!

If Jewish "proselyte baptism" is made "over directly to the Christian uses," this is, of course, taught in God's word, or we are expressly or by implication taught, that the Jewish Talmud, a Rabbinical composition of the third century of the Christian era, belongs wholly, or in some specified part, to the oracles of God! We deny not "an organic unity" in any man, or any animal, having head, heart, lungs, liver, etc.; nor do we deny a union between Christ and his people, so that he lives in them; but we deny a union between children and parents, so that when father or mother is converted, the child becomes a "new creature," or becomes then, and not before, "potentially regenerate." We maintain that man becomes potentially regenerate, not through organic unity with any believing man, but as belonging to those for whom God has instituted an economy of grace, no man becoming potentially regenerate but through the sacrifice of the Son of God, which atones for sin and secures the bestowment of the divine Spirit. Well may Dr. B. piteously exclaim on his "doctrine of organic unity," "as a ready solvent for the rather perplexing difficulties of this difficult subject," that "one difficulty remains, namely, that so few can believe it" (p. 111). There is as much evidence that a child is baptized in the baptism of the parent, as that it is regenerated in the regeneration of the parent; yea, that the whole life and character of the child, and its eternal salvation or damnation, are that of the parent.

We believe that the circumcision, not only of male adults, but of male *infants*, was divinely enjoined, and that the unconsciousness of the latter constituted no hindrance to an accomplishment of the design of this institution; and we doubt not God's right, if he had seen it good, to institute a rite under the Christian dispensation that should embrace the unconscious, both males and females; but we deny the shadow of evidence that he has so enacted. The existence of circumcision from Abraham proves it not.

Nor are we taught that baptism is in the place of circumcision, although in some things there is a resemblance in one to the other. The antitype of circumcision, or spiritual, Christian circumcision, is the renewal of the heart. Rom. ii. 28, 29; 1 Cor. vii. 19; Gal. vi. 15; Phil. iii. 3; Col. ii. 11. The apostles and elders gathered together in Jerusalem, to consider the necessity of circumcision, which some of the baptized Jewish believers maintained, drop not a single hint to the erring, that baptism is in place of circumcision. The apostle of the Gentiles, warning the Colossian believers, and rebuking those in the churches of Galatia who held the destructive error, instead of teaching that baptism occupies the place of circumcision, teaches that Christian circumcision, the circumcision of Christ, is a circumcision "without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." Nor is there in the fact that all children, or all the children of believers, are of "the kingdom of God," a particle of evidence that God has commanded their baptism.

The Scriptures which speak of baptism, recording its appointment, its practice, its nature, design, or benefit, are those from which its divinely approved subjects can be learned. These speak of confession of sin, repentance, faith in Christ, discipleship, a good conscience, as characteristic of the baptized. Not a word is recorded respecting parents or others as proxies for "the child's personal engagement" (p. 381). Ourselves, our children, and all we possess, are God's property; and with all, as "his servants," God has a sovereign right to deal. The duty of baptism is not learnt from this fact, but from the revelation of God's will.

The apostle Paul, speaking of the marriage bond, when one partner has become a Christian, and the other remains an unbeliever, teaches a sacredness in the children and the unbelieving partner that forbids a dissolution of the connection; but, while attributing the same holiness to the children and the unbelieving partner he says not a syllable implying a "right and title to baptism" (p. 382). Everything really included in parental dedication is as much the privilege of the Baptist as Paedobaptist. It is a benefit to the child when no deceptive substitute has been performed on him, preventing, or helping to prevent, his personal, conscious, voluntary, and acceptable obedience to God's

command.

