

Baptism 02: The Not So New, New Covenant

INTRODUCTION

1. One of the great challenges in the baptism debate is establishing the proper relationship between the testaments.
 - Everyone acknowledges infants and children were circumcised and part of the covenant community in the OT.
 - But those who reject infant or covenant baptism deny such is applicable in terms of the New Covenant today.
2. There is a hyper-distinction often made between the OT and NT, reflected in the priority given to NT Scriptures.
 - It *is* true we are “New Covenant” believers, and the NT Scriptures have particular relevance to our lives.
 - But the NT Scriptures are built upon the OT, and the New Covenant is established on promises that are very old.
3. The NC must be understood in relation to redemptive history to rightly form the doctrine of church and sacraments.

I. WHAT IS NEW ABOUT THE NEW COVENANT...AND WHAT ISN'T

A. What is New About the New Covenant?

1. There are many things that are “new” about the New Covenant.
 - The NC is “new” in relation to the “old,” Mosaic covenant. **Jer. 31:31-34; 2Cor. 3:4-18; Heb. 8:1-13**
 - The NC is the consummation of what was formerly only foreshadowed and typified.
2. The New Covenant is a greater covenant than the Mosaic system.
 - It is more inclusive, it has a perfect sacrifice, it has a perfect High Priest, and better promises.
 - Furthermore, the NC will never be ultimately broken or end, as the Mosaic covenant was and did.

B. What is Not New About the New Covenant?

1. Unfortunately, dispensationalism has promoted a radical separation between the two testaments.
 - The phenomenon of “NT Christianity” would be foreign to the first Christians. **Acts 23:6; 24:14**
 - Careful examination of the old/new covenantal contrast reveals it relates to Mosaic/NC, not OT/NT.
2. THE NEW COVENANT IS THE CONSUMMATION OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT
 - Paul is explicit: the New Covenant *is* the Abrahamic Covenant...fulfilled. **Gal. 3:6-9, 13-14, 17-18, 29**
 - The covenant promises made to Abraham were specifically Messianic and appear in the NC.
 - All families are blessed in Christ under the NC. **Gen. 12:2-3; 22:17-18; Acts 2:39; Rev. 7:9-10**
 - Even the land promise has a Messianic, NC aspect. **Gen. 12:7; Heb. 11:14-16; Mat. 5:3; 2Pe. 3:13**
 - Though the Mosaic covenant was related to the Abrahamic, it was ethnic, political, and temporary.
 - By contrast the Abrahamic is primarily redemptive and meant to bless *all* nations. (Gen. 22:18)
 - The Mosaic system was removed at the cross; the Abrahamic covenant endures. **Col. 2:13-17**
 - Jesus fulfills all the prior covenants, but the NC has a special relationship to Abraham. **Gal. 4:21-31**
 - If this is so, there is a strong argument to be made for placing the covenant sign on our children.
 - God’s promise in the covenants is to be God to believers & their offspring. **Gen. 17:7; Eph. 2:12**
3. THE NEW COVENANT INCLUDES EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL ADMINISTRATIONS
 - This is explicitly denied by Baptists who insist Jer. 31/Heb. 8 indicate every member is regenerate.
 - But the clear testimony of the NT shows some who are “in” the NC are not truly “of” the NC.
 - Some have been “visibly” connected to Christ, but are not savingly so. **Jn. 15:1-2, 6; cf. 1Jn. 2:19**
 - Some once enlightened and sanctified will fall away and be lost. **Heb. 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 2Pet. 2:1**
 - This does not mean some who are saved will be lost or that baptism truly connects one to Christ.
 - The *truly* saved (elect) are secure and forever saved in Christ. **Jn. 5:24; 6:37; 10:28-29; Rev. 17:8**
 - “...infants descending from parents, either both, or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are *in that respect* within the covenant, and to be baptized.” (WLC 166, emp. added)
 - There is both an external (visible) and internal (invisible) administration of the covenant. **Ro. 9:6**
 - The NC is redemptive, not ethnic, but has visible impurities until the Judgment. **Mat 13:36-43, 47-50**
4. THE NEW COVENANT IS MORE INCLUSIVE THAN THE MOSAIC COVENANT, NOT LESS
 - The NC clearly embraces *more* individuals than the Mosaic ever did. **Ac. 10:34-35; 11:15-18; Rev 14:6**
 - Men and women are baptized in the NC, whereas only men were marked in the OT. **Ac. 8:12**
 - Jewish Christians in the 1st century thought their children were still in covenant. **Ac. 21:20-21**
 - The entire trajectory of the NC is expansion & inclusion; why would children now be excluded?
 - If the NC excludes believers’ children, when did things change, and where is the explanation of it?
 - There is evident controversy in the early church over the Law of Moses, why not over this issue?
 - Our next study will examine the relationship of believers’ children and the church in more detail.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP OF CIRCUMCISION, BAPTISM, AND THE COVENANTS

