

Paedobaptism



The Word of God
and
Infant Baptism

By Rev. Ovid Need

Pastor Ovid Need

Bro Need entered into the ministry in 1970, five years after his discharge from the Navy. He served as an associate pastor in three churches until 1983, at which time he became the pastor of the Linden Baptist Church in Linden, Indiana. He has had several articles published in national and international publications, *e.g.*, *Chalcedon Report* and *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*. After his wife died in 1999, he married a widow, Bettie Ethell in 2001, and remained as pastor until 2002, when they moved to Virginia. In 2007, at the urging of another pastor, they moved to West Virginia for a “church plant.” They remained there until 2015, when they moved to Ohio to be close to three of their five children and a good number of grandchildren.

Being pastor of a small church allowed abundant time for study. As various theological issues came up in the church as well in his mind, there was time to do serious study. This particular study on *infant baptism* is the result of someone asking for his children to be baptized. Being a Baptist, the automatic answer would have been “No”, but what was the scriptural basis? Almost all the sound theologians of the past were Paedobaptist, and many of their writings have been used herein. No one can study and write in a vacuum, without preconceived ideas, and few can write apart from those ideas. This book is an effort to get past Baptist ideas, and find what God says.

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This Baptist pastor has generally found that “Paedobaptist” Presbyterians, are more scholarly, and are more receptive to serious theological works regardless of their source, than are Baptists. Thus, he find more acceptance and more “kindred spirits” for serious theological studies and for claiming the world for Christ among “Paedobaptist” than among Baptists. Most of his library contains pre 1915 Presbyterian theologians.

This pastor’s style is to try to follow almost every thought to its logical conclusion, which makes his studies so lengthy. Hence, you will generally find that this pastor’s writings are strong meat, and at times hard to follow for those accustomed to milk; they are not the common “fluff and stuff” that attracts today’s readers.

Some of the other works by Brother Need:

* Death Of the Church Victorious (Ross House Books.)

Self published works

* Matthew 24 and its context

* Church Inc. a look at church and incorporation

* Identifying Identity is abbreviated in “Identifying Identity’s Gentile Corruption”

* Israel’s Identity/Israel’s Conversion

* Bible studies in the books of Deuteronomy and John

* Many other smaller booklets can be found at www.biblicalexaminer.org.

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(Holding to the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689)

There is an abundance of good works on infant baptism, so why another?

This particular study on *infant baptism* is the result of someone asking for his children to be baptized. Being a Baptist pastor, the automatic answer would have been “No”, but what was the scriptural basis for my answer. The answer had to be obtained through personal study of Scripture, rather than the tradition of the elders. (1 Pet 3:15)

Those who will seriously study the issue will find that *infant baptism* is based on the tradition of the Church Fathers, which tradition started with the Church of Rome. (1 Pet 1:18)

A good number of respected sound theologians of the past were Paedobaptist, and many of their writings have been used herein. No one can study and write in a vacuum without preconceived ideas, but this book is an effort to get past Baptist ideas, and find the Word of God on this subject.

This lengthy study covers a little history of infant baptism and believer’s baptism in general, which resulted from a study of Exodus 12:43-51.

Moreover, this pastor must admit that, unlike many who write and speak on various subjects, he does not have all the answers. Though the following has some inconsistencies, it fits together best for this pastor. As is common for this pastor, who must follow every lead, there is far too much information here. So this work includes a lengthy TOC and an index. Hence, the reader can pick and choose what he might find interesting.

There was no intention at the time of doing anything with the study other than personal research and information. However, others asked for the study, and this is what developed.

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Introduction

First, this study concerning infant baptism, covering a little concerning baptism in general, is a result of a study in Exodus 12:43-51. The study was motivated in about 1987 when, as the pastor of a Baptist Church, a young couple asked me to “baptize” their infant. I had to research the matter from the Old Testament, following through to the New Testament. The following was the Biblical conclusion that prevented my yielding to their desire.

Second, this pastor must admit that, unlike many who write and speak on this subject, he does not have all the answers. Though the following has some inconsistencies, it fits together best for this pastor concerning the matter. The study was not intended to be so lengthy, but one thing led to another. Nor was there any intention of doing anything with it. The study was research for personal information concerning paedobaptism, but others asked for the study.

