

# A Puritan's Mind

JOHN 5:39, "...SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES..."

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## Dr. John Calvin on Infant Baptism

What did Calvin believe on the issue of infant baptism?  
this is a "small" portion taken from the *Institutes*.

***Institutes of the Christian Religion, 4:16 on Infant baptism***  
by Dr. John Calvin

### Sections.

1. [Paedobaptism. The consideration of the question necessary and useful. Paedobaptism of divine origin.](#)
2. [This demonstrated from a consideration of the promises. These explain the nature and validity of paedobaptism.](#)
3. [Promises annexed to the symbol of water cannot be better seen than in the institution of circumcision.](#)
4. [The promise and thing figured in circumcision and baptism one and the same. The only difference in the external ceremony.](#)
5. [Hence the baptism of the children of Christian parents as competent as the circumcision of Jewish children. An objection founded on a stated day for circumcision refuted.](#)
6. [An argument for paedobaptism founded on the covenant which God made with Abraham. An objection disposed of. The grace of God not diminished by the advent of Christ.](#)
7. [Argument founded on Christ's invitation to children. Objection answered.](#)
8. [Objection, that no infants were baptised by the apostles. Answer. Objection, that paedobaptism is a novelty. Answer.](#)
9. [Twofold use and benefit of paedobaptism in respect, 1. Of parents. 2. Of children baptised.](#)
10. [Second part of the chapter, stating the arguments of Anabaptists. Alleged dissimilitude between baptism and circumcision. First answer.](#)
11. [Second answer. The covenant in baptism and circumcision not different.](#)
12. [Third answer.](#)
13. [Infants, both Jewish and Christian, comprehended in the covenant.](#)
14. [Objection considered.](#)
15. [The Jews being comprehended in the covenant, no substantial difference between baptism and circumcision.](#)
16. [Another argument of the Anabaptists considered.](#)
17. [Argument that children are not fit to understand baptism, and, therefore, should not be baptised.](#)
18. [Answer continued.](#)



[Back to the  
Covenant Theology](#)

[Francis Turretin](#)

[William Ames](#)

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[Samuel Rutherford](#)

[William Perkins](#)

[George Gillespie](#)

[Jonathan Edwards](#)

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[Buy Books Links](#)

[Internet Links](#)

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the [RPCGA](#).

18. [Answer continued.](#)
19. [Answer continued.](#)
20. [Answer continued.](#)
21. [Answer continued.](#)
22. [Argument, that baptism being appointed for the remission of sins, infants, not having sinned, ought not to be baptised. Answer.](#)
23. [Argument against paedobaptism, founded on the practice of the apostles. Answer.](#)
24. [Answer continued.](#)
25. [Argument founded on a saying of our Lord to Nicodemus. Answer.](#)
26. [Error of those who adjudge all who die unbaptised to eternal destruction.](#)
27. [Argument against paedobaptism, founded on the precept and example of our Saviour, in requiring instruction to precede baptism. Answer.](#)
28. [Answer continued.](#)
29. [Answer continued.](#)
30. [Argument, that there is no stronger reason for giving baptism to children than for giving them the Lord's Supper. Answer.](#)
31. [Last part of the chapter: refuting the arguments of Servetus.](#)
32. [Why Satan so violently assails paedobaptism.](#)

1. But since in this age, certain frenzied spirits have raised, and even now continue to raise, great disturbance in the Church on account of paedobaptism, I cannot avoid here, by way of appendix, adding something to restrain their fury. Should any one think me more prolix than the subject is worthy let him reflect that in a matter of the greatest moment, so much is due to the peace and purity of the Church, that we should not fastidiously object to whatever may be conducive to both. I may add, that I will study so to arrange this discussion, that it will tend, in no small degree, still farther to illustrate the subject of baptism. The argument by which paedobaptism is assailed is, no doubt, specious, viz., that it is not founded on the institution of God, but was introduced merely by human presumption and depraved curiosity, and afterwards, by a foolish facility, rashly received in practice; whereas a sacrament has not a thread to hang upon, if it rest not on the sure foundation of the word of God. But what if, when the matter is properly attended to, it should be found that a calumny is falsely and unjustly brought against the holy ordinance of the Lord? First, then, let us inquire into its origin. Should it appear to have been devised merely by human rashness, let us abandon it, and regulate the true observance of baptism entirely by the will of the Lord; but should it be proved to be by no means destitute of his sure authority, let us beware of discarding the sacred institutions of God, and thereby insulting their Author.

2. In the first place, then, it is a well-known doctrine, and one as to which all the pious are agreed, - that the right consideration of signs does not lie merely in the outward ceremonies but depends chiefly on the promise and the spiritual mysteries, to typify which, the ceremonies themselves are appointed. He, therefore, who would thoroughly understand the effect of baptism - its object and

true character - must not stop short at the element and corporeal object, but look forward to the divine promises which are therein offered to us, and rise to the internal secrets which are therein represented. He who understands these has reached the solid truth, and, so to speak, the whole substance of baptism, and will thence perceive the nature and use of outward sprinkling. On the other hand, he who passes them by in contempt, and keeps his thoughts entirely fixed on the visible ceremony, will neither understand the force, nor the proper nature of baptism, nor comprehend what is meant, or what end is gained by the use of water. This is confirmed by passages of Scripture too numerous and too clear to make it necessary here to discuss them more at length. It remains, therefore, to inquire into the nature and efficacy of baptism, as evinced by the promises therein given. Scripture shows, first, that it points to that cleansing from sin which we obtain by the blood of Christ; and, secondly, to the mortification of the flesh, which consists in participation in his death, by which believers are regenerated to newness of life, and thereby to the fellowship of Christ. To these general heads may be referred all that the Scriptures teach concerning baptism, with this addition, that it is also a symbol to testify our religion to men.

3. Now, since prior to the institution of baptism, the people of God had circumcision in its stead, let us see how far these two signs differ, and how far they resemble each other. In this way it will appear what analogy there is between them. When the Lord enjoins Abraham to observe circumcision, (Gen. 17: 10,) he premises that he would be a God unto him and to his seed, adding, that in himself was a perfect sufficiency of all things, and that Abraham might reckon on his hand as a fountain of every blessing. These words include the promise of eternal life, as our Saviour interprets when he employs it to prove the immortality and resurrection of believers: "God," says he, "is not the God of the dead, but of the living," (Matt. 22: 32.) Hence, too, Paul, when showing to the Ephesians how great the destruction was from which the Lord had delivered them, seeing that they had not been admitted to the covenant of circumcision, infers that at that time they were aliens from the covenant of promise, without God, and without hope, (Eph. 2: 12,) all these being comprehended in the covenant. Now, the first access to God, the first entrance to immortal life, is the remission of sins. Hence it follows, that this corresponds to the promise of our cleansing in baptism. The Lord afterwards covenants with Abraham, that he is to walk before him in sincerity and innocence of heart: this applies to mortification or regeneration. And lest any should doubt whether circumcision were the sign of mortification, Moses explains more clearly elsewhere when he exhorts the people of Israel to circumcise the          of their heart, because the Lord had chosen them for his own people, out of all the nations of the earth. As the Lord, in choosing the posterity of Abraham for his people, commands

them to be circumcised, so Moses declares that they are to be circumcised in heart, thus explaining what is typified by that carnal circumcision. Then, lest any one should attempt this in his own strength, he shows that it is the work of divine grace. All this is so often inculcated by the prophets, that there is no occasion here to collect the passages which everywhere occur. We have, therefore, a spiritual promise given to the fathers in circumcision, similar to that which is given to us in baptism, since it figured to them both the forgiveness of sins and the mortification of the flesh. Besides, as we have shown that Christ, in whom both of these reside, is the foundation of baptism, so must he also be the foundation of circumcision. For he is promised to Abraham, and in him all nations are blessed. To seal this grace, the sign of circumcision is added.

