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16

THOUGHTS

UPON

INFANT BAPTISM:

EXTRACTED FROM A LATE WRITER,

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THOUGHTS
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INFANT BAPTISM.

THE baptism of infants has been a troublesome dispute almost ever since the Reformation: but I shall only rehearse a few arguments commonly used to vindicate the practice of baptizing children.

I. The covenant made with Abraham and his seed (Gen. xvii.) is the covenant of grace; it includes, and was designed to extend to, all believers. When God promised to be a God to Abraham, and to his seed, St. Paul assures us, that by Abraham's seed are meant all that should imitate the faith of Abraham, whether they be Jews or Gentiles: (Gal. iii. 7:) "Know ye therefore that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham;" (verse 29;) "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The same spiritual promises and blessings which belonged to the church under the Old Testament, belong also to it under the New. (Acts ii. 39; 2 Cor. i. 20.) Abraham is represented as the root, or stock, of the visible church. (Rom. xi. 16, 17, &c.) The Jewish church are the natural branches of it: the Gentiles are grafted into the same stock, (verses 17, 24,) and partake of the blessings of it. From these texts, (and many others might easily be produced,) it seems evident that the Jewish and

the Christian church are but one and the same visible church, in a continued succession, though under different administrations and ordinances.

II. The covenant made with Abraham, and with his seed, is still in force. This is implied in what has been already said: but it ought to be particularly considered. It is plainly asserted by the Apostle, Gal. iii. 17. To the same purpose the Apostle speaks in Rom. iv. 14, 16. Here he declares, that the promise made to Abraham is not made of none effect, or abolished, but is sure to all believers in all ages.

Ever since God called the family of Abraham, and settled his visible church in it, he never suffered it to fail. It was an everlasting covenant that he made with Abraham to be his God, and the God of his seed, (Gen. xvii. 7,) that he might be the father both of Jews and Gentiles, who were brought into the church, as in Rom. iv. 11, 16.

III. The children of the Jews were visible members of the Jewish church under the covenant of Abraham, and as such they were acknowledged, and received into it by circumcision, as the door of entrance. (Gen. xvii. 9—14.)

IV. The children of Christians were never cut off from this privilege when their fathers were received into the church, whether they were Jews or Gentiles; and therefore they are members of the Christian church also under spiritual promises and blessings. When the Jews, the natural branches, were cut off from the good olive-tree, their little buds were cut off with them also; and when the Gentiles by a profession of faith were grafted in as foreign branches, their little buds were grafted in with them. Christ received the children that were brought by their parents, and "laid his hands on them, and blessed them, and said, Of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Mark x.

13—16.) The promises of the Old Testament, wherein children are included, in some of the Prophets, do refer to the Gentile church as well as the Jewish. (Isai. xlv. 3, 5; lxx. 23; Joel ii. 28, 29.) For it is "the blessing of Abraham" which reaches to his seed, "that comes upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." (Gal. iii. 14.) Rom. xv. 8, 9, "That the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy."

V. Baptism is now (like circumcision of old) the sign of God's covenant. This is plainly intimated by the Apostle in Gal. iii. 27, 29. Circumcision being abolished, and baptism coming in the room of it, baptism should be applied to all those who have any interest in the covenant, as circumcision was. Now that baptism is come in the room of circumcision seems plain from Col. ii. 12, where the Apostle argues, that being baptized, we need not be circumcised: and besides, baptism and circumcision signify the same thing, that is, the removal of sin; one by cutting off, and the other by washing away.

VI. As this seems to manifest the right of the children of Christians to these blessings, or that they have an interest in this covenant; so there are some considerations which render it very probable that children should be admitted into the visible church by the Christian door of entrance; that is, baptism. As for instance,

First, the Gospel, which is a dispensation of greater grace, does not lessen, but increase the privileges of the church: it takes away yokes and burdens, indeed, such as circumcision was, (Acts xv. 10,) but does not diminish its honour or privileges.

Again: when the father or mother of a family believed in Christ, their households were baptized, together with themselves, even where there is no mention that the household believed in Christ also: as in the case of Lydia and Stephanas. (Acts xvi.

15; 1 Cor. i. 16.) Now children are usually a considerable part of the household.