Third, this pastor, holding to *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, realizes that the elect are redeemed before the foundation of the world. We will mention later in this treatise that the Spirit must work in the heart of the elect; Only He can awaken the elect to his sinful state, give him understanding of the work of Christ in his place and give him faith to come to Christ for his justification.¹ A term we could use for that point of faith in the life of the elect could be “conversion.” Scripture is clear—Even the elect must be converted, John 3.²

Fourth, it is through the *foolishness of preaching* of the cross that the Lord has chosen to save them that would believe, *viz.* the elect. Therefore, because the elect are scattered throughout the world, it is the responsibility of every Child of God to see that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is taken world-wide, for how shall the elect hear without a preacher?³

Fifth, though words such as redemption may be misused in places where conversion should be used, this pastor realizes that redemption took place in eternity past, and conversion takes place in time at the awakening of the elect sinner by the Spirit. Furthermore, the Spirit deals with individuals as unique individuals, but all dealings must be within the bounds of the clear teaching of the Word of God. We cannot restrict the Spirit’s work in converting others to the way He may have worked to convert us.

Sixth, many of the great Bible Scholars whom this writer admires and regularly uses dogmatically defend infant baptism. The honest ones admit there is no Scriptural support for the practice, yet claim to be reformed, *i.e.*, “Scripture Alone.” So they must use great flowing words to justify the practice. They even ridicule those who do not follow them in their departure from Scripture Alone. If such great men, both past and present, are so committed to their assumptions, obviously, the following treatise will not change those who are so committed. This pastor does not see paedobaptism as a shibboleth for fellowship nor for working together.⁴ This pastor also has met laymen who when told that the great Bible Scholars of the past agree there is no Scriptural support for paedobaptism, will say that those great men of the past just did not understand the issue. Yet they believe they do.

Seventh, this pastor is firmly convinced that the uniting of Believers is around the authority of the Law-Word of God over every action and thought. This pastor has supported and will continue to support good men who hold to paedobaptism, if we have common basic goals: Doing all we can to advance the crown rights of King Jesus upon this earth. There are much more important matters that

¹ Normally through the preaching of the word of God, Titus 1:3.

² The same young couple argued that since the elect are from the foundation of the world, there is no need to be concerned about the child’s salvation. There is no “conversion” in time needed, as the child is already “saved” in the mind of God.

³ Matthew 28:19, 20, Acts 2:36, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Romans 10:14-17, &c.

⁴ However, if baptism is assumed to replace conversion or salvation, then our response should be as though the church were the church of Rome, and the people, Papist.

must be dealt with if we are to see paganism fall before the claims of Christianity. To the shame of the name “Baptist,” this Baptist pastor has found far more interest in claiming the world for Christ among paedobaptists than he has among Baptists.

Corresponding with a young man who was examining the issue of paedobaptism, the young man said he felt infants should be baptized, so he was going that direction. However, he offered no Scriptural support for his direction. This writer has found his basis for paedobaptism all too common: “I feel this is the way it should be, so this is what I am going to do.” “Scripture Alone?”

As is far too common with this pastor, I gives too much information. The primary justification for paedobaptism seems to be taken from Old Testament circumcision, so this lengthy tome attempts to deal with those Old Testament scriptures and the implications that I have been confronted with by paedobaptists. It is lengthy, as we deal in some detail with Old Testament circumcision, which paedobaptist use for justifying New Testament infant baptism. After a thorough look at Old Testament circumcision, circumcision cannot be connected with New Testament baptism.

Our experience has been that those whose minds are made up do not want to know the truth of the matter. So they will not read anything they think will not confirm what has appealed to their own understanding. However, those who sincerely want the truth should be able to find it here as we trace the circumcision-paedobaptism discussion from the Old Testament into the New.⁵

It would be well to consider the following however committed one may be to paedobaptism.

⁵Very little of this pastor’s writings are suitable for the faint-hearted – the casual reader. They are not the “Christian Fluff” that is so popular with today’s readers. His writings are for the serious minded who want to pursue all the details of a matter from God’s Word. We try to leave no loose ends concerning the matters under consideration, as we examine all of the implications of the issues at hand, and of the passages under consideration. This book is no exception, as I probably wore out the subject of Old Testament circumcision.