4. There is now no difficulty in seeing wherein the two signs agree, and wherein they differ. The promise, in which we have shown that the power of the signs consists, is one in both, viz., the promise of the paternal favour of God, of forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. And the thing figured is one and the same, viz., regeneration. The foundation on which the completion of these things depends is one in both. Wherefore, there is no difference in the internal meaning, from which the whole power and peculiar nature of the sacrament is to be estimated. The only difference which remains is in the external ceremony, which is the least part of it, the chief part consisting in the promise and the thing signified. Hence we may conclude, that every thing applicable to circumcision applies also to baptism, excepting always the difference in the visible ceremony. To this analogy and comparison we are led by that rule of the apostle, in which he enjoins us to bring every interpretation of Scripture to the analogy of faith, (Rom. 12: 3, 6.) And certainly in this matter the truth may almost be felt. For just as circumcision, which was a kind of badge to the Jews, assuring them that they were adopted as the people and family of God, was their first entrance into the Church, while they, in their turn, professed their allegiance to God, so now we are initiated by baptism, so as to be enrolled among his people, and at the same time swear unto his name. Hence it is incontrovertible, that baptism has been substituted for circumcision, and performs the same office.

5. Now, if we are to investigate whether or not baptism is justly given to infants, will we not say that the man trifles, or rather is delirious, who would stop short at the element of water, and the external observance, and not allow his mind to rise to the spiritual mystery? If reason is listened to, it will undoubtedly appear that baptism is properly administered to infants as a thing due to them. The Lord did not anciently bestow circumcision upon them without making them partakers of all the things signified by circumcision. He would have deluded his people with mere

imposture, had he quieted them with fallacious symbols: the very idea is shocking. I distinctly declares, that the circumcision of the infant will be instead of a seal of the promise of the covenant. But if the covenant remains firm and fixed, it is no less applicable to the children of Christians in the present day, than to the children of the Jews under the Old Testament. Now, if they are partakers of the thing signified, how can they be denied the sign? If they obtain the reality, how can they be refused the figure? The external sign is so united in the sacrament with the word, that it cannot be separated from it; but if they can be separated, to which of the two shall we attach the greater value? Surely, when we see that the sign is subservient to the word, we shall say that it is subordinate, and assign it the inferior place. Since, then, the word of baptism is destined for infants why should we deny them the signs which is an appendage of the word? This one reason, could no other be furnished, would be amply sufficient to refute all gainsayers. The objection, that there was a fixed day for circumcision, is a mere quibble. We admit that we are not now, like the Jews, tied down to certain days; but when the Lord declares that though he prescribes no day, yet he is pleased that infants shall be formally admitted to his covenant, what more do we ask?

6. Scripture gives us a still clearer knowledge of the truth. For it is most evident that the covenant, which the Lord once made with Abraham, is not less applicable to Christians now than it was anciently to the Jewish people, and, therefore, that word has no less reference to Christians than to Jews. Unless, indeed, we imagine that Christ, by his advent, diminished or curtailed the grace of the Father - an idea not free from execrable blasphemy. Wherefore, both the children of the Jews, because, when made heirs of that covenant, they were separated from the heathen, were called a holy seed, and for the same reason the children of Christians, or those who have only one believing parent, are called holy, and, by the testimony of the apostle, differ from the impure seed of idolaters. Then, since the Lord, immediately after the covenant was made with Abraham ordered it to be sealed, infants by an outward sacrament, how can it be said that Christians are not to attest it in the present day, and seal it in their children? Let it not be objected that the only symbol by which the Lord ordered his covenant to be confirmed was that of circumcision, which was long ago abrogated. It is easy to answer, that in accordance with the form of the old dispensation, he appointed circumcision to confirm his covenant, but that it being abrogated, the same reason for confirmation still continues, a reason which we have in common with the Jews. Hence it is always necessary carefully to consider what is common to both, and wherein they differed from us. The covenant is common, and the reason for confirming it is common. The mode of confirming it is so far different that they had circumcision instead of which we now have baptism

had circumcision, instead of which we now have baptism.

Otherwise, if the testimony by which the Jews were assured of the salvation of their seed is taken from us, the consequence will be, that, by the advent of Christ, the grace of God, which was formerly given to the Jews, is more obscure and less perfectly attested to us. If this cannot be said without extreme insult to Christ, by whom the infinite goodness of the Father has been more brightly and benignly than ever shed upon the earth, and declared to men, it must be confessed that it cannot be more confined, and less clearly manifested, than under the obscure shadows of the law.

7. Hence our Lord Jesus Christ, to give an example from which the world might learn that he had come to enlarge rather than to limit the grace of the Father, kindly takes the little children in his arms, and rebukes his disciples for attempting to prevent them from coming, (Matth. 19: 13,) because they were keeping those to whom the kingdom of heaven belonged away from him, through whom alone there is access to heaven. But it will be asked, What resemblance is there between baptism and our Saviour embracing little children? He is not said to have baptised, but to have received, embraced, and blessed them; and, therefore, if we would imitate his example, we must give infants the benefit of our prayers, not baptise them. But let us attend to the act of our Saviour a little more carefully than these men do. For we must not lightly overlook the fact, that our Saviour, in ordering little children to be brought to him, adds the reason, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." And he afterwards testifies his good will by act, when he embraces them, and with prayer and benediction commends them to his Father. If it is right that children should be brought to Christ, why should they not be admitted to baptism, the symbol of our communion and fellowship with Christ? If the kingdom of heaven is theirs, why should they be denied the sign by which access, as it were, is opened to the Church, that being admitted into it they may be enrolled among the heirs of the heavenly kingdom? How unjust were we to drive away those whom Christ invites to himself, to spoil those whom he adorns with his gifts, to exclude those whom he spontaneously admits. But if we insist on discussing the difference between our Saviour's act and baptism, in how much higher esteem shall we hold baptism, (by which we testify that infants are included in the divine covenant,) than the taking up, embracing, laying hands on children, and praying over them, acts by which Christ, when present, declares both that they are his, and are sanctified by him? By the other cavils by which the objectors endeavour to evade this passage, they only betray their ignorance: they quibble that, because our Saviour says, "Suffer little children to come," they must have been several years old, and fit to come. But they are called by the Evangelists "brethe kai paidia", terms which denote infants still at their mothers' breasts. The term "come" is used simply for "approach." See the quibbles to which men are obliged to have recourse when

See the quibbles to which men are obliged to have recourse when they have hardened themselves against the truth! There is nothing more solid in their allegation, that the kingdom of heaven is not assigned to children, but to those like children, since the expression is, "of such," not "of themselves." If this is admitted, what will be the reason which our Saviour employs to show that they are not strangers to him from nonage? When he orders that little children shall be allowed to come to him, nothing is plainer than that mere infancy is meant. Lest this should seem absurd, he adds, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." But if infants must necessarily be comprehended the expression, "of such," clearly shows that infants themselves, and those like them, are intended.

8. Every one must now see that paedobaptism, which receives such strong support from Scripture, is by no means of human invention. Nor is there anything plausible in the objection, that we nowhere read of even one infant having been baptised by the hands of the apostles. For although this is not expressly named by the Evangelists, yet as they are not expressly excluded when mention is made of any baptised family, (Acts 16: 15, 32,) what man of sense will argue from this that they were not baptised? If such kinds of argument were good, it would be necessary, in like manner, to interdict women from the Lord's Supper, since we do not read that they were ever admitted to it in the days of the apostles. But here we are contented with the rule of faith. For when we reflect on the nature of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, we easily judge who the persons are to whom the use of it is to be communicated. The same we observe in the case of baptism. For, attending to the end for which it was instituted, we clearly perceive that it is not less applicable to children than to those of more advanced years and that therefore, they cannot be deprived of it without manifest fraud to the will of its divine Author. The assertion which they disseminate among the common people, that a long series of years elapsed after the resurrection at Christ, during which paedobaptism was unknown, is a shameful falsehood, since there is no writer, however ancient, who does not trace its origin to the days of the apostles.

