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SERMONS AND TRACTS OF JOHN GILL

BAPTISM: A PROFESSION OF THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL

The Argument From Apostolic Tradition, In Favor of Infant-Baptism, Considered

by John Gill

(London: George Keith, 1751)

Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth
— Psalm 60:4

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SERMON 63

THE ARGUMENT FROM APOSTOLIC TRADITION, IN FAVOR OF INFANT BAPTISM

With OTHERS, advanced in a late Pamphlet, called,
`*The Baptism of Infants A Reasonable Service,* etc.', considered

It is with reluctance I enter again into the controversy about baptism; not from any consciousness either of the badness or weakness of the cause I am engaged in; but partly on account of other work upon my hands, which I chose not to be interrupted in; and partly because I think there has been enough written already, to bring this controversy to an issue; and it is not our fault that it has not been closed long ago; for there has been scarce any thing wrote by us these *fifty* years past, but in our own defense; our Paedobaptist brethren being continually the aggressors, and first movers of the controversy; they seem as if they were not satisfied with what has been done on their side, and therefore are always attempting either to put the controversy upon a new foot, or to throw the old arguments into a new form; and even say the same things over and over again, to make their minds, and the minds of their people easy, if possible. If persons are content to search the scriptures, and form their judgment of this matter by them, there has been enough published on both sides of the question to determine themselves by; and we are willing things should rest here: but this is our care; if we reply to what is written against us, then we are litigious persons, and lovers of controversy; though we only rise up in our own vindication, for which surely we are not to be blamed; and if we make no reply, then what is written is unanswerable by us, and we are triumphed over.

No less than half a dozen pamphlets have been published upon this subject, within a very little time; without any provocation from us, that I know of. ***Some of them indeed are like mushrooms, that rise up and die almost as soon as they live. It has been the lot of the pamphlet before me, to live a little longer; and which is cried up as an unanswerable one,*** for no other reason, that I can see, but because it has not yet been answered in form;

otherwise the arguments advanced in it, have been answered before it was in being; for there is nothing new throughout the whole of it. Is there any one argument in it, but what has been brought into the controversy before? not one. Is the date of infant-baptism, as it appears from the writings of the ancients, from antiquity, for which this performance is mostly boasted of, carried one year, one month, one day, one hour, or moment higher, than it was before? not one. Is there any one passage of the ancients cited, which has not been produced and been under consideration before? not one. What then has this Gentleman been doing? just nothing at all. ***However, an answer would have been made to him before this time, had not some things in providence prevented.*** My late worthy friend, the Reverend Mr *Samuel Wilson,* intended to have drawn up one, as he signified to me; for which reason, I did not give myself the trouble to read this pamphlet: His view was first to publish his *Manual,* and then to take this under consideration; but he dying before the publication of the former, prevented his design; nor did he, as I could ever find, leave any materials behind him relating to this affair. Some time after Mr. *Killingworth* published an answer to Dr. *Foster* on the subject of communion, and added some remarks upon this pamphlet; when I ordered my Bookseller to get me that, and the strictures on it; upon reading of which, I found that Mr. *Killingworth* expected a formal answer to it was preparing, and would be published by a Gentleman he represents as the occasion of its being written; which for some time I have been waiting for: but hearing nothing of it, and ***the boasts of the party increasing, because of no answer, determined me to take it under examination in the manner I have done;*** but whether after all I am not too *forward,* I cannot tell; but if any thing is preparing or prepared by another hand, I hope what I have written will not hinder the publication of it.

Infant-baptism is sometimes put upon one footing, and sometimes on another; as on the covenant of grace; on circumcision; on the baptism of Jewish proselytes; on scripture consequences; and by our author it is rested on apostolic tradition. This he says is *an argument of great weight;* [f1] and that it is principally for the sake of this, that his performance appears in the world; [f2] for which reason, I shall chiefly attend unto it. Whatever weight this argument may be thought to have in the present controversy, it has none in others; not in the controversy with the Papists, nor with the church of *England* about rites and ceremonies, this Gentleman himself being judge; who I understand is the author of *The Dissenting Gentleman's Answer to Mr. White's Three Letters.* In his controversy with him, Christ is

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

The title of the pamphlet before me is, *The Baptism of Infants a Reasonable Service, founded upon Scripture, and Undoubted Apostolic Tradition;* but if it is founded upon scripture, then not upon tradition; and if upon tradition, then, not on scripture; if it is a scriptural business, then not a traditional one; and if a traditional one, then not a scriptural one: if it can be proved by scripture, that is enough, it has then no need of tradition; but if it cannot be proved by that, a cart-load of traditions will not support it. — This put me in mind of what I have heard, of a countryman offering to give the Judge a *dozen* reasons why his neighbor could not appear in court; in the *first* place, my Lord, says he, *he is dead;* that is enough, quoth the Judge, I shall spare you the trouble of giving me the rest: so prove but infant-baptism by scripture, and there will be no need of the weighty arguments from tradition. ***However, by putting the case as it is, we learn that this author by apostolic tradition, means unwritten apostolic tradition, since he distinguishes it from the Scripture; and not apostolic tradition, delivered in the Scriptures,*** which is the sense in which sometimes *tradition*

is used, both in the word of God, (<46 15 3>1 Corinthians 15:3. <52 2 15>2 Thessalonians 2:15.) and in ancient writers. [f3] So we are not at a loss about the sense of it; it is *unwritten*, uninspired apostolic tradition; tradition not *in*, but *out* of the scriptures; not delivered by the apostles in the sacred writings, but by word of mouth to their successors, or to the churches.

It is pretty much that infant-baptism should be called an *undoubted* apostolic tradition, since it has been *doubted* of by some learned Paedobaptists themselves; nay, some have affirmed that it is not observed by them as an apostolic tradition, particularly *Curcellaeus,* [f4] and who gives a very good reason for it: his words are these;

> "Paedobaptism was unknown in the two first ages after Christ; in the third and fourth it was approved by a few; at length, in the fifth and following ages it began to obtain in divers places; and therefore this rite is indeed observed by us as an *ancient custom,* but not as an *apstolic tradition.*"

Bishop *Taylor* [f5] calls it a *pretended* apostolical tradition; and says, that the tradition cannot be proved to be apostolical, we have very good evidence from antiquity. Since then the Paedobaptists disagree about this point among themselves, as well as it is called in question and contested by others; one would think, this writer should not be so confident as to call it an *undoubted* apostolic tradition.

Besides, apostolic tradition, at most and best, is a very precarious and uncertain thing, and not to be depended on. We have a famous instance of this, in the controversy that arose in the second century, about the time of keeping *Easter;* whether it should be observed on the 14th day of the first moon, let it fall on what day of the week it would, or on the Sunday following; the former was observed by the churches of *Asia*, and the latter by the church of Rome*;* both pleaded the custom and usage of their predecessors, and even ancient apostolic tradition; [f6] the Asiatic churches said, they had it by tradition from *Philip* and *John;* the Roman church from *Peter* and *Paul;* but not being able to settle this point, which was in the right, *Victor,* the then bishop of *Rome,* excommunicated the other churches that would not fall in with the practice of him and his church; this was in the year 196; and even before this, in the year 157, this same controversy was on foot; and *Polycarp* bishop of *Smyrna,* who had been a hearer and disciple of the apostle *John,* made a journey to some, and conversed with *Anicetus* bishop of that place, about this matter; they talked it over

candidly, parted friendly, but without convincing each other, both retaining their former customs and tradition; [f7] if now it was so difficult a thing to fix a tradition, or fettle what was an apostolic tradition, about the middle of the second century, fifty or sixty years after the death of the apostle *John,* and when some of the immediate successors of the apostles were living; what judgment can we form of apostolic traditions in the eighteenth century?

Moreover, it is doubtful whether there ever was any such thing as apostolic tradition; or that ever any thing was delivered by the apostles to their successors, or to the churches, to be observed by them, which was not delivered in the sacred writings, and I defy this Gentleman, and demand of him to give me one single instance of any apostolic tradition of this nature; and if no such instance can be given, it is in vain to talk of *undoubted apostolic tradition;* and upon what a miserable foundation must infant baptism stand, that relies upon this? unwritten apostolic tradition is a *non-entity,* as the learned *Alting* [f8] calls it; it is a mere chimaera; a refuge of heretics formerly, and of papists now; a favorite argument of theirs, to prove by it what they please.

