

THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM



JOHN GILL (1697-1771)

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THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM

Introduction

As the first covenant, or testament,¹ had ordinances of divine service that are shaken, removed, and abolished;² so the New Testament, or gospel dispensation,³ has ordinances of divine worship that cannot be shaken, but will remain until the second coming of Christ. These, as Austin⁴ says, are few and easy to be observed, and of a very expressive signification.⁵ Baptism must be reckoned⁶ as one of these. It is proper to be treated of in the first place; for though it is not a church ordinance, it is an ordinance of God, and a part and branch of public worship.

When I say it is not a church ordinance, I mean it is not an ordinance administered in the church, but out of it and in order to admission into it and communion with it.⁷ It is preparatory to it and a qualification for it. It does not make a person a member of a church, or admit him into a visible church.⁸ Persons must first be baptized and *then* added to the church, as the three thousand converts were (Act 2:41).

A church has nothing to do with the baptism of any, but to be satisfied that they are baptized before they are admitted into communion with it. Admission to baptism lies solely in the breast of the administrator,⁹ who is the only judge of qualifications for it, and has the sole power of receiving to it and rejecting from it. If not

¹ **first...testament** – Old Covenant given through Moses.

² **shaken...abolished** – The Old Testament’s ceremonial laws for worship were abrogated by Christ at His crucifixion and removed when the Jewish Temple was destroyed in AD 70.

³ **dispensation** – age.

⁴ *De Doctrina Christiana*, 50:3, c. 9.—*Gill*

Austin (Augustine of Hippo, 354-430) was an early church theologian born in Tagaste, North Africa. Known by many as the father of orthodox theology, he taught the depravity of man and the grace of God in salvation.

⁵ **signification** – meaning.

⁶ **reckoned** – included among the number; counted.

⁷ In other words, baptism is administered as a prerequisite to joining a church as a member.

⁸ **visible church** – local assembly of professing Christians, as differentiated from the invisible or spiritual church universal, which includes all true believers throughout the world and throughout all time.

⁹ **administrator** – person who administers baptism. Seventeenth-century Baptist leader Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) illustrates that early Baptist thought did not demand that “administrators” of baptism be church officers. He states that an administrator of baptism could be any gifted disciple in *Gold Refin’d, or Baptism in Its Primitive Purity*, London, 1689, 20-21.

satisfied, he may reject a person thought fit by a church, and admit a person to baptism not thought fit by a church—but a disagreement is not desirable nor advisable.

The orderly, regular, scriptural rule of proceeding seems to be as follows. A person inclined to submit to baptism and to join in communion¹ with a church should first apply to an administrator; and upon giving him satisfaction, be baptized by him; and then should propose to the church for communion, when he would be able to answer all proper questions. If asked to give a reason of the hope that is in him, he is ready to do it (1Pe 3:15). If a testimony of his life and conversation² is required, if none present can give it, he can direct where it is to be had. If the question is put to him whether he is a baptized person or not, he can answer in the affirmative and give proof of it. And so the way is clear for his admission into church fellowship. So Saul, when converted, was immediately baptized by Ananias, without any previous knowledge and consent of the church. And it was many days after this that he proposed to join himself to the disciples, and was received (Act 9:18-19, 23, 26-28).

I. A Gospel Ordinance

As it is water baptism that is meant, I shall first prove that this is peculiar to the gospel dispensation, is a standing³ ordinance in it, and will be continued to the second coming of Christ.

A. Old Testament Washings

This is opposed to the sentiments of such who say baptism was in use before the times of John,⁴ Christ, and His apostles. [It also is opposed to the sentiments] of such who restrain water baptism to the interval between the beginning of John's ministry and the death of Christ, when they supposed this, with other external rites, ceased; and of such, as the Socinians,⁵ who think that only the first converts to Christianity in a nation are to be baptized, and their children, but not their after posterity.

There were indeed various washings, bathings, or baptisms under the legal dispensation,⁶ for the purification of persons and things unclean by the ceremonial

¹ **communion** – in this context, membership.

² **conversation** – behavior; lifestyle.

³ **standing** – permanent.

⁴ **John** – John the Baptist (Mat 3; Mar 1; Luk 3; Joh 1).

⁵ *Vid. Socin. Disp. de Baptismo*, c. 15-17.—*Gill*

Socinians – followers of the sect founded by Faustus Socinius, 16th century Italian theologian, who denied the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and original sin; and denied that the cross brought forgiveness of sins; influenced the development of Unitarian theology.

⁶ **legal dispensation** – Old Covenant.

law. [These] had a doctrine in them called “the doctrine of baptisms” (Heb 6:2), which taught the cleansing of sin by the blood of Christ; but there was nothing similar in them to the ordinance of water baptism, but immersion only. The Jews pretend their ancestors were received into covenant by baptism, or dipping, as well as by circumcision and sacrifice; and that proselytes¹ from heathenism were received the same way. This is greedily grasped at by the advocates for infant baptism, who fancy that John, Christ, and His apostles took up this custom as they found it, and continued it. [This], they imagine, accounts for the silence about [infant baptism] in the New Testament, and why there is neither precept for it nor example of it. But surely if it was in such common use as pretended, though no new precept had been given, there would have been precedents enough of it. But no proof is to be given of any such practice obtaining² in those times, neither from the Old nor New Testament; nor from the apocryphal books³ written by Jews between them; nor from Josephus and Philo the Jew, who wrote a little after the times of John and Christ; nor from the Jewish Mishnah,⁴ or book of traditions—only from later writings of theirs, too late for the proof of it before those times.⁵

B. John’s Baptism

John was the first administrator of the ordinance of baptism, and therefore is called “the Baptist” (Mat 3:1) by way of emphasis. [But if baptism] had been in common use, there must have been many baptizers before him who had a like claim to this title. And why should the people be so alarmed with it as to come from all parts to see it administered and to hear it preached when, had it been in frequent use, they must have often seen it? And why should the Jewish Sanhedrin send priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John to know who he was—whether the Messiah, or His forerunner Elias (Mal 4:5), or that Prophet spoken of and expected (Deu 18:15-19)? And when he confessed and denied that he was neither of them, they say to him, “Why baptizest thou then?” (Joh 1:25). By which thing...it appears it was a new thing that they expected when the Messiah came, but not before.

And, [they expected that] then it would be performed by some great personage, one or other of the before mentioned; whereas, had it been performed by an ordinary teacher, common rabbi or doctor, priest or Levite in ages immemorial, there

¹ **proselytes** – converts to Judaism.

² **obtaining** – being in place.

³ **apocryphal books** – books written between the Old and New Testament periods. They are included in Catholic editions of the Old Testament, but Jews and Protestants have generally excluded them from the inspired canon of Scripture.

⁴ **Mishnah** – collection of Jewish oral laws passed from generation to generation.

⁵ See the “Dissertation concerning the Baptism of Jewish Proselytes” at the end of *A Body of Practical Divinity*, Vol 2, 760.—Gill

could have been no room for such a question. And had this been the case, there would have been no difficulty with the Jews to answer the question [that they put to] our Lord: “The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?” (Mat 21:25). They could have answered, It was a tradition of theirs, a custom in use among them time out of mind, had this been the known case. Nor would they have been subject to any dilemma.

But John’s baptism was not a device of men, but “the counsel of God,” according to His will and wise determination (Luk 7:30). John had a mission and commission from God; he was a man sent of God, and sent to baptize (Joh 1:6, 33). And his baptism was water baptism, this he affirms, and the places he made use of for that purpose show it—and none will deny it.

Now, John’s baptism and that of Christ and His apostles were the same. Christ was baptized by John, and His baptism was surely Christian baptism. Of this no one can doubt (Mat 3:13-17). And Christ’s disciples also were baptized by [John], for by whom else could they be baptized? Not by Christ Himself, for He baptized none (Joh 4:2). And it is observable that the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ and His apostles were at the same time; they were contemporary, and the one did not succeed the other. Now it is not reasonable to suppose there should be two sorts of baptism administered at the same time, but one and the same by both (Joh 3:22-23, 26; 4:1-2).

C. Baptisms Performed by John and Christ’s Apostles

The baptism of John and that which was practiced by the apostles of Christ (even after His death and resurrection from the dead) agreed,

1. *In the subjects thereof.* Those whom John baptized were sensible, penitent¹ sinners who were convinced of their sins and made an ingenuous² confession of them; and of whom he required “fruits meet³ for repentance,” which showed it to be genuine (Mat 3:6-8). Hence, his baptism is called “the baptism of repentance” because he required [repentance] previous to it (Mar 1:4). So the apostles of Christ exhorted men to repent, to profess their repentance, and give evidence of it [prior] to their baptism (Act 2:38). John said to the people who came to his baptism “that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus,” upon which they were baptized in Christ’s name (Act 19:4-5).⁴ Faith in Christ was made a prerequisite to baptism by Christ and His apostles (Mar 16:16; Act 8:36-37).

¹ **penitent** – repentant.

² **ingenuous** – sincere.

³ **meet** – fit.

⁴ **in Christ’s name** – It is not evident from Scripture that John explicitly mentioned the name of Jesus Christ as a formula in the act of baptism. “Baptized in Christ’s name” here could simply

2. *In the way and manner of the administration of both.* John's baptism was by immersion, as the places chosen by him for it show; and the baptism of Christ by him is a proof of it (Mat 3:6, 16; Joh 3:23). Baptism was performed in like manner by the apostles, as [for example] the eunuch by Philip (Act 8:38-39).

3. *In the form of their administration.* John was sent of God to baptize; and in whose name should he baptize but in the name of the one true God Who sent him—even in the name of God: Father, Son, and Spirit? The doctrine of the Trinity was known to John, as it was to the Jews in common. It is said of John's hearers and disciples that "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Act 19:4-5).¹ The same form is used of the baptism of those baptized by the apostles of Christ (Act 8:16; 10:48). "In the name of the Lord Jesus" is only a part of the form put for the whole; and is sufficiently expressive of Christian baptism, which is to be performed "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mat 28:19).

4. *In the end² and use of baptism.* John's baptism, and so the apostles, was upon repentance for the remission of sins (Mar 1:4; Act 8:38). [Now], neither repentance nor baptism procure the pardon of sin (that is only obtained by the blood of Christ); but baptism is a means of leading to the blood of Christ, and repentance gives encouragement to hope for [pardon], through [the blood of Christ]. Now, since there is such an agreement between the baptism of John (as administered before the death of Christ) and the baptism of the apostles (after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ), it is a plain case [that] it was not limited to the interval of time from the beginning of John's ministry to the death of Christ, but was afterwards continued.