Yet further: children under the New Testament are as capable of receiving the blessings signified, and fulfilling the duties enjoined, as ever they were under the Old. It is granted, that they neither could then, nor can now, understand the blessings nor the duties; yet they might receive the seal of circumcision, or of baptism, as a bond laid upon them in their infancy to fulfil the obligations and the duties of riper years, and as an encouragement to wait and hope for the blessings. This was the case of Jewish infants; and why may not Christians be favoured with it also?

The covenant made with Abraham, and with his seed, Gen. xvii. 7, included infants. This covenant is not repealed or disannulled. (II. Argument, p. 4.) It was intended to extend to Christians, and their seed; (I. Arg.;) it is confirmed by God to Christ, (Gal. iii. 17,) that is, it was made with Christ, considered as including all his members in him. As circumcision of old was a sign of admitting persons into this covenant, so now baptism is the sign of admitting persons into the same individual covenant; (V. Arg.;) therefore it must be administered to the same persons, that is, to infants, as well as to the adult. When the covenant is the same, the privileges and promises the same, the seal must have been the same, if it had not been changed; and the seed of Abraham to inherit must be the same also, unless there is some alteration made in the Gospel. The seed in covenant included infants; and therefore infants are still part of that seed of Abraham. The seed of Abraham had a right to the seal of the covenant; their right still continues as the covenant does; and therefore they are to be admitted, infants in particular, to baptism, the present seal of this covenant.

If God thought fit to make any alterations in

any circumstance of this covenant, it seems necessary that he should give notice of it in the Gospel. Accordingly, as he thought fit to change the old sign of circumcision for baptism, so he has in the Gospel expressly warned us of the change. (Acts xv. 24; xxi. 21, 25; Gal. v. 2, 3.) And as he chose to make one alteration, with regard to the persons to whom the seal of the said covenant should be applied, and to ordain that females, as well as males, should be baptized, so he has expressly told us of this alteration in the Gospel. (Acts viii. 12; xvi. 14, 15; Gal. iii. 27, 28.) In like manner it must be concluded that if God would have had a farther alteration made,—if infants of believing parents that were formerly to partake of the seal of this covenant were upon the coming of Christ to partake of it no more,—undoubtedly God would have given us express warning of it, and have told us in the Gospel, that though infants before Christ came were in the covenant, now they are to be shut out of it. But as the Gospel says no such thing, it seems to me certain it cannot be true. It is then incumbent upon those who oppose infant baptism, if they would make their point good, positively to prove this by texts which expressly declare that Christ has cast infants out of the covenant, though before they were in it. But no such texts can be produced: therefore it appears they continue in covenant, and have still a right to the seal of it, which is baptism.

It will be in vain here to urge, that the Scripture sufficiently declares against applying this seal of the covenant to infants by making faith and repentance the conditions of baptism. For this kind of arguing would as well prove that infants heretofore were not qualified for circumcision, which yet no man will assert. As this argument would prove too much, it must be looked upon as proving

nothing. It will be needful to add, as a distinct head, that,

VII. The texts which speak of faith as the term of baptism, do not at all imply that infants are not to be baptized. In the case just now mentioned there is a parallel between baptism and circumcision. If a Heathen heretofore was proselyted to the Jewish religion, and did thereupon desire to be circumcised, he was admitted to circumcision upon the account of his faith in the God of Israel. And till he professed this faith, he could not lawfully be circumcised. And if a Jewish Prophet had been inviting a set of Heathens to Judaism, and circumcision, he would have been forced to talk in such a manner as this, namely, "Believe in the one true God, and ye shall be circumcised. He that believeth, and is circumcised, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned. Repent of your idolatry and other sins, and be circumcised. Circumcision now saveth us; not the putting away a piece of flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward the true God. Arise then and be circumcised, and put away your sins." In this manner, the Jewish Prophet must have spoken to his heathen audience. And if he had succeeded, and made proselytes, the history of it must have been expressed in such a language as this; namely, "When the Heathens believed the Prophet, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, they were circumcised. A certain convert said to the Jewish Prophet, What should hinder my being circumcised? The Prophet answered, If you believe with all your heart, you may. He replied, I believe that there is one God, and that Moses is his Prophet. And hereupon he circumcised him. Others hearing, believed, and were circumcised." This, I apprehend, must have been the language, in case the Prophet had preached to a heathen nation, and proselyted them. And

yet I suppose that no one would, from this kind of language, infer that infants were not to be circumcised; or that actual faith in God was so universally necessary to circumcision as that infants were not to receive it, for want of actual faith. As this will be allowed by every one, it must be acknowledged also, by parity of reason, that the very same expressions, when in the same circumstances applied to baptism, cannot imply that infants are not to be baptized. All I now contend for is, that they do not even *seem* to imply that infants are not to be baptized; for this they cannot do, unless in the case above represented they did also imply that infants were not heretofore to be circumcised. As it will be allowed they would not have implied this, they cannot consistently be thought to imply the other.