But be it so, that there is such a thing as apostolic tradition; let it be proved that infant-baptism is such; let the apostles be pointed out that delivered it. Were they all the apostles or only some of them that delivered it? let them be named who they were, and to whom they delivered it, and when, and where. The apostles *Peter* and *Paul,* who were, the one the apostle of the circumcision, and the other the apostle of the uncircumcision, one would think, should be the most likely to hand down this tradition; the one to the christian Jews, and the other to the christian Gentiles; or however, to their successors or companions: but is there any proof or evidence that they did so? none at all; though there are writings of persons extant that lived in their times. If *Clemens Romanus* was a successor of *Peter,* as the papists say, it might have been expected, that it would have been delivered to him, and he would have published it; but there is not a word of it in his epistles still in being. *Barnabas* was a companion of the apostle *Paul;* and had it been a tradition of his, it might be justly thought, it would be met with in an epistle of his now extant; but there is not the least hint of it in it, but on the contrary, several passages in favor of believers-baptism. Perhaps, as *John was* the last of the apostles, and outlived them all, it was left with him to transmit it to others; and had this been the care, it might have been hoped it would have been found in

the writings of *Polycarp*, a hearer and disciple of the apostle *John;* but not a syllable of it is to be found in him. Nay *Papias*, bishop of *Hierapolis*, one that was a hearer of *John* the elder *of Ephesus*, and a companion *of Polycarp*, and who had conversed with those who were familiar with the apostles, and made it his business to pick up sayings and facts, said or done by the apostles, not recorded in scripture, has not a word of this; which *childish* business would have been a very pretty thing for that weak-headed man, as *Eusebius* [f9] represents him, to have gone prattling about with; here is an apostolic tradition then, which no body knows by whom it was delivered, nor to whom, nor when and where: the companions and successors of the apostles say nothing of it. The [f10] Jews talk of a Mosaic tradition and oral law, delivered from one to another for several thousand years running; they tell you by whom it was first given and received; and can name the persons to whom it was transmitted in succeeding ages; this is something to the purpose; this is doing business roundly; but here is a tradition no body can tell from whence it comes, nor who received it, and handed it down; for there is not the least mention of it, nor any pretended to in the first century or apostolic age. ***But let us attend to what evidence is given of it, in the next or second century.***

Two pasages are produced out of the writers of this age, to prove this *undoubted* apostolic tradition; the one out of *Justin Martyr;* the other out of *Irenaeus.* That from *Justin* is as follows; [f11]

> "several persons among us, men and women, of sixty and seventy years of age, οι εκ παιδων εμαθητευθησαν τω Χρισο, *who from their childhood were instructed in Christ*, remain incorrupt:"

for so the phrase on which the whole depends should be rendered, and not *discipled* or *proselyted to Christ;* which rendering of the words, as it is unjustifiable, so it would never have been thought of, had it not been to serve a turn; and is not agreeable to *Justin's* use of the word, who frequently makes use of it in the sense of instruction and teaching; as when he speaks of persons being μαθητευθηνας, *instructed* into divine doctrines; [f12] and of others being μαθητευομενους, *instructed* in the name (person or doctrine) of Christ, and leaving the way of error; [f13] and of Christ's sending his disciples to the Gentiles, who by them εμαθητευσαν, *instructed* them: [f14] nor should εκ παιδων, be rendered *in infancy, but from childhood;* and is a phrase of the same signification with that in 2 Timothy 3:15. where *Timothy* is said απο βρεφους, *from a child* to know

the holy scriptures; and *Justin's sense* is, that notwithstanding the strict and severe commands of Christ in [40 5 28]*Matthew* 5:28, 29, 30, 44 as they might seem to be, and which he cites; yet there were several persons of the age he mentions, then living, who had been instructed in the person, offices, and doctrines of Christ, or had been trained up in the christian religion from their childhood, who had persevered hitherto, and were incorrupt in their practices, and in their principles; and which is no other than a verification of what the wise man observes, [20 22 6]Proverbs 22:6.

> Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it:

and we are able in our day, to point out persons of an age that *Justin* mentions, who have been trained up in the christian religion from their childhood; and who in riper years have made a public profession of it, and have held fast their profession without wavering, and lived unblemished lives and conversations; and yet never were baptized in their infancy. Behold, here the first proof and evidence of infant-baptism being an *undoubted apostolic tradition;* when there is not a word of baptism in it, much less of infant-baptism; nor any hint of it, or reference unto it. Can the most sanguine Paedobaptist sit down, and in cool reflection conclude, upon reading and considering this passage, that it proves infant-baptism to be an *undoubted apostolic tradition? s*urely he cannot.

The other passage is out of *Irenaeus,* and stands thus; [f15]

> "He (Christ) came to save all; all I say, qui per eum renascuntur in Deum, *who by him are born* again *unto God,* infants, and little ones, and children, and young men, and old men."

For so the words are to be rendered, and not *baptized unto God;* for the word *renascor* is never used by *Irenaeus,* or rather by his translator, in such a sense; nor had it as yet obtained among the ancients to use the words *regenerated* and *regeneration,* for *baptized* and baptism. Likewise, it is certain that *Irenaeus* speaks elsewhere of regeneration as distinct from baptism, as an inward spiritual work, agreeable to the scriptures; which never speak of it but as such, no not in [43 3 5]John 3:5, [56 3 5]Titus 3:5. And what reason can there be to depart from the literal and scriptural sense of the word, and even the sense which *Irenaeus* uses it in; and especially, since infants are capable of regeneration in such a sense of it? besides, to understand *Irenaeus* as speaking of baptism, is to make him at least to

suggest a doctrine which is absolutely false; as if Christ came to save all and only such, who are baptized unto God; when it is certain, he came to save the Old-Testament-saints, who never were baptized, as well as New-Testament-saints; and no doubt many now are fared by him, who never were baptized with water at all: and on the other hand, nothing is more true than that he came to save all and only those, who are regenerated by the Spirit and grace of God, of whatsoever age they he. And after all, when it is observed that the chapter out of which this passage is taken, is thought by some learned men to be none of *Irenaeus's*, but a spurious piece; and if it is his, it is only a translation, as almost all his works be, and a very foolish, uncouth and barbarous one, as learned men observe; so that it is not certain that there are his words, or are a true translation of them; what wise and considerate man will say, that this is a proof of infant-baptism being an *undoubted apostolic tradition? s*eeing the passage is so much contested, and so much is to be said against it; seeing, at most and best, the sense of it is doubtful; and seeing it is certain that *Irenaeus* uses the word *regeneration* in a different sense from baptism; [f16] who can be sure he uses it of baptism here? Upon the whole, what thoughtful man will affirm from hence, that infant-baptism is an *undoubted* apostolic tradition? And seeing these two testimonies are the only ones produced in favor of infant-baptism in the second century; and the latter Dr *Wall* [f17] confesses, "is the first express mention that we have met with of infants baptized;" though there is no mention at all made of it in it, any more than in the former; he must have a strong faith to believe, and a good assurance upon such evidence to assert, [f18] "that the baptism of infants was the *undoubted* practice of the christian church in its purest and first: ages; the ages immediately succeeding the apostles." ***Let us now consider third century evidence.***

Tertullian is the first man that ever made mention of infant-baptism, that we know of; and as he was the first that spoke of it, he at the same time spoke against it, dissuaded from it, and advised to defer it; and though he was quire *singular*, as our author says, in this his advice; it should be observed, that he is also quite *singular* in his mention of the thing itself; there being no writings of any contemporary of his extant, from which we might learn their sense of this affair. We allow that infant-baptism was moved in the third century; that it then began to be talked of, and became matter of debate, and might be practiced in the African churches, where it was first moved. We do not deny the *probability* of the practice of it then, though the *certainty* of it does not appear; it is probable it might be

practiced, but it is not certain it was; as yet it has not been proved. Now here we stick, by this we abide, that there is no mention made of it in any authentic writer before *Tertullian's* time. And this writer himself elsewhere [f19] observes, that "by *his* time, it is well known, a great variety of superstitious, and ridiculous, and foolish rites were brought into the church." The date of infant-baptism cannot, we apprehend, be carried higher than his time; and we require of any of our learned Paedobaptist brethren, to produce a single passage out of any authentic writer before *Tertullian,* in which infant-baptism is expressly mentioned, or clearly hinted at, or plainly supposed, or manifestly referred unto. This being the care, as we own it began in this century, and might be practiced by some, it might be needlers in a good measure to consider after-testimonies; however, I shall not think fit wholly to neglect them.