[This] further appears from the commission of Christ, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them" (Mat 28:19); and though water is not expressed, it is always implied when the act of baptizing is ascribed to men, for it is peculiar to Christ to baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mat 3:11; Act 1:5). Nor did Christ give to His apostles, nor to any man or set of men, a commission and power to baptize with the Spirit. Besides [all this], an increase of the graces of the Spirit and a large donation of His gifts are promised to persons after baptism and as distinct from it (Act 2:38). The apostles, doubtless, understood the commission of their Lord and Master to baptize in water, since they practiced baptism upon water.

mean that this baptism was done as an act of repentance as well as faith in the coming Messiah. Clearly, repentance in light of the Messiah's coming was central to John's message.

¹ While in Acts 19:5 Paul is the one doing the baptizing "in the name of the Lord Jesus," Gill may be observing that Paul's instruction in verse 4 emphasizes the unity of John's baptism with his own as being in Christ's name.

² **end** – purpose; intended result.

Such was the baptism administered by Philip, who, having taught the eunuch the doctrine of baptism, when they came to a “certain water” he said to him, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Act 8:36)—that is, [to be baptized] in water. And when Philip had observed unto him the grand requisite of [baptism], even faith in Christ, he at once professed [such faith]. The chariot in which they rode [was] ordered to stand, they went down both into the water, and Philip baptized him (Act 8:38-39). This was most certainly water baptism.

And so was the baptism that Peter ordered to be administered to Cornelius and his friends upon their receiving of the Holy Ghost, and so a baptism different from [baptism of the Holy Spirit]: “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?” (Act 10:47-48).

And this was designed to be continued unto the end of the world, to the second coming of Christ. As the ordinance of the [Lord’s] Supper is to be kept to that time, the ordinance of water baptism is to be continued as long. Hence Christ says, to encourage His ministers to preach His gospel and to baptize in His name: “Lo, I am with you always,” in the ministry of the Word and in the administration of baptism, “even unto the end of the world” (Mat 28:19-20).

II. An Ordinance of God

I shall next consider the author of baptism and show that it is not a device of men but an ordinance of God. It is a solemn part of divine worship performed in the name of the three divine persons in Deity—Father, Son, and Spirit—and by their authority. [In this worship,] the name of God is invoked and faith in Him expressed; and a man gives up himself to God, obliges himself to yield obedience to Him, expecting all good things from Him. Now, for an act of religious worship there must be a command of God. God is a jealous¹ God, and will not suffer anything to be admitted into the worship of Him but what is according to His Word and will.² If [something done in worship is] not commanded by Him, He may justly say, “Who hath required this at your hand?” (Isa 1:12), and will resent it! A command from men is not sufficient. No man on earth is to be called master; one is our Master in heaven, and Him only we are to obey. If the commandments of men are taught for doctrines, in vain is the Lord worshipped. What is done according to them is superstition and will-worship.

Indeed, as baptism is now commonly practiced, it is a mere invention of men, the whole of it corrupted and changed. Instead of rational spiritual men [being] the subjects of it, infants—who have neither the use of reason nor the exercise of

¹ **jealous** – zealous in defending the honor of His holiness.

² See *The Regulative Principle of the Church* by Sam Waldron, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

grace—are admitted to it. And instead of immersion in water and [rising] out of it—a very expressive emblem of the sufferings of Christ, His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead—sprinkling a few drops of water on the face is introduced. [In addition to these,] a number of foolish rites and ceremonies are used by the papists,¹ and some of their usages are retained by some Protestants, [such] as sponsors or sureties² for infants and signing them with the sign of the cross. In short, the face of the ordinance is so altered that, if the apostles were to rise from the dead and see it as now performed, they would neither know nor own it to be the ordinance commanded [to] them by Christ and practiced by them.

But, [when] it is administered according to the pattern and as first delivered, it appears to be of an heavenly origin—the “counsel of God” (Luk 7:30), a wise appointment of His. All the Three Persons [of the Trinity] have a concern; they all appeared at the baptism of Christ and gave a sanction³ to the ordinance by Their presence. The Father [gave a sanction] by a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17). As [the Father is pleased] in Christ’s person, so [He is] in this act of Christ in submitting to the ordinance of baptism. The Son [gave a sanction] in human nature, yielding obedience to it. And the Spirit [gave a sanction by] descending on Christ as a dove. And, baptism is ordered to be administered in the name of all three: Father, Son, and Spirit. This, among other things, is expressive of divine authority under which it is performed. Christ received from God the Father honor and glory—as at His transfiguration (Mat 17:2)—so at His baptism, by the voice from heaven [in which the Father] owned His relation to [Christ] as His Son, and expressed His well-pleasement in Him as obedient to His will.

The Son of God, in human nature, not only left an example of baptism [so] that we should tread in His steps, [He also] (though He Himself baptized none) countenanced⁴ it in His disciples and gave them orders to do it. [These] orders were repeated and a fresh commission given for the same after His resurrection from the dead. The Spirit of God showed His approbation⁵ of it by His descent on Christ at His baptism. [The Spirit’s] authority for it is to be seen in the administration of it in His name, as in the name of the other Two Persons. [This is all given] so that it is to be regarded, not as an institution of men, but as an ordinance of God—as a part of

¹ **papists** – those who follow Roman Catholic pope.

² **sponsors or sureties** – godparents. In ancient practice, Christians who vouched for the profession of an adult pagan being baptized. Over time, it came to refer to Christians who made a profession of faith on behalf of a child being baptized and committed to oversee the child’s spiritual development. In some traditions a sponsor may be a natural parent of the child.

³ **sanction** – approval.

⁴ **countenanced** – supported.

⁵ **approbation** – official approval.

righteousness to be fulfilled, a branch of the righteous will of God to be observed in obedience to it.

III. Subjects of the Ordinance

The subjects of baptism are next to be inquired into, or who they are to whom it is to be administered.

A. Who Is Baptized

According to the Scripture instances and examples, they are such who,

1. Are *enlightened* by the Spirit of God to see their lost state by nature, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and Christ as the only Savior of sinners, [and] who look to Him and are saved. Only such can see to the end¹ of the ordinance, which is to represent the sufferings and death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Hence baptism was by the ancients called φωτισμος, “illumination”; and baptized persons φωτιζομενοι, “enlightened” ones. The Syriac and Ethiopic versions of Hebrews 6:4 translate the word *enlightened* as “baptized.” An emblem² of this was the falling off from the eyes of Saul as [if] it had been scales, signifying his former blindness, ignorance, and unbelief now removed—upon which he arose and was baptized (Act 9:18).

2. *Penitent* persons who, having seen the evil nature of sin, repent of it and acknowledge it. Such were the first who were baptized by John that we read of: they were “baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mat 3:6). Being made sensible of their sins, they ingenuously³ confessed them. Such were the first who were baptized after Christ had renewed, upon His resurrection, the commission to His disciples to teach and baptize. Such were pricked to the heart, were exhorted to profess repentance and give evidence of it, and then be baptized—as they were (Act 2:37-38, 41). It is a pity that these first examples of baptism were not strictly followed.

3. *Faith* in Christ is a prerequisite to baptism (Mar 16:16). This is clear from the case of the eunuch desiring baptism, to whom Philip said, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” (Act 8:37). By this, it seems that if he did not believe he had no right to the ordinance; but if he did [believe], he had [such a right]. [After this] he professed his faith in Christ, and upon that profession was baptized.

The various instances of baptism recorded in Scripture confirm the same. The inhabitants of Samaria, upon believing in Christ, “were baptized, both men and women” (Act 8:12). So the Corinthians, upon “hearing” the word preached by the

¹ **see to the end** – understand the purpose and goal.

² **emblem** – symbol.

³ **ingenuously** – sincerely.

apostle Paul, “believed” in Christ Whom he preached “and were baptized” upon their faith in Him (Act 18:8). And “without faith it is impossible to please” God in any ordinance or part of worship (Heb 11:6). And “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). Without faith no one can see to the end of the ordinance of baptism, as before observed.

4. Such who are taught and made *disciples* by teaching are the proper subjects of baptism, [which is] agreeable both to the practice of Christ and His commission. It is said “that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John” (Joh 4:1). [Notice,] He first made them disciples and *then* baptized them (that is, ordered His apostles to baptize them). And so runs His commission to them, “Go...teach all nations, baptizing them” (Mat 28:19). That is, [baptize] those that are taught and so made disciples. They are the disciples of Christ who have learned to know Him, and are taught to deny sinful, righteous, and civil self for His sake, and to take up the cross and follow Him (Mat 16:24-25).

5. Such who have *received the Spirit of God*—as the Spirit of illumination and conviction, of sanctification and faith, as the persons before described may well be thought to have—should be admitted to baptism (Act 10:47; *see* Gal 3:2).

B. Who Is Not Baptized

From all [this], it appears that such who are ignorant of divine things—impenitent, unbelievers, not disciples and followers of Christ—and who are destitute of the Spirit, are not proper subjects of baptism, let their pretenses to birth-right be what they may. And so [the proper subjects of baptism are] not the infants of any, be they born of whom they may. The above characteristics, [which are] descriptive of the subjects of baptism, do by no means belong [to them]. With respect to their first birth, though born of believing parents, they are [nevertheless] carnal,¹ corrupt, and children of wrath as others. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (Joh 3:6); and they must be born again or they cannot see, possess, and enjoy the kingdom of God (Joh 3:3). [They do not] have a right to be admitted into the church of God now, nor will they enter into the kingdom of God in heaven hereafter, unless born again. Their first and carnal² birth neither entitles them to the kingdom of God on earth nor to the kingdom of God in heaven, be it taken in either sense. For the baptism of such, there is neither precept nor precedent in the Word of God.

C. No Scriptural Basis for Infant Baptism

For the baptism of such [i.e., infants], there is neither precept nor precedent in the Word of God.

¹ **carnal** – characterized by sinful flesh; not regenerated by the Spirit of God.

² **carnal** – natural; physical.

1. No Precept for Infant Baptism

a. Matthew 19:14

“But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

First, there is no precept for it; and [in particular] not in the words of Christ in Matthew 19:14. For,

1) Let the words be said to or of whom they may, they are not in the form of a precept, but of a permission or grant. [They] signify not what was enjoined as necessary, but what was allowed of or which might be.

2) These children do not appear to be newborn babes. The words used by the evangelists,¹ neither *παιδια* nor *βρεφη*, do not always signify such; but are sometimes used of such who are capable of going alone, of being instructed, and of understanding the Scriptures, and even of one of twelve years of age (Mat 18:2; 2Ti 3:15; Mar 5:39, 42). Nor is it probable that children just born should be had abroad.² Besides, these were such as Christ called unto Himself (Luk 18:16) and were capable of coming to Him of themselves, as is supposed in the words themselves. Nor is their being brought unto Him, nor His taking them in His arms, any objection to this, since the same are said of such who could walk of themselves (Mat 12:22; 17:16; Mar 9:36).