9. It remains briefly to indicate what benefit redounds from the observance, both to believers who bring their children to the church to be baptised, and to the infants themselves, to whom the sacred water is applied, that no one may despise the ordinance as useless or superfluous: though any one who would think of ridiculing baptism under this pretence, would also ridicule the divine ordinance of circumcision: for what can they adduce to impugn the one, that may not be retorted against the other? Thus the Lord punishes the arrogance of those who forthwith condemn whatever their carnal sense cannot comprehend. But God furnishes us with other weapons to repress their stupidity. His holy institution, from which we feel that our faith derives admirable

consolation, deserves not to be called superfluous. For the divine symbol communicated to the child, as with the impress of a seal, confirms the promise given to the godly parent, and declares that the Lord will be a God not to him only but to his seed: not merely visiting him with his grace and goodness, but his posterity also to the thousandth generation. When the infinite goodness of God is thus displayed, it, in the first place, furnishes most ample materials for proclaiming his glory, and fills pious breasts with no ordinary joy, urging them more strongly to love their affectionate Parent, when they see that, on their account, he extends his care to their posterity. I am not moved by the objection, that the promise ought to be sufficient to confirm the salvation of our children. It has seemed otherwise to God, who, seeing our weakness, has herein been pleased to condescend to it. Let those, then, who embrace the promise of mercy to their children, consider it as their duty to offer them to the Church, to be sealed with the symbol of mercy, and animate themselves to surer confidence, on seeing with the bodily eye the covenant of the Lord engraven on the bodies of their children. On the other hand, children derive some benefit from their baptism, when, being ingrafted into the body of the church, they are made an object of greater interest to the other members. Then when they have grown up, they are thereby strongly urged to an earnest desire of serving God, who has received them as sons by the formal symbol of adoption, before, from nonage, they were able to recognise him as their Father. In fine, we ought to stand greatly in awe of the denunciations that God will take vengeance on every one who despises to impress the symbol of the covenant on his child, (Genesis 17: 15) such contempt being a rejection, and, as it were, abjuration of the offered grace.

10. Let us now discuss the arguments by which some furious madmen cease not to assail this holy ordinance of God. And, first, feeling themselves pressed beyond measure by the resemblance between baptism and circumcision, they contend that there is a wide difference between the two signs, that the one has nothing in common with the other. They maintain that the things meant are different, that the covenant is altogether different, and that the persons included under the name of children are different. When they first proceed to the proof, they pretend that circumcision was a figure of mortification, not of baptism. This we willingly concede to them, for it admirably supports our view, in support of which the only proof we use is, that baptism and circumcision are signs of mortification. Hence we conclude that the one was substituted for the other, baptism representing to us the very thing which circumcision signified to the Jews. In asserting a difference of covenant, with what barbarian audacity do they corrupt and destroy scripture? and that not in one passage only, but so as not to leave any passage safe and entire. The Jews they depict as so carnal as to resemble

brutes more than men, representing the covenant which was made with them as reaching no farther than a temporary life, and the promises which were given to them as dwindling down into present and corporeal blessings. If this dogma is received, what remains but that the Jewish nation was overloaded for a time with divine kindness, (just as swine are gorged in their sty,) that they might at last perish eternally? Whenever we quote circumcision and the promises annexed to it, they answer, that circumcision was a literal sign, and that its promises were carnal.

11. Certainly, if circumcision was a literal sign, the same view must be taken of baptism, since, in the second chapter to the Colossians, the apostle makes the one to be not a whit more spiritual than the other. For he says that in Christ we "are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ." In explanation of his sentiment he immediately adds, that we are "buried with him in baptism." What do these words mean, but just that the truth and completion of baptism is the truth and completion of circumcision, since they represent one thing? For his object is to show that baptism is the same thing to Christians that circumcision formerly was to the Jews. Now, since we have already clearly shown that the promises of both signs, and the mysteries which are represented by them, agree, we shall not dwell on the point longer at present. I would only remind believers to reflect, without anything being said by me, whether that is to be regarded as an earthly and literal sign, which has nothing heavenly or spiritual under it. But lest they should blind the simple with their smoke, we shall, in passing, dispose of one objection by which they cloak this most impudent falsehood. It is absolutely certain that the original promises comprehending the covenant which God made with the Israelites under the old dispensation were spiritual, and had reference to eternal life, and were, of course, in like manner spiritually received by the fathers, that they might thence entertain a sure hope of immortality, and aspire to it with their whole soul. Meanwhile, we are far from denying that he testified his kindness to them by carnal and earthly blessings; though we hold that by these the hope of spiritual promises was confirmed. In this manner, when he promised eternal blessedness to his servant Abraham, he, in order to place a manifest indication of favour before his eye, added the promise of possession of the land of Canaan. In the same way we should understand all the terrestrial promises which were given to the Jewish nation, the spiritual promise, as the head to which the others bore reference, always holding the first place. Having handled this subject fully when treating of the difference between the old and the new dispensations, I now only glance at it.

12. Under the appellation of "children" the difference they observe

12. Under the appellation of children, the difference they observe is this that the children of Abraham, under the old dispensation, were those who derived their origin from his seed, but that the appellation is now given to those who imitate his faith, and therefore that carnal infancy, which was ingrafted into the fellowship of the covenant by circumcision, typified the spiritual children of the new covenant, who are regenerated by the word of God to immortal life. In these words we indeed discover a small spark of truth, but these giddy spirits err grievously in this, that laying hold of whatever comes first to their hand, when they ought to proceed farther and compare many things together; they obstinately fasten upon one single word. Hence it cannot but happen that they are every now and then deluded, because they do not exert themselves to obtain a full knowledge of any subject. We certainly admit that the carnal seed of Abraham for a time held the place of the spiritual seed, which is ingrafted into him by faith, (Gal. 4: 28; Rom. 4: 12.) For we are called his sons, though we have no natural relationship with him. But if they mean, as they not obscurely show, that the spiritual promise was never made to the carnal seed of Abraham, they are greatly mistaken. We must, therefore, take a better aim, one to which we are directed by the infallible guidance of Scripture. The Lord therefore promises to Abraham that he shall have a seed in whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed, and at the same time assures him that he will be a God both to him and his seed. All who in faith receive Christ as the author of the blessing are the heirs of this promise, and accordingly are called the children of Abraham.

13. Although, after the resurrection of Christ, the boundaries of the kingdom of God began to be extended far and wide into all nations indiscriminately, so that, according to the declaration of Christ, believers were collected from all quarters to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, (Matth. 8: 11,) still, for many ages before, the Jews had enjoyed this great mercy. And as he had selected them (while passing by all other nations) to be for a time the depositaries of his favour, he designated them as his peculiar purchased people, (Exod. 19: 5.) In attestation of this kindness, he appointed circumcision, by which symbol the Jews were taught that God watched over their safety, and they were thereby raised to the hope of eternal life. For what can ever be wanting to him whom God has once taken under his protection? Wherefore the apostle, to prove that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, were the children of Abraham, speaks in this way: "Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcisions or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that

believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed to them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised," (Rom. 4: 9-12.) Do we not see that both are made equal in dignity? For, to the time appointed by the divine decree, he was the father of circumcision. But when, as the apostle elsewhere writes, (Eph. 2: 14,) the wall of partition, which separated the Gentiles from the Jews was broken down, to them, also, access was given to the kingdom of God, and he became their fathers and that without the sign of circumcisions, its place being supplied by baptism. In saying expressly that Abraham was not the father of those who were of the circumcision only, his object was to repress the superciliousness of some who, laying aside all regard to godliness, plumed themselves on mere ceremonies. In like manner, we may, in the present day, refute the vanity of those who, in baptism, seek nothing but water.