If it had been fit to have continued circumcision, as the sign of God's covenant, and Christ had actually continued it, when he gave his Apostles a commission to proselyte the Gentile nations, I do not see how he could have expressed his thoughts better than thus:—"Go, proselyte all nations, circumcising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" that is, Prove to the Gentiles that Jesus is the Christ; and when they profess to believe this, circumcise them. Would the Apostles, or any one else, have inferred from hence, that infants, not having actual faith, were not to be circumcised? Nay rather, on the other hand, the Apostle would have reasoned thus:—"The sign of God's covenant, circumcision, has hitherto been confined to one nation, even that of the Israelites; but now Christ has commanded us to extend it to all nations of the earth; he has ordered us to go and proselyte all nations, and circumcise them. Surely it is his intention that we should take our pattern from the practice of

circumcision among the Jews. He cannot, therefore, be supposed to mean, that we must only circumcise grown men, who are capable of believing the Gospel, and profess so to do. It is evident he intends, that when we shall have circumcised such, we should next circumcise their male children; and that in after generations the males among them should be circumcised the eighth day. Thus it was at the first institution. Abraham was first circumcised; then his children, of whatsoever ages they happened to be; and in after generations their children were circumcised on the eighth day. This is a direction to us. And when we are bid to 'go proselyte all nations, circumcising them,' we plainly see we are not forbidden to circumcise infants; but, on the contrary, are ordered to imitate this example of our father Abraham." I observed, if circumcision had been retained as the seal of the covenant, and the same commission had been given to the Apostles as now was given them, only the word "circumcise" used instead of "baptize," no one would have imagined that form of expression would in the least have interfered with the circumcision of infants. It is as certain then that the same form of words applied to baptism cannot in the least interfere with the baptism of infants.

These considerations, I think, fully take off the force of all the objections that men think they find in the Scripture against the baptism of infants. If there be any thing in the nature of baptism, as a seal of the covenant, which confines it to such as believe, there must be the same limiting nature in circumcision, which was a seal of the same covenant. But as this is certainly false, the other cannot be true. If an infant was not, by reason of his age, unqualified to receive the sign of circumcision, "a seal of the righteousness of faith," an infant cannot now, by reason of his age, be consistently

thought unqualified for baptism, which is a seal of the same.

Farther, to confirm this point, if it needs confirmation, it may be observed, that the same forms of expression which are urged out of the New Testament to prove that infants are not qualified for baptism, for want of actual faith and repentance, would equally prove them unqualified for salvation. From Christ's saying, "He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved," some have inferred that a person must actually believe, or else he cannot be baptized. With as much strength of reason they might infer that a person cannot be saved unless he actually believe; especially since it is added, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Yet it is acknowledged that though infants do not believe, yet they shall not be damned. It is evident, then, to all, that this text must be interpreted as speaking only of the adult, who were capable of hearing and believing the Gospel. Since then it does not at all speak of infants, they may be saved, and may be baptized too, notwithstanding they are not believers. The method of proving that they may be saved without faith, will as necessarily demonstrate that they may be baptized without their own faith, notwithstanding any thing that is laid down in this text. Thus all the objections against infant baptism are at once cut off.

VIII. In the Christian church, from its earliest ages, and we think from the Apostles' time, it has been the custom to baptize the infant children of professing Christians. To prove this I shall produce a few witnesses, among many.

1. Justin Martyr, who wrote about forty years after the Apostles, in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, page 59, plainly speaks of baptism as being to Christians in the stead of circumcision. And in his "Apology for the Christians," near the

beginning, he says, "Several persons among us, of sixty and seventy years old, of both sexes, were disciplined," (or made disciples,) "to Christ, in or from their childhood." Please to observe Justin's word,—*εμαθητευθησαν*, *were disciplined*, or *made disciples*: it is the very same word that had been used by St. Matthew, chap. xxviii. 19, in expressing our Saviour's command,—*μαθητευσατε*, *disciple all nations*. And it was done to these persons, Justin says, in or from their childhood. And he wrote that "Apology" within forty years of the death of the Apostles; and seventy years reckoned back from that time do reach into the midst of the Apostles' time.