3) It cannot be said whose children these were, whether they belonged to those who brought them or to others; and whether the children of believers and of baptized persons, or not. And if [these were the children] of unbelievers and of unbaptized persons, the paedobaptists³ themselves will not allow such children to be baptized.

4) It is certain they were not brought to Christ to be baptized by Him, but for other purposes. The evangelist Matthew says they were brought to Him that “he should put his hands on them, and pray” (Mat 19:13, 15)—as He did, that is, for a blessing on them, as it was usual with the Jews to do (Gen 48:14-15). The evangelists Mark and Luke say they were brought to Him “that he would touch them” (Luk 18:15), as He did when He healed persons of diseases. Probably these children were diseased and were brought to Him to be cured. However, they were not brought to be baptized by Christ, for Christ baptized none at all, adult or infants (Joh 4:2). Had they that brought them [had] this in view, they would have not brought them to Christ but to the disciples of Christ, whom they might have seen administering the

¹ **the evangelists** – gospel writers: Matthew (19:14), Mark (10:14), and Luke (18:16).

² **had abroad** – taken out in public.

³ **paedobaptists** – those who baptize infants.

ordinance of baptism (but not Christ Himself). However, it is certain they were not baptized by Christ, since He never baptized any.

5) This passage rather concludes against paedobaptism than for it, and shows that this practice had not obtained¹ among the Jews, and had not been used by John, by Christ, or by His disciples. [If baptizing of children had been practiced among the Jews,] then the apostles would scarcely have forbidden the bringing of these children, since they might readily suppose they were brought to be baptized. But knowing of no such usage in the nation, whether of them that did or did not believe in Christ, they forbade them. And Christ's silence about this matter—when He had such an opportunity of speaking of it to His disciples and enjoining it, had it been His will—does not look very favorably upon this practice.

6) The reason given for suffering “little children” to come to Christ, “for of such is the kingdom of heaven,” is to be understood in a figurative and metaphorical² sense: of such who are comparable to children for modesty, meekness, and humility, and for freedom from rancor,³ malice, ambition, and pride (*see* Matthew 18:2). [This is the] sense given into by Origen,⁴ among the ancients, and by Calvin⁵ and Brugen-sis,⁶ among the moderns.

b. Matthew 28:19

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Nor does the commission in Matthew 28:19 contain in it any precept for infant baptism. For,

1) The baptism of all nations is not here commanded, but the baptism only of such who are taught. The antecedent⁷ to the relative “them” cannot be “all nations,” since the words *παντα τα εθνη*, “all nations,” are of the neuter gender; whereas *αυτους*, “them,” is of the masculine. [Rather,] *μαθητας*, disciples, is supposed and understood in the word *μαθητευσατε*, “teach” or “make disciples.” Now, the com-

¹ **obtained** – become prevalent or customary.

² **metaphorical** – use of a figure of speech containing an implied comparison, in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used of one thing, is applied to another.

³ **rancor** – deep enmity.

⁴ *Commentary on Matthew*, 372, 375.—*Gill*

Origen (c. 185 - c. 254) – theologian and biblical scholar of the early Greek Church.

⁵ **John Calvin** (1509-1564) – father of Reformed and Presbyterian theology. Calvin preached an average of five sermons a week during his 25 years serving in Geneva. Born in Noyon, Picardie, France.

⁶ **Franciscus Lucas Brugensis** (1549-1619) – Roman Catholic commentator on the gospels in Latin; from the Netherlands.

⁷ **antecedent** – *grammar*: word, phrase, or clause to which a pronoun refers.

mand is that such who are first taught (or made disciples by teaching) under the ministry of the Word by the Spirit of God, [afterwards] should be baptized.

2) If infants, as a part of “all nations” and because they are such, are to be baptized, then the infants of heathens, Turks, and Jews ought to be baptized, since they are a part (and a large part) of all nations, as well as the children of Christians, or believers, which are but a small part. Yea, every individual person in the world ought to be baptized, all adult persons, heathens as well as Christians—even the most profligate and abandoned of mankind—since they are a part of “all nations.”

3) Disciples of Christ—and such who have learned to know Christ and the way of salvation by Him, and to know themselves and their need of Him—are characters that cannot agree with¹ infants. And if disciples and learners are the same, as is said, they must be learners or they cannot be disciples; and they cannot be learners of *Christ* unless they have learned something of Him. According to this notion of disciples and learners, they ought to learn something of Him before they are baptized in His name. But what can an infant be taught to learn of Christ?

To prove infants [are] disciples, that text is usually brought of Acts 15:10, “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” [This text] falls greatly short of proving it, for infants are not designed in that place nor included in the character. For though the Judaizing teachers would have had the Gentiles, and their infants too, circumcised; yet it was not circumcision, the thing itself, which is meant by the intolerable “yoke”—for that was what the Jewish fathers and their children *were* able to bear, and had borne, in ages past. [Instead,] it was the doctrine of the necessity of that and other rites of Moses to salvation, [which] obliged [them] to the keeping of the whole Law, [that] was intolerable. [Such a] doctrine could not be imposed upon infants, but upon adult persons only.

4) These two acts—teaching or making disciples, and baptizing—are not to be confounded, but are two distinct acts. The one is previous and absolutely necessary to the other: men must first be made disciples, and then baptized. So Jerome² long ago understood the commission, on which he observes, “First they teach all nations, then dip those that are taught in water; for it cannot be that the body should receive the sacrament of baptism unless the soul has before received the truth of faith.” And so says Athanasius,³ “Wherefore the Savior does not simply command to baptize;

¹ **agree with** – be characteristic of.

² *Commentary on Matthew*, 28:19.—*Gill*

Jerome (ca. 347-420) – biblical scholar and translator of the Latin translation of Scripture known as the Vulgate.

³ *Contr. Arian.*, oratory 3, p. 209.—*Gill*

Athanasius (c. 295-373) – Bishop of Alexandria, Egypt; defender of the deity of Christ at the council of Niceae. He was the 20th bishop of Alexandria (c. 328-373). He was a renowned Chris-

but first says, teach and then baptize thus ‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost’—[so] that faith might come of teaching, and baptism be perfected.”

2. *No Precedent for Infant Baptism*

[Just as there is no *precept* for infant baptism], there is [also] no *precedent* for the baptism of infants in the Word of God. Among the vast numbers who flocked to John’s baptism from all parts, we read of no infants that were brought [to] them for that purpose, or that were baptized by him. And though more were baptized by Christ (that is, by the apostles of Christ at His order) than by John, yet [there is] no mention of any infant baptized by them. And though three thousand persons were baptized at once (Act 2:41), yet not an infant among them. In all the accounts of baptism in the Acts of the Apostles in different parts of the world, not a single instance of infant baptism is given.

There is, indeed, mention made of households, or families, baptized; and which the paedobaptists endeavor to avail themselves of.¹ But they ought to be sure there were infants in these families, and that they were baptized, or else they must baptize [infants] on a very precarious foundation. [This is because] there are families who have no infants in them, and how can they be sure there were any in these the Scriptures speak of? It lies upon them to prove there were infants in them and that these infants were baptized, or the allegation of these instances is to no purpose.

We are able to prove there are many things in the account of these families that are inconsistent with infants, and that make it at least probable there were none in them, and that also make it certain that those who were baptized were adult persons and believers in Christ. There are but three families, if so many, who are usually instanced in.²

a. *Lydia*

The first is that of Lydia and her household (Act 16:14-15), but in what state of life she was is not certain, whether single or married, whether maid, widow, or wife; and if married, whether she then had any children, or ever had any; and if she had, and they living, whether they were infants or adult. If infants, it does not seem probable that she should bring them along with her from her native place (Thyatira) to Philippi, where she seems to have been upon business and so had hired a house during her stay there. Wherefore, her household seems to have consisted of menial servants, [whom] she brought along with her to assist her in her business. Certain

tian theologian and the chief defender of Trinitarianism against Arianism at the First Council of Nicaea in 325 (Arius denied that Jesus is God). The creed attributed to his name was the first to identify and uphold the doctrine of the Trinity.

¹ **avail themselves of** – use in their arguments for baptizing infants.

² **instanced in** – mentioned to support their argument.

it is that those the apostles found in her house—when they entered into it after they came out of prison—were such as are called “brethren,” and were capable of being “comforted” by them, which supposes them to have been in some distress and trouble, and needing comfort.

b. Philippian jailer

The second instance is of the jailor and his household (Act 16:32-34), which consisted of adult persons and of such only; for the apostles spoke the word of the Lord to “all” that were in his house. [These] were capable of hearing and, it seems, of understanding; for not only *he* “rejoiced” at the good news of salvation by Christ, but “*all*” in his house hearing it, rejoiced likewise. [This] joy of theirs was the joy of faith, for he and they were believers in God (Father, Son, and Spirit); for it is expressly said that he “rejoiced, *believing* in God with all his house.” They were not only hearers of the Word, but rejoiced at it and believed in it, and in God the Savior revealed in it to them. All which shows them to be adult persons and not infants.

c. Stephanas

The third instance—if distinct from the household of the jailor, which some take to be the same—is that of Stephanas. [If] it be a different one, it is certain it consisted of adult persons, believers in Christ, and very useful in the service of religion. They were the first fruits of Achaia, the first converts in those parts, who “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints” (1Co 16:15). [Now], whether understood of the ministry of the Word to the saints, which they gave themselves up unto; or of the ministration of their substance to the poor, which they cheerfully communicated—they must be adult persons and not infants.

There being then neither precept nor precedent in the Word of God for infant baptism, it may be justly condemned as unscriptural and unwarrantable.

3. No Further Implications for Infant Baptism

Thirdly, infant baptism is not to be concluded from any things or passages recorded either in the Old or in the New Testament. Baptism being an ordinance peculiar to the New Testament, it cannot be expected there should be any directions about the observance of it in the Old Testament; and whatever may be gathered relative to it, from typical and figurative baptisms under the former dispensation,¹ there is nothing from thence in favor of or to countenance infant baptism. Yet, we are often referred thereunto for the original and foundation of it—but to no purpose.

¹ **former dispensation** – Old Covenant.

a. *Old Testament figures*

1) *Children not members of the covenant*

It is not fact, as has been asserted,¹ that the “infants of believers” have, with their parents, been taken into covenant with God in the former ages of the church,² if by [this covenant] is meant the covenant of grace.³ The first covenant made with man was that of works,⁴ made with Adam and which indeed included all his posterity. [To his earthly line, Adam] stood as a federal head,⁵ as did no one ever since to his natural offspring. In Adam, they all sinned, were condemned, and died—which surely cannot be pleaded in favor of the infants of believers!

After the Fall, the covenant of grace and the way of life and salvation by Christ were revealed to *Adam and Eve* personally, as interested therein; but not to their natural seed and posterity, and as interested therein; for then all mankind must be taken into the covenant of grace, and so nothing peculiar to the infants of believers. Of [this] not the least syllable is mentioned throughout the whole age of the church reaching from Adam to Noah.