The obtaining by infants, through baptism, of entrance into the church, of "a right sealed to the ordinances," that is, to the Lord's Supper, etc., and of "the tutelage of angels to be the infant's lifeguard," may be in the imagination of Paedobaptists; but these are not in the word of God, any more than that baptism is to elected infants "a 'seal of the righteousness of faith,' a layer of regeneration, and a badge of adoption" (p. 380). Not only are the Scriptures silent respecting infant baptism, but every record relating to baptism, forbids its existence in apostolic times, and its right to a subsequent existence. Nor does Irenaeus, or any of the earliest fathers, say one word favouring the supposition of its existence, notwithstanding the inference that is drawn by some of the Paedobaptists from one passage in Irenaeus. What authority has a practice that can but be proved as possibly beginning to exist at the close of the second, or in the early part of the third century? For Tertullian, dissuading from the baptism of children, may not refer to infants. The existence of infant baptism in the third century is certain. The existence in the third, and in the preceding century, of sentiments on the efficacy of baptism, and of various practices which have no foundation in Holy Writ, is easily and abundantly proved. But neither infant baptism nor any other practice could be sanctioned by evidence of existence in the age immediately succeeding the apostolic period, or existence in apostolic times, if destitute of apostolic sanction; and especially if opposed to, and destructive of, what is divinely enjoined. The fact that inspired writers, in recording baptisms, except where the baptism of parents and other members of the family take place at the same time, say nothing as to parental piety, accords with and corroborates our view of baptism as a personal and voluntary profession and engagement. Every record of baptisms in Holy Writ, and every reference to baptism, is a confirmation of believers' baptism as the "one baptism" for parents and children, for every generation, and for all alike, to the end of time.

Nor are we ashamed of the Baptist, as compared with the Paedobaptist history, tracing it through every age, and in every country, from apostolic to the present times, although we are not disposed to boast of our own righteousness. We justify not "the doings of the Anabaptists in Germany," though Paedobaptists were united with them, and all were then but emerging from the darkness and errors of Popery. We believe in what has just fallen from the lips of the Rev. W. Walters respecting the Baptists of this country. "From the beginning," says Locke, 'they were the friends and advocates of absolute liberty--just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty.' The claim which we make to have been the first expositors and advocates in modern times of religious liberty, is based on the surest foundation, and is capable of the most satisfactory proof."

Instead of exalting believers' baptism above measure, we say in the words of our honourable and Rev. brother Noel, "It is not separation from the church of Rome, or from the church of England, nor a scriptural organisation, nor evangelical doctrine which can alone secure our Saviour's approbation." They who speak of infant baptism as a putting of the child's name in a will by the parent, need to be reminded of God's prerogative, and of the character of his government as revealed in the words: "All souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Who, believing this testimony, can also believe that unbaptized infants are "sucking pagans," while those kindly baptized through parental influence are sucking Christians?

The baptism of believers, we believe to be a reasonable, scriptural, and profitable service, calculated to strengthen and perpetuate every right feeling and conduct. But in whatever esteem we hold the erring Paedobaptist, and however cordially we say, and hope ever to say, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," we are obliged to think and speak of infant baptism according to a writer before quoted. "In it there is no conscience, no will, no reasonable service. It allies persons without their consent, or even their intelligence, to a religious creed; it forces upon them an unreasoning and unwilling service; it imposes upon them an unconscious profession; it anticipates the conduct of riper years to a degree which both nature and Scripture condemn; and is therefore a violation of their just rights."

The above article was originally written as an appendix to Rev. Thomas Watson's *Body of Divinity Contained in Sermons Upon the Assembly's Catechism*, A New and Complete Edition, Revised and Adapted to Modern Readers, by the Rev. George Rogers. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



News

Southern Baptist Founders Conference Midwest

The venue for this year's conference is First Baptist Church of St. Peters, MO. The theme is "The Essence of the Gospel" with keynote speakers, Dr. Tom Nettles of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Dr. Richard Belcher of Columbia International University. The conference will meet March 9-11. For a brochure or more information contact Joe Braden at (314) 397-3405 or Curtis McClain at (314) 936-0858.