2. Irenæus, born about the time of St. John's death, in his treatise "Adv. Hæres," lib. ii., cap. 3, speaking of Christ, says, "Not disdain- ing, nor going in a way above human nature, nor breaking in his own person the law which he had set for mankind; but sanctifying every several age by the likeness it has to him. For he came to save all persons by himself: all, I mean, who by him are regenerated unto God; infants, and little ones, and children, and youths, and elderly persons. Therefore he went through the several ages: for infants being made an infant, sanctifying infants," &c.

This testimony, which reckons infants among those that are regenerated, is plain and full. Dr. Wall has largely shown, that the word "regenerating" does, particularly in the writings of Irenæus, and in the usual phrase of those times, signify baptizing; he mentions some places which expressly declare, that Christ was regenerated by John; meaning that he was baptized by him.

Near the time that Irenæus wrote the above treatise, Clemens Alexandrinus wrote his "Pedagog.," wherein he expressly says, "The word regeneration is the name of baptism;" (lib. i., c. 6, near

the beginning;) his thus plainly declaring, that regenerating is the common name for baptizing does very much confirm the argument taken from Irenæus, who asserts that infants were regenerated unto God.

Please to take notice how near this man was to the Apostles' time. Irenæus himself says, (lib. v., c. 30,) that the revelation made to St. John, in Patmos, was but a little before his time; and that revelation was five or six years before St. John's death. In an age so nigh to that of the Apostles, and in a place where one of them had so lately lived, the Christians could not be ignorant what had been done in their time in a matter so public as the baptizing, or not baptizing, of infants.

3. Origen is not only express for the baptizing of infants, but gives his reason for it: in his eighth homily, or sermon, on Leviticus, chap. xii., he thus speaks, "Hear David speaking; 'I was,' says he, 'shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me:' showing, that every soul that is born in the flesh is polluted with the filth of sin and iniquity; and that therefore that was said which we mentioned before, that 'none is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one day.'

"Besides all this, let it be considered, what is the reason that whereas the baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness of sins, infants are also, by the usage of the church, baptized; when, if there was nothing in infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them."

Again, in his homily on Luke xiv., he says as follows:—"Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? or when have they sinned? Or how can any reason of the laver in their case hold good, but according to that sense that we mentioned even now: 'None is free from pollution,

though his life be but the length of one day upon earth?' And it is for that reason, because by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, * that infants are baptized."

Yet farther, in the fifth book of his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, he says thus:—"And also in the law it is commanded that a sacrifice be offered for every child that is born; 'a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons; of which one is for a sin-offering, the other for a burnt-offering.'" For what sin is this one pigeon offered? Can the child that is new-born have committed any sin? It has even *then* sin, for which the sacrifice is commanded to be offered; from which even he "whose life is but of one day" is denied to be free.

"For this also it was that the church had from the Apostles an order to give baptism to infants. For they to whom the divine mysteries were committed knew that there is in all persons the natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by water and the Spirit."

The reader is desired to observe, that Origen not only says that it was the custom of the church to baptize infants, but he expressly affirms "that the church received an *order* from the Apostles to give baptism even to infants."

4. There is one circumstance that makes Origen a more competent witness to give evidence whether the baptizing of infants had been in use time out of mind than most other authors that we have left to us of that age; because he was himself of a family that had been Christian for a long time. The other witnesses that I have mentioned, except Irenæus,

* Taken away, in a sacramental sense, as to the liability to punishment on account of it: but not as to its existence, which renders necessary the further baptism of "the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier."

must have been themselves baptized in adult age; because they were of heathen parents. But Origen's father was a martyr for Christ in the persecution under Severus, the year after the Apostles, 102. And Eusebius (in his History, book vi., c. 19) assures us, that his forefathers had been Christians for several generations.

Now since Origen was born in the eighty-fifth year after the Apostles, (for he was seventeen years old when his father suffered martyrdom,) his grandfather, or at least his great-grandfather, must have lived in the Apostles' time. And as he could not be ignorant whether he was himself baptized in infancy, so he had no farther than his own family to go to inquire what was practised in the time of the Apostles.