Origen is next quoted, and *three* passages out of him; shewing that the baptism of infants is a tradition of the apostles, and an usage of the church for the remission of sins; but it should be observed, that these quotations are not from the Greek of *Origen;* he wrote much in that language, and there is much still extant in it; and yet nothing is produced from thence, that can fairly be construed in favor of infant-baptism; though many things may be observed from thence, in favor of adult-baptism. The three pasages are quoted out of some Latin translations, greatly interpolated, and not to be depended on. His Homilies on *Leviticus,* and exposition of the epistle to the *Romans,* out of which *two* of them are taken, are translated by *Ruffinus;* who with the former, he himself owns, he used much freedom, and added much, and took such a liberty in both of adding, taking away, and changing, that, as *Erasmus* says [f20], whoever reads there pieces, it is uncertain whether he *reads Origen orRuffinus;* and *Vossius* observes [f21], that the former of these was interpolated by *Ruffinus,* and thinks therefore, that the passage cited was of the greater authority against the *Pelagians,* because *Ruffinus* was inclined to them. The Homilies on *Luke,* out of which is the other passage, were translated by *Jerom,* of whom *Du Pin* says [f22], that "his versions are not more exact than *Ruffinus's."* Now both there lived at the latter end of the fourth century, and it looks very probable, that these very passages, are additions, or interpolations of these men, tinct the language agrees with those times, and no other; for no contemporary of *Origen's,* nor any writer before him or after him, until the times *of Ruffinus, Jerom* and *Austin,* speak of infant-baptism as an usage of

the church, or an apostolical tradition; in short, as bishop *Taylor* observes[f23],

> "a tradition apostolical, if it be not consigned with a fuller testimony than of one person *(Origen,)* whom all after-ages have condemned of many errors, will obtain so little reputation amongst those, who know that things have upon greater authority pretended to derive from the apostles, and yet falsly; that it will be a great argument, that he is credulous, and weak, that shall be determined by so weak a probation, in a matter of so great concernment."

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

The *Clementine Constitutions*, as they are called, are next produced, as enjoining infant-baptism; but why does this Gentleman call them the *Clementine Constitutions*, unless he is of opinion, and which he suggests by this title of them, that *Clemens Romanus* was the compiler of them from the mouths of the apostles? and if so, he might have placed the passage out of them with greater advantage, at the head of his testimonies; but he must know, that there writings are condemned as spurious, by almost all learned men, excepting Mr *Whiston;* and were not heard of till the times of *Epiphanius*, in the latter end of the fourth century, if so soon: and it should be observed, that these same *Constitutions*, which direct to the baptizing of infants, injoin the use of godfathers in baptism; the form of renouncing the devil and all his works; the consecration of the water; trine immersion; the use of oil, and baptizing, fasting; crossing with the sign of the cross in the forehead; keeping the day of Christ's nativity, *Epiphany*, the *Quadragesima* or *Lent;* the feast of the passover, and the festivals of the apostles; falling on the fourth and sixth days of the week; praying for saints

departed; singing for the dead, and honoring their relics; with many other things foreign enough from the simplicity of the apostolic doctrine and practice. A testimony from such a work, can be of very little credit to the cause of infant-baptism.

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

1. However embarassed *Pelagius* might be with the argument, it did not lead to a controversy about the subject, but the end of baptism, and about the latter, and not the former was the dispute; nor was he under so great a temptation, and much less necessity, nor did it so greatly concern him to deny the baptism of infants, on account of his tenet; since he was able upon his principles to point out other ends of their baptism, than that of remission of sin; and particularly, their receiving and enjoying the kingdom of heaven; and as a late writer [f24] observes, this proposition

> "*baptism ought to be administered to children, as well as to the adult;* was not inconsistent with, nor repugnant to his doctrine; for though he denied original sin, he allowed baptism to be administered even to children, but only for their sanctfication."

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

his authorities, though it would have been a greater satisfaction to have had there things from himself, and not at second hand. Nor,

3. Would I detract from the character of *Pelagius*, or call in question his acuteness, sagacity, and learning; yet two doctors of the age in which he lived, are divided about him in this respect, *Austin* and *Jerom;* the former speaks of him as a very considerable man, and of great penetration; but the latter, as if he had no genius, and but very little knowledge; [f25] it must be owned, that *Austin* was the most candid man, and *Jerom* a sour one, who seldom spoke well of those he opposed, though he was a man of the greatest learning, and so the best judge of it: but however acute, learned, and sagacious *Peliagius* was, yet falling in with the stream of the times, and not seeing himself concerned about the subject, but the end of baptism, might give himself no trouble to inquire into the rise of it; but take it for granted, *as Austin* did; who perhaps was as acute, learned and sagacious as he, that it had been the constant usage of the church, and an apostolic tradition; as he had many other things, in which he was mistaken, as will soon appear.

4. Though *Pelagius* complained that he was defamed, and slandered by some who charged him with denying infant-baptism; yet this, *Austin* observes, was only a shift of his, in order to invert the state of the question, that he might more easily answer to what was objected to him, and preserve his own opinion. And certain it is, according to *Austin;* [f26] that the Pelagians did deny baptism to some infants, even to the infants of believers, and that for this reason, because they were *holy;* what others made a reason for it, they make a reason against it.

5. *Pelagius* says no such thing, that he never heard, no not even any impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants. His words indeed are [f27] *nunquam se vel impium aliquem haereticum audisse, qui hoc,* quod proposuit, *de parvulis diceret;* that

> "he never heard, no not any impious heretic, that would say concerning infants, what he had proposed or mentioned:"

the sense depends upon the meaning of the phrase, *quod proposuit*, "what he had proposed or mentioned," of whom, and what that is to be understood; whether of *Austin*, and the state of the case as proposed and set down by him; so our author seems to understand it, since by way of explanation, he adds, *viz.*

> "that unbaptized infants are not liable to the condemnation of the first man; and that they are not to be cleansed by the regeneration of baptism:"

but this gentleman has not put it as *Austin* has stated it, which is thus;

> "it is objected to them (the Pelagians) that they will not own that unbaptized infants are liable to the condemnation of the first man; & *in eos tranfisse originale peccatum regeneratiane purgandum*, and that original sin has passed upon them to be cleansed by regeneration:"

and according to this sense the meaning cannot be, that he never heard that any heretic denied baptism to infants; but either that he never heard that any one should say, that unbaptized infants are not liable to the condemnation of the first man, and that original sin had not passed upon them to be cleansed by regeneration; but then this is to bring the wicked heretics as witnesses against himself, and to make himself worse than they: or the meaning is, that he never heard that any of them should say, that unbaptized infants are liable to the condemnation of the first man, and that original sin has passed upon them to be cleansed by regeneration, which is most likely: but then this makes rather against, than for the thing for which it is brought; since it makes the heretic as never saying that infants flood in need of being cleansed by baptism: or else, *quod proposuit*, "what he had proposed or mentioned," refers to *Pelagius*, and to the state of the question as he had put it; representing that he was charged with promising the kingdom of heaven to some, without the redemption of Christ; and of this he might say, he never heard the most impious heretic to say; and this seems to be the sense by what he subjoins;

> "for who is so ignorant of what is read in the gospel, not only as to attempt to affirm it, but even lightly mention it, or even imagine it? Moreover, who so impious that would exclude infants from the kingdom of heaven, *dum eos baptizari & in Christo renasci putat*? whilst he thinks, or is of opinion that they are baptized and regenerated in Christ?"

for so it is in my edition[f28] of *Austin; putet*, and not *vetat*, as Dr *Wall* quotes it; and after him this Gentleman: and *Pelagius* further adds,

> “who so impious as to forbid to an infant, of whatsoever age, the common redemption of mankind?"

but this, *Austin* says, like the rest is ambiguous; what redemption he means, whether from bad to good, or from good to better: now take the words which way you will, they cannot be made to say, that he had never heard that any heretic denied baptism to infants, but that they denied the kingdom of heaven to them; and indeed every one must: allow, whoever is of that opinion, that infants are by baptism really regenerated in Christ; which was the prevailing notion of those times, and the light in which it is put; that they must belong to the kingdom of heaven, and share in the common redemption by Christ.

6. *Austin* himself does not say, that he had never heard or read of any catholic, heretic, or schismatic, that denied infant-baptism; he could never say any such thing; he must know, that *Tertullian* had opposed it; and he himself was at the council of *Carthage*, and there presided, and was at the making of that canon which runs thus; "also it is our pleasure, that whoever denies that new-born infants are to be baptized — let him be anathema:" but to what purpose was this canon made, if he and his brethren knew of none that denied infant-baptism? To say that this respects some people, who were still of the same opinion with *Fidus*, an African bishop, that lived 150 years before this time, that infants were not to be baptized until they were eight days old, is an idle notion of *Dr Wall*: [f29] can any man in his senses think, that a council, consisting of all the bishops in *Africa*, should agree to *anathematize* their own brethren, who were in the same opinion and practice of infant-baptism with themselves; only they thought it should not be administered to them as soon as born, but at eight days old? *Credat Judaeus Apella*, believe it who will; he is capable of believing any thing, that can believe this. *Austin* himself makes mention of some that argued against it, after this manner: [f30]

> "men are used to ask this question, says he, of what profit is the sacrament of christian baptism to infants, seeing when they have received it, for the most part they die before they know any thing of it?"