14. But in opposition to this is produced a passage from the Epistle to the Romans, in which the apostle says, that those who are of the flesh are not the children of Abraham, but that those only who are the children of promise are considered as the seed, (Rom. 9: 7.) For he seems to insinuate, that carnal relationship to Abraham, which we think of some consequence, is nothing. But we must attend carefully to the subject which the apostle is there treating. His object being to show to the Jews that the goodness of God was not restricted to the seed of Abraham, nay, that of itself it contributes nothing, produces, in proof of the fact, the cases of Ishmael and Esau. These being rejected, just as if they had been strangers, although, according to the flesh, they were the genuine offspring of Abraham, the blessing resides in Isaac and Jacob. This proves what he afterwards affirms, viz., that salvation depends on the mercy which God bestows on whomsoever he pleases, but that the Jews have no ground to glory or plume themselves on the name of the covenant, unless they keep the law of the covenant, that is, obey the word. On the other hand, after casting down their vain confidence in their origin, because he was aware that the covenant which had been made with the posterity of Abraham could not properly prove fruitless, he declares, that due honour should still be paid to carnal relationship to Abraham, in consequence of which, the Jews were the primary and native heirs of the gospel, unless in so far as they were, for their ingratitude, rejected as unworthy, and yet rejected so as not to leave their nations utterly destitute of the heavenly blessing. For this reason, though they were contumacious breakers of the covenant, he styles them holy, (such respect does he pay to the holy generation which God had honoured with his sacred covenant,) while we, in comparison of them, are termed posthumous, or abortive children of Abraham and that not by nature, but by adoption, just as if a twig were broken from its

own tree, and ingrafted on another stock. Therefore, that they might not be defrauded of their privilege, it was necessary that the gospel should first be preached to them. For they are, as it were, the first-born in the family of God. The honour due, on this account, must therefore be paid them, until they have rejected the offer, And, by their ingratitude, caused it to be transferred to the Gentiles. Nor, however great the contumacy with which they persist in warring against the gospel, are we therefore to despise them. We must consider, that in respect of the promise, the blessing of God still resides among them; And, as the apostle testifies, will never entirely depart from them, seeing that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," (Rom. 11:29.)

15. Such is the value of the promise given to the posterity of Abraham, - such the balance in which it is to be weighed. Hence though we have no doubt that in distinguishing the children of God from s and foreigners, that the election of God reigns freely, we, at the same time, perceive that he was pleased specially to embrace the seed of Abraham with his mercy, and, for the better attestation of it, to seal it by circumcision. The case of the Christian Church is entirely of the same description; for as Paul there declares that the Jews are sanctified by their parents, so he elsewhere say s that the children of Christians derive sanctification from their parents. Hence it is inferred that those who are chargeable with impurity are justly separated from others. Now who can have any doubt as to the falsehood of their subsequent averments viz., that the infants who were formerly circumcised only typified the spiritual infancy which is produced by the regeneration of the word of God? When the apostle says, that "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers," (Rom. 15: 8,) he does not philosophise subtilely, as if he had said, Since the covenant made with Abraham has respect unto his seed, Christ, in order to perform and discharge the promise made by the Father, came for the salvation of the Jewish nation. Do you see how he considers that, after the resurrection of Christ, the promise is to be fulfilled to the seed of Abraham, not allegorically, but literally, as the words express? To the same effect is the declaration of Peter to the Jews: "The promise is unto you and to your children," (Acts 2: 39;) and in the next chapters he calls them the children of the covenant, that is, heirs. Not widely different from this is the other passage of the apostle, above quoted, in which he regards and describes circumcision performed on infants as an attestation to the communion which they have with Christ. And, indeed, if we listen to the absurdities of those men, what will become of the promise by which the Lord, in the second commandment of his law, engages to be gracious to the seed of his servants for a thousand generations? Shall we here have recourse to allegory? This were the merest nibble. Shall we say that it has been abrogated? In this way, we should do

away with the law which Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil, inasmuch as it turns to our everlasting good. Therefore, let it be without controversy, that God is so good and liberal to his people, that he is pleased, as a mark of his favour, to extend their privileges to the children born to them.

16. The distinctions which these men attempt to draw between baptism and circumcision are not only ridiculous, and void of all semblance of reason, but at variance with each other. For, when they affirm that baptism refers to the first day of spiritual contest, and circumcision to the eighth day, mortification being already accomplished they immediately forget the distinction, and change their song, representing circumcision as typifying the mortification of the flesh, and baptism as the burial, which is given to none but those who are already dead. What are these giddy contradictions but frenzied dreams? According to the former view, baptism ought to precede circumcision; according to the latter, it should come after it. It is not the first time we have seen the minds of men wander to and fro when they substitute their dreams for the infallible word of God. We hold, therefore, that their former distinction is a mere imagination. Were we disposed to make the allegory of the eighth day, theirs would not be the proper mode of it. It were much better with the early Christians to refer the number eight to the resurrection, which took place on the eighth day, and on which we know that newness of life depends, or to the whole course of the present life, during which, mortification ought to be in progress, only terminating when life itself terminates; although it would seem that God intended to provide for the tenderness of infancy by deferring circumcision to the eighth day, as the wound would have been more dangerous if inflicted immediately after birth. How much more rational is the declaration of Scripture, that we, when already dead, are buried by baptism, (Rom. 6: 4;) since it distinctly states, that we are buried into death that we may thoroughly die, and thenceforth aim at that mortification? Equally ingenious is their cavil, that women should not be baptised if baptism is to be made conformable to circumcision. For if it is most certain that the sanctification of the seed of Israel was attested by the sign of circumcision, it cannot be doubted that it was appointed alike for the sanctification of males and females. But though the rite could only be performed on males, yet the females were, through them, partners and associates in circumcision. Wherefore, disregarding all such quibbling distinctions, let us fix on the very complete resemblance between baptism and circumcision, as seen in the internal office, the promise, the use, and the effect.

17. They seem to think they produce their strongest reason for denying baptism to children, when they allege, that they are as yet unfit, from nonage, to understand the mystery which is there sealed, viz. spiritual regeneration, which is not applicable to

saved, viz., spiritual regeneration, which is not applicable to earliest infancy. Hence they infer, that children are only to be regarded as sons of Adam until they have attained an age fit for the reception of the second birth. But all this is directly opposed to the truth of God. For if they are to be accounted sons of Adam, they are left in death, since, in Adam, we can do nothing but die. On the contrary, Christ bids them be brought to him. Why so? Because he is life. Therefore, that he may quicken them, he makes them partners with himself; whereas these men would drive them away from Christ, and adjudge them to death. For if they pretend that infants do not perish when they are accounted the sons of Adam, the error is more than sufficiently confuted by the testimony of Scripture, (1 Cor. 15: 22.) For, seeing it declares that in Adam all die, it follows, that no hope of life remains unless in Christ. Therefore that we may become heirs of life, we must communicate with him. Again, seeing it is elsewhere written that we are all by nature the children of wrath, (Eph. 2: 3,) and conceived in sin, (Ps. 51: 5,) of which condemnation is the inseparable attendant, we must part with our own nature before we have any access to the kingdom of God. And what can be clearer than the expression, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor. 15: 50.) Therefore, let every thing that is our own be abolished, (this cannot be without regeneration,) and then we shall perceive this possession of the kingdom. In fine, if Christ speaks truly when he declares that he is life, we must necessarily be ingrafted into him by whom we are delivered from the of death. But how, they ask, are infants regenerated, when not possessing a knowledge of either good or evil? We answer, that the work of God, though beyond the reach of our capacity, is not therefore null. Moreover, infants who are to be saved (and that some are saved at this age is certain) must, without question, be previously regenerated by the Lord. For if they bring innate corruption with them from their mother's womb, they must be purified before they can be admitted into the kingdom of God, into which shall not enter any thing that defileth, (Rev. 21: 27.) If they are born sinners, as David and Paul affirm, they must either remain unaccepted and hated by God, or be justified. And why do we ask more, when the Judge himself publicly declares, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God?" (John 3: 3.) But to silence this class of objectors, God gave, in the case of John the Baptist, whom he sanctified from his mother's womb, (Luke 1: 15,) a proof of what he might do in others. They gain nothing by the quibble to which they here resort, viz., that this was only once done, and, therefore, it does not forthwith follow that the Lord always acts thus with infants. That is not the mode in which we reason. Our only object is to show, that they unjustly and malignantly confine the power of God within limits, within which it cannot be confined. As little weight is due to another subterfuge. They allege that, by the usual phraseology of Scriptures "from the womb," has the same meaning as "from childhood." But it is easy to see that the angel

meaning as from childhood. But it is easy to see that the angel had a different meaning when he announced to Zacharias that the child not yet born would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Instead of attempting to give a law to God, let us hold that he sanctifies whom he pleases in the way in which he sanctified John, seeing that his power is not impaired.