A. The Connection Between Circumcision and Baptism

1. Baptism is the New Covenant fulfillment of the covenant sign of circumcision. **Col. 2:11-12**
 - Circumcision marked those set apart to God in the OT, just as baptism marks us today. **1Co. 12:13**
 - Though there are differences, the continuities and similarities appear undeniable. **Gal. 3:26-27; 5:2**
2. Most credobaptists relate circumcision primarily (or exclusively) to ethnic identity and physical blessing.
 - Circumcision was an ethnic marker, but it was always the sign of a spiritual promise. **Gen. 17:3-11**
 - Circumcision pointed to inward circumcision, just as baptism does. **Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Rom. 2:28-29**
 - Dispensational thinking mistakenly overemphasizes the physical/spiritual contrast in OT/NT.
“The cutting off of the foreskin of the procreative organ represented the violent removal of the inherently sinful nature of man. This same significance now is being applied to the initiation rite of baptism.”
—O. Palmer Robertson, *Christ and the Covenants* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), p. 163
3. Who was commanded to be circumcised? Abraham’s sons. Who are baptized? His children. **Gal. 3:26-29**
 - The covenant with Abraham is an everlasting one; it was never set aside as Moses’ was. **Gen. 17:7**
 - The promises were for a thousand generations; why not now? (cf. Deut. 7:9; 1Chr. 16:15; Psa. 105:8)

B. The Covenantal Significance of Baptism

1. The NT indicates the covenantal relationship of circumcision and baptism by their interchangeability.
 - Israel was *baptized* in the Red Sea; Christians are *circumcised* in Christ. **1Co. 10:1-4; Col. 2:11-12**
 - Paul clearly regarded the two signs to bear the same basic relationship to the people of God.
2. There are significant and extensive ways in which OT typology is fulfilled in baptism.
 - CREATION AND BAPTISM: Water, Spirit, and New Life (cf. Ge. 1:1-3; Matt. 3:13-17; Jn. 3:1-8)
 - Notice the repetition of water, Spirit, and new creation/beginning in each of these episodes.
 - Baptism unites the water-Spirit motif in symbolizing new creation. **Rom. 6:3-4; 2Cor. 5:17**
 - The Church’s experience of salvation parallels creation at many points. **2Cor. 4:6; Rev.21:9-27**
 - THE FLOOD AND BAPTISM: Water, Judgment, Deliverance (cf. Gen. 7-8; 1Pet. 3:18-22)
 - Notice the connections of water, Spirit/dove, new creation, and judgment/deliverance by water
 - Water was an instrument of judgment against sin and of justification for Noah. (cf. Heb. 11:7)
 - Noah’s safe passage through the flood demonstrated the grace of God shown to him. (Gen. 6:8)
 - THE RED SEA AND BAPTISM: Water, Judgment, Deliverance, Covenant (Ex. 14:1-31; 1Co. 10:1-4)
 - Notice the connections again of water as judgment and deliverance and the sign of the covenant
 - The cloud is associated with the Spirit’s presence. **Hag. 2:4-5; Isa. 63:11-14; Neh. 9:18-20**
 - Israel’s visible covenant with Yahweh under Moses was inaugurated by passing thru the water.
 - PURIFICATION RITES AND BAPTISM: Water, Cleansing, Forgiveness, Consecration
 - Historically in the Levitical system **Num. 19:17-19; Lev. 1:4-5; 16:14-19; cf. Psa. 51:7**
 - Prophetically in the OT **Ezek. 36:25-27; Isa. 1:16; 44:3; Zech. 13:1**
 - Eschatologically in the NT **Mark 1:2-5; Acts 2:37-39; 22:16; Eph. 5:25-27; Titus 3:4-5**
 - COVENANT JUDGMENT AND BAPTISM: Curse, Consecration, and Commitment (Gen. 17:14; Lev. 18:26-30)
 - Jesus described his suffering on the cross as a *baptism*. **Luke 12:49-50**
 - Paul described Jesus’ death on the cross as a covenant *curse*. **Gal. 3:10-14**
 - The signs of the covenant symbolized not only consecration but also commitment and curse.
 - When God pronounced His covenant with Abram He passed through the animal halves.
 - Those who were uncircumcised would be “cut off” from the camp of Israel.
 - Those who were disobedient to the Law would receive the penalties of it.
 - Jesus took the penalty of our cursed condition so that we might be set free from it.
 - Baptism is a picture of judgment as we pass through and are subject to covenant. **Col. 2:11-12**