and as before observed, he brings in the Pelagians [f31] saying, that the infants of believers ought not to be baptized: and so *Jerom*, [f32] who was a contemporary of his, speaks of some christians, *qui dare noluerint baptisma*, “who refused to give baptism to their children;" so that though infant-baptism greatly obtained in those times, yet it was not so general as this author represents it. *Austin* therefore could not say what he is made to

say: but what then does he say, that he never remembered to have read in any catholic, heretic, or schismatic writer? why, “that infants were not to be baptized, that they might receive the remission of sins, but that they might be sanctified in Christ:" it is of this the words are spoken, which our author has quoted, but are not to be found in the place he refers to; having through inadvertence mistaken Dr *Wall*, from whom I perceive he has taken this, and other things. This, and not infant-baptism itself, was what was transiently talked of at *Carthage*, and cursorily heard by *Austin* some little time ago, when he was there: this was the novelty he was startled at, but did not think it seasonable to enter into a debate about it then, and so forgot it: for surely it will not be said, that it was the denial of infant-baptism that was defended with so much warmth against the church, as he lays this was; and was committed to memory in writing; and the brethren were obliged to ask their advice about it; and they were obliged to dispute and write against; for this would prove the very reverse of what this gentleman produces it for. Now, though *Austin* could not say that he never remembered to have heard or read of any catholic, schismatic, or heretic, that denied infant-baptism; yet he might say he never remembered to have heard or read of any that owned and practiced infant-baptism, but who allowed it to be for the remission of sin; which is widely different from the former: it is one thing what *Austin* says, and another, what may be thought to be the consequence of his so saying; and in the same sense are we to understand him, when he says, [f33] "and this the church has *always* had, has *always* held." What? why, that infants are diseased through *Adam;* and stand in need of a physician; and are brought to the church to be healed. It was the doctrine of original sin, and the baptism of infants for the remission of it, he speaks of in there passages; it is true indeed, he took infant-baptism to be an ancient and constant usage of the church. and an apostolic tradition; [f34] which perhaps he had taken up from the Latin translations of *Origen* by *Jerom* and *Ruffinus* before-mentioned; since no other ecclesiasticical writer speaks of it as such, before those times: but in this he was deceived and mistaken, as he was in other things which he took for apostolic traditions; which ought to be equally received as this, by those who are influenced by his authority; and indeed ***every honest man that receives infant-baptism upon the foot of tradition, ought to receive every thing else upon the same foot, of which there is equally as full, and as early, evidence of apostolic tradition, as of this:*** let it then be observed,

1. That the same *Austin* that asserts infant-baptism to be an apostolic tradition, affirms infant-communion to be so likewise, as Bishop *Taytlor* [f35] observes; and thus Austin says, [f36]

> "if they pay any regard to the apostolic authority, or rather to the Lord and Matter of the apostles, who says, that they have no life in themselves, *unless they eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood,* which they cannot do unless baptized; will sometimes own that unbaptized infants have not life;"

— and a little after,

> "no man that remembers that he is a christian, and of the catholic faith, denies or doubts that infants, not having the grace of regeneration in Christ, and without eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, have no life in them; but are hereby liable to everlasting punishment;"

by which he means the two sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper; the necessity of both which to eternal life he founded upon a mistaken sense of John 3:5 and John 6:53 as appears from what he elsewhere says; [f37] where having mentioned the first of those passages, he cites the latter, and adds;

> "let us hear the Lord, I say, not indeed speaking this of the sacrament of the holy laver, but of the sacrament of the holy table; whither none rightly come, unless baptized. *Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, ye shall have no life in you;* what do we seek for further? what can be laid in answer to this, unless one would set himself obstinately against clear and invincible truth? will any one dare to say this, that this passage does not belong to infants; and that they can have life in themselves, without partaking of his body and blood?"

And of the necessity of this, as well as of baptism to eternal life, he says [f38] the *African* christians took to be an ancient and apostolic tradition.

Innocent the first, his contemporary, was also of the same mind; and the giving of the eucharist to infants generally obtained; and it continued six hundred years after, until transubstantiation took place; and is continued to this day in the Greek church: and if we look back to the times before *Austin*, we shall find that it was not only the opinion of *Cyprian*, but was

practiced in his time; he tells [f39] a story which he himself was a witness of; how that

> "a little child being left in a fright by its parents with a nurse, she carried the child to the magistrates, who had it to an idol's sacrifice; where because the child could not eat flesh, they gave it bread soaked in wine: some time after, the mother had her child again; which not being able to relate to her what had passed it was brought by its parent to the place where *Cyprian* and the church were celebrating the Lord's-supper; and where it shrieked, and was dreadfully distressed; and when the cup was offered it in its turn by the deacon, it shut its lips against it; who forced the wine down its throat; upon which it sobbed, and threw it up again."

Now here is a plain instance of infant-communion in the third century; and we defy any one to give a more early instance, or an instance so early, of infant-baptism: it is highly probable that infant-baptism was now practiced; and that this very child was baptized, or otherwise it would not have been admitted to the Lord's-supper; and it is reasonable to suppose, they both began together; yet no instance can be given of infant-baptism, so early as of infant-communion; wherefore whoever thinks himself obliged to receive the one upon such evidence and authority, ought to receive the other; the one has as good a claim to apostolic authority and tradition, as the other has.

2. The sign of the cross in baptism was used by the ancients, and pleaded for as an apostolic tradition. *Basil*, who lived in the fourth century observes, [f40] that some things they had from scripture; and others from apostolic tradition, of which he gives instances; and, says he,

> "because this is the first and most common, I will mention it in the first place; as that we *sign with the sign of the cross* those who place their hope in Christ; and then asks who taught this in scripture?"

Chrysostom, who lived in the same age, manifestly refers to it, when he says, [f41]

> "how can you think it fitting for the minister to make *the* sign *on its* (the child's) *forehead*, where you have besmeared it with the dirt?"

which *Cyril* [f42] calls the *royal seal* upon the forehead.

Cyprian in the middle of the third century relates the custom of his times;[f43]

> “what is now also in use among us is, that those who are baptized, are offered to the governors of the church; and through our prayers and imposition of hands, they obtain the holy Spirit, and are made compleat *signaculo Dominico,* with the seal of the Lord:"

and in another place [f44] he says,

> "they only can escape, who are regenerated *and signed* with *the sign of Christ."*

And *Tertullian,* in the beginning of the same century, speaking of baptism says [f45] "the flesh is washed, that the soul may be unspotted; the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; *caro signatur,* "the flesh is signed," that the soul also may be fortified." Now this use of the cross in baptism, was as early as any instance of infant-baptism that can be produced; higher than *Tertulian's* time it cannot be carried: what *partiality* then is it, I know to whom I speak, to admit the one upon the foot of tradition, and reject the other? The same *Tertullian* [f46] also speaks of *sponsores,* sponsors, or godfathers, in baptism; which this writer himself has mentioned, and thus renders;

> "what occasion is there — except in cases of necessity, that the sponsors or *godfathers* be brought "into danger;"

not to take notice of the *Clementine Constitutions,* as our author calls them, which enjoin the use of them; and which appear to be as early as infant-baptism itself; and indeed it is but reasonable that if infants are baptized, there should be sponsors or sureties for them.

3. The form of "renouncing the devil and all his works," used in baptism, is also by *Basil* [f47] represented as an apostolic tradition; for having mentioned several rites in baptism, received upon the same foot, he adds;

> "and the rest of what is done in baptism, as to renounce the devil and his angels, from what scripture have we it? is it not from this private and secret tradition?"

Origen before the middle of the third century relates the usage of his times;[f48]

> "let every one of the faithful remember when he first came to the waters of baptism; when he received the first seals of faith, and came to the fountain of salvation; what words there he then used; and what he denounced to the devil, *non se, usurum pompis ejus*, "that he would not use his *pomps*, nor his *works*, nor any of his service, nor obey his pleasures:"

and *Tertullian* [f49] before him;

> "when we enter into the water, we profess the faith of Christ, in the words of his law; we protest with our mouth that *we renounce the devil, and his pomp, and his* angels;"

and in another place [f50] in proof of unwritten tradition, and that it ought to be allowed of in some cases, he says;

> "to begin with baptism; when we come to the water, we do there, and sometimes in the congregation under the hand of the pallor, protest that we *renounce* the devil, and his pomp, and angels; and then we are thrice immersed; answering something more than the Lord has enjoined in the gospel:"

now this is as early as any thing can be produced in favor of infant-baptism.

4. Exorcisms and exsusslations are represented by *Austin* [f51] as rites in baptism, *prisae traditionis*, "of ancient tradition," as used by the church every where, throughout the whole world. He frequently presses the Pelagians with the argument taken from thence, and luggers, that they were pinched with it, and knew not how to answer it; he observes, that things the most impious and absurd, were the consequences of their principles, and among the rest there: [f52]

> "that they (infants) are baptized into a Savior, but not saved; redeemed by a deliverer, but not delivered; washed in the laver of regeneration, but not washed from any thing; exorcised and exsusslated, but not freed from the power of darkness:"

and elsewhere he says [f53], that

> "notwithstanding their craftiness, they know not what answer to make to this, *that infants* are *exorcised* and *exsusslated*; for this, without doubt, is done in mere show, if the devil has no power over them; but if he has power over them, and therefore are not

> *exorcised* and *exsusstated* in mere show, by what has the prince of sinners power over them, but by sin?"