Chapter 1

Baptism, a brief history

Though this is neither the subject nor the purpose of this study, we probably should give a brief overview of the history of baptism, both “believer’s” and “infant’s. Many strange and unscriptural teachings have gained prominence only by ignoring honest history.

Barnabas (AD 100)

How was baptism regarded by the early church? The first mention we have of baptism in non-Biblical history is by Barnabas. In “The Epistle of Barnabas,” Chap. XI., we find this statement:

...and again He saith in another prophet, “The man who doeth these things shall be like a tree planted by the courses of waters, which shall yield its fruit in due season; and his leaf shall not fade, and all that he doeth shall prosper. Not so are the ungodly, not so, but even as chaff, which the wind sweeps away from the face of the earth. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the counsel of the just; for the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.” Mark how He has described at once both the water and the cross. For these words imply, Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have gone down into the water; for, says He, they shall receive their reward in due time: then He declares, I will recompense them... This meaneth, that we indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement, but come up, bearing fruit in our heart, having the fear [of God] and trust Jesus in our spirit.¹

Barnabas speaks of sins forgiven through faith in the work of Christ on the cross. Then he reverses himself by implying that sins are washed away in the water of baptism. Our point being that Barnabas held that the convert had to “go down into the water” for baptism. Can an infant “go down into the water”?

Justin Martyr (AD 110-165)

Justin Martyr wrote in his first Apology concerning the rite of baptism:

And for this [rite] we have learned from the apostles this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the laver the person that is to be washed calling him by this name alone. For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God; and if any one dare to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness. And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed.²

Justin, though identifying baptismal washing with washing from sin and with the “laver”, that is, pouring, pointed out that baptism is for “him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins.” Is such a choice possible in infants?

¹ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I.144. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1979 Reprint.

² *Ibid*, p 183. “Chooses...” We know, however, that God chooses us—that is to say, he places in us the desire and power to “choose him.”

John Gill (1696-1771)

Gill comments on Hebrews 6:4:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c. The Syriac and Ethiopic versions render it, “baptized”; and the word is thought to be so used in Heb 10:32. And indeed baptism was called very early “illumination” by the ancients, as by Justin Martyr, and Clemens Alexandrinus {Paedagog. 1. 1. C. 6. P. 93.}, because only enlightened persons were the proper subjects of it; and the word once here used seems to confirm this sense, since baptism, when rightly administered, was not repeated; but then this sense depends upon an use of a word, which is not certain did as yet obtain; nor does the apostle take notice of baptism in a parallel place, Heb 10:26, 27. This gave rise to, and seems to favour the error of Novatus, that those who fall into sin after baptism are to be cut off from the communion of the church, and never more to be restored unto it...

From the first, baptism was connected with illumination. Are infants illuminated to their sinful conditions?

Tertullian (AD 145-220)

Tertullian, in chapter XVIII,—OF THE PERSONS TO WHOM, AND THE TIME WHEN, BAPTISM IS TO BE ADMINISTERED, said,

And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children. For why is it necessary—if (baptism itself) is so necessary [Tertullian has already allowed (in c. xvi) that baptism is not *indispensably* necessary to salvation. *Father’s* editor’s note]—that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger? Who both themselves, by reason of mortality, may fail to fulfil their promises, and may be disappointed by the development of an evil disposition, *in those for whom they stood?* The Lord does indeed say, “Forbid them not to come unto me.” Let them “come,” then, while they are growing up; let them “come” while they are learning, while they are learning whither to come; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ.³

Tertullian, accordingly, says that children certainly should be allowed to come to Christ, but he also points out that the time they come is when “they have become able to know Christ.” Tertullian continues by pointing out that the baptism of John involved repentance over and over again for sins. We will connect John’s baptism and Christian baptism later in the text. Infants? Not hardly.

Though this writer holds to the Word of God as the final authority for all doctrine, faith and practice, one should not ignore history. The following is found under, “Paul, Various canons:”

VARIOUS CANONS OF PAUL THE APOSTLE CONCERNING THOSE THAT OFFER THEMSELVES TO BE BAPTIZED—WHOM WE ARE TO RECEIVE, AND WHOM TO REJECT.