PRAYER OF REFLECTION

Holy Father, You are a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. Indeed, our hope in the unbreakable *new* covenant is because You have fulfilled the conditions of that covenant in the person of the Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Lord, You have given us baptism as a consummating sign of so many types and shadows given to Your people throughout the Old Testament. We thank You for the richness of that redemptive heritage. We thank You for loving us and saving us in Jesus Christ. We pray for Your blessing upon this Word that we might continue to meditate upon it and grow in our appreciation of Your gifts to Your Church. In the blessed name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Brief Observations on the Historicity of Infant Baptism

Our primary focus in the question of infant baptism must be on the biblical evidence since it is the ultimate and only infallible standard of authority. However, there is considerable historical evidence to support the practice of infant baptism, and I have included a few brief excerpts and a longer survey in this week's study outline.

“He came to save all persons by means of Himself – all, I say, who through Him are born again to God – infants, children, boys, youth, and old men.” –Irenaeus (c. 180), 1.391

“In respect of the case of infants, you say that they should not be baptized within the second or third day after their birth – that the law of ancient circumcision should be regarded. So you think that one who has just been born should not be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day. However, we all thought very differently in our council...” –Cyprian (c. 250), 5.353

“Even to the greatest sinners and to those who have sinned much against God, when they subsequently believe, remission of sins is granted. Nobody is hindered from baptism and from grace. How much more should we shrink from hindering an infant.... Therefore, dearest brother, this was our opinion in council that no one should be hindered by us from baptism and from the grace of God.” –Cyprian (c. 250), 5.354

“Baptize your infants also and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of God. For He says, ‘Allow the little children to come unto me and do not forbid them.’” –*Apostolic Constitutions* (compiled c. 390), 7.457

These quotes are from David W. Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998) *s.v.* “Baptism: III. The Question of Infant Baptism.” The fuller context can be found in the Ante-Nicene and Nicene Fathers which are available online (<http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>).

Tertullian was an early church father who objected to infant baptism, but what is remarkable is that he argues against what is obviously a universally accepted practice and from a theological position no one today would affirm, that post-baptism sin cannot be forgiven. Aaron Denlinger has written on the implications of Tertullian's view for the debate over infant baptism: <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2014/10/the-first-baptist-theologian-t.php>.

Philip Schaff notes Tertullian's cautions were not only ineffective but argue convincingly in favor of paedobaptism.

The only opponent of infant baptism among the fathers is the eccentric and schismatic Tertullian, of North Africa. He condemns the hastening of the innocent age to the forgiveness of sins, and intrusting it with divine gifts, while we would not commit to it earthly property. Whoever considers the solemnity of baptism, will shrink more from the receiving, than from the postponement of it. But the very manner of Tertullian's opposition proves as much in favor of infant baptism as against it. He meets it not as an innovation, but as a prevalent custom; and he meets it not with exegetical nor historical arguments, but only with considerations of religious prudence. His opposition to it is founded on his view of the regenerating effect of baptism, and of the impossibility of having mortal sins forgiven in the church after baptism; this ordinance cannot be repeated, and washes out only the guilt contracted before its reception. On the same ground he advises healthy adults, especially the unmarried, to postpone this sacrament until they shall be no longer in danger of forfeiting forever the grace of baptism by committing adultery, murder, apostasy, or any other of the seven crimes which he calls mortal sins. On the same principle his advice applies only to healthy children, not to sickly ones, if we consider that he held baptism to be the indispensable condition of forgiveness of sins, and taught the doctrine of hereditary sin. With him this position resulted from moral earnestness, and a lively sense of the great solemnity of the baptismal vow. But many put off baptism to their death-bed, in moral levity and presumption, that they might sin as long as they could.

–Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* Vol. 2: Ante-Nicene Christianity A.D. 100-325 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), 261.

Schaff's summary of Infant Baptism in the Ante-Nicene period argues in favor of the apostolic origin of the practice. It can be read online here: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc2.v.vii.xv.html>. His analysis of the historical data concludes that "it seems an almost certain fact, though by many disputed, that, with the baptism of converts, the optional baptism of the children of Christian parents in established congregations, comes down from the apostolic age" (p.258).

I highly recommend Samuel Miller's historical treatment of the question of infant baptism. It is in the public domain and available online, but I have excerpted the historical portion and included it as an attachment. Actually, it was historical arguments by anti-paedobaptists that largely convinced me infant baptism was the historic practice of the church (particularly Paul Jewett's *Infant Baptist and the Covenant of Grace*). If we deny infant baptism was taught by the apostles, how do we account for the universal acceptance of such a practice throughout the entire ancient church so soon after the apostolic age? It is certainly enough to give one pause in their critique of the practice.

--Joel Ellis (October 2015)

Excerpt from Samuel Miller, *Infant Baptism Scriptural and Reasonable: and Baptism by Sprinkling or Affusion the Most Suitable and Edifying Mode* <<http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLS/baptism1.htm>>

Finally, *the history of the Christian church, from the apostolic age*, furnishes an argument of irresistible force in favour of the divine authority of infant baptism.

I can assure you, my friends, with the utmost candour and confidence, after much careful inquiry on the subject, that, for more than fifteen hundred years after the birth of Christ, there was not a single society of professing Christians on earth, who opposed infant baptism on anything like the grounds which distinguish our modern Baptist brethren. It is an *undoubted fact*, that the people known in ecclesiastical history under the name of the Anabaptists, who arose in Germany, in the year 1522, were the very first body of people, in the whole Christian world, who rejected the baptism of infants, on the principles now adopted by the Antipaedobaptist body. This, I am aware, will be regarded as an untenable position by some of the ardent friends of the Baptist cause; but nothing can be more certain than that it is even so. Of this a short induction of particulars will afford conclusive evidence.

Tertullian, about two hundred years after the birth of Christ, is the first man of whom we read in ecclesiastical history, as speaking a word against infant baptism; and he, while he recognizes the existence and prevalence of the practice, and expressly recommends that infants be baptized, if they are not likely to survive the period of infancy; yet advises that, where there is a prospect of their living, baptism be delayed until a late period in life. But what was the reason of this advice? The moment we look at the reason, we see that it avails nothing to the cause in support of which it is sometimes produced.

Tertullian adopted the superstitious idea, that baptism was accompanied with the remission of all past sins; and that sins committed after baptism were peculiarly dangerous. He, therefore, advised that not merely infants, but young men and young women (and even young widows and widowers) should postpone their baptism until the period of youthful appetite and passion should have passed. In short, he advised that, in all cases in which death was not likely to intervene, baptism be postponed, until the subjects of it should have arrived at a period of life, when they would be no longer in danger of being led astray by youthful lusts. And thus, for more than a century after the age of Tertullian, we find some of the most conspicuous converts to the Christian faith, postponing baptism till the close of life. Constantine the Great, we are told, though a professing Christian for many years before, was not baptized till after the commencement of his last illness. The same fact is recorded of a number of other distinguished converts to Christianity, about and after that time. But, surely, advice and facts of this kind make nothing in favour of the system of our Baptist brethren. Indeed, taken altogether, their historical bearing is strongly in favour of our system.

The next persons that we hear of as calling in question the propriety of infant baptism, were the small body of people in France, about twelve hundred years after Christ, who followed a certain Peter de Bruis, and formed an inconsiderable section of the people known in ecclesiastical history under the general name of the Waldenses. This body maintained that infants ought not to be baptized, because they were incapable of salvation. They taught that none could be saved but those who wrought out their salvation by a long course of self-denial and labour. And as infants were incapable of thus "working out their own salvation" (Phil. 2:12), they held that making them the subjects of a sacramental seal, was an absurdity. But surely our Baptist brethren cannot be willing to consider these people as their predecessors, or to adopt their creed.

We hear no more of any society or organized body of Antipaedobaptists, until the sixteenth century, when they arose, as before stated, in Germany, and for the first time broached the doctrine of our modern Baptist brethren. As far as I have been able to discover, they were absolutely unknown in the whole Christian world, before that time.