Southern Baptist Founders YOUTH Conference

This year's conference will meet for the first time at Toccoa Falls Bible College in Toccoa Falls, GA. The theme is "The Providence of God" and will be addressed by keynote speakers Steve Lawson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, AL and Lance Quinn, pastor of The Bible Church of Little Rock. Dates are June 21-25. Cost is \$200 per person if registration is received by April 30. For more information contact Bill Ascol at (318) 798-7088; email: tuliplover@earthlink.net.

Doctrines of Grace Conference

Elm Street Baptist Church, Sweet Home, OR is holding their annual conference on March 19-21, 1999. The keynote speaker is noted author and pastor, Dr. Roger Ellsworth. Also participating will be Richard and Pearl Denham from FIEL publications in Brazil. A brochure and information can be obtained by phone (541) 367-8082 or e-mail speckled@peak.org.

Glory of Christ Bible Conference

Del-Haven Ministries, First Baptist Church of Oak Grove, and Heritage Reformed Baptist Church will hold a conference May 13-15, 1999. at First Baptist Church, Oak Grove, MO. The conference theme will be "Preach the Word" and speakers will include Dr. Mark Coppenger, President of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Dr. Don Whitney, Professor of Spiritual Formation at Midwestern, and Jim Elliff, President and Founder of Christian Communicators Worldwide and resident consultant for Midwestern Center for Biblical Revival There is no charge to attend, but advanced reservations are recommended. Call (816) 920-3588 for more information.



Book Reviews

The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism. By Pierre Ch. Marcel. Translated from the French by Philip Edgcumbe Hughes. London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1959, 256 pages.

Reviewed by [Fred A. Malone](#)

Considered a classic work on infant baptism for decades, Pierre Marcel's *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism* is a "must" read for anyone who wants to understand the strengths and the weaknesses of the Paedobaptist position. Marcel was a pastor of the French Reformed Church, Editor-in-Chief of *LaRevue Reformee*, Vice-President of the Calvinist society of France, and lectured in the Free Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris. His purpose in writing was to refute the attacks upon infant baptism led by Karl Barth and F. J. Leenhardt.

Marcel takes his antagonists on in vigorous style. Highly respected as a defender of the Reformed Faith in France, Marcel's work is highly respected by Paedobaptists worldwide as a classic argument and is highly recommended by Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, the equally esteemed translator of this work. Marcel rejects the voice of tradition in the second and third centuries, used by many Paedobaptists, as having any validity in the argument. As we all wish to do, he desires his argument to be based upon *sola Scriptura*.

Divided into three parts, the book covers a general study of the sacraments, the covenant of grace, and baptism as a sacrament of the covenant of grace. The first part sets forth Marcel's premises and presuppositions, while the second and third explain his theology of the covenants and of infant baptism. As Marcel states throughout the book: "The covenant of grace is the foundation of baptism."

From this premise, he argues that the covenant of grace is the historical outworking of the covenant of redemption and, by biblical definition, includes the organic seed of believers. Therefore, since the covenant of grace to Abraham included his organic seed who received circumcision as a sign and seal of the covenant, so the covenant of grace in the New Covenant administration automatically includes the organic seed of believers who may receive infant baptism. For Marcel, the only acceptable evidence which could possibly exclude children of believers in the New Covenant administration of baptism would be a positive statement in the New Testament which specifically prohibits the baptism of infants.

His primary argument against Baptists is that they hold to *a priori* notions which color the way they read Scripture and interpret clear biblical texts on the covenants, thus coming to a faulty position in the end. He believes that *a priori* notions have little effect the paedobaptist position.

As a Baptist who once was convinced by Marcel's book to become a Presbyterian, and who has read this book five times, the reviewer now notices a number of weaknesses in Marcel's presentation. There are exegetical errors, hermeneutical mistakes, and contradictory language which bothers the close reader.