18. And, indeed, Christ was sanctified from earliest infancy, that he might sanctify his elect in himself at any age, without distinction. For as he, in order to wipe away the guilt of disobedience which had been committed in our flesh, assumed that very flesh, that in it he might, on our account, and in our stead, perform a perfect obedience, so he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, that, completely pervaded with his holiness in the flesh which he had assumed he might transfuse it into us. If in Christ we have a perfect pattern of all the grace, which God bestows on all his children, in this instance we have a proof that the age of infancy is not incapable of receiving sanctification. This, at least, we set down as incontrovertible, that none of the elect is called away from the present life without being previously sanctified and regenerated by the Spirit of God. As to their objection that, in Scriptures the Spirit acknowledges no sanctification save that from incorruptible seed, that is, the word of God, they erroneously interpret Peter's words, in which he comprehends only believers who had been taught by the preaching of the gospel, (1 Pet. 1: 23.) We confess, indeed, that the word of the Lord is the only seed of spiritual regeneration; but we deny the inference that, therefore, the power of God cannot regenerate infants. This is as possible and easy for him as it is wondrous and incomprehensible to us. It were dangerous to deny that the Lord is able to furnish them with the knowledge of himself in any way he pleases.

19. But faith, they says comes by hearing, the use of which infants have not yet obtained, nor can they be fit to know God, being, as Moses declares, without the knowledge of good and evil, (Deut. 1: 39.) But they observe not that where the apostle makes hearing the beginning of faith, he is only describing the usual economy and dispensation which the Lord is wont to employ in calling his people, and not laying down an invariable rule, for which no other method can be substituted. Many he certainly has called and endued with the true knowledge of himself by internal means, by the illumination of the Spirit, without the intervention of preaching. But since they deem it very absurd to attribute any knowledge of God to infants, whom Moses makes void of the knowledge of good and evil, let them tell me where the danger lies if they are said now to receive some part of that grace, of which they are to have the full measure shortly after. For if fulness of life consists in the perfect knowledge of God, since some of those whom death hurries away in the first moments of

infancy pass into life eternal, they are certainly admitted to behold the immediate presence of God. Those therefore whom the Lord is to illumine with the full brightness of his light, why may he not, if he so pleases, irradiate at present with some small beam, especially if he does not remove their ignorance before he delivers them from the prison of the flesh? I would not rashly affirm that they are endued with the same faith which we experience in ourselves or have any knowledge at all resembling faith, (this I would rather leave undecided;) but I would somewhat curb the stolid arrogance of those men who, as with inflated cheeks affirm or deny whatever suits them.

20. In order to gain a stronger footing here, they add, that baptism is a sacrament of penitence and faith, and as neither of these is applicable to tender infancy we must beware of rendering its meaning empty and vain, by admitting infants to the communion of baptism. But these darts are directed more against God than against us; since the fact that circumcision was a sign of repentance is completely established by many passages of Scripture, (Jer. 4: 4.) Thus Paul terms it a seal of the righteousness of faiths (Rom. 4: 11.) Let God, then, be demanded why he ordered circumcision to be performed on the bodies of infants? For baptism and circumcision being here in the same case, they cannot give any thing to the latter without conceding it to the former. If they recur to their usual evasion, that, by the age of infancy, spiritual infants were then figured, we have already closed this means of escape against them. We say then that since God imparted circumcision, the sign of repentance and faith, to infants, it should not seem absurd that they are now made partakers of baptisms unless men choose to against an institution of God. But as in all his acts, so here also enough of wisdom and righteousness shines forth to repress the slanders of the ungodly. For although infants, at the moment when they were circumcised, did not comprehend what the sign meant, still they were truly circumcised for the mortification of their corrupt and polluted nature, - a mortification at which they afterwards aspired when adults. In fine, the objection is easily disposed of by the fact, that children are baptised for future repentance and faith. Though these are not yet formed in them, yet the seed of both lies hid in them by the secret operation of the Spirit. This answer at once overthrows all the objections which are twisted against us out of the meaning of baptism; for instance, the title by which Paul distinguishes it when he terms it the "washing of regeneration and renewing," (Tit. 3: 5.) Hence they argue, that it is not to be given to any but to those who are capable of such feelings. But we, on the other hand, may object, that neither ought circumcision, which is designated regeneration, to be conferred on any but the regenerate. In this way, we shall condemn a divine institution. Thus, as we have already hinted, all the arguments which tend to shake circumcision are of no force in

assailing baptism. Nor can they escape by saying, that everything which rests on the authority of God is absolutely fixed, though there should be no reason for it, but that this reverence is not due to paedobaptism, nor other similar things which are not recommended to us by the express word of God. They always remain caught in this dilemma. The command of God to circumcise infants was either legitimate and exempt from cavil, or deserved reprehension. If there was nothing incompetent or absurd in it, no absurdity can be shown in the observance of paedobaptism.

21. The charge of absurdity with which they attempt to stigmatise it, we thus dispose of. If those on whom the Lord has bestowed his election, after receiving the sign of regeneration, depart this life before they become adults, he, by the incomprehensible energy of his Spirit, renews them in the way which he alone sees to be expedient. Should they reach an age when they can be instructed in the meaning of baptism, they will thereby be animated to greater zeal for renovation, the badge of which they will learn that they received in earliest infancy, in order that they might aspire to it during their whole lives. To the same effect are the two passages in which Paul teaches, that we are buried with Christ by baptism, (Rom. 6: 4; Col. 2: 12.) For by this he means not that he who is to be initiated by baptism must have previously been buried with Christ, he simply declares the doctrine which is taught by baptism, and that to those already baptised: so that the most senseless cannot maintain from this passage that it ought to precede baptism. In this way, Moses and the prophets reminded the people of the thing meant by circumcision, which however infants received. To the same effect, Paul says to the Galatians, "As many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ," (Gal. 3: 27.) Why so? That they might thereafter live to Christ, to whom previously they had not lived. And though, in adults, the receiving of the sign ought to follow the understanding of its meaning, yet, as will shortly be explained, a different rule must be followed with children. No other conclusion can be drawn from a passage in Peter, on which they strongly found. He says, that baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," (1 Pet. 3: 21.) From this they contend that nothing is left for paedobaptism, which becomes mere empty smoke, as being altogether at variance with the meaning of baptism. But the delusion which misleads them is, that they would always have the thing to precede the sign in the order of time. For the truth of circumcision consisted in the same answer of a good conscience; but if the truth must necessarily have preceded, infants would never have been circumcised by the command of God. But he himself showing that the answer of a

command of God. But he himself, showing that the answer of a good conscience forms the truth of circumcision, and, at the same time, commanding infants to be circumcised, plainly intimates that, in their case, circumcision had reference to the future. Wherefore, nothing more of present effect is to be required in paedobaptism, than to confirm and sanction the covenant which the Lord has made with them. The other part of the meaning of the sacrament will follow at the time which God himself has provided.