The next covenant we read of is that made with Noah (Gen 9:11-13), which was not made with him and his immediate offspring only. Nor were any taken into it as infants of believers, nor had they any sacrament or rite as a token of it, [or as a token] of God being their God in a peculiar relation. Surely this will not be said of Ham, one of the immediate sons of Noah. That covenant was made with Noah, and with all mankind to the end of the world, and even with every living creature, the beasts of the field—promising security from an universal deluge, as long as the world should stand. And so [it] had nothing in it peculiar to the infants of believers.

2) *The Abrahamic Covenant not the Covenant of Grace proper*

The next covenant is that made with Abraham and his seed, on which great stress is laid (Gen 17:10-14).

¹ Micaiah Towgood, *Baptism of Infants a Reasonable Service*, p. 14-15.—Gill

² **church** – God’s people; used in this context to include those in both the Old and New Covenants.

³ **covenant of grace** – God’s gracious, eternal purpose of redemption, conceived before the creation of the world, first announced in Genesis 3:15, progressively revealed in history, accomplished in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and appropriated by faith in Him (Gen 12:1-3; 2Sa 7:5-17; Jer 31:31-34; Gal 3).

⁴ **covenant of works** – God’s arrangement with man, first instituted with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before the Fall, that they would have privileges as long as they obeyed God’s command: not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17). See *The Covenants: of Works and of Grace* by Walter Chantry, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁵ **federal head** – one who represents a group united to him (for example, a president acting for a country united under a constitution). In the Bible, we find such headship applying to Adam and to Christ, Who represents His people, acts for them, and is united to them (Rom 5:12-21; 1Co 15:20-22, 45-49).

10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. 11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you... 13 ...and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

This is said to be

The grand turning point on which the issue of the controversy very much depends. If Abraham's covenant—which included his infant children and gave them a right to circumcision—was not the covenant of grace, then it is confessed that the “main ground” is taken away on which “the right of infants to baptism” is asserted. Consequently, the principal arguments in support of the doctrine are overturned.¹

Now, that this covenant was not the pure covenant of grace (in distinction from the covenant of works), but rather a covenant of works, will soon be proved. And if so, then the main ground of infants' baptism is taken away and its principal arguments in support of it are overturned. That [the covenant referred to] is not the covenant of grace is clear [from the following].

a) It is never so called, nor by any name that shows it to be such; but [it is called] “the covenant of circumcision” (Act 7:8). Now, nothing is more opposite to one another than circumcision and grace; circumcision is a work of the Law, which they who sought to be justified by fell from grace (Gal 5:2-4). Nor can this covenant be the same we are now under, which is a new covenant, or a new administration of the covenant of grace, since [the covenant of circumcision] is abolished and no more in being and force.

b) It appears to be a covenant of works, and not of grace, since it was to be kept by men under a severe penalty. Abraham was to keep it, and his seed after him. Something was to be done by them, their flesh to be circumcised. And a penalty was annexed in case of disobedience or neglect: such a soul was to be cut off from his people. All [of this] shows it to be, not a covenant of grace, but of works.

c) It is plain [that] it was a covenant which might be broken: of the uncircumcised it is said, “He hath broken my covenant” (Gen 17:14). Whereas, the covenant of grace cannot be broken: God will not break it and men cannot. It is ordered in all things and sure, and is more immovable than hills and mountains (Psa 89:34).

d) It is certain [that] it had things in it of a civil and temporal nature, as a multiplication of Abraham's natural seed, a race of kings from him, a promise of his being the father of many nations, and a possession of the land of Canaan by his seed.

¹ David Bostwick, *A Fair and Rational Vindication of the Right of Infants to the Ordinance of Baptism* (1765), 19.—Gill

[These are] things that can have no place in the pure covenant of grace and have nothing to do with that, any more than the change of his name from Abram to Abraham.

e) There were some persons included in it who cannot be thought to belong to the covenant of grace; as Ishmael (not in the same covenant with Isaac) and profane Esau. On the other hand, there were some who were living when this covenant of circumcision was made, and yet were left out of it, who nevertheless, undoubtedly, were in the covenant of grace: as Shem, Arphaxad, Melchizedek, Lot, and others. Wherefore, [Abraham's covenant] can never be the pure covenant of grace.

f) Nor is [Abraham's covenant] the same with what in Galatians 3:17 is said to be "confirmed before of God in Christ," which could not be disannulled by the law four hundred and thirty years after. The distance of time between them does not agree, but falls short of the apostle's date twenty-four years; and therefore must not refer to the covenant of circumcision, but to some other covenant and time of making it; even to an exhibition and manifestation of the covenant of grace to Abraham, about the time of his call out of Chaldea (Gen 12:3).

g) The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the federal head of the elect in Him, and that from everlasting, and Who is the only head of that covenant and of the covenanted ones. If the covenant of grace was made with Abraham as the head of his natural and spiritual seed, Jews and Gentiles, [then] there must be two heads of the covenant of grace, contrary to the nature of such a covenant and the whole current of Scripture. Yea, the covenant of grace and the promises of it—as it concerns the spiritual seed of Abraham and spiritual blessings for them—were made to Christ (Gal 3:16). No mere man is capable of covenanting with God; the covenant of grace is not made with any single man; and much less with him on behalf of others. Whenever we read of it as made with a particular person or persons, it is always to be understood of the manifestation and application of it, and of its blessings and promises to them.

h) [We must allow] Abraham's covenant to be a peculiar one and of a mixed kind: containing promises of temporal things to him and his natural seed, and [promises] of spiritual things to his spiritual seed—or, rather, that there was at the same time when the covenant of circumcision was given to Abraham and his natural seed, a fresh manifestation of the covenant of grace made with him and his spiritual seed in Christ. That the temporal blessings of it belonged to his natural seed is no question; but that the spiritual blessings belong to all Abraham's seed after the flesh and to all the natural seed of believing Gentiles must be denied. If the covenant of grace was made with all Abraham's seed according to the flesh, then it was made with his more immediate offspring, with a mocking, persecuting Ishmael, and with a profane Esau, and with all his remote posterity; with them who believed not and whose car-

casses fell in the wilderness; with the ten tribes who revolted from the pure worship of God; with the Jews in Isaiah's time, a seed of evildoers, whose rulers are called the rulers of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah; with the scribes and Pharisees, that wicked and adulterous generation in the times of Christ. But what serious, thoughtful man, who knows anything of the covenant of grace, can admit of this (*see Rom 9:6-7*)?

It is only a remnant, according to the election of grace, who are in this covenant. If all the natural seed of Abraham are not in this covenant, it can scarcely be thought that all the natural seed of believing Gentiles are. It is only some of the one and some of the other who are in the covenant of grace. And [who is in] cannot be known until they believe; [it is then] when they appear to be Abraham's spiritual seed. [Therefore,] it must be right to put off their claim to any supposed privilege arising from covenant interest until it is plain they have one. If all the natural seed of Abraham, as such, and all the natural seed of believing Gentiles, as such, are in the covenant of grace—since all they that are in it, and none but they [that] are in it, are the chosen of God, the redeemed of the Lamb, and will be called by grace, and sanctified, and persevere in faith and holiness, and be eternally glorified—then the natural seed of Abraham and of believing Gentiles must be all chosen to grace and glory, and be redeemed by the blood of Christ from sin, Law, hell, and death. They must all have new hearts and spirits given them, and the fear of God put into their hearts. [They all] must be effectually called, their sins forgiven them, their persons justified by the righteousness of Christ, and they persevere in grace to the end and be glorified forever (*see Jer 31:33-34; 32:40; Eze 36:25-27; Rom 8:30*). But who will venture to assert all this of the one or of the other?

i) And after all, if their covenant interest could be ascertained, that gives no right to an ordinance without a positive order and direction from God. It gave no right to circumcision formerly; for, on the one hand, there were persons living when that ordinance was appointed who had an undoubted interest in the covenant of grace—as Shem, Arphaxad, Lot, and others, on whom circumcision was not enjoined and they had no right to use it. On the other hand, there have been many of whom it cannot be said they were in the covenant of grace, and yet were obliged to [circumcision]. And so covenant interest gives no right to baptism.

Could it be proved, as it cannot, that all the infant seed of believers, as such, are in the covenant of grace, it would give them no right to baptism without a command for it. The reason is because a person may be in covenant, and as yet not have the prerequisite to an ordinance—even faith in Christ and a profession of it, which are necessary both to baptism and the Lord's Supper. If covenant interest gives a right to the one, it would to the other.

j) Notwithstanding all this attention made about Abraham's covenant (Gen 17:1-14), it was not made with him and his infant seed, but with him and his adult offspring. It was they in all after ages to the coming of Christ, whether believers or unbelievers, who were enjoined to circumcise their infant seed, and not all of them, only their males. It was not made with Abraham's infant seed, who could not circumcise themselves, but their parents were by this covenant obliged to circumcise them. Yea, others, who were not Abraham's natural seed, were obliged to it: "He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you...he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is *not of thy seed*" (Gen 17:12).

3) *Baptism of infants not concluded from circumcision*

[This] leads on to observe that nothing can be concluded from the circumcision of Jewish infants, to the baptism of the infants of believing Gentiles. Had there been a like command for the baptism of the infants of believing Gentiles under the New Testament, as there was for the circumcision of Jewish infants under the Old, the thing would not have admitted of any dispute; but nothing of this kind appears. For,

a) It is not clear that even Jewish infants were admitted into covenant by the rite of circumcision (from whence it is pleaded that the infants of believers are admitted into it by baptism), for Abraham's female seed were taken into the covenant made with him as well as his male seed, but not by any "visible rite" or ceremony. Nor were his male seed admitted by any such rite; 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, I presume, will not be denied: as it was a national covenant, so early [from birth] they were in it. The Israelites with their infants at Horeb had not been circumcised, nor were they when they entered into covenant with the Lord their God (Deu 29:10-15; Jos 5:3-7).

b) Circumcision was no seal of the covenant of grace under the former dispensation, nor is baptism a seal of it under the present. Had circumcision been a seal of it, the covenant of grace must have been without [such a seal] from Adam to Abraham. It is called a sign or token, but not a seal. It was a sign or mark in the flesh of Abraham's natural seed, a typical sign¹ of the pollution of human nature, and of the inward circumcision of the heart. But [it was] no seal confirming any spiritual blessing of the covenant of grace to those who had this mark or sign. It is indeed called "a seal of the righteousness of faith" (Rom 4:11), but not a seal to Abraham's natural seed of their interest in that righteousness, but only to Abraham himself. It was a seal to him, a confirming sign, assuring him that the righteousness of faith, which he had before he was circumcised, should come upon the uncircumcised be-

¹ **typical sign** – sign that serves as a type or figure.

lieving Gentiles. Therefore, it was continued on his natural offspring until that righteousness was preached unto, received by, and imputed to believing Gentiles.

c) Nor did baptism succeed¹ circumcision. There is no agreement between the one and the other: The *subjects* to whom they were administered [is different]. The *use* of the one and the other is not the same. And the *manner* of administering them different. [Regarding *subjects*,] baptism [is] administered to Jews and Gentiles, to male and female, and to adult persons only—not so circumcision. The *use* of circumcision was to distinguish the natural seed of Abraham from others; [the use of] baptism is the badge of the spiritual seed of Christ and “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1Pe 3:21), and represents the sufferings, burial, and resurrection of Christ. [Regarding *manner* of administering,] the one is by blood, the other by water. [They are] ordinances so much differing in their subjects, use, and administration [that] the one can never be thought to come in the room and place of the other. Besides, baptism was in use and force before circumcision was abolished, which was not until the death of Christ; whereas the doctrine of baptism was preached and the ordinance itself administered some years before that. Now, that which was in force before another is out of date can never with any propriety² be said to succeed or come in the room of that other. Besides, if this was the case, as circumcision gave a right to the Passover, so would baptism to the Lord’s Supper—which yet is not admitted.³

b. New Testament passages

Now, as there is nothing to be gathered out of the Old Testament to countenance infant baptism, so neither are there any passages in the New that can be supported in favor of it.