And *Gregory Nazianzen* before him, as he exhorts to confession of sin in baptism, so to exorcism;

> "do not refuse, says he[f54], the medicine of exorcism — for that is the trial of sincerity, with respect to that grace (baptism)."

And says *Optatus* of *Milevis*, [f55]

> “every man that is born, though born of christian parents, cannot be without the spirit of the world, which must be excluded and separated from him, before the salutary laver; this exorcism effects, by which the unclean spirit is driven away, and is caused to flee to desert places."

Cyprian, in the third century, speaking of the efficacy of baptism to destroy the power of Satan, relates what was done in his day;[f56]

> “that by the exorcist the devil was buffeted, distressed, and tortured, with an human voice, and by a divine power."

And Cornelius bishop *of Rome*, a contemporary of his, makes mention[f57] of the same officers in the church; and this is also as early as the practice of infant-baptism.

5. Trine immersion is affirmed to be an apostolic tradition, nothing is more frequently asserted by the ancients than this. *Basil*[f58], among his instances of apostolic tradition, mentions this; "now a man is thrice immersed, from whence is it derived?" his meaning is, is it from scripture or apostolic tradition? not the former, but the latter. And *Jerom*[f59], in a dialogue of his, makes one of the parties say after this manner, which clearly appears to be his own sense;

> "and many other things which by tradition are observed in the churches, have obtained the authority of a written law; as to dip the head thrice in the laver," etc.

And so *Tertullian* in the third century as above, in support of tradition, mentions[f60] this as a common practice; "we are thrice immersed;" and elsewhere speaking[f61] of the commission of Christ, he says,

> "he commanded them to dip into the Father, and the Son, and the holy Ghost; not into one, for not once, but thrice are we dipped, at each name, into each person;"

and he is the first man that makes mention of infant-baptism, who relates this as the then usage of the church: and *Sozomen* [f62] the historian observes, that it was said, that:

> "Eunomius was the first that dared to assert, that the divine baptism should be performed by one immersion; and so corrupted the apostolic tradition, which till now had been every where observed."

6. The consecration of the water of baptism is an ancient rite, and which [f63] *Basil* derives from apostolic tradition; "we consecrate, says he, the water of baptism, and the anointing oil, as well as the person that receives baptism, from what scripture? is it not from private and secret tradition?" by which he means apostolic tradition, as he in the same place calls it; which was done, not only by the prayer of the administrator over the water, but by signing it with the sign of the cross; which rite was in use in the times of *Austin* [f64], who says,

> "baptism is signed with the sign of Christ, that is, the water where we are dipped;"

and *Ambrose*, who lived in the same age, relates, that exorcism was also used in consecration: he describes the manner of it thus: [f65]

> "why did Christ descend first, and afterwards the Spirit, seeing the form and use of baptism require, that first the font be consecrated, and then the person that is to be baptized, goes down? for where the priest first enters, he makes an exorcism, next an invocation on the creature of the water, and afterwards prays that the font may be sanctified, and the eternal Trinity be present."

Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, makes mention of this ceremony of consecrating the baptismal water; he says, [f66]

> "the water must first be cleansed and *sanctified* by the priest, that it may, by his baptizing in it, wash away the sins of the man that is baptized."

And *Tertullian* before him, though he makes no difference between the water of a pool, river or fountain, *Tyber* or *Jordan*, yet supposes there is a

sanctification of it through prayer; "all waters," he says, from their ancient original prerogative, (referring to <01002>Genesis 1:2)

> "obtain the sacrament of sanctification, *Deo invocato,* God being called upon;" for immediately the Spirit comes down from heaven, and rests upon the waters, sanctifying them of himself; and so being sanctified, they drink in together the sanctifying virtue."

This also is as high as the date of infant-baptism can be carried.

7. Anointing with oil at baptism, is a rite that claims apostolic tradition. *Basil* [f68] mentions it as an instance of it, and asks;

> "the anointing oil, what passage in scripture teaches this?"

Ausin [f69] *speaks* of it as the common custom of the church in his time; having quoted that passage in <44038>Acts 10:38.

> *"how God anointed him* (Jesus) *with the holy Ghost;* adds, not truly with visible oil, but with the gift of grace, which is signified by the visible ointment, *quo baptizatos ungit ecclesia,* "with which the church anoints those that are baptized:"

several parts of the body were wont to be anointed. *Ambrose* [f70] makes mention of the ointment on the head in baptism, and gives a reason for it. *Cyril* [f71] *s*ays, the oil was exorcised, and the forehead, ear, nose and breast, were anointed with it, and observes the mystical signification of each of there; the necessity of this anointing is urged by *Cyprian* [f72] in the third century;

> "he that is baptized must needs be anointed, that by receiving the chrysm, that is, the *anointing,* he may be the anointed of God, and have the grace of Christ."

And *Tertullian,* in the beginning of the same century, says [f73], as before observed,

> "the flesh is anointed, that the soul may be consecrated;"

and in another place, [f74]

> "when we come out of the laver, we are anointed with the blessed ointment, according to the ancient discipline, in which they used to be anointed with oil out of the horn, for the priesthood;"

this was the custom used in the times of the man that first spoke of infant-baptism.

8. The giving a mixture of milk and honey to a person just baptized, is a rite that was used in the churches anciently through tradition; *Jerom* [f75] makes mention of it, as observed upon this footing, and as an instance, among other things which obtained authority in that way:

> "as to dip the head thrice in the laver, and when they *came out* from thence, *to taste of a mixture of milk and honey*, to signify the new birth;"

and elsewhere he says, [f765] it was a custom observed in the western churches to that day, to give *wine and milk* to them that were regenerated in Christ. This was in use in *Tertullian's* time; for, speaking of the administration of baptism, he says, [f77] we come to the water — then we are thrice dipped — then being taken out from thence we taste a mixture of *milk and honey;* and this, as well as anointing with oil, he observes, was used by heretics themselves, for so he says of *Marcion;* [f78]

> "he does not reject the water of the creator, with which he washes his disciples; nor the oil with which he anoints his own; *nor the mixture of milk and honey*, by which he points them out as newborn babes;"

yea, even *Barnabas*, a companion of the apostle *Paul*, is thought to refer to this practice, in an epistle of his still extant; [f79] not to take notice of the white garment, and the use of the ring and kiss in baptism, in *Cyprian* and *Tertullian's* time [f80].

Now these several rites and usages in baptism, claim their rise from *apostolic tradition*, and have equal evidence of it as infant-baptism has; they are of as early date, have the same vouchers, and more; the testimonies of them are clear and full; they universally obtained, and were practiced by the churches, throughout the whole world; and even by heretics and schismatics; and this is to be said of them, that they never were *opposed* by any within the time referred to, which cannot be said of infant-baptism; for the very first man that mentions it, dissuades from it: and are there facts which could not but be *publicly* and perfectly known, and for which the ancient writers and fathers may be appealed to, not as reasoners and interpreters, but as historians and witnesses to public standing facts; and all the reasoning this gentleman makes use of, concerning the apostles

forming the churches on one uniform *plan* of baptism, the *nearness* of infant-baptism to their times, from the testimony of the ancients, the difficulty of an innovation, and the easiness of its detection, may be applied to all and each of these rites.