22. Every one must, I think, clearly perceive, that all arguments of this stamp are mere perversions of Scripture. The other remaining arguments akin to these we shall cursorily examine. They object, that baptism is given for the remission of sins. When this is conceded, it strongly supports our view; for, seeing we are born sinners, we stand in need of forgiveness and pardon from the very womb. Moreover, since God does not preclude this age from the hope of mercy, but rather gives assurance of it, why should we deprive it of the sign, which is much inferior to the reality? The arrow, therefore, which they aim at us, we throw back upon themselves. Infants receive forgiveness of sins; therefore, they are not to be deprived of the sign. They adduce the passage from the Ephesians, that Christ gave himself for the Church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," (Eph. 5: 26.) Nothing could be quoted more appropriate than this to overthrow their error: it furnishes us with an easy proof. If, by baptism, Christ intends to attest the ablution by which he cleanses his Church, it would seem not equitable to deny this attestation to infants, who are justly deemed part of the Church, seeing they are called heirs of the heavenly kingdom. For Paul comprehends the whole Church when he says that it was cleansed by the washing of water. In like manner, from his expression in another place, that by baptism we are ingrafted into the body of Christ, (1 Cor. 12: 13,) we infer, that infants, whom he enumerates among his members, are to be baptised, in order that they may not be dissevered from his body. See the violent onset which they make with all their engines on the bulwarks of our faith.

23. They now come down to the custom and practice of the apostolic age, alleging that there is no instance of any one having been admitted to baptism without a previous profession of faith and repentance. For when Peter is asked by his hearers, who were pricked in their heart, "What shall we do?" his advice is, "Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," (Acts 2: 37, 38.) In like manner, when Philip was asked by the eunuch to baptise him, he answered, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Hence they think they can make out that baptism cannot be lawfully given to any one without previous faith and repentance. If

we yield to this argument, the former passage, in which there is no mention of faith, will prove that repentance alone is sufficient, and the latter, which makes no requirement of repentance, that there is need only of faith. They will object, I presume, that the one passage helps the other, and that both, therefore, are to be connected. I, in my turn, maintain that these two must be compared with other passages which contribute somewhat to the solution of this difficulty. There are many passages of Scripture whose meaning depends on their peculiar position. Of this we have an example in the present instance. Those to whom these things are said by Peter and Philip are of an age fit to aim at repentance, and receive faith. We strenuously insist that such men are not to be baptised unless their conversion and faith are discerned, at least in as far as human judgement can ascertain it. But it is perfectly clear that infants must be placed in a different class. For when any one formerly joined the religious communion of Israel, he behaved to be taught the covenant, and instructed in the law of the Lord, before he received circumcision, because he was of a different nation; in other words, an alien from the people of Israel, with whom the covenant, which circumcision sanctioned, had been made.

24. Thus the Lord, when he chose Abraham for himself, did not commence with circumcision, in the meanwhile concealing what he meant by that sign, but first announced that he intended to make a covenant with him, and, after his faith in the promise, made him partaker of the sacrament. Why does the sacrament come after faith in Abraham, and precede all intelligence in his son Isaac? It is right that he who, in adult age, is admitted to the fellowship of a covenant by one from whom he had hitherto been alienated, should previously learn its conditions; but it is not so with the infant born to him. He, according to the terms of the promise, is included in the promise by hereditary right from his mother's womb. Or, to state the matter more briefly and more clearly, If the children of believers, without the help of understanding, are partakers of the covenant, there is no reason why they should be denied the sign, because they are unable to swear to its stipulations. This undoubtedly is the reason why the Lord sometimes declares that the children born to the Israelites are begotten and born to him, (Ezek. 16: 20; 23: 37.) For he undoubtedly gives the place of sons to the children of those to whose seed he has promised that he will be a Father. But the child descended from unbelieving parents is deemed an alien to the covenant until he is united to God by faith. Hence, it is not strange that the sign is withheld when the thing signified would be vain and fallacious. In that view, Paul says that the Gentiles, so long as they were plunged in idolatry, were strangers to the covenants (Eph. 2: 11.) The whole matter may, if I mistake not, be thus briefly and clearly expounded: Those who, in adult age, embrace the faith of Christ, having hitherto been aliens from the

covenant, are not to receive the sign of baptism without previous faith and repentance. These alone can give them access to the fellowship of the covenant, whereas children, deriving their origin from Christians, as they are immediately on their birth received by God as heirs of the covenant, are also to be admitted to baptism. To this we must refer the narrative of the Evangelist, that those who were baptised by John confessed their sins, (Matth. 3: 6.) This example, we hold, ought to be observed in the present day. Were a Turk to offer himself for baptism, we would not at once perform the rite without receiving a confession which was satisfactory to the Church.

25. Another passage which they adduce is from the third chapter of John, where our Saviour's words seem to them to imply that a present regeneration is required in baptism, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," (John 3: 5.) See, they say, how baptism is termed regeneration by the lips of our Lord himself, and on what pretext, therefore, with what consistency is baptism given to those who, it is perfectly obvious, are not at all capable of regeneration? First, they are in error in imagining that there is any mention of baptism in this passage, merely because the word water is used. Nicodemus, after our Saviour had explained to him the corruption of nature, and the necessity of being born again, kept dreaming of a corporeal birth, and hence our Saviour intimates the mode in which God regenerates use viz., by water and the Spirit; in other words, by the Spirit, who, in irrigating and cleansing the soul of believers, operates in the manner of water. By "water and the Spirit," therefore, I simply understand the Spirit, which is water. Nor is the expression new. It perfectly accords with that which is used in the third chapter of Matthew, "He that comes after me is mightier than I;" "he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire," (Matth. 3: 11.) Therefore, as to baptise with the Holy Spirit, and with fire, is to confer the Holy Spirit, who, in regeneration, has the office and nature of fire, so to be born again of water, and of the Spirit, is nothing else than to receive that power of the Spirit, which has the same effect on the soul that water has on the body. I know that a different interpretation is given, but I have no doubt that this is the genuine meaning, because our Saviour's only purpose was to teach, that all who aspire to the kingdom of heaven must lay aside their own disposition. And yet were we disposed to imitate these men in their mode of cavilling, we might easily, after conceding what they wish, reply to them, that baptism is prior to faith and repentance, since, in this passage, our Saviour mentions it before the Spirit. This certainly must be understood of spiritual gifts, and if they follow baptism, I have gained all I contend for. But, cavilling aside, the simple interpretation to be adopted is, that which I have given viz., that no man, until renewed by living water, that is, by the Spirit, can enter the kingdom of God.

26. This, moreover, plainly explodes the fiction of those who consign all the unbaptised to eternal death. Let us suppose, then, that as they insist, baptism is administered to adults only. What will they make of a youth who, after being imbued duly and properly with the rudiments of piety, while waiting for the day of baptism, is unexpectedly carried off by sudden death? The promise of our Lord is clear, "He that hearth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life," (John 5: 24.) We nowhere read of his having condemned him who was not yet baptised. I would not be understood as insinuating that baptism may be condemned with impunity. So far from excusing this contempt, I hold that it violates the covenant of the Lord. The passage only serves to show, that we must not deem baptism so necessary as to suppose that every one who has lost the opportunity of obtaining it has forthwith perished. By assenting to their fiction, we should condemn all, without exception, whom any accident may have prevented from procuring baptism, how much soever they may have been endued with the faith by which Christ himself is possessed. Moreover, baptism being, as they hold, necessary to salvation, they, in denying it to infants, consign them all to eternal death. Let them now consider what kind of agreement they have with the words of Christ, who says that "of such is the kingdom of heaven," (Matth. 19: 14.) And though we were to concede every thing to them, in regard to the meaning of this passage, they will extract nothing from it, until they have previously overthrown the doctrine which we have already established concerning the regeneration of infants.