Besides that, he was a very learned man, and could not be ignorant of the use of the churches, in most of which he had also travelled; for as he was born and bred at Alexandria, so it appears, from Eusebius's History, b. vi., that he had lived in Greece, and at Rome, and in Cappadocia, and Arabia, and spent the main part of his life in Syria and Palestine.

5. What I apprehend very much strengthens the truth of infant baptism, that it is of a divine original, is this: "About one hundred and fifty years after the death of St. John the Apostle, there was an assembly of sixty-six Bishops, who spoke of infant baptism as a known, established, and uncontested practice." One Fidus questioned whether infants were to be baptized so soon as between two and three days after their birth, and whether it would not be better to defer their baptism till they were eight days old, as was observed in circumcision; which scruples he proposed to this assembly, and in which he desired their resolution, which they sent in a letter to him, part of which I shall transcribe.

“Cyprian, and the rest of the Bishops, who were present at the council, sixty-six in number, to Fidus our brother, greeting.

“We read your letter, most dear brother: but as to the case of infants, whereas you judge ‘that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born, and that the rule of circumcision is to be observed, so that none should be baptized, and sanctified, [dedicated to God,] before the eighth day after he is born,’ we were all in our assembly of the contrary opinion.

“We judge that no person is to be hindered from obtaining the grace by the law that is now appointed; and that the spiritual circumcision ought not to be restrained by the circumcision that was according to the flesh: but that all are to be admitted to the grace of Christ; since Peter, speaking in the Acts of the Apostles, says, ‘The Lord has shown me, that no person is to be called common, or unclean.’

“This, therefore, dear brother, was our opinion in the assembly; that it is not for us to hinder any person from baptism and the grace of God, who is merciful, and benign, and affectionate to all: which rule, as it holds for all, so we think it is more especially to be observed in reference to infants newly born; to whom our help and the divine mercy is rather to be granted, because by their cries and tears at their first entrance into the world, they do intimate nothing so much, as that they implore compassion.”

From this piece of history it appears, that both the persons who moved the doubt, and all the persons who resolved it, unanimously agreed in this, that infants were to be baptized, and that it was the settled custom of the church to baptize them. If the assembly had been against infant baptism, they would have answered, “It is so far

from being necessary to baptize children on the eighth day after their birth, that they ought not to be baptized at all till they are of age to judge and act for themselves." But none of those Bishops was in this sentiment. They all looked upon it as a thing uncontested, that infants were to be baptized.

If we look back to the space that had passed from the Apostles' time, which was but one hundred and fifty years, we must conclude, that it was easy then to know the practice of Christians in the Apostles' days; for some of these sixty-six Bishops may be thought to be at this time sixty or seventy years old themselves, which reaches almost to half the space: and at that time, when they were infants, there must have been several alive that were born within the Apostles' age. And such could not be ignorant whether infants were baptized in that age, when they themselves were some of those infants. And as there was no dispute, or difference of opinion, (as there must have been among so many, if any innovation had been made,—for it is here expressly said, there was not one of Fidus's mind,) on the proposal that infant baptism should be delayed till the eighth day; much less then were there any of opinion that it was not to be administered.

"In a doctrinal point," as Mr. Baxter well observes, "a mistake is easier than in a bare narration of some one fact: but in a matter of fact of so public notice, and which so many thousands were partakers in, as baptism was, how could they be ignorant?"

Suppose it were a question now among us, whether persons were baptized at age only, or in infancy also, eighty years before we were born; were it not easy to know the truth, what by report, and what by records?

I shall conclude what I have to remark on this testimony with observing, that we see here con-

firmed what was said before, that baptism was reckoned to be to Christians in the room of circumcision. For it was upon that account that Fidus thought it must be at the time of the old circumcision; and the Bishops of the Council, though denying that, do call it the spiritual [or Christian] circumcision.

6. Ambrose, commenting on these words, (Luke i. 17,) where the angel prophesies of John the Baptist, "He shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias;" after having shown, in several particulars, how John in his office did resemble Elias, and having mentioned that miracle of Elias dividing the river Jordan, adds thus: "But perhaps this may seem to be fulfilled in our time and in the Apostles' time. For that returning of the river-waters backward toward the spring-head, which was caused by Elias, when the river was divided, (as the Scripture says, 'Jordan was driven back,') signified the sacrament of the laver of salvation, which was afterwards to be instituted; by which those infants that are baptized are reformed back again from wickedness to the primitive state of their nature."