Wherefore whoever receives infant-baptism upon the foot of apostolic tradition, and upon such proof and evidence as is given of it, as above, if he is an honest man; I say again, if he is an honest man, he ought to give into the practice of all those rites and usages. We do not think ourselves indeed obliged to regard these things; we know that a variety of superstitious, ridiculous, and foolish rites, were brought into the church in there times; we are not of opinion, as is suggested, that even the authority of the apostles a hundred years after their death, was sufficient to keep an innovation from entering the church, nor even whilst they were living; we are well assured, there never was such a set of impure wretches under the christian name, so unsound in principle, and so bad in practice, as were in the apostles days, and in the ages succeeding, called the *purest* ages of christianity. We take the Bible to be the only authentic, perfect and sufficient rule of faith and practice: we allow of no other head and lawgiver but one, that is, Christ; we deny that any men, or let of men, have any power to make laws in his house, or to decree rites and ceremonies to be observed by his people, no not apostles themselves, uninspired: and this gentleman, *out of this controversy*, is of the same mind with us, who asserts the above things we do; and affirms, without the least hesitation, that what is

> "ordained by the apostles, without any precept from the Lord, or any particular direction of the holy Spirit, is not at all obligatory as *a law* upon the consciences of christians; — even *the apostles* had no *dominion* over the *faith* and *practice* of christians, but what was given them by the special presence, and Spirit of Christ, the only Lawgiver, Lord, and Sovereign of the church: they were to teach *only* the things which he should command them; and whatever they enjoined under the influence of that Spirit, was to be considered and obeyed as the injunctions of Christ; but if they enjoined any thing in the church, without the peculiar influence and direction of this Spirit, that is, as merely fallible and unassisted men, in that case, their injunctions had no authority over conscience; and every man's own reason had authority to examine and discuss their injunctions, as they approved themselves to his private judgment, to

> observe them or not: should we grant thee what you ask. — lays he to his antagonist — that the church in the present age, has the same authority and power, as the church in the apostolic age, considered, as not being under any immediate and extraordinary guidance of the holy Ghost what will you gain by it? This same authority and power is you see, Sir, really no power nor authority at all." [f81]

The controversy between us and our brethren on this head, is the same as between Papists and Protestants about tradition, and between the church of *England* and Dissenters, about the church's power to decree rites and ceremonies namely, whether Christ is the sole head and lawgiver in his church; or whether any let of men have a power to set aside, alter, and change any laws of his, or prescribe new ones? if the latter, then we own it is all over with us, and we ought to submit, and not carry on the dispute any further: but since we both profess to make the Bible our religion, and that only the rule of our faith and practice; let us unite upon this common principle, and reject every tradition of men, and all rites and ceremonies which Christ hath not enjoined, us; let us join in pulling down this *prop* of *Popery*, and remove this *scandal* of the Protestant churches, I mean infant-baptism; for lure I am, so long as it is attempted to support it upon the foot of apostolic tradition, no man can write with success against the Papists, or such, who hold that the church has a power to decree rites and ceremonies.

However; if infant baptism is a tradition of the apostles, then this point must be gained, that it is not a scriptural business; for if it is of tradition, then not of scripture; who ever appeals to tradition, when a doctrine or practice can be proved by scripture? Appealing to tradition, and putting it upon that foot, is giving it up as a point of scripture: I might therefore be excused from considering, ***What this writer has advanced from Scripture in favor of infant-baptism,*** and the rather, since there is nothing produced but what has been brought into the controversy again and again, and has been answered over and over: but perhaps this gentleman and his friends will be displeased, if I take no notice of his arguments from thence. I shall therefore just make some few remarks on them. But before I proceed, I must congratulate my readers upon the blessed times we are fallen into! what an enlightened age! what an age of good sense do we live in! what prodigious improvement in knowledge is made! behold! *tradition* proved by *Scripture! apostolic tradition* proved *by Abraham's covenant! undoubted apostolic tradition* proved from writings in being *hundreds* of

years *before* any of the *apostles* were born! all extraordinary and of the marvellous kind! ***but let us attend to the Scripture proof of these things.***

The first argument is taken from its being an *incontestable fact,* that *the infants of believers* were received with their parents into covenant with God, in the former dispensations or ages of the church; which is a great privilege, a privilege still subsisting, and never revoked; wherefore the infants of believers, having still a right to the same privilege, in consequence have a right to baptism, which is now the only appointed token of God's covenant, and the only rite of admission into it [f82] . To which I reply, that it is not an incontestable fact, but a *fact contested,* that the *infants of believers* were with their parents taken into covenant with God, in the former dispensations and ages of the church; by which must be meant, the ages preceding the *Abrahamic* covenant; since that is made, to furnish out a *second* and distinct argument from this; and so the scriptures produced are quite impertinent, <01707>Genesis 17:7, 10-12. <052910>Deuteronomy 29:10-12. <261620>Ezekiel 16:20, 21. seeing they refer to the Abrahamic and *Mosaic* dispensations, of which hereafter. The first covenant made with man, was the covenant of works, with *Adam* before the fall, which indeed included all his posterity, but had no *peculiar* regard to the infants of believers; he standing as a federal head to all his feed, which no man since has ever done: and in him they all finned, were condemned, and died. This covenant, I presume this Gentleman can have no view unto: after the fall of *Adam,* the covenant of grace was revealed, and the way of life and salvation by the Messiah; but then this revelation was only made to *Adam* and *Eve* personally, as interested in there things, and not to their natural feed and posterity as such, as being interested in the same covenant of grace with them; for then all mankind must be taken into the covenant of grace; and if that gives a right to baptism, they have all an equal right to unto it; and so there is nothing *peculiar* to the infants of believers; and of whom, there is not the least syllable mentioned throughout the whole age or dispensation of the church, reaching from *Adam* to *Noah;* a length of time almost equal to what has run out from the birth of Christ, to the present age. The next covenant we read of, is the covenant made with *Noah* after the flood, which was not made with him, and his immediate offspring *only;* nor were they taken into covenant with him as the *infants of a believer;* nor had they any sacrament or rite given them as a token *of Jehovah* being their God, and they his children, and as standing in a peculiar relation to him; will any one dare to say this of *Ham,* one of the

immediate sons of *Noah?* The covenant was made with *Noah* and all mankind, to the end of the world, and even with every living creature, and all the beasts of the earth, promising them security from an universal deluge, as long as the world stands; and had nothing in it *peculiar* to the infants of believers: and these are all the covenants the scripture makes mention of, till that made with *Abraham,* of which in the next argument.

This being the case, there is no room nor reason to talk of the greatness of this privilege, and of the continuance of it, and of asking when it was repealed, since it does not appear to have been a fact; nor during these ages and dispensations of the church, was there ever any *sacrament, rite,* or *ceremony,* appointed for the admission of *persons adult,* or *infants,* into covenant with God; nor was there ever any such rite in any age of the world, nor is there now: the covenant with *Adam,* either of works or grace, had no ceremony of this kind; there was a token, and still is, of *Noah's* covenant, the rainbow, but not a token or rite of admission of persons into it, but a token of the continuance and perpetuity of it in all generations: nor was circumcision a rite of admission of *Abraham's* feed into his covenant, as will quickly appear; nor is baptism now an *initiatory rite,* by which persons are admitted into the covenant. Let this Gentleman, if he can, point out to us where it is so described; persons ought to appear to be in the covenant of grace, and partakers of the blessings of it, the Spirit of God, faith in Christ, and repentance towards God, before they are admitted to baptism. This Gentleman will find more work to support his first argument, than perhaps he was aware of; the premises being bad, the conclusion must be wrong. I proceed to,

The second argument, taken from *the Abrabamic* covenant, which stands thus: The covenant God made with *Abraham* and his seed, Genesis 17:into which *his infants* were taken together with himself, *by the rite of circumcision,* is the *very same* we are *now* under, the same with that *in* <4816>Galatians 3:16, 17 still in force, and not to be disannulled, in which we believing Gentiles are included, <4809>Romans 4:9-16, 17. and so being Abraham's seed, have a right to all the grants and privileges of it, and so to the admission of our infants to it, by the sign and token of it, which is changed from circumcision to baptism. [f83] But,

1. though *Abraham's* seed were taken into covenant with him, which designs his adult posterity in all generations, on whom it was enjoined to circumcise their infants, it does not follow that his infants were; but so it is,

that wherever the words seed, *children,* etc. are used, it immediately runs in the heads of some men, that infants must be meant, though they are not necessarily included; but be it so, that *Abraham's* infants were admitted with him, (though at the time of making this covenant, he had no infant with him, *Ishmael* was then *thirteen* years of age) yet not as *the infants of a believer;* there were believers and their infants then living, who were left out of the covenant; and those that were taken in in successive generations, were not the infants of believers only, but of unbelievers also; even all the natural feed of the Jews, whether believers or unbelievers. —

2. Those that were admitted into this covenant, were not admitted *by the rite of circumcision; Abraham's* female feed were taken into covenant with him, as well as his male feed, but not by any *viable rite* or ceremony; nor were his male feed admitted by any such rite, no not by circumcision; for they were not to be circumcised until the eighth day; to have circumcised them sooner would have been criminal; and that they were in covenant from their birth, this gentleman, I presume, will not deny. —