1) Acts 2:39

It cannot be supported by the text in Acts 2:39: “The promise is unto you and to your children,” etc. It is pretended that this refers to the covenant made with Abraham, and to a covenant promise made to him giving his infant children a right to the ordinance of circumcision. [This] is urged [by] the Jews as a reason why they and their children ought to be baptized; and [by] the Gentiles why they and theirs should be also when called into a church state. But,

a) There is not the least mention made in the text of Abraham’s covenant, or of any promise made to him giving his infant seed a right to circumcision, and still

¹ **succeed** – follow and take the place of.

² **propriety** – fitness; appropriateness.

³ Gill lists repentance and faith, in addition to baptism, as qualifications for a person to partake.

“None but penitent sinners, and true believers, and those baptized, upon a profession of their repentance and faith, are to be allowed to communicate at this ordinance” of the Lord’s Supper (*Body of Divinity*, Vol. 2, “Of the Lord’s Supper,” 658).

less to baptism. Nor is there the least syllable of infant baptism, nor any hint of it, from whence it can be concluded. Nor by “children” are infants designed, but the posterity of the Jews, who are frequently called [God’s children] in Scripture [even] though grown up. And unless it be so understood in many places, strange interpretations must be given of them. Wherefore, the argument from hence for paedobaptism is given up by some learned men, as Dr. Hammond¹ and others, as inconclusive.

b) The promise here, be it what it may, is observed not as giving a right or claim to any ordinance; but as an encouraging motive to persons in distress under a sense of sin: to repent of it, declare their repentance, and yield a voluntary subjection to the ordinance of baptism—when they might hope that remission of sins would be applied to them and they should receive a larger measure of the grace of the Spirit. Wherefore, repentance and baptism are urged in order to the enjoyment of the promise; and consequently must be understood of adult persons, who only are capable of repentance and of a voluntary subjection to baptism.

c) The promise is no other than the promise of life and salvation by Christ, and of remission of sins by His blood, and of an increase of grace from His Spirit. The persons addressed had imprecated² the guilt of the blood of Christ [that] they had shed upon their posterity as well as on themselves—which distressed them. [Therefore,] they are told, for their relief, that the same promise would be made good to their posterity also, provided they did as they were directed to do. [The promise would be] even to all the Jews afar off, in distant countries and future ages, who should look on Christ and mourn, repent and believe, and be baptized. [Therefore,] seeing the Gentiles are sometimes described as those “afar off,” the promise may be thought to reach to them who should be called by grace, repent, believe, and be baptized also. But no mention is made of their children. Had they been mentioned, the limiting clause, “Even as many as the Lord our God *shall call*,” plainly points at and describes the persons intended, whether Jews or Gentiles, effectually called by grace, who are encouraged by the motive in the promise to profess repentance and submit to baptism. [This] can only be understood of adult persons and not of infants.

2) Romans 11:16

Nor [can] Romans 11:16 [be used in favor of infant baptism]: “If the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.” For,

a) By the first fruits, and lump, and by the root and branches, are not meant Abraham and his posterity (or natural seed) as such; but the first among the Jews

¹ **Henry Hammond** (1605-1660) – English Anglican churchman who supported the Royalist cause during the English Civil War. Born at Chertsey, Surrey.

² **imprecated** – called down as a curse.

who believed in Christ and laid the first foundation of a gospel church state,¹ and were first incorporated into it. [These,] being holy, were a pledge of the future conversion and holiness of that people in the latter day.

b) By the good olive tree, after mentioned, is not meant the Jewish church state,² which was abolished by Christ with all the peculiar ordinances of it. The believing Gentiles were never engrafted into it; the axe has been laid to the root of that old Jewish stock and it is entirely cut down, and no graft is made into it. But,

c) By “firstfruits,” etc., is meant the gospel church state, in its first foundation, consisting of Jews that believed, out of which were left the Jews who believed not in Christ and who are the branches broken off. Into [this] church state the Gentiles were received and engrafted. [This] grafting, or coalition, was first made at Antioch when, and hereafter, the Gentiles partook of the root and fatness of the olive tree, enjoyed the same privileges, communicated in the same ordinances, and were satisfied with the goodness and fatness of the house of God.

This gospel church may be truly called, by the converted Jews in the latter day, their “own olive tree,” into which they will be engrafted. [This is because] the first gospel church was set up at Jerusalem and gathered out of the Jews. And [the same] in other places: the first gospel churches consisted of Jews, the first fruits of those converted ones. From the whole it appears that there is not the least syllable about baptism, much less of infant baptism, in the passage; nor can anything be concluded from hence in favor of it.

3) *1 Corinthians 7:14*

Nor [can support for infant baptism be gleaned] from 1 Corinthians 7:14, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.” [This] is understood by some of a federal³ holiness, giving a claim to covenant privileges—and so to baptism. But,

a) It should be told what these covenant privileges are, since, as we have seen, covenant interest gives no right to any ordinance without divine direction, nor is baptism a seal of the covenant. It should be told what this “covenant holiness” is, whether imaginary or real.

By some it is called “reputed” [holiness], and is distinguished from internal holiness, which is rejected from being the sense of the text. But such holiness can never qualify persons for a New Testament ordinance. Nor has the covenant of grace any such holiness belonging to it. [The covenant of grace] provides real holiness by way

¹ **gospel church state** – condition of being churches of Christ.

² **Jewish church state** – the Jews’ condition of being a congregation or “church” of God; Old Testament Israel.

³ **federal** – covenantal.

of promise—signified by putting the laws of God in the heart, by giving new hearts and new spirits, and by cleansing from all impurity. [It] designs real internal holiness shown in a holy conversation.¹ Such who appear to have that, have an undoubted right to the ordinance of baptism, since they have received the Spirit as a Spirit of sanctification (Act 10:47). But this cannot be meant in the text, seeing,

b) “Now they are holy.” [This] is such a holiness as heathens may have; unbelieving husbands and wives are said to have it in virtue of their relation to believing wives and husbands. And [this] is prior to the holiness of their children—on [such holiness of the parents, this holiness of the children] depends. [Now,] surely such [unbelieving spouses] will not be allowed to have federal holiness, and yet it must be of the same kind with their children. If the holiness of the children is a federal holiness, that of the unbelieving parent must be so too, from whence is the holiness of the children.

c) If children, by virtue of this holiness, have claim to baptism, then much more their unbelieving parents, since they are sanctified before them by their believing yoke-fellows,² and are as near to them as their children. If the holiness of the one gives a right to baptism, why not the holiness of the other? Yet the one are baptized and the other not, though sanctified, whose holiness is the more near³—for the holiness spoken of, be it what it may, is derived from both parents, believing and unbelieving. Yea, the holiness of the children depends upon the sanctification of the unbelieving parent, for if the unbeliever is not sanctified, the children are unclean and not holy. But,

d) These words are to be understood of matrimonial holiness, even of the very act of marriage, which, in the language of the Jews, is frequently expressed by being sanctified. The [Hebrew] word שרק, “to sanctify,” is used in innumerable places in the Jewish Writings⁴ as “to espouse.” And in the same sense the apostle uses the [Greek] word ἀγαζω here: the words may be rendered, “the unbelieving husband is espoused [or married] to the wife”—or rather, “has been espoused,” for it relates to the act of marriage past as valid: “and the unbelieving wife has been espoused to the husband.”

The preposition ἐν, translated “by,” should be rendered “to” as it is in the very next verse: “God hath called us *to* peace (ἐν εἰρήνῃ).” The apostle’s inference from it is, “else were your children unclean [i.e., illegitimate if their parents were not lawfully espoused and married to each other] but now are they holy”—a holy and

¹ **conversation** – lifestyle.

² **yoke-fellows** – spouses, taken from two oxen yoked together when plowing a field.

³ **holiness is the more near** – Spouses are more closely related to each other than to their children, as evidenced by the creation order and the right of inheritance.

⁴ See my exposition of 1 Corinthians 7:14.—*Gill*

legitimate seed, as in Ezra 9:2 (*see also* Mal 2:15). No other sense can be put upon the words than of a legitimate marriage and offspring; nothing else will suit with the case proposed to the apostle, and with his answer to it and reasoning about it. [This] sense has been allowed by many learned interpreters, ancient and modern, as Jerome, Ambrose, Erasmus, Camerarius, Musculus, and others.¹

D. Objections to Adult Baptism Answered

There are some objections made to the practice of adult baptism, which are of little force and to which an answer may easily be returned.

1. *Adults Not Mentioned as the Only Ones*

Though it may be allowed that adult persons such as repent and believe are the subjects of baptism, yet it is nowhere said that they are the only ones.

But if no others can be named as baptized, and the descriptive characters given in Scripture of baptized persons are such as can “only” agree with adults and not with infants, then it may be reasonably concluded that the former [ones] “only” are the proper subjects of baptism.

2. *Adult Offspring of Christians*

It is objected to our practice of baptizing the adult offspring of Christians that no scriptural instance of such a practice can be given; and it is demanded of us to give an instance agreeable to our practice, since the first persons baptized were such as were converted either from Judaism or from heathenism—and about the baptism of such adults, they say, there is no controversy.

But our practice is not at all concerned with the parents of the persons baptized by us—whether they be Christians, Jews, Turks, or pagans—but with the persons themselves, whether they are believers in Christ or not. If they are the adult offspring of Christians, yet unbaptized, it is no objection to us. And if they are not, it is no bar in the way of admitting them to baptism, if they themselves are believers. Many, and it may be the greater part, of such baptized by us are the adult offspring of those who, without breach of charity, cannot be considered as Christians.