27. But they boast of having their strongest bulwark in the very institution of baptism, which they find in the last chapter of Matthew, where Christ, sending his disciples into all the world, commands them to teach and then baptise. Then in the last chapter of Mark, it is added "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved," (Mark 16: 16.) What more (say they) do we ask, since the words of Christ distinctly declare, that teaching must precede baptism, and assign to baptism the place next to faith? Of this arrangement our Lord himself gave an example, in choosing not to be baptised till his thirtieth year. In how many ways do they here entangle themselves, and betray their ignorance! They err more than childishly in this, that they derive the first institution of baptism from this passage, whereas Christ had from the commencement of his ministry, ordered it to be administered by the apostles. There is no ground, therefore, for contending that the law and rule of baptism is to be sought from these two passages, as containing the first institution. But to indulge them in their error, how nerveless is this mode of arguing? Were I disposed to evasion, I have not only a place of escape, but a wide field to expatiate in. For when they cling so desperately to

a wide field to expatiate in. For when they cling so desperately to the order of the words, insisting that because it is said, "Go, preach and baptise," and again, "Whosoever believes and is baptised," they must preach before baptising, and believe before being baptised, why may not we in our turn object, that they must baptise before teaching the observance of those things which Christ commanded, because it is said, "Baptise, teaching whatsoever I have commanded you?" The same thing we observed in the other passage in which Christ speaks of the regeneration of water and of the Spirit. For if we interpret as they insist, then baptism must take precedence of spiritual regeneration, because it is first mentioned. Christ teaches that we are to be born again, not of the Spirit and of water, but of water and of the Spirit.

28. This unassailable argument, in which they confide so much, seems already to be considerably shaken; but as we have sufficient protection in the simplicity of truth, I am unwilling to evade the point by paltry subtleties. Let them, therefore, have a solid answer. The command here given by Christ relates principally to the preaching of the gospel: to it baptism is added as a kind of appendage. Then he merely speaks of baptism in so far as the dispensation of it is subordinate to the fiction of teaching. For Christ sends his disciples to publish the gospel to all nations of the World, that by the doctrine of salvation they may gather men, who were previously lost into his kingdom. But who or what are those men? It is certain that mention is made only of those who are fit to receive his doctrine. He subjoins, that such, after being taught, were to be baptised, adding the promise, Whosoever believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved. Is there one syllable about infants in the whole discourse? What, then, is the form of argument with which they assail us? Those who are of adult age are to be instructed and brought to the faith, before being baptised, and, therefore, it is unlawful to make baptism common to infants. They cannot, at the very utmost, prove any other thing out of this passage, than that the gospel must be preached to those who are capable of hearing it before they are baptised: for of such only the passage speaks. From this let them, if they can, throw an obstacle in the way of baptising infants.

29. But I will make their fallacies palpable even to the blind, by a very plain similitude. Should any one insist that infants are to be deprived of food, on the pretence that the apostle permits none to eat but those who labour, (2 Thess. 3: 10,) would he not deserve to be scouted by all? Why so? Because that which was said of a certain class of men, and a certain age, he wrests and applies to all indifferently. The dexterity of these men in the present instance is no greater. That which every one sees to be intended for adult age merely, they apply to infants, subjecting them to a rule which

was laid down only for those of riper years. With regard to the example of our Saviour, it gives no countenance to their case. He was not baptised before his thirtieth year. This is, indeed, true, but the reason is obvious; because he then determined to lay the solid foundation of baptism by his preaching, or rather to confirm the foundation which John had previously laid. Therefore when he was pleased with his doctrine to institute baptism, that he might give the greater authority to his institution, he sanctified it in his own person, and that at the most befitting time, namely, the commencement of his ministry. In fine, they can prove nothing more than that baptism received its origin and commencement with the preaching of the gospel. But if they are pleased to fix upon the thirtieth year, why do they not observe it, but admit any one to baptism according to the view which they may have formed of his proficiency? Nay, even Servetus, one of their masters, although he pertinaciously insisted on this period, had begun to act the prophet in his twenty-first year; as if any man could be tolerated in arrogating to himself the office of a teacher in the Church before he was a member of the Church.

30. At length they object, that there is not greater reason for admitting infants to baptism than to the Lord's Supper, to which, however, they are never admitted: as if Scripture did not in every way draw a wide distinction between them. In the early Church, indeed, the Lord's Supper was frequently given to infants, as appears from Cyprian and Augustine, (August. ad Bonif. Lib. 1;) but the practice justly became obsolete. For if we attend to the peculiar nature of baptism, it is a kind of entrance, and as it were initiation into the Church, by which we are ranked among the people of God, a sign of our spiritual regeneration, by which we are again born to be children of God, whereas on the contrary the Supper is intended for those of riper years, who, having passed the tender period of infancy, are fit to bear solid food. This distinction is very clearly pointed out in Scripture. For there, as far as regards baptism, the Lord makes no selection of age, whereas he does not admit all to partake of the Supper, but confines it to those who are fit to discern the body and blood of the Lord, to examine their own conscience, to show forth the Lord's death, and understand its power. Can we wish anything clearer than what the apostle says, when he thus exhorts, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup?" (1 Cor. 11: 28.) Examination, therefore, must precede, and this it were vain to expect from infants. Again, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." If they cannot partake worthily without being able duly to discern the sanctity of the Lord's body, why should we stretch out poison to our young children instead of vivifying food? Then what is our Lord's injunction? "Do this in remembrance of me." And what the inference which the apostle draws from this? "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this

cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." How, pray, can we require infants to commemorate any event of which they have no understanding; how require them to "show forth the Lord's death," of the nature and benefit of which they have no idea? Nothing of the kind is prescribed by baptism. Wherefore, there is the greatest difference between the two signs. This also we observe in similar signs under the old dispensation. Circumcision, which, as is well known, corresponds to our baptism, was intended for infants, but the Passover, for which the Supper is substituted, did not admit all kinds of guests promiscuously, but was duly eaten only by those who were of an age sufficient to ask the meaning of it, (Exod. 12: 26.) Had these men the least particle of soundness in their brain, would they be thus blind as to a matter so very clear and obvious?

31. Though I am unwilling to annoy the reader with the series of conceits which Servetus, not the least among the Anabaptists, nay, the great honour of this crew, when girding himself for battle, deemed, when he adduced them, to be specious arguments, it will be worth while briefly to dispose of them. He pretends that as the symbols of Christ are perfect, they require persons who are perfect, or, at least, capable of perfection. But the answer is plain. The perfection of baptism, which extends even to death, is improperly restricted to one moment of time; moreover, perfection, in which baptism invites us to make continual progress during life, is foolishly exacted by him all at once. He objects, that the symbols of Christ were appointed for remembrance, that every one may remember that he was buried together with Christ. I answer, that what he coined out of his own brain does not need refutation, nay, that which he transfers to baptism properly belongs to the Supper, as appears from Paul's words, "Let a man examine himself," words similar to which are nowhere used with reference to baptism. Whence we infer, that those who from nonage are incapable of examination are duly baptised. His third point is, That all who believe not in the Son remain in death, the wrath of God abideth on them, (John 3: 36;) and, therefore, infants who are unable to believe lie under condemnation. I answer, that Christ does not there speak of the general guilt in which all the posterity of Adam are involved, but only threatens the despisers of the gospel, who proudly and contumaciously spurn the grace which is offered to them. But this has nothing to do with infants. At the same time, I meet him with the opposite argument. Every one whom Christ blesses is exempted from the curse of Adam, and the wrath of God. Therefore, seeing it is certain that infants are blessed by him, it follows that they are freed from death. He next falsely quotes a passage which is nowhere found, Whosoever is born of the Spirit, hears the voice of the Spirit. Though we should grant that such a passage occurs in Scripture, all he can extract from it is, that believers, according as the Spirit works in them. are framed to obedience. But that which is said of