3. The covenant of circumcision, as it is called <4408>Acts 7:8 cannot be the same covenant we are now under, since that is abolished, <4801>Galatians 5:1-3. and it is a *new* covenant, or a new administration of the covenant of grace, that we are now under; the old covenant under the *Mosaic* dispensation is waxen old, and vanished away, <5813>Hebrews 8:8, 13. nor is the covenant with *Abraham,* Genesis 17 the same with that mentioned in <4817>Galatians 3:17 which is still in force, and not to be disannulled; the distance of time between them does not agree, but falls short of the apostle's date, four and twenty years; for from the making of this covenant to the birth of *Isaac,* was one year, <0170>Genesis 17:1 and <0215>Genesis 21:5 from thence to the birth of *Jacob,* sixty years, <0256>Genesis 25:26 from thence to his going down to *Egypt,* one hundred and thirty years, <0409>Genesis 47:9 where the Israelites continued two hundred and fifteen; [f84] and quickly after they came out of *Egypt,* was the law given, which was but four hundred and fix years after this covenant. The reason this gentleman gives, why they must be the same, will not hold good, namely, "this is the only covenant in which "God ever *made* and *confirmed* promises to *Abraham,* and to *his seed;"* since God made a covenant with *Abraham* before this, and confirmed it to his seed, and that by various rites, and usages, and wonderful appearances, <0158>Genesis 15:8-18 which covenant, and the confirmation of it, the apostle manifestly refers to in <4817>Galatians 3:17 and with which his date exactly agrees, as the years are

computed by *Paraeus*[f85] thus; from the confirmation of the covenant, and taking *Hagar* to wife, to the birth of *Isaac,* fifteen years; from thence to the birth of *Jacob,* sixty, <01256>Genesis 25:26 from thence to his going down to *Egypt,* one hundred and thirty, <01409>Genesis 47:9 from thence to his death, seventeen, <01428>Genesis 47:28 from thence to the death of *Joseph,* fifty three, <01026>Genesis 1:26 from thence to the birth *of Moses,* seventy-five; from thence to the going out of *Israel* from *Egypt,* and the giving of the law, eighty years; in all four hundred and thirty years. —

4. It is allowed, that the covenant made with *Abraham,* <01701> Genesis 17 is of a mixed kind, consisting partly of temporal, and partly of spiritual blessings; and that there is a twofold seed of *Abraham,* to which they severally belong; the temporal blessings, to his natural seed the Jews, and the spiritual blessings, to his spiritual seed, even all true believers that walk in the steps of his faith, *Jews or Gentiles,* <450411>Romans 4:11, 12, 16 believing Gentiles are Abraham's spiritual seed, but then they have a right only to the spiritual blessings of the covenant, not to *all* the grants and privileges of it; for instance, not to the land of *Canaan;* and as for their natural feed, there have no right, as such, to any of the blessings of this covenant, temporal or spiritual: for either they are the natural, or the spiritual seed of Abraham; not his natural seed, no one will say that; not his spiritual seed, for only believers are such; *they which are of faith* (believers) *the same are the children of Abraham; and if ye be Christ's,* (that is, believers) *then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the premise;* and it is time enough to claim the promise, and the grants and privileges of it, be they what they will, when they appear to be believers; and as for the natural seed of believing Gentiles, there is not the least mention made of them in *Abraham's* covenant.

5. Since *Abraham's* seed were not admitted into covenant with him, by any visible rite or token, no not by circumcision, which was not a rite of admission into the covenant, but a token of the continuance of it to his natural seed, and of their distinction from other nations, until the Messiah came; and since therefore baptism cannot succeed it as such, nor are the one or the other reals of the covenant of grace, as I have elsewhere[f86] proved, and shall not now repeat it; upon the whole, this second argument can be of no force in favor of infant-baptism: and here, if any where, is the proper time and place for this gentleman to ark for the *repeal* of this *ancient privilege,* as he calls it, [f87] of infants being taken into covenant with their parents, or to shew when it was repealed; to which I answer, that the

covenant made with *Abraham,* into which his natural feed were taken with him, so far as it concerned them as such, or was a national covenant, it was abolished and disannulled when the people of the Jews were cut off as a nation, and as a church; when the *Mosaic* dispensation was put an end unto, by the coming, sufferings, and death of Christ:, and by the destruction of that people on their rejection of him; when God wrote a *Loammi* upon them, and said,

> Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God, <30109>Hosea 1:9

when he

> took his staff, beauty, and cut it asunder, that he might break his covenant he had made with this people, <38110>Zechariah 11:10

when the old covenant and old ordinances were removed, and the old church-state utterly destroyed, and a new church-state was set up, and new ordinances appointed; and for which new rules were given; and to which none are to be admitted, without the observance of them; which leads me to

The third argument, taken from the commission of Christ for baptism, <40289>Matthew 28:19. and from the *natural* and *necessary* sense in which the apostles would understand it; [f88] though this gentleman owns that it is delivered in such general terms, as not certainly to determine whether adult believers only, or the infants also of such are to be baptized; and if so, then surely no argument can be drawn from it for admitting infants to baptism. And,

1. The rendering of the words, *disciple* or *proselyte all nations, baptizing them,* will not help the cause of infant-baptism; for one cannot be a proselyte to any religion, unless he is taught it, and embraces and professes it; though had our Lord used a word which conveyed such an idea, the evangelist *Matthew* was not at a loss for a proper word or phrase to express it by; and doubtless would have made use of another clear and express, as he does in <40235>Matthew 23:15. —

2. The suppositions this writer makes, that if, instead of *baptizing them,* it had been said *circumcising them,* the apostles without any farther warrant would have naturally and justly thought, that upon proselyting the Gentile parent, and circumcising him, his infants also were to be circumcised: or if the twelve patriarchs of old had had a divine command given them, to go

into *Egypt, Arabia, etc. and teach them the God of Abraham, circumcising them,* they would have understood it as authorizing them to perform this ceremony, not upon the parent only, but also upon the infants of such as believed on the God of *Abraham.* As these suppositions are without foundation, so I greatly question whether they would have been so understood, without some instructions and explanations; and betides the cases put are not parallel to this before us, since the circumcision of infants was enjoined and practiced before such a supposed commission and command; whereas the baptism of infants was neither commanded nor practiced before this commission of Christ; and therefore could not lead them to any such thought as this, whatever the other might do. —

3. The characters and circumstances of the apostles, to whom the commission was given, will not at all conclude that they apprehended infants to be actually included; some in which they are represented being entirely false, and others nothing to the purpose: Jews they were indeed, but men that knew that the covenant of circumcision was not still in force, but abolished: men, who could never have observed that the infants of believers with their parents had always been admitted into covenant, and passed under the same initiating rite: men, who could not know, that the Gentiles were to be taken into a joint participation of all the privileges of the Jewish church; but must know that both believing Jews and Gentiles were to constitute a new church, state, and to partake of new privileges and ordinances, which the Jewish church knew nothing of: — men, who were utter strangers to the baptism of Gentile proselytes, to the Jewish religion, and of their infants; and to any baptism, but the ceremonial ablutions, before the times of *John* the Baptist: — men, who were not tenacious of their ancient rites after the Spirit was poured down upon them at Pentecost, but knew they were now abolished, and at an end: — men, though they had seen little children brought to Christ to have his hands laid on them, yet had never seen an infant baptized in their days: — men, who though they knew that infants were sinners, and under a sentence of condemnation, and needed remission of sin and justification, and that baptism was a means of leading the faith of adult persons to Christ for them; yet knew that it was not by baptism, but by the blood of Christ, that there things are obtained: — men, that knew that Christ came to set up a new church-state; not national as before, but congregational; not consisting of carnal men, and of infants without understanding; but of spiritual and rational men, believers in Christ; and therefore could not be led to conclude

that infants were comprehended in the commission: nor is Christ's silence with respect to infants to be construed into a strong and most manifest presumption in their favor, which would be presumption indeed; or his not excepting them, a permission or order to admit them: persons capable of making such constructions, are capable of doing and saying any thing. I hasten to

The fourth argument, drawn from the evident and clear consequences of other passages of Scripture; [f89] as,

1. From <451117>Romans 11:17 and *if some of the branches be broken off,* etc. here let it be noted, that the *olive tree* is not the Abrahamic covenant or church, into which the Gentiles were grafted; for they never were grafted into the Jewish church, that, with all its peculiar ordinances, being abolished by Christ; signified by the shaking of the heaven and the earth, and the removing of things shaken, (<581226>Hebrews 12:26, 27) but the gospel church-state, out of which the unbelieving Jews were left, and into which the believing Gentiles were engrafted, but not in the stead of the unbelieving Jews: and by the *root and fatness* of the olive-tree, are meant, not the religious privileges and grants belonging to the Jewish covenant or church, which the Gentiles had nothing to do with, and are abolished; but the privileges and ordinances of the gospel-church, which they with the believing Jews jointly partook of, being incorporated together in the same church-state; and which, as it is the meaning of <451117>Romans 11:17 so of <490306>Ephesians 3:6 in all which there is not the least syllable of baptism; and much less of infant, baptism; or of the faith of a parent grafting his children with himself, into the church or covenant-relation to God, which is a mere chimera, that has no foundation either in reason or scripture.