As for the first persons that were baptized, they were neither proselytes from Judaism nor from heathenism, but the offspring of Christians (of such that believed in the Messiah).² The saints before the coming of Christ, and at His coming, were as

¹ **Jerome** (ca. 347-420) – biblical scholar and translator of the Latin Vulgate.

Ambrose (c. 339-397) – Bishop of Milan, early church theologian.

Erasmus (c. 1466-1536) – Roman Catholic theologian, leading biblical scholar.

Camerarius (1500-1574) – German scholar; helped write the Augsburg Confession.

Musculus (1497-1563) – German Reformed theologian during the Reformation.

² **Christians** – Though some might argue against his bold use of the term *Christian* to describe Jewish believers before Christ and at the time of His life on earth, Gill’s basic point is clear: Israel-

good Christians as any that have lived since, so that if any should affirm good men—those who lived before Abraham as far back as to the first man, and those that lived after him even to the coming of Christ—to be Christians, though not in name yet in reality, he would not say amiss, as Eusebius observes.¹ Judaism, at the time of Christ’s coming, was the same with Christianity and not in opposition to it; so that there was no such thing as conversion from Judaism to Christianity. Zachariah and Elizabeth, of whom John the first baptizer was offspring, and Mary, the mother of our Lord, who was baptized by John when an adult, were as good Christians as have been since—and as strong believers in Jesus as the Messiah as soon as [He was] born, and even when in the womb of the Virgin. Surely these must be allowed to be the adult offspring of Christians. Such were the apostles of Christ and the first followers of Him, who were the adult offspring of such who believed in the Messiah and embraced Him upon the first notice of Him. [These] cannot be said to be converted from Judaism to Christianity.

Judaism did not exist until the opposition to Jesus being the Messiah became general and national. After that, indeed, those of the Jewish nation who believed in Christ may be said to be proselytes from Judaism to Christianity, as the apostle Paul and others. And so, converts made by the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles were proselytes from heathenism to Christianity. But then it is unreasonable to demand of us instances of the adult offspring of such being baptized and added to the churches, since the scriptural history of the first churches contained in the Acts of the Apostles only gives an account of the first planting of these churches, and of the baptism of those of which they first consisted, but not of the additions of members to them in later times. Wherefore, to give instances of those who were born of them—and brought up by them—as baptized in adult years, cannot reasonably be required of us. But on the other hand, if infant children were admitted to baptism in these times upon the faith and baptism of their parents and their becoming Christians, it is strange—exceeding strange—that among the many thousands baptized in Jerusalem, Samaria, Corinth, and other places, that there should be no one instance of any of them bringing their children with them to be baptized, and claiming the privilege of baptism for them upon their own faith; nor of their doing this in any short time after. This is a case that required no length of time, and yet not a single instance can be produced.

ites who were expecting the Messiah by faith should not be seen as embracing a different “religion” from Christians.

¹ *Ecclesiastical History*, 50:1. c. 4.—*Gill*

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-c. 339) – theologian, church historian, and scholar.

3. *Infants Cast Out of the Covenant*

It is objected that no time can be assigned when infants were cast out of covenant or cut off from the seal of it.

If by “the covenant” is meant the covenant of grace, it should be first proved that they are in it as the natural seed of believers, which cannot be done—and when [it] is, [then] it is time enough to talk of their being cast out, when and how. If by “the covenant” is meant Abraham’s covenant, the covenant of circumcision, the answer is [that] the cutting off was when circumcision ceased to be an ordinance of God, which was at the death of Christ. If by “the covenant” is meant the national covenant of the Jews, [then] the ejection of Jewish parents—with their children—was when God wrote a “Loammi”¹ upon that people as a political and ecclesiastical² body; when He broke His covenant with them, signified by breaking His two staffs, Beauty and Bands (Zec 7:6-17).

4. *Gospel Dispensation Less than the Law*

A clamorous outcry is made against us as abridging³ the privileges of infants by denying baptism to them; making them to be lesser under the gospel dispensation⁴ than under the Law, and [making] the gospel dispensation less glorious.

But as to the gospel dispensation, it is the more glorious for infants being left out of its church state; that is, for its being not national and carnal⁵ as before, but congregational and spiritual—consisting not of infants without understanding, but of rational and spiritual men, believers in Christ. And these [are] not of a single country, as Judea, but in all parts of the world. As for infants, their privileges now are many and better [because they] are eased from the painful rite of circumcision. It is a rich mercy and a glorious privilege of the gospel that the believing Jews and their children are delivered from [circumcision], and that the Gentiles and their [children] are not obliged to it. [This is because it] would have bound them over to fulfil the whole Law. To [this] may be added that being born of Christian parents, and having a Christian education and opportunities of hearing the gospel as they grow up—and that not in one country only but in many—are greater privileges than the Jewish children had under the former dispensation.

¹ “Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are *not my people*, and I will not be your God” (Hos 1:9).

² **ecclesiastical** – Israel as God’s congregation (Greek *ekklesia*: congregation or church).

³ **abridging** – diminishing.

⁴ **gospel dispensation** – New Covenant, as set apart from the Law, or Old Covenant.

⁵ **carnal** – natural; of physical descent.

5. *No Express Commands for Other Practices*

It is objected that there are no more express commands in Scripture for keeping the first day of the week as a Sabbath, nor for women partaking of the Lord's Supper, and other things, than for the baptism of infants.

As for the first, though there is no express precept for the observance of it, yet there are precedents of its being observed for religious services (Act 20:7; 1Co 16:1-2). And though we have no example of infant baptism, yet if there were scriptural precedents of it, we should think ourselves obliged to follow them. As for women's right to partake of the Lord's Supper, we have sufficient proof of it since these were baptized as well as men; and having a right to one ordinance, [they also] had [such a right] to another. [In addition, they] were members of the first church, [and] communicated with it, and women as well as men were added to it (Act 8:12; 1:14; 5:1, 14). [And] we have a precept for it: "Let a man [*ανθρωπος*, a word common to both genders, and equally signifying man and woman] examine himself [or herself], and so let him [or her] eat" (1Co 11:29; see Gal 3:28).

We also have examples of it in Mary the mother of our Lord and [in] other women who, with the disciples, constituted the gospel church at Jerusalem. As they continued with one accord in the apostles' doctrine and in prayer, so [they also continued] in fellowship and in *breaking of bread* [partaking of the Lord's Supper] (Act 2:42). Let the same proof be given of the baptism of infants, and it will be admitted!

6. *Antiquity*

Antiquity is urged in favor of infant baptism. It is pretended that this is a tradition of the church received from the apostles.

[However,] no other proof is given of this but the testimony of Origen, and none before that—and [Origen's testimony] is taken not from any of his genuine Greek writings, [but] only from some Latin translations, [which are] confessedly interpolated¹ and so corrupted that it is owned that one is at a loss to find Origen in Origen! No mention is made of this practice in the first two centuries, no instance given of it until the third, when Tertullian² is the first who spoke of it and, at the same time, spoke against it!³ And could [the argument] be carried up higher,⁴ it would be of no force unless it could be proved from the sacred Scriptures, to which only we appeal, and by which the thing in debate is to be judged and determined.

¹ **interpolated** – changed by insertion of new material.

² **Tertullian** (AD c. 160-225) – early Christian theologian from Carthage, Africa.

³ See my Treatises, *The Argument from Apostolic Tradition in Favor of Infant Baptism, Considered, and Antipaedobaptism, or Infant Baptism, an Innovation*, with others.—Gill

⁴ **carried up higher** – earlier instances found closer to the first century.

We know that innovations and corruptions very early obtained,¹ even in the times of the apostles. And, what is pretended to be near those times is the more to be suspected as the traditions of the false apostles—the antiquity of a custom is no proof of the truth and genuineness of it. “The customs of the people are vain” (Jer 10:3).

IV. Manner of the Ordinance

I proceed to consider the way and manner of baptizing; and to prove that it is by immersion: plunging the body in water and covering it with it.

In this controversy, custom and the common use of writing have so far prevailed that, for the most part, immersion is usually called the “mode” of baptism, whereas it is properly baptism itself. To say that immersion or dipping is the mode of baptism is the same thing as to say that dipping is the mode of dipping! As Sir John Floyer observes, “Immersion is no circumstance [of baptism], but the very act of baptism used by our Savior and His disciples in the institution of baptism.”² And Calvin expressly says, “The word *baptizing* signifies ‘to plunge’; and it is certain that the rite of plunging was used by the ancient churches.”³ And as for sprinkling, that cannot, with any propriety, be called a mode of baptism: it would be just such good sense as to say, “Sprinkling is the mode of dipping,” since baptism and dipping are the same. Hence the learned Selden⁴—who in the former part of his life might have seen infants dipped in fonts, but lived to see immersion much disused—had reason to say, “In England of late years, I ever thought the parson baptized his own fingers rather than the child,” because he dipped the one and sprinkled the other.

That baptism is immersion, or the dipping of a person in water and covering him with it, is to be proved [as follows.]

A. The Meaning of the Word Itself

[First, that baptism is immersion is to be proved] from the proper and primary signification of the word βαπτίζω, “baptize,” which in its first and primary sense signifies to “dip or plunge into.” It is rendered [so] by our best lexicographers:⁵ a) “mergo, immergo,” to dip or plunge into; and b) in a secondary and consequential sense, “abluo, lavo,” to wash, because what is dipped is washed, there being no

¹ **obtained** – came into effect.

² “Essay to Restore the Dipping of Infants in Baptism,” 1722, p. 44.—*Gill*

Sir John Floyer (1649-1734) – English physician and author. Born near Lichfield, Staffordshire; educated at Oxford. He wrote medical articles and some theological works.

³ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*; 50:4. c. 15. s. 19.—*Gill*

⁴ *Opera*, vol. 6. col. 2008.—*Gill*

John Selden (1584-1654) – English jurist and scholar. He wrote about England’s ancient laws and constitution, and Jewish law. He was known as a great scholar in several fields.

⁵ **lexicographers** – writers of dictionaries (*lexicon*: dictionary).

proper washing but by dipping; c) but never “perfundo” or “aspergo,” to pour or sprinkle. [It is thus so in] the lexicon published by Constantine, Budaeus, etc., and those of Hadrian Junius, Plantinus, Scapula, Stephens, Schrevelius, Stockius, and others—besides a great number of critics, as Beza, Casanbon, Witsius, etc., which might be produced. By [these] united testimonies, the thing is out of question. Had our translators, instead of adopting the Greek word *baptize* in all places where the ordinance of baptism is made mention of, truly translated it, and not have left it untranslated as they have,¹ the controversy about the manner of baptizing would have been at an end—or rather, have been prevented. Had they used the word *dip*, instead of *baptize*, as they should have done, there would have been no room for a question about it.