But we have something more than mere negative testimony on this subject. It is not only certain, that we hear of no society of Antipaedobaptists resembling our present Baptist brethren, for more than fifteen hundred

years after Christ; but we have positive and direct proof that, during the whole of that time, infant baptism was the general and unopposed practice of the Christian church.

To say nothing of earlier intimations, wholly irreconcilable with any other practice than that of infant baptism, Origen, a Greek father of the third century, and decidedly the most learned man of his day, speaks in the most unequivocal terms of the baptism of infants, as the general practice of the church in his time, and as having been received from the apostles. His testimony is as follows: "According to the usage of the church, baptism is given even to infants; when if there were nothing in infants which needed forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would seem to be superfluous" (Homil. 8 in Lev. ch. 12). Again: "Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? Or, when have they sinned? Or, can there be any reason for the laver in their case, unless it be according to the sense which we have mentioned above: namely, that no one is free from pollution, though he has lived but one day upon earth? And because by baptism native pollution is taken away, therefore infants are baptized" (Homil. in Luke 14). Again: "For this cause it was that the church received an order from the apostles to give baptism even to infants."

The testimony of Cyprian, a Latin father of the third century, contemporary with Origen, is no less decisive. It is as follows.

In the year 253 after Christ, there was a council of sixty-six bishops or pastors held at Carthage, in which Cyprian presided. To this council, Fidus, a country pastor, presented the following question, which he wished them, by their united wisdom, to solve: namely, whether it was necessary, in the administration of baptism, as of circumcision, to wait until the *eighth day*; or whether a child might be baptized at an earlier period after its birth? The question, it will be observed, was not whether infants ought to be baptized? *That* was taken for granted. But simply, whether it was necessary to wait until the *eighth day* after their birth? The council came *unanimously* to the following decision, and transmitted it in a letter to the inquirer.

"Cyprian and the rest of the bishops who were present in the council, sixty-six in number, to Fidus, our brother, greeting:

"As to the case of infants: whereas you judge that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born, and that the rule of circumcision is to be observed, that no one should be baptized and sanctified before the eighth day after he is born; we were all in the council of a very different opinion. As for what you thought proper to be done, no one was of your mind; but we all rather judged that the mercy and grace of God is to be denied to no human being that is born. This, therefore, dear brother, was our opinion in the council; that we ought not to hinder any person from baptism and the grace of God, who is merciful and kind to us all. And this rule, as it holds for all, we think more especially to be observed in reference to infants, even to those newly born" (Cyprian, Epist. 66).

Surely no testimony can be more unexceptionable and decisive than this. Lord Chancellor King, in his account of the primitive church, after quoting what is given above, and much more, subjoins the following remark: "Here, then, is a synodical decree for the baptism of infants, as formal as can possibly be expected; which being the judgment of a synod, is more authentic and cogent than that of a private father; it being supposable that a private father might write his own particular judgment and opinion only; but the determination of a synod (and he might have added, the *unanimous* determination of a synod of sixty-six members) denotes the common practice and usage of the whole church."

The famous Chrysostom, a Greek father who flourished towards the close of the fourth century, having had occasion to speak of circumcision, and of the inconvenience and pain which attempted its dispensation, proceeds to say: "But *our* circumcision, I mean the grace of *baptism*, gives cure without pain, and procures to us a thousand benefits, and fills us with the grace of the Spirit; and it has *no determinate time*, as that had; but one that is in the *very beginning of his age*, or one that is in the middle of it, or one that is in his old age, may receive

this circumcision made without hands; in which there is no trouble to be undergone but to throw off the load of sins, and to receive pardon for all past offences" (Homil. 40 in Genesis).

Passing by the testimony of several other conspicuous writers of the third and fourth centuries, in support of the fact that infant baptism was generally practiced when they wrote, I shall detain you with only one testimony more in relation to the history of this ordinance. It is that of Augustine, one of the most pious, learned and venerable fathers of the Christian church, who lived a little more than three hundred years after the apostles taken in connection with that of Pelagius, the learned heretic, who lived at the same time. Augustine had been pleading against Pelagius, in favour of the doctrine of original sin. In the course of this plea, he asks, "Why are infants baptized for the remission of sins, if they have no sin?" at the same time intimating to Pelagius, that if he would be consistent with himself, his denial of original sin must draw after it the denial of infant baptism.