He means, they are freed from the guilt of original sin, and in that sense reduced back to the primitive state in which man was before it happened. He plainly speaks of infants, as baptized in the Apostles' time, as well as in his own; and makes John, in baptizing infants, to resemble Elias in turning back the waters to their spring-head.

7. Austin, in his treatise "De Baptismo contra Donatistas," lib. iv., c. 23, having had occasion to speak of the penitent thief, who obtained salvation without baptism, shows, that that is no more an argument against the necessity of baptism, where it may be had, than the example of baptized in-

fants not obtaining salvation without faith is an argument against the necessity of faith, where the subject is capable of it. Near the conclusion of the fourth book he says, "And as the thief who by necessity went without baptism, was saved, because, by his piety, he had it spiritually; so where baptism is had, though the party by necessity go without that [faith] which the thief had, yet he is saved.

"Which the whole body of the church holds, as delivered to them, in the case of little infants baptized; who certainly cannot yet believe with the heart to righteousness, or confess with the mouth to salvation as the thief could; nay, by their crying and noise, while the sacrament is administering, they disturb the holy mysteries; and yet no Christian man of any sort will say they are baptized to no purpose.

"And if any one do ask for divine authority in this matter, though that which the whole church practises, and which has not been instituted by Councils, but was ever in use, is very reasonably believed to be no other than a thing ordered by the authority of the Apostles; yet we may besides take a true estimate how much the sacrament of baptism does now avail infants, by the circumcision which God's former people received." In what follows, he most plainly declares, that baptism is to the Christian infants what circumcision was to the Jewish.

Though Austin speaks of infant baptism in this place but occasionally, his words are a full evidence that it was then universally practised, and had been so beyond the memory of any man, or of any record: and they took it to be a thing that had not been enacted by any Council, but had been in use from the beginning of Christianity. And they had then but three hundred years to look back to

the times of the Apostles, whereas we now have upwards of sixteen hundred. And many writings and records which are now lost, were then extant, and easily known.

It deserves a particular remark, that most of these witnesses for infant baptism were not only faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, but were faithful unto death, joyfully suffering martyrdom for the truth: surely this is a great accession to the strength of their testimony.

All these things put together seem to prove, that infant baptism was practised in the church of Christ from the beginning, and consequently that it is of an apostolical and divine original.

As for the first four hundred years, there appears only one man, Tertullian, that advised that delay of infant baptism in some cases, and one Gregory, that did perhaps practise such delay in the case of his children, but no society of men so thinking, or so practising; so in the next seven hundred years there is not so much as one man to be found that either spoke for or practised such delay, but all the contrary. And when one sect among the Waldenses declared against the baptizing of infants, as being incapable of salvation, the main body of that people rejected their opinion; and those of them that held that opinion quickly dwindled away and disappeared; there being no more heard of holding that tenet, till the rising of the German Anti-pædobaptists, in the year 1522. "And all the national churches now in the world do profess and practise infant baptism."

This brings to my remembrance a very clear proof for the baptism of infants, which much satisfied the mind of the great and good Mr. Baxter. I shall relate it in his own words. "I am fully satisfied, that Mr. Tombs cannot show me any society (I think not one man) that ever opened their

mouths against the baptism of infants till about two hundred years ago; which confirms me much that it is from the Apostles' time, or else some one would have been found as an opposer of it; even as I profess, seriously, that it much satisfieth my conscience that Christ and his Apostles did never shut out the infants of believing Jews (and consequently not of believing Gentiles) from being members of his visible church, in that I never find in all the New Testament one word of exception, arguing, murmuring, or dissatisfaction against it: whereas it cannot possibly be conceived, but those Jews who kept such a stir before they would let go circumcision, the sign of church-membership, when yet they had baptism, another sign, would undoubtedly have been much more scandalized at the unchurching of all their children, and would have much more hardly have let go that privilege of their church-membership, or at least have raised some scruple about it, which might have occasioned one word of satisfaction from some one of the Apostles; especially when Paul calls them holy, and Christ saith, 'Suffer them to come to me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.' I know not how Mr. Tombs, and such others, think on these things; but for my part, they stick so close to my conscience that I dare not say, Christ would have no infants received into his visible church among the number of Christians, when I find he once placed them in the church; and neither Mr. Tombs, nor any man breathing, can show me one word of Scripture where ever Christ did put them out again; and yet these men pretend to stand to the determination of Scripture. I would this one thing were impartially considered."