B. Places Chosen for Baptism

That baptism was performed by immersion appears by the places chosen for the administration of it, as the river Jordan by John, where he baptized many and where our Lord Himself was baptized by him (Mat 3:6, 13, 16). But why should he choose the river to baptize in, and baptize in it, if he did not administer the ordinance by immersion? Had it been done any other way, there was no occasion² for any confluence of water, much less a river—a basin of water would have sufficed.³ John also, it is said, “was baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, because there was much water” (Joh 3:23), which was convenient for baptism—for which this reason is given, and not for convenience for drink for men and their cattle, which is not expressed nor implied. From whence we may gather, as Calvin on the text does, “that baptism was performed by John and Christ, by plunging the whole body under water”; and so [wrote] Piscator, Aretius, Grotius,⁴ and others on the same passage.

¹ The English word *baptize* is from the Greek word *baptizo*, and is an example of “transliteration,” where instead of translating a foreign word with words in the new language to represent the meaning, a foreign word is taken directly into another language by substituting the equivalent letters or sounds of the new language.

² **occasion** – need.

³ Some represent the river Jordan, from Sandys’s account of it, as if it were a shallow river and insufficient for immersion. But what Sandys says of it is only that it was not navigably deep, not above eight fathoms broad, nor, except by accident, heady (*Travels*, b. 3: p. 110. ed. 5). But Mr. Maundrel says for its breadth it might be about twenty yards over, and in depth it far exceeded his height (*Journey from Aleppo*, etc., p. 83. ed. 7. vid. *Reland. de Palestina*, 50:1. p. 278; and *Adamnan. in ib*). Therefore, [it] must be sufficient for immersion. And Strabo speaks of ships of burden sailing through Jordan (*Geograph.* 50:16. p. 519). It was a river to swim in and navigable according to the Jewish writers (see Gill on Matthew 3:5).—*Gill*

⁴ **Johannes Piscator** (1546-1625) – German Reformed theologian, known as a Bible translator and textbook writer.

Benedictus Aretius (1505-1574) – Swiss Protestant theologian, Protestant reformer,

C. Circumstances Recorded in Scripture

That this was the way in which it was anciently administered is clear from various instances of baptism recorded in Scripture and the circumstances attending them; as that of our Lord, of Whom it is said, “when he was baptized, [he] went up straightway out of the water,” which supposes He had been *in* it. [In the same way,] Piscator infers from His going up out of it that, therefore, He went down into it and was baptized in the river itself. Of which going down, there would have been no need had the ordinance been administered to Him in another way, as by sprinkling or pouring a little water on His head [with] He and John standing in the midst of the river, as the painter and engraver ridiculously describe it. [So] certain it is [that] He was then baptized in Jordan, the evangelist Mark says “into Jordan” (Mar 1:9), not at the banks of Jordan but into the waters of it—for which reason He went into it, and when baptized “came up out” of it.¹

The baptism of the eunuch is another instance of baptism by immersion (Act 8:26-40)—when he and Philip were come “unto a certain water,” that is, to the water side. [This] destroys a little piece of criticism: as if their going into the water, after expressed, was no other than going to the brink of the water (to the water side), whereas they were come to that before! And, baptism being agreed upon, “they went down both into the water,” both Philip and the eunuch, “and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water,” etc. Now, we do not reason merely from the circumstances of going down into and coming up out of the water—we know that persons may go down into water and come up out of it, and never be immersed in it. But when it is expressly said, upon these persons going down into the water, that Philip baptized, or dipped, the eunuch; and when this was done that both came up out of it—these circumstances strongly corroborate, without the explanation of the word “baptized,” that it was performed by immersion. These circumstances cannot agree with any other way of administering it but that; for a man can hardly be thought to be in his senses who can imagine that Philip went down with the eunuch into the water to sprinkle or pour a little water on him, and then gravely² come out of it.

and natural philosopher.

Hugo Grotius (Hugo de Groot) (1583-1645) – Dutch jurist and part-time theologian.

¹ Not “from” it but “out” of it; *απο* and *εξ* signifying the same, as in Luke 4:35, 41. So the preposition is used in the Septuagint version, [the Greek translation of the Old Testament,] of Psalm 40:2. *Εξ* and *απο* are “equipollent” [equal in power or effect; equivalent], as several lexicographers from Xenophon observe.—*Gill*

Xenophon (c. 430-354 BC), Greek historian and student of Socrates whose works have been used to understand New Testament Greek usage.

² **gravely** – soberly.

Hence, as the above learned commentator Calvin says on the text, “Here we plainly see what was the manner of baptizing with the ancients, for they plunged the whole body into the water; [but] now, custom obtaining, that the minister only sprinkles the body or the head.” So Barnabas,¹ an apostolic writer of the first century who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as a companion of the apostle Paul, describes baptism by going down into and by coming up out of the water. “We descend,” says he, “into the water full of sin and filth; and we ascend bringing forth fruit in the heart, having fear and hope in Jesus through the Spirit.”

D. The Purpose of Baptism

The end² of baptism, which is to represent the burial of Christ, cannot be answered in any other way than by immersion, or covering the body in water. That baptism is an emblem³ of the burial of Christ is clear from Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12. It would be endless to quote the great number, even of “paedobaptist” writers, who ingenuously acknowledge that the allusion in these passages is to the ancient rite by immersion. As none but such who are dead are buried, so none but such who are dead to sin—and to the Law by the body of Christ, or who profess to be so—are to be buried in and by baptism, or to be baptized. As none can be properly said to be buried unless underground and covered with earth, so none can be said to be baptized but such who are put under water and covered with it. Nothing short of this can be a representation of the burial of Christ and of ours with Him—not sprinkling or pouring a little water on the face, for a corpse cannot be said to be buried when only a little earth or dust is sprinkled or poured on it.

E. Scriptural Figures and Types of Baptism

[That baptism by immersion is the scriptural pattern] may be concluded from the various figurative and typical baptisms spoken of in Scripture. As,

1. *From the waters of the flood*, which Tertullian⁴ calls the “baptism of the world,” and of which the apostle Peter makes baptism the antitype⁵ (1Pe 3:20-21). The ark in which Noah and his family were saved by water was God’s ordinance; it was made according to the pattern He gave to Noah, as baptism is. As [the ark] was the object of the scorn of men, so is the ordinance of baptism [when it is] rightly administered. As [the ark] represented a burial when Noah and his family were shut up in it, so baptism. And when the fountains of the great deep were broken up below and the windows of heaven were opened above, the ark, with those in it, were cov-

¹ *Ep.* c. 9. p. 235; ed. Voss.—*Gill*

² **end** – purpose; intention.

³ **emblem** – symbol.

⁴ *De Baptismo*, c. 8.—*Gill*

⁵ **antitype** – fulfilment of a type; what was represented by a type or symbol.

ered with and immersed in water, as it were. And so [it] was a figure of baptism by immersion. And, as there were none but adult persons in the ark who were saved by water, so none but adult persons are the proper subjects of water baptism. Though there were few who were in the ark, it was attended with a salutary¹ effect to them: they were saved by water. So such who truly believe in Christ, and are baptized, shall be saved,² and that “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 3:21), which was typified by the coming of Noah and his family out of the ark—to which baptism corresponds as the antitype, being an emblem of the same (Rom 6:4-5; Col 2:12).

2. *From the passage of the Israelites under the cloud and through the sea*, when they were said to be “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1Co 10:1-2). There are various things in this account that agree with baptism. This was following Moses, who directed them into the sea and went before them; so baptism is a following Christ, Who has set an example to tread in His steps. And as the Israelites were baptized into Moses, so believers are baptized into Christ and put Him on (Eph 4:22-24). And, this passage of theirs was after their coming out of Egypt and at the beginning of their journey through the wilderness to Canaan; so baptism is administered to believers at their first coming out of darkness and bondage worse than Egyptian, and when they first enter on their Christian pilgrimage. And as joy followed upon the former (“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel,” etc.; Exo 15:1), so it often follows upon the latter: the eunuch, after baptism, went on his way rejoicing (Act 8:39).

But chiefly this passage was a figure of baptism by immersion. As the Israelites were “under the cloud,” and so under water and covered with it as persons baptized by immersion are, “and passed through the sea,” [which was] standing up as a wall on both sides of them, with the cloud over them, thus they were surrounded as persons immersed in water and so said to be “baptized.” Thus Grotius remarks upon the passage.

3. *From the various washings, bathings, or baptisms of the Jews*, [which are] called “various” because of the different persons and things washed or dipped, as the same Grotius observes. [The washings are not called “various”] because of different *sorts* of washing, for there is but one way of washing, and that is by dipping. What has a little water only sprinkled or poured on it cannot be said to be washed. The Jews had their sprinklings—which were distinct from washings or bathings, which

¹ **salutary** – beneficial.

² Gill is not asserting that the lost are saved by their baptism, as some profess based on Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Gill’s own commentary on that verse says, “Faith must precede baptism, as these words of Christ, and Scripture examples show; and such as have it [i.e., faith] ought to make a profession of it and be baptized—in which way it is that faith discovers itself and works by love to Christ; namely, in observing His commands, and this among the rest.” (*Exposition of the New Testament*, Mar 16:16)

were always performed by immersion. It is a rule with them that “wherever in the law washing of the flesh, or of the clothes, is mentioned, it means nothing else than “the dipping of the whole body” in a laver—for, according to them, if any man dips himself all over except the tip of his little finger, he is still in his uncleanness.”¹

4. *From the sufferings of Christ* being called a baptism: “I have a baptism to be baptized with,” etc. (Luk 12:50). [This is] not water baptism, nor the baptism of the Spirit, with both of which He had been baptized. But [it refers to] the baptism of His sufferings yet to come, [which] He was desirous of. These are called so in allusion to baptism as it is an immersion, and is expressive of the abundance of them, sometimes signified by deep waters and floods of waters. And Christ is represented as plunged into them, covered and overwhelmed with them (Psa 62:7; 69:1-2).

5. *From the extraordinary donation of the Holy Spirit*, and His gifts unto, and His descent upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, which is called “baptizing” (Act 1:5; 2:1-2), expressive of the very great abundance of [those gifts] in allusion to baptism or dipping, in a proper sense, as the learned Casaubon² observes, “Regard is had in this place to the proper signification of the word βαπτίζειν, to immerse or dip. In this sense the apostles are truly said to be baptized, for the house in which this was done was *filled* with the Holy Ghost, so that the apostles seemed to be plunged into it as into some pool.” All which typical and figurative baptisms serve to strengthen the proper sense of the word, as it signifies an immersion and dipping the body into and covering it in water, which only can support the figure used.