The reply of Pelagius is striking and unequivocal. "Baptism," says he, "ought to be administered to infants, with the same sacramental words which are used in the case of adult persons." "Men slander me as if I denied the sacrament of baptism to infants." "*I never heard of any, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants; for who can be so impious as to hinder infants from being baptized, and born again in Christ, and so make them miss of the kingdom of God?*"

Again, Augustine remarks, in reference to the Pelagians: "Since they grant that infants must be baptized, as not being able to *resist the authority of the whole church, which was doubtless delivered by our Lord and his apostles*; they must consequently grant that they stand in need of the benefit of the Mediator; that being offered by the sacrament, and by the charity of the faithful, and so being incorporated into Christ's body, they may be reconciled to God," etc.

Again, speaking of certain heretics at Carthage, who, though they acknowledged infant baptism, took wrong views of its meaning, Augustine remarks: "They, *minding the scriptures, and the authority of the whole church*, and the form of the sacrament itself, see well that baptism in infants is for the remission of sins." Further, in his work against the Donatists, the same writer, speaking of baptized infants obtaining salvation without the personal exercise of faith, says: "*which the whole body of the church holds*, as delivered to them in the case of little infants baptized; who certainly cannot believe with the heart unto righteousness, or confess with the mouth unto salvation; nay, by their crying and noise while the sacrament is administering, they disturb the holy mysteries: and yet *no Christian man* will say that they are baptized to no purpose." Again, he says: "The custom of our mother the church in baptizing infants must not be disregarded, nor be accounted needless, nor believed to be anything else than an *ordinance delivered to us from the apostles*."

In short, those who will be at the trouble to consult the large extracts from the writings of Augustine, among other Christian fathers, in the learned Wall's *History of Infant Baptism*, will find that venerable father declaring again and again that he never met with any Christian, either of the general church, or of any of the sects, nor with any writer, who owned the authority of scripture, who taught any other doctrine than that infants were to be baptized for the remission of sin. Here, then, were two men, undoubtedly among the most learned then in the world Augustine and Pelagius; the former as familiar probably with the writings of all the distinguished fathers who had gone before him, as any man of his time; the latter also a man of great learning and talents, who had travelled over the greater part of the Christian world; who both declare, about three hundred years after the apostolic age, that they never saw or heard of any one who called himself a Christian, not even the most impious heretic, no nor any writer who claimed to believe in the scriptures, who denied the baptism of infants (See Wall's *History*, Part 1, ch. 15-19). Can the most incredulous reader, who is not fast bound in the fetters of invincible prejudice, hesitate to admit: first, that these men verily believed that infant baptism had been the universal practice of the church from the days of the apostles; and, secondly, that, situated and informed as they were, it was impossible that they should be mistaken.

The same Augustine, in his "Epistle to Boniface," while he expresses an opinion that the parents are the proper persons to offer up their children to God in baptism, if they be good faithful Christians; yet thinks proper to

mention that others may, with propriety, in special cases, perform the same kind office of Christian charity. "You see," says he, "that a great many are offered, not by their parents, but by any other persons, as infant slaves are sometimes offered by their masters. And sometimes when the parents are dead, the infants are baptized, being offered by any that can afford to show this compassion on them. And sometimes infants whom their parents have cruelly exposed, may be taken up and offered in baptism by those who have no children of their own, nor design to have any."

Again, in his book against the Donatists, speaking directly of infant baptism, he says: "If any one asks for divine authority in this matter, although that which *the whole church practices*, which *was not instituted by councils*, but was *ever in use*, is very reasonably believed to be no other than a thing delivered by the authority of the apostles; yet we may besides take a true estimate, how much the sacrament of baptism does avail infants, by the circumcision which God's ancient people received. For Abraham was justified before he received circumcision, as Cornelius was endued with the Holy Spirit before he was baptized. And yet the apostle says of Abraham, that he received the sign of circumcision, 'a seal of the righteousness of faith,' by which he had in heart believed, and it had been 'counted to him for righteousness' (Rom. 4:11). Why then was he commanded to circumcise all his male infants on the eighth day, when they could not yet believe with the heart, that it might be counted to them for righteousness; but for this reason, because the sacrament is, in itself of great importance? Therefore, as in Abraham, 'the righteousness of faith' went before, and circumcision, 'the seal of the righteousness of faith came after;' so in Cornelius, the spiritual sanctification by the gift of the Holy Spirit went before, and the sacrament of regeneration, by the laver of baptism, came after. And as in Isaac, who was circumcised the eighth day, the seal of the righteousness of faith went before, and (as he was a follower of his father's faith) the righteousness itself, the seal whereof had gone before in his infancy, came after; so in infants baptized, the sacrament of regeneration goes before, and (if they put in practice the Christian religion) conversion of the heart, the mystery whereof went before in their body, comes after. By all which it appears, that the sacrament of baptism is one thing, and conversion of the heart another."