First, the exegetical. Marcel erroneously uses Eph. 1:13-14 and 4:30 to establish baptism as a seal of the covenant of grace corresponding to Abraham's circumcision, which was a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised. He states that "the exegetes" understand "after having believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" to refer to baptism as a seal of the covenant of grace. However, "the [Paedobaptist]exegetes" such as Charles Hodge and William Hendriksen do not even mention baptism in these texts and understand the seal to be the Holy Spirit's sealing of the heart. This is what Baptists have contended all along, that the only seal of the New

Covenant mentioned in the New Testament is the Holy Spirit who seals the heart of every New Covenant member. Thus, the fulfillment of circumcision as the sign and seal of Abraham's faith is not baptism, but Holy Spirit regeneration, the seal of the New Covenant. The sign of that sealing is baptism. Therefore, those "disciples" alone who exhibit outward repentance and faith as evidence of Holy Spirit regeneration are baptized (Matt. 28:18-20; John 4:1; Acts 6:1; 9:26, 38; 11:26, 29; 13:52; 14:20, 22, 28).

A second exegetical error identifies the parable of the wheat and the tares as a justification for including the unregenerate in the kingdom of God, the church, and the covenant of grace. This is specifically applied to the unregenerate children of believers thereby entitling them to baptism (126-127). Marcel erroneously joins this parable with the root and branches metaphor of Rom. 11, thus condemning efforts to separate the wheat and the tares in building the church. However, the parable of the wheat and the tares is clear. The field is the world, not the church as Paedobaptists often claim (Matt. 13:38). This attempt to refute the Baptist argument of baptizing disciples alone confuses the issue. We all agree that a person may be baptized and yet unregenerate in the church. The issue is that certain New Testament texts are misinterpreted by Marcel to fit his *a priori* theology of infant baptism. His accusation that Baptists approach texts with *a priori* prejudices does not stand when compared with his own exegesis.

A third exegetical error concerns Col. 2:11-12, often used by Paedobaptists as a proof text to support baptism as the fulfillment of circumcision thereby permitting infant baptism by "good and necessary inference." He states:

The text of Colossians ii. 11 f. plainly links circumcision to baptism and teaches that the circumcision of Christ, that is to say, the circumcision of the heart, signified by the circumcision in the flesh (cf. Rom. ii. 28f.), is achieved by baptism, that is to say, by that which baptism signifies. They are grafted into Christ by means and in virtue of the circumcision which Christ Himself endured at His death for sin, at the same moment as they are buried and resurrected with Christ by baptism (156).

On the one hand, Marcel wants to say that the circumcision of Christ in the heart is the fulfillment of physical circumcision. On the other hand he actually says that the fulfillment is "by baptism." Does he really mean to say that one is "grafted into Christ" at the same moment that he is buried and resurrected "by baptism?" Does he mean physical baptism or spiritual baptism at regeneration? His language is so imprecise that one wonders if he is teaching sacramentalism. Marcel is so intent on identifying circumcision and baptism that he claims that the circumcision of Christ is achieved "by baptism, that is to say, by that which baptism signifies." Well, which does he mean? By physical baptism? Or by that which it signifies, which is the circumcision of the heart by Christ? It cannot be both. Baptists say that circumcision is fulfilled by that which baptism signifies. Marcel says "by baptism" itself. Such imprecise exegesis and expression is typical of his arguments. Other examples such as his treatments of Act 2:38-39 or 1 Cor. 7:14 could also be cited.

Besides exegetical errors, Marcel makes a number of hermeneutical mistakes. First, as so often happens in paedobaptist theology, he completely identifies the Abrahamic Covenant as the covenant of grace, thereby including an organic element in the very definition of a covenant. This is a hermeneutical mistake simply because there are other divine covenants described in the Scripture which have no organic element attached, for example, the Noahic Covenant. If one wishes to include Noah's family as an organic element, then one must ask if in-laws should be included in covenant concept and signs. The definition of a covenant must be defined from Scriptural usage first as a promise, oath, or bond (Heb. 6:13-18). Then each covenant's stipulations must be determined by written revelation, not "good and necessary inference." This is Puritan theologian John Owen's view (see his Hebrews 8 commentary).