2. From <411014>Mark 10:14. *Suffer little children to come unto me,* etc. and <430305>John 3:5. *Except any one is born of water,* etc. from there two passages put together, it is said, the right of infants to baptism may be clearly inferred; for in one they are declared actually to have a place in God's kingdom or church, and yet into it, the other as expressly says, none can be admitted without being baptized. But supposing the former of these texts is to be understood of infants, not in a metaphorical sense, or of such as are compared to infants for humility, etc. which sense some versions lead unto, and in which way some Paedobaptists interpret the words, particularly *Calvin,* but literally; then by *the kingdom of God,* is not meant the visible church on earth, or a gospel church-state, which is not national, but

congregational; consisting of persons gathered out of the world by the grace of God, and that make a public profession of the name of Christ, which infants are incapable of, and so are not taken into it: betides, this sense would prove too much, and what this writer would not choose to give into, *viz.* that infants, having a place in this kingdom or church, must have a right to all the privileges of it; to the Lord's supper, as well as to baptism; and ought to be treated in all respects as other members of it. Wherefore it should be interpreted of the kingdom of glory, into which we doubt not that such as these in the text are admitted; and then the strength of our Lord's argument lies here; that since he came to save such infants as these, as well as adult persons, and bring them to heaven, they should not be hindered from being brought to him to be touched by him, and healed of their bodily diseases: and so the other text is to be understood of *the kingdom of God,* or heaven, in the same sense; but not of water-baptism as necessary to it, or that without which there is no entrance into it; which mistaken, shocking and stupid sense of them, led *Austin,* and the *African* churches, into a confirmed belief and practice of infant-baptism; and this sense being imbibed, will justify him in all his monstrous, absurd and impious tenets, as this writer calls them, about the ceremony of baptismal water, and the absolute necessity of it unto salvation: whereas the plain meaning of the words is, that *except a man be born again* of the grace of the Spirit of God, comparable to water, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,* or be a partaker of the heavenly glory; or without the regenerating grace of the Spirit of God, which in Titus 3:5 is called *the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost,* there can be no meetness for, no reception into, the kingdom of heaven; and therefore makes nothing for the baptizing of infants.

3. A distinction between the children of believers and of unbelievers, is attempted from 1 Corinthians 7:14 as if the one were in a visible covenant-relation to God, and the other not; whereas the text speaks not of two sorts of children, but of one and the same, under supposed different circumstances; and is to be understood not of any federal, but matrimonial holiness, as I have shewn elsewhere, [f90] to which I refer the reader. As for the *Queries* with which the argument is concluded, they are nothing to the purpose, unless it could be made out, that it is the will of God that infants should be baptized, and that the baptism of them would give them the remission of sins, and justify their persons; neither of which are true: and of the same kind is the *harangue* in the *introduction* to this treatise: and after

all a poor, slender provision is made for the salvation of infants, according to this author's own scheme, which only concerns *the infants of believers,* and leaves all others to the uncovenanted mercies of God, as he calls them; seeing the former are but a very small part of the thousands of infants that every day languish under grievous distempers, are tortured, convulsed, and in piteous agonies give up the ghost. Nor have I any thing to do with what this writer lays, concerning the moral purposes and use of infant-baptism in religion; since the thing itself is without any foundation in the word of God: upon the whole, the baptism of infants is so far from being a *reasonable service,* that it is a *most unreasonable one;* since there is neither precept nor precedent for it in the sacred writings; and it is neither to be proved by *scripture* nor *tradition.*

FOOTNOTES

[ft1] Reasonable Service, p. 30.

[ft2] Preface, p.

[ft3] Irenaeus adv. Haeres. 1. 3. c. 4. Cyprian. Ep. 63. ad Caecillum, p. 146. Athanas. ad Adelph, p. 333.

[ft4] Institut. Rel. Christ. 1. 1. c. 12. J. 4. p. 25.

[ft5] Of the liberty of Prophesying, p. 320, 321. Ed. 3d.

[ft6] Euseb. Eccl. Hist. 50:5. c. 23-25. Socrat. Eccl. Hist. 1. 5. c. 22. p 285.

[ft7] Euseb. lb. 1. 4. c. 14. See Bowcr's Lives of the Popes, vol. I. p. 27, 37.

[ft8] Loc. Common. p. 287.

[ft9] Euseb. ib. l 3. c. 39.

[ft10] Pirke Abot. c. 1 § 1.

[ft11] Apolog. 2 p. 62.

[ft12] Apolog. 1 p. 43.

[ft13] Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 258.

[ft14] Ib. p. 272.

[ft15] Adv. Haeres. 1. 3. c. 39.

[ft16] Ib. 1:1. c 18. & 1. 4. c. 39. & 1. 5. c. 15.

[ft17] History of Infant-baptism, p. 1. ch. 3. p. 6.

[ft18] Reasonable Service, p. 30.

[ft19] The Dissenting Gentleman's Third Letter, etc. p. 32,

[ft20] In Rivet. critici facri, 1. 2. c. 12. p. 202.

[ft21] Hist. Pelag. par. I. 1.2. p. 147.

[ft22] Hist. Eccles. vol. I. p. 132.

[ft23] Liberty of Prophesying, p. 320,

[ft24] Bower's History of Popes, vol. I. p. 339.

[ft25] Bower ibid. p. 329, c. 330.

[ft26] De peccator. merit. & remiss. I. 2. c. 25.

[ft27] In Aug. de peceator, originali, 1. 2. c. 18.

[ft28] Ed. Antwerp. by Plantine, 1576.

[ft29] Hist. of Infant, baptism, part I. ch. 19 p. 37.

[ft30] De libero Arbitdo, 1. 3. c. 23.

[ft31] De Peccator. nierit. 1. 2. c. 25.

[ft32] Ep. ad Laetam, t. I. fol. 19. M.

[ft33] De verbis Apostoli, serm 10, c. 2.

[ft34] De Genesi, I. 10. c. 22. De baptismo, contr. Donat. 1. 4. c. 23, 24.

[ft35] Liberty of Prophesying. p. 119.

[ft36] Ep. 106. Bonifacio, contr. Pelag.

[ft37] De Peccator. merit. & remiss. 1. 1. c. 20.

[ft38] Ibid. c. 24.

[ft39] Cyprian de lapsis, p. 244.

[ft40] Basil. de Spiritu Sanct. c. 27. ·

[ft41] Homil. 12. in 1 Ep. ad Corinth.

[ft42] Catechef. 12. §. 4.

[ft43] Ep. 73. ad Jubajanum. p. 184.

[ft44] Ad Demetrian, prope finem,

[ft45] De resurrectione carnis, c. 8.

[ft46] De Baptismo. c. 18.

[ft47] Ut supra.

[ft48] Homil 12. in Numeros, fol. 114. D.

[ft49] De spectaculis, c. 4.

[ft50] De corona, c. 3.

[ft51] De peccato originali 1. 2. c, 40. de nupt,. & concup. 1. 1. c 20. & 1. 2. c. 18.

[ft52] Contr. Julian. 1. 3. c 5.

[ft53] Ep. 105. Bonifacio, prope sinem,

[ft54] Orat. 40. p. 657.

[ft55] Adv. Parmenian. 1.4. P. 92.

[ft56] Ep 76. ad Magnum.

ft57 Apud Euseb. Eccl. Hist. 50:6. c. 43.

ft58 Ut supra.

ft59 Adv. Luciserianos, fol. 47. H. tom. 2.

ft60 De corona, c. 3.

ft61 Adv. Praxeam e. 26.

ft62 Hist. Ecclesiastes 1.6. c. 26.

ft63 Ut supra.

ft64 De tempore sermo, 119. c. 8.

ft65 De sacramentis, I. 1 c. 5.

ft66 Ep. 70. ad Januasium.

ft67 De baptismo, c. 4.

ft68 Ut supra.

ft69 De trinhate, 50:15. c. 26.

ft70 De sacramentis, I. 3. c. 11.

ft71 Cateches. mystagog, 2. p. 3. & 3. p. 3.

ft72 Ep. 70. ad Januariam, p. 175.

ft73 De resurrectione carnis, c. 8.

ft74 De baptismo, c 7.

ft75 Adv. Luciferianos, fol. 47.

ft76 Comment. in Esaiam. c. 55. 1. fol. 94. E.

ft77 De corona, c. 3.

ft78 Adv. Marcion, 1. 3. c. 14.

ft79 C. 5. prope finem,

ft80 Tertullian de pudicitia, c. 9. Cyprian. Ep 59. ad Fidum, vid. Aug. contr, 2. Epist. Pelag. I. 4. c. 8.

ft81 The dissenting Gentleman's Second Letter, etc. p. 29, 30.

ft82 Baptism of Infants a reasonable Service, etc. p. 14, 15.

ft83 Baptism of Infants a reasonable Service, etc. p. 16-19.

ft84 See Pool's Annotation on <4837>Galatians 3:17.

ft85 In ibid.

ft86 The divine right of Infant baptism disproved, p. 56-61.

[ft87]Reasonable service, etc. p. 16,

[ft88] Reasonable service, etc. p. 19-22

[ft89] Reasonable service, etc. p. 23-28.

[ft90] The divine right of Infant-baptism disproved, etc. p. 73-78.