So much for the testimony of the fathers. To me, I acknowledge, this testimony carries with it irresistible conviction. It is, no doubt, conceivable, considered in itself, that in three centuries from the days of the apostles, a very material change might have taken place in regard to the subject of baptism. But that a change so serious and radical as that of which our Baptist brethren speak, should have been introduced without the knowledge of such men as have been just quoted, is *not conceivable*. That the church should have passed from the practice of none but adult baptism, to that of the constant and universal baptism of infants, while such a change was utterly unknown, and never heard of, by the most active, pious, and learned men that lived during that period, cannot, I must believe, be imagined by any impartial mind. Now when Origen, Cyprian, and Chrysostom declare, not only that the baptism of infants was the universal and unopposed practice of the church in their respective times and places of residence; and when men of so much acquaintance with all preceding writers, and so much knowledge of all Christendom, as Augustine and Pelagius, declared that they *never heard of any one who claimed to be a Christian, either orthodox or heretic, who did not maintain and practice infant baptism*; I say, to suppose, in the face of such testimony, that the practice of infant baptism crept in, as an unwarranted innovation, between their time and that of the apostles, without the smallest notice of the change having ever reached their ears is, I must be allowed to say, of all incredible suppositions, one of the most incredible. He who can believe this, must, it appears to me, be prepared to make a sacrifice of all historical evidence at the shrine of blind and deaf prejudice.

It is here also worthy of particular notice, that those pious and far-famed witnesses for the truth, commonly known by the name of the Waldenses, did undoubtedly hold the doctrine of infant baptism, and practice accordingly. In their confessions of faith and other writings, drawn up between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, and in which they represent their creeds and usages as handed down, from father to son, for several hundred years before the Reformation, they speak on the subject before us so frequently and explicitly, as to preclude all doubt in regard to the fact alleged. The following specimen of their language will satisfy every reasonable inquirer.

"Baptism," say they, is administered in a full congregation of the faithful, to the end that he that is received into the church may be reputed and held of all as a Christian brother, and that all the congregation may pray for him that he may be a Christian in heart, as he is outwardly esteemed to be a Christian. *And for this cause it is that we present our children in baptism*, which ought to be done by those to whom the children are most nearly related, such as their parents, or those to whom God has given this charity."

Again, referring to the superstitious additions to baptism which the Papists had introduced, they say, in one of their ecclesiastical documents: "The things which are not necessary in baptism are: the exorcisms, the breathings, the sign of the cross upon the head or forehead of the *infant*, the salt put into the mouth, the spittle into the ears and nostrils, the unction of the breast, etc. From these things many take an occasion of error and superstition, rather than of edifying and salvation."

Understanding that their popish neighbours charged them with denying the baptism of infants, they acquit themselves of this imputation as follows:

"Neither is the time nor place appointed for those who are to be baptized. But charity and the edification of the church and congregation ought to be the rule in this matter.

"Yet, notwithstanding, *we bring our children to be baptized*; which they ought to do to whom they are most nearly related; such as their parents, or those whom God hath inspired with such a charity."

"True it is," adds the historian, "that being, for some hundreds of years, constrained to suffer their children to be baptized by the Romish priests, they deferred the performance of it as long as possible, because they detested the human inventions annexed to the institution of that holy sacrament, which they looked upon as so many pollutions of it. And by reason of their pastors, whom they called Barbes, being often abroad travelling in the service of the church, they could not have baptism administered to their children by them. They, therefore, sometimes kept them long without it. On account of which delay, the priests have charged them with that reproach. To which charge not only their adversaries have given credit, *but also many of those who have approved of their lives and faith in all other respects.*"