For instance, the Abrahamic Covenant included the organic seed of Abraham, heart-changed or not. However, the New Covenant, by self-definition, shifts to a more individual covenant which only includes those who have a

changed heart and the forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:27-34;32:40). Marcel's a priori definition of a covenant automatically to include organic seed in the New Covenant is a major hermeneutical mistake which, absurdly, would require a New Testament statement to prohibit infant baptism, even if it were never practiced (121-122). To Marcel, the positive commands and examples which define the New Covenant and institute baptism in the New Testament are not enough to define baptismal candidates as exclusively those who repent and believe. The *a priori* assumption of organic seed in the Covenant of Grace carries more authority to Marcel than explicit statements of revelation.

Marcel's view is a violation of the Reformed regulative principle of worship and a violation of the hermeneutical principle that the New is the final interpreter of the Old. Marcel actually states that God gives "general instruction" to the church concerning baptism in the New Testament and we, like we must do in preaching, must apply it concretely to life by baptizing infants according to "normative principles" (190). This astonishing admission that infant baptism is established on "normative principles" reveals that it violates the regulative principle. Thus, the regulative principle is transformed into the normative principle, allowing one to go beyond Scriptural elements of worship into unprescribed practices, as long as the church calls it application. John Frame has justified drama and dance in just this same manner (see his *Worship in the Spirit and Truth*, 93). What can come next by such inference and application?

Finally, there is a lot of confusing, unsubstantiated, and contradictory language in Marcel's work. He actually states that it is more likely that those who are baptized as infants will be converted than those who are baptized upon profession of their faith (232). No evidence is cited for this assertion despite the current weaknesses of many Baptist denominations. Further, this claim rings hollow in light of overwhelming witness of nominal Christianity among Paedobaptists around the world today.

Other confusing language surrounds his discussion of the efficacy of baptism. While stating that the covenant of grace does not promise the salvation of every seed individually, but only in a collective sense, he also says, "Beyond doubt the promises of the covenant will be fulfilled when parents, clinging to these promises by faith, entreat and supplicate God, in the name of these promises, to be faithful to His promises in regard to their posterity" (113). He blames the lack of salvation among children of the covenant upon parental failure. They have believed only for themselves, not for their children as well (113-114).

Well, which is it? Does the covenant of grace only promise salvation in the collective seed, or is it each parent's fault when a child is not saved? It cannot be both. What guilt and burden this places upon faithful parents! Furthermore, how can this be reconciled with God's sovereign distinction between Jacob and Esau (Rom. 9).

Because of this confusing and contradictory language, one is baffled by what position parents and children are placed in when they reach the "age of discretion," which is twelve according to Marcel (99). If they do not commit themselves to the covenant by that age, then they may be subject to the discipline of the church for covenant breaking (131; this concept is so stated in the PCA book of church order). If they do not commit, the testimony of the parents is placed in jeopardy. Such confusing and contradictory language can only place enormous pressure upon parents and children to conform without true conversion.

Another instance of confusing language surrounds Marcel's definition of the position of believer's children in the covenant. Though he may mean "that which baptism signifies," he actually says, "Original sin is, indeed, partially and in principle nullified by baptism, though not totally so" (147). Baptism for children of believers is warranted because they are "separate from the profane world and are placed neither under God's judgment nor under Satan's power. God regards them as members of His kingdom," (191). God "says that He has removed [condemnation] for the children of the covenant" (108). Furthermore, the Lord "according to the promise, restores liberty of choice to the children of the covenant, with the result that, confronted with the alternative of life or death, they are able voluntarily

and freely to embrace the one or the other" (110). Such confusing language seems to remove covenant children from the Covenant of Works, the blinding damage of original sin, the condemnation of God, and places them in a new, third category of men who have more ability than unbelievers.