With regard to the mode of baptizing, I would only add, Christ nowhere, as far as I can find, requires *dipping*, but only *baptizing*; which word

many most eminent for learning and piety have declared, signifies to "pour on" or "sprinkle," as well as to "dip." As our Lord has graciously given us a word of such extensive meaning, doubtless the parent, or the person to be baptized, if he be adult, ought to choose which way he best approves. What God has left indifferent, it becomes not man to make necessary.

I think it proper in this place to subjoin what Dr. Watts has declared concerning the signification of this word. "The Greek word *baptizo*," says he, "signifies to *wash* any thing properly *by water coming over it*: now there are several ways of such washing, viz., *sprinkling* water on it in a small quantity, *pouring* water on it in a larger quantity, or *dipping* it under water, either in part or in whole: and since this seems to be left undetermined in Scripture to one particular mode, therefore any of these ways of washing may be sufficient to answer the purpose of this ordinance. Now that the Greek word signifies washing a thing in general by water coming over it, and not always dipping, is argued by learned men, not only from ancient Greek authors, but from the New Testament itself, as Luke xi. 38, 'The Pharisees marvelled that Jesus had not first washed before dinner;' in Greek, that he was not first 'baptized:' and can it be supposed, that they would have him dip himself in water? Mark vii. 4, 'The Pharisees, when they come from the market, eat not except they are washed;' in Greek, except they are baptized: surely it cannot mean except they were dipped. And if this should be restrained to signify washing their hands only, yet it does not signify necessarily dipping them; for the manner of washing their hands of old was by pouring water on them, as 'Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah.' (2 Kings iii. 11.) Yet further,

they practised the washing of tables; in Greek, 'baptism of beds,' as well as cups and vessels. Now beds could not usually be washed by dipping. (Heb. ix. 10.) The Jews had divers washings prescribed by Moses, in Greek, 'baptisms,' which were sprinkling and pouring water on things, as well as plunging them all over in water. 'The children of Israel were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, in their passage through the Red Sea, at their march from Egypt.' (1 Cor. x. 2.) Not that they were dipped in the water, but they were sprinkled by the clouds over their heads, and perhaps by the water which stood up in heaps as they passed by."

Besides, pouring or sprinkling more naturally represents most of the spiritual blessings signified by baptism; namely, the sprinkling the blood of Christ on the conscience, or the pouring out of the Spirit on the person baptized, or sprinkling him with clean water, as an emblem of the influence of the Spirit;—all which are the things signified in baptism as different representations of the cleansing away of the guilt or defilement of sin thereby.

I conclude, since this controversy has difficulties attending it, persons of an honest and sincere mind, in searching out the truth, may happen to run into different opinions; but the things wherein we agree are so important, as should not suffer us to quarrel about the lesser things wherein we differ. Our brethren who reject infant baptism, as well as we who practise it, all agree in a belief of the sacred institution of this ordinance: we all agree, that children should be devoted to God, and should be partakers of all the privileges which Scripture admits, and that they should grow up under all possible obligations to duty; and since each of us desires to find out the will of Christ, and practise it accordingly, it is a most unreasonable thing that

we should be angry with each other, because some of us are devoted to God and Christ, by this ceremony, a little sooner or later than others; or because some devote their children to God in baptism, as a claim of privileges and an obligation to duties, before they can do this for themselves, and are capable of acting therein; or because some of us think this ordinance requires much water, and that the whole body should be immersed in it, while others suppose that a little is sufficient, and that he who has the face and head washed in this solemnity has as true a significancy of Gospel benefits and obligations as when he has his whole body put under water,—since our Saviour thought so when he washed Peter's feet. (John xiii. 10.) In short, where faith in Christ, and love to God, and obedience to the sanctifying operations of the Spirit, are made necessary to salvation, and agreed upon by us all, it is pity that these lesser things should raise such unhappy contentions among the disciples of the blessed Jesus, the Prince of peace.