It being so plainly a fact, established by their own unequivocal and repeated testimony, that the great body of the Waldenses were PAEdobaptists, on what ground is it that our Baptist brethren assert, and that some have been found to credit the assertion, that those venerable witnesses of the truth rejected the baptism of infants? The answer is easy and ample. A small section of the people bearing the general name of Waldenses, followers of Peter de Bruis, who were mentioned in a preceding page, while they agreed with the mass of their denomination in most other matters, differed from them in regard to the subject of infant baptism. They held, as before stated, that infants were not capable of salvation; that Christian salvation is of such a nature that none can partake of it but those who undergo a course of rigorous self-denial and labour in its pursuit. Those who die in infancy not being capable of this, the Petrobrussians held that they were not capable of salvation; and, this being the case, that they ought not to be baptized. This, however, is not the doctrine of our Baptist brethren; and, of course, furnishes no support to their creed or practice. But the decisive answer is, that the Petrobrussians were a very small fraction of the great Waldensian body; probably not more than a thirtieth or fortieth part of the whole. The great mass of the denomination, however, as such, declare, in their Confessions of Faith, and in various public documents, that they held, and that their fathers before them, for many generations, always held, to infant baptism. The Petrobrussians, in this respect, forsook the doctrine and practice of their fathers, and departed from the proper and established Waldensian creed. If there be truth in the plainest records of ecclesiastical history, this is an undoubted fact.

In short, the real state of this case may be illustrated by the following representation. Suppose it were alleged that the Baptists in the United States are in the habit of keeping the seventh day of the week as their sabbath? Would the statement be true? By no means. There is, indeed, a small section of the Anti paedobaptist body in the United States, usually styled "Seventh-day Baptists" probably not a thirtieth part of the whole body who

observe Saturday in each week as their sabbath. But, notwithstanding this, the proper representation, no doubt is (the only representation that a faithful historian of facts would pronounce correct) that the Baptists in this country, as a general body, observe "the Lord's day" as their sabbath. You may rest assured, my friends, that this statement most exactly illustrates the real fact with regard to the Waldenses as PAEdobaptists. Twenty-nine parts, at least, out of thirty, of the whole of that body of witnesses for the truth, were undoubtedly PAEdobaptists. The remaining thirtieth part departed from the faith of their fathers in regard to baptism, but departed on principles altogether unlike those of our modern Baptist brethren.

I have only one fact more to state in reference to the pious Waldenses, and that is, that soon after the opening of the Reformation by Luther, they sought intercourse with the Reformed churches of Geneva and France; held communion with them; received ministers from them; and appeared eager to testify their respect and affection for them as "brethren in the Lord." Now it is well known that the churches of Geneva and France, at this time, were in the habitual use of *infant baptism*. This single fact is sufficient to prove that the Waldenses were PAEdobaptists. If they had adopted the doctrine of our Baptist brethren, and laid the same stress on it with them, it is manifest that such intercourse would have been wholly out of the question.

If these historical statements be correct and that they are so, is just as well attested as any facts whatever in the annals of the church the amount of the whole is conclusive, is *demonstrative*, that for fifteen hundred years after Christ the practice of infant baptism was universal; that to this general fact there was absolutely no exception, in the whole Christian church, which, on principle, or even analogy, can countenance in the least degree, modern Anti-paedobaptism; that from the time of the apostles to the time of Luther, the general, unopposed, established practice of the church was to regard the infant seed of believers as members of the church, and, as such, to baptize them.

But this is not all. If the doctrine of our Baptist brethren be correct that is, if infant baptism be a corruption and a nullity then it follows, from the foregoing historical statements, most inevitably, that the ordinance of baptism was lost for fifteen hundred years: yes, entirely lost, from the apostolic age till the sixteenth century. For there was manifestly, "no society, during that long period of fifteen centuries, but what was in the habit of baptizing infants." *God had no church, then, in the world for so long a period!* Can this be admitted? Surely not by anyone who believes in the perpetuity and indestructibility of the household of faith.

Nay, if the principle of our Baptist brethren be correct, the ordinance of baptism is irrecoverably lost altogether; that is, irrecoverably without a miracle. Because if, during the long tract of time that has been mentioned, there was no true baptism in the church; and if none but baptized persons were capable of administering true baptism to others; the consequence is plain: there is no true baptism now in the world! But can this be believed? Can we imagine that the great Head of the church would permit one of his own precious ordinances to be banished entirely from the church for many centuries, much less to be totally lost? Surely the thought is abhorrent to every Christian feeling.