If this is Marcel's way of insuring parents when their underage children die that they are safe, or if it is his way to pressure twelve-year olds to acquiesce to the covenant or else enter a new condemnation, it is a weak attempt biblically. There is no biblical basis for such confusing language. Children of believers are just as much under the Covenant of Works as pagan children; everyone is either in Adam or in Christ (Romans 5). There is no third way. And they are just as responsible to repent and believe on the basis of their sins (not on the basis of their covenant position) as pagan children are. Such confusing language may attract parents to baptize their babies to assure their salvation, but it may also prevent parents from calling their children to repent and to believe in Christ under the assumption that they are safe.

Pierre Marcel's arguments sound convincing to the novice reader and intellectually stimulating to the convinced Paedobaptist. However, the faulty exegesis, logical inconsistencies, confusing language, and theological speculation are too unbiblical to be taken seriously as a challenge to the informed Baptist position. That is, of course, unless *one a priori* wants to believe it.

The Life and Ministry of John Gano, Volume 1. By Terry Wolever. Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998. 454 pages, Hardback, \$32.00.

Reviewed by [Douglas R. Shivers](#)

Particular Baptist Press, the brainchild of Pastor Gary Long, Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Springfield, Missouri, has published its second work. This is the first in the "Philadelphia Association Series," which will chronicle the lives of influential Calvinistic Baptists in America. (The previous volume, *The Life and Works of Joseph Kinghorn*, Volume 1, is the first in a series dealing with British Particular Baptists.)

Readers will find Terry Wolever, the editor of this work, to be an exceptionally knowledgeable Baptist historian. His rigorous research for this book, including an extensive investigation into the archives of seminaries and historical societies, resulted in a bounty of materials about this little known Baptist giant. As a result, what was intended to be a single volume under 200 pages grew into a sizable two-volume project.

An excellent appendix within the book, "The Particular Baptists in North Carolina: An Appraisal Appraised," is particularly noteworthy. In this appendix, Wolever interacts with George W. Paschal who seems to think that Particular Baptists were the source of theological and ecclesiological ills. Some of the accusations are tired old things, such as being "anti-missionary." The editor does a fine job of refuting Paschal's proposals with solid, historical facts.

Other items of interest include sermon notes by Gano on Ephesians 1:6b, "Wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." The original notes are accompanied by a facsimile. Excerpts from the minutes of period church meetings, as well as Associational meetings in colonial America are also interesting. They give evidence of a warm-hearted

Calvinism in early American Baptist life.

It should be noted that, in the presentation of this work, Wolever's love for the old writers is evidenced in his emulation of their writing style, requiring more dedicated labor in reading. The editor is not overly concerned with presenting the material in a readily digested style for our own generation. Substantial repetition between Wolever's biographical material and the "Biographical Memoir" by Stephen Gano, John's son, both of which are provided in the main text, also creates a reading challenge. The memoir would have been better placed in the appendix. Wolever's warning of a "disjointed flow" (p. 9) may be understated. It is also curious that Wolever takes theological issue with an account of a sermon by Gano in a footnote on page 293 regarding the "free offer" of the gospel. Debate on issues of theological controversy seem misplaced in an historical account.

Despite these textual considerations, this book is a wonderful gift to Baptists. In a time when history in general and Baptist history in particular is considered a wasteland, the work of Particular Baptist Press is a welcome voice in the wilderness. Very few Baptists can align themselves with the historic Baptist community beyond a rudimentary declaration of, "I am a Baptist." Their knowledge of Baptist history drops into never-never land beyond their own immediate parentage: "I learned about being a Baptist from Grandma, and she got her information directly from the Apostle Paul."

If you suspect there is more Baptist heritage than "Grandma," or if you're already a serious student of Baptist heritage (and can approach textual style with good humor), this book will be a bonus for your history shelf. We'll be watching for future works from Particular Baptist Press.