a certain number, it is illogical to apply to all alike. His fourth objection is, As that which precedes is animal, (1 Cor. 15: 46,) we must wait the full time for baptism, which is spiritual. But while I admit that all the posterity of Adam, born of the flesh, bear their condemnation with them from the womb, I hold that this is no obstacle to the immediate application of the divine remedy. Servetus cannot show that by divine appointment, several years must elapse before the new spiritual life begins. Paul's testimony is, that though lost by nature, the children of believers are holy by supernatural grace. He afterwards brings forward the allegory that David when going up into mount Zion, took with him neither the blind nor the lame, but vigorous soldiers, (2 Sam. 5: 8.) But what if I meet this with the parable in which God invites to the heavenly feast the lame and the blind? In what way will Servetus disentangle this knot? I ask, moreover whether the lame and the maimed had not previously served with David? But it is superfluous to dwell longer on this argument, which as the reader will learn from the sacred history, is founded on mere misquotation. He adds another allegory, viz., that the apostles were fishers of men, not of children. I ask, then, What does our Saviour mean when he says that in the net are caught all kinds of fishes? (Matth. 4: 19; 13: 47.) But as I have no pleasure in sporting with allegory, I answer, that when the office of teaching was committed to the apostles they were not prohibited from baptising infants. Moreover, I should like to know why, when the Evangelist uses the term "anthropous", (which comprehends the whole human race without exception,) he denies that infants are included. His seventh argument is, Since spiritual things accord with spiritual, (1 Cor. 2: 13,) infants, not being spiritual, are unfit for baptism. It is plain how perversely he wrests this passage of Paul. It relates to doctrine. The Corinthians, pluming themselves excessively on a vain acuteness, Paul rebukes their folly, because they still required to be imbued with the first rudiments of heavenly doctrine. Who can infer from this that baptism is to be denied to infants, whom, when begotten of the flesh, the Lord consecrates to himself by gratuitous adoption? His objection, that if they are new men, they must be fed with spiritual food, is easily obviated. By baptism they are admitted into the fold of Christ, and the symbol of adoption is sufficient for them, until they grow up and become fit to bear solid food. We must, therefore, wait for the time of examination, which God distinctly demands in the sacred Supper. His next objection is, that Christ invites all his people to the sacred supper. But as it is plain that he admits those only who are prepared to celebrate the commemoration of his death, it follows that infants whom he honoured with his embrace, remain in a distinct and peculiar position until they grow up, and yet are not aliens. When he objects, that it is strange why the infant does not partake of the Supper, I answer, that souls are fed by other food than the external eating of the Supper, and that accordingly Christ is the food of infants though they partake not of the

symbol. The case is different with baptism, by which the door of the Church is thrown open to them. He again objects that a good householder distributes meat to his household in due season, (Matth. 24: 45.) This I willingly admit; but how will he define the time of baptism, so as to prove that it is not seasonably given to infants? He, moreover, adduces Christ's command to the apostles to make haste, because the fields are already white to the harvest, (John 4: 35.) Our Saviour only means that the apostles, seeing the present fruit of their labour, should bestir themselves with more alacrity to teach. Who will infer from this, that harvest only is the fit time for baptism? His eleventh argument is, That in the primitive Church, Christians and disciples were the same; but we have already seen that he argues unskilfully from the part to the whole. The name of disciples is given to men of full age, who had already been taught, and had assumed the name of Christ, just as the Jews behaved to be disciples under the law of Moses. Still none could rightly infer from this that infants, whom the Lord declared to be of his household, were strangers. Moreover he alleges that all Christians are brethren and that infants cannot belong to this class, so long as we exclude them from the Supper. But I return to my position, first, that none are heirs of the kingdom of heaven but those who are the members of Christ; and, secondly, that the embracing of Christ was the true badge of adoption, in which infants are joined in common with adults, and that temporary abstinence from the Supper does not prevent them from belonging to the body of the Church. The thief on the cross, when converted, became the brother of believers, though he never partook of the Lord's Supper. Servetus afterwards adds, that no man becomes our brother unless by the Spirit of adoption, who is only conferred by the hearing of faith. I answer, that he always falls back into the same paralogism, because he preposterously applies to infants what is said only of adults. Paul there teaches that the ordinary way in which God calls his elect, and brings them to the faith, is by raising up faithful teachers, and thus stretching out his hand to them by their ministry and labours. Who will presume from this to give the law to God, and say that he may not ingraft infants into Christ by some other secret method? He objects, that Cornelius was baptised after receiving the Holy Spirit; but how absurdly he would convert a single example into a general rule, is apparent from the case of the Eunuch and the Samaritans, in regard to whom, the Lord observed a different order, baptism preceding the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The fifteenth argument is more than absurd. He says that we become gods by regeneration, but that they are gods to whom the word of God is sent, (John 10: 35; 2 Pet. 1: 4,) a thing not possible to infant children. The attributing of deity to believers is one of his ravings which this is not the proper place to discuss; but it betrays the utmost effrontery to wrest the passage in the psalm (Ps. 82:6) to a meaning so alien to it. Christ says, that kings and magistrates are called gods by the prophet. because

they perform an office divinely appointed them. This dexterous interpreter transfers what is addressed by special command to certain individuals to the doctrine of the Gospel, so as to exterminate infants from the Church. Again, he objects, that infants cannot be regarded as new men, because they are not begotten by the word. But what I have said again and again I now repeat, that, for regenerating us, doctrine is an incorruptible seed, if indeed we are fit to perceive it; but when, from nonage, we are incapable of being taught, God takes his own methods of regenerating. He afterwards returns to his allegories, and says, that under the law, the sheep and the goat were not offered in sacrifice the moment they were dropt, (Exod. 12: 5.) Were I disposed to deal in figures, I might obviously reply, first, that all the first-born, on opening the matrix, were sacred to the Lord, (Exod. 13: 12;) and, secondly, that a lamb of a year old was to be sacrificed: whence it follows, that it was not necessary to wait for mature age, the young and tender offspring having been selected by God for sacrifice. He contends, moreover, that none could come to Christ but those who were previously prepared by John; as if John's ministry had not been temporary. But, to omit this, assuredly there was no such preparation in the children whom Christ took up in his arms and blessed. Wherefore let us have done with his false principle. He at length calls in the assistance of Trismegistus and the Sibyls, to prove that sacred ablutions are fit only for adults. See how honourably he thinks of Christian baptism, when he tests it by the profane rites of the Gentiles, and will not have it administered except in the way pleasing to Trismegistus. We defer more to the authority of God, who has seen it meet to consecrate infants to himself, and initiate them by a sacred symbol, the significance of which they are unable from nonage to understand. We do not think it lawful to borrow from the expiations of the Gentiles, in order to change, in our baptism, that eternal and inviolable law which God enacted in circumcision. His last argument is, If infants, without understanding, may be baptised, baptism may be mimicked and jestingly administered by boys in sport. Here let him plead the matter with God, by whose command circumcision was common to infants before they received understanding. Was it, then, a fit matter for ridicule or boyish sport, to overthrow the sacred institution of God? But no wonder that these reprobate spirits, as if they were under the influence of frenzy, introduce the grossest absurdities in defence of their errors, because God, by this spirit of giddiness, justly avenges their pride and obstinacy. I trust I have made it apparent how feebly Servetus has supported his friends the Anabaptists.

32. No sound man, I presume, can now doubt how rashly the Church is disturbed by those who excite quarrels and disturbances because of paedobaptism. For it is of importance to observe what Satan means by all this craft, viz., to rob us of the singular blessing of confidence and spiritual joy, which is hence

singular blessing of conscience and spiritual joy, which is hence to be derived, and in so far to detract from the glory of the divine goodness. For how sweet is it to pious minds to be assured not only by word, but even by ocular demonstration, that they are so much in favour with their heavenly Father, that he interests himself in their posterity! Here we may see how he acts towards us as a most provident parent, not ceasing to care for us even after our death, but consulting and providing for our children. Ought not our whole heart to be stirred up within us, as David's was, (Ps. 48: 11,) to bless his name for such a manifestation of goodness? Doubtless, the design of Satan in assaulting paedobaptism with all his forces is to keep out of view, and gradually efface, that attestation of divine grace which the promise itself presents to our eyes. In this way, not only would men be impiously ungrateful for the mercy of God, but be less careful in training their children to piety. For it is no slight stimulus to us to bring them up in the fear of God, and the observance of his law, when we reflect, that from their birth they have been considered and acknowledged by him as his children. Wherefore, if we would not maliciously obscure the kindness of God, let us present to him our infants, to whom he has assigned a place among his friends and family that is, the members of the Church.

[Email](#) Dr. C. Matthew McMahon ([Curriculum Vitae](#) and Bio): © **A Puritan's Mind**, All Rights Reserved, 1998-2009

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