Nor is this sense of the word to be set aside or weakened by the use of it in Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38. In the former it is said, “Except they wash [βαπτίζονται, ‘baptize or dip’ themselves], they eat not”; and in it mention is made of βαπτισμων, “washings or dippings” of cups and pots, of brazen vessels, and of tables or beds. In the latter [instance], the Pharisee is said to marvel at Christ that He had not first εβαπτισθη, “washed [or dipped] before dinner.”

All [this] agrees with the superstitious traditions of the elders here referred to, which enjoined dipping in all the cases and instances spoken of, and so serve but the more to confirm the sense of the word contended for. The Pharisees, upon touching the common people or their clothes as they returned from market or from any court of judicature, were obliged to immerse themselves in water before they ate, and so the Samaritan Jews.³ “If the Pharisees,” says Maimonides,¹ “touched but the

¹ Maimonides, *Hilchot Mikvaot*, c. 1. s. 2.—*Gill*

² In Acts 1:5.—*Gill*

Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614) – classical scholar and philologist, first in France and then in England, regarded by many of his time as the most learned man in Europe. His son Méric Casaubon was also a classical scholar.

³ *Epiph. contra Haeres.* 50:1. Haeres. 9.

garments of the common people, they were defiled all one as if they had touched a profluvius² person, and needed immersion” (were obliged to it). Scaliger³ observes from the Jews that “the more superstitious part of them, every day, before they sat down to meat, dipped the whole body; hence the Pharisees’ admiration⁴ at Christ” (Luk 11:38). And not only cups, pots, and brazen vessels were washed by dipping—or putting them into water, in which way unclean vessels were washed according to the Law (Lev 11:32)—but even beds, pillows, and bolsters, unclean in a ceremonial sense, were washed in this way according to the traditions of the elders referred to. They say, “A bed that is wholly defiled, if a man ‘dips’ it part by part, it is pure.”⁵ Again, “If he ‘dips the bed’ in [a pool of water], though its feet are plunged into the thick clay [at the bottom of the pool], it is clean.”⁶ And as for pillows and bolsters, thus they say, “A pillow or a bolster of skin,⁷ when a man lifts up the mouth of them out of the water, the water which is in them will be drawn; what must be done? He must ‘dip’ them, and lift them up by their fringes.”⁸ Thus, according to these traditions, the various things mentioned were washed by immersion; and instead of weakening, [they] strengthen the sense of the word pleaded for.

F. Objections against Baptism by Immersion

The objections against baptism as immersion, taken from some instances of baptism recorded in Scripture, are of no force.

1. [Such is] that of *the three thousand* in Acts 2, [where it is asserted that immersion of all was not possible] with respect to their number. It may be observed that though these were added to the church in one and the same day, it does not follow that they were baptized in one day. But be it that they were, there were twelve apostles to administer the ordinance, and it was but two hundred and fifty persons apiece. And besides, there were seventy disciples [who could be] administrators of it; and supposing them employed, it will reduce the number to thirty-seven persons each. And the difference between dipping and sprinkling is very inconsiderable,

¹ In *Misn. Chagigah*, c. 2. s. 7.—*Gill*

Maimonides (c. 1135-1204) – medieval Sephardic Jewish philosopher; one of the most influential Torah scholars of the Middle Ages.

² **profluvius** – having a large discharge of bodily fluids from severe accident or illness.

³ *De Emend. Temp.* 50:6. p. 771.—*Gill*

Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609) – French religious leader and scholar, known for expanding classical history from Greek and ancient Roman history to include Persian, Babylonian, Jewish, and ancient Egyptian history.

⁴ **admiration** – surprise.

⁵ Maimonides, *Hilchot Celim*. c. 26. s. 14.—*Gill*

⁶ *Misn. Mikvaot*. c. 7. s. 7.—*Gill*

⁷ **bolster of skin** – pillow, cushion, or pad made with an outer cover of animal skin.

⁸ *Ibid.* s. 6.—*Gill*

since the same form of words is used in the one way as in the other. Therefore, it might be done in one day, and in a small part of it too.¹

Nor [can the case be made] with respect to convenience for the administration of it, as [that there were not] water and places of [water] sufficient to baptize in. Here can be no objection when it is observed what number of private baths were in Jerusalem for ceremonial uncleanness, the many pools in the city, and the various apartments and things in the Temple fit for such a use—[such] as the dipping room for the high priest, the molten sea for the common priests, and the ten brazen lavers, each of which held forty baths² of water sufficient for the immersion of the whole body—all which they might be allowed the use of as they were of the Temple, they “having favor with all the people” (Act 2:47).

[Nor can the case be made] with respect to clothes and change of garments: it was only everyone’s providing and bringing change of raiment for himself.

2. Another instance objected to is that of *the baptism of Saul* (Act 9:18), supposed to be done in the house where he was. But that does not necessarily follow, but rather the contrary: since he “arose” from the place where he was in order to be baptized. And admitting it was done in the house, it is highly probable there was a bath in the house in which it might be performed, since it was the house of a Jew, with whom it was usual to have baths to wash their whole bodies in on certain occasions. Had it been performed by sprinkling or pouring a little water on him, he needed not to have “arose” for that purpose. Besides, he was bid to “arise, and be baptized,” which would sound very oddly if rendered “be sprinkled” or “poured” (Act 22:16). [And,] he himself says that he, with others, were “buried by [or ‘in’] baptism” (Rom 6:4).

3. Another instance [objected to] is that of *the jailer and his household* (Act 16:33), in which account there is nothing that makes it improbable that it was done by immersion. It seems to be a clear case that the jailer, upon his conversion, took the apostles out of prison into his own house, where they preached to him and his family (Act 16:32). And after this, they went out of his house, and he and his were

¹ Ten thousand were baptized in one day by Austin the monk in the river Swale, if our historians are to be credited (Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, vol. 1, p. 154; Ranulph. *Poly-chron.* 50:5. c. 10). The twelve sons of Wolodomir, Grand Prince of Russia, with twenty thousand Russians in the 10th century were baptized in one day by a missionary of Photius the patriarch; and the ancient Russians would allow no person to be a Christian unless he had been dipped quite [completely] under water (Strahlenberg; *Histor. Geograph. Descript. of the Northern and Eastern Parts of Europe and Asia*, ch. 8; p. 283, 286. *Vid. Fabricii Lux Evangel.* p. 475). No doubt assistance was had in both instances; but these show what numbers may be baptized in a day.—*Gill*

² **forty baths** – Hebrew measure of liquid: one bath is about 22 liters or 5.75 US gallons; thus forty baths would be about 880 liters or 230 gallons.

baptized very probably in the river without¹ the city, where the oratory² was (Act 16:13); for it is certain that, after the baptism of him and his family, he brought the apostles into his house again and set meat before them (Act 16:33-34). Upon the whole, these instances fail of showing the improbability of baptism by immersion. [Rather, baptism by immersion] must appear clear and manifest to every attentive reader of his Bible, notwithstanding all that has been opposed unto it.

V. Form of the Ordinance

The next thing to be considered is the form in which this ordinance is to be administered, which is “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mat 28:19). [This verse] contains in it a proof of a Trinity of Persons in the unity of the divine essence, of the deity of each Person, and of their equality to and distinction from each other. It also shows that this ordinance is performed under the authority of all three, in which a person submitting to it expresses his faith in them, and invocation of them, and gives himself up to them—obliging himself to yield obedience to what they require of him, as well as putting himself under their care and protection.

This form is sometimes a little varied and otherwise expressed as sometimes only “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Act 8:16), which is a part of the form for the whole. [“In the name of the Lord Jesus”] includes in it the substance of the whole, and of Christian baptism, and everything relating to the person and offices of Christ, and His relation to and connection with the other two persons.

Cornelius and his family were ordered to be baptized “in the name of the Lord” (Act 10:48), that is, in the name of Jehovah: Father, Son, and Spirit. For in the New Testament κυριος, “Lord,” answers to Jehovah in the Old. The form of baptism in Matthew 28:19 is in the name of “the Father,” etc., which single name denotes the one deity, power, and substance of Father, Son, and Spirit—the equal dignity, co-eternal kingdom, and government in the three perfect Persons—as it is expressed in the synodical epistle of the general council at Constantinople.³

¹ **without** – outside.

² **oratory** – place for prayer or public worship.

³ *Apud. Theodorit. Eccl. Hist.* 50:5. c. 9. This form was first changed and corrupted by Mark the Heretic and his followers in the second century; who baptized into the name of the “unknown Father of all,” into “truth the mother of all,” into “him who descended on Jesus,” into “union and redemption, and communion of powers.” The same also first changed and corrupted the mode, taking a mixture of oil and water, poured it on the head, and then anointed with balsam. *Vid, Irenaeum adv. Haeres.* 50:1. c. 18.—*Gill*

VI. Ends and Uses of the Ordinance

[I proceed now to consider] the ends and uses for which baptism is appointed and which are answered by it.

1. One end of it, and a principal one as has been frequently hinted, is to represent the *sufferings, burial, and resurrection of Christ*—which is plainly and fully suggested in Romans 6:4-5 and Colossians 2:12. His sufferings are represented by going into the water and being overwhelmed in it. His burial [is represented] by a short continuance under it and being covered with it, and His resurrection by an emersion¹ out of it.

2. It was practiced both by John and by the apostles of Christ for the *remission of sins* (Mar 1:4; Act 2:38). Not that that is the procuring and meritorious cause of it, which only is the blood of Christ; but they who submit unto it may, by means of it, be led, directed, and encouraged to expect it from Christ. And so,

3. In like manner, it is for the *washing away of sin* and cleansing from it: “Arise, and be baptized, and wash thy sins” (Act 22:16). This is really done only by the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin. Baptism neither washes away original nor actual sin, it has no such virtue in it; but it is a means of directing to Christ the Lamb of God, Who, by His atoning blood and sacrifice, has purged and continues to take away the sins of men.

4. A salutary or *saving use and effect* is ascribed unto it: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.” Should it be asked how, and by what means, the answer follows: “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 3:21). That is, by leading the faith of the person baptized to Christ, as delivered for his offences and as risen again for his justification.

5. In the same passage it is said to be of this use and to serve this purpose: “The answer of a *good conscience* toward God.” A man who believes baptism to be an ordinance of God and submits to it as such discharges a good conscience, the consequence of which is joy and peace. Though “for” keeping the commands of God there is no reward, yet there *is* [a reward] “in” keeping them. And this is their reward: the testimony of a good conscience, for great peace have they which love God and keep His commandments (Psa 119:165).

6. Yielding obedience to this ordinance of Christ is an *evidence of love to God and Christ* (1Jo 5:3), and such who from a principle of love to Christ keep His commandments, may expect, according to His promise, to have fresh manifestations of His and His Father’s love, and to have communion with Father, Son, and Spirit (Joh 14:15, 21, 23). This is an end to be had in view in obedience to it, and a very encouraging one. ↪

¹ **emersion** – rising out of a fluid; opposite of immersion.