XXXII. *I also, Paul, the last of the apostles, do make the following constitutions for you, the bishops, and presbyters, and deacons, concerning canons.* Those that first come to the mystery of godliness, let them be brought to the bishop or to the presbyters by the deacons, and let them be examined as to the cause wherefore they come to the world of the Lord; and let those that bring them exactly inquire about their character, and give them their testimony. Let their manners and their life be inquired into, and whether they be slaves or freemen...⁴

Let us, accordingly, point out the requirement that the candidate for baptism had to be examined. Can

³ *Ibid*, III.678. >

⁴ *Ibid*, v. VII, p 494—CONSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES. *Schaff* briefly mentions the *CONSTITUTION* as “the most complete and important Church Manual. It is, in form, a literary fiction, professing to be a bequest of all the apostles, handed down through the Roman bishop Clement, or dictated to him.” *History of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff, II.185. ©, 1910, by Charles Scribner’s Sons, reprint by Em. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

an infant be examined concerning his/her faith and Christian works? Admittedly, most early Church fathers seemed to believe that the water of baptism literally washed away sins. But equally evident is their belief that the candidate for baptism had to be fully aware of what was taking place and why it was taking place.

Chapter 2

Paedobaptism, a brief history

Origen (185–258)

Cyprian (AD 200-258) seems to be the first of the early church fathers to address Paedobaptism. Though Beasley–Murray, in his *Baptism in the New Testament*, says that Origen was the first church father to address Paedobaptism, this writer is unable to document Beasley-Murray’s statement. According to Beasley-Murray, Origen suggests that,

‘By the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away’ (Hom. 14.4, in Luc.); but elsewhere he [Origen, *ed*] says that the Apostles gave baptism to infants, ‘for they knew that there were inborn corruptions of sin in all people, which must be washed away by water and the Spirit’ (Comm. on Romans 5.9).⁵

Unable to document Origen, we will use Cyprian, whom we can document.

Cyprian (200-258)

Cyprian (martyred, AD 258) held that Old Testament circumcision on the eighth day had nothing to do with New Testament infant baptism; rather, it prefigured the resurrection of Christ on the eighth day—the eighth day being the first day after the sabbath:

...For in respect of the observance of the eighth day in the Jewish circumcision of the flesh, a sacrament was given beforehand in shadow and in usage; but when Christ came, it was fulfilled in truth. For because the eighth day, that is, the first day after the Sabbath, was to be that on which the Lord should rise again, and should quicken us, and give us circumcision of the spirit, the eighth day, that is, the first day after the Sabbath, and the Lord’s day, went before in the figure; which figure ceased when by and by the truth came, and spiritual circumcision was given to us.⁶

The above view of Old Testament circumcision is totally Scriptural, *viz.* it prefigured the circumcised heart which was and is accomplished through the work of the resurrected Christ. That is, circumcision, acting upon the source of life, on the eighth day foreshadowed the resurrection of Christ on the eighth day—He would act upon the source of life. Baptism, accordingly, could not possibly fit within this description, for it does not nor can it act upon the source of life. Only the Spirit of the resurrected Christ can do that operation upon the heart.

What does Cyprian do with infant baptism? He says that baptism is God’s means of providing His grace and mercy to the individual and that mercy and grace should not be withheld from any man,

⁵ *BAPTISM in the New Testament*, G. R. Beasley–Murray, M.A., M.Th., Ph.D., p 366, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. ©1962, Reprint, January 1981. Note no Scripture is offered to support the theory that “the Apostles gave baptism to infants.” This author was unable to verify this statement. See, Evidence.

⁶ *The Anti-Nicene Fathers*, V.353, 354. Cyprian, a spiritual son and pupil of Tertullian, wrote before the Bishop of Rome gained his tremendous Papal power. He wrote many “Epistles” to the Bishop of Rome. The reader should note that there is a translator’s note at the bottom of p 354 concerning one of Cyprian’s statements about a new-born infant’s purity: “A marvellous relic of pagan ideas.” Though Cyprian was not referring to Paedobaptism, it is here implied that the early desire for the ritual was influenced by paganism. All quotes from Cyprian are found on the two pages where he deals with Paedobaptism.

infant or adult, a common view of our day:

For in this course which you thought was to be taken, no one agreed (in counsel, *ed.*); but we all rather judge that the mercy and grace of God is not to be refused (baptism, *ed.*) to any one born of man...

He continues by saying that grace is given according to the age of the individual baptized:

...If this thing be considered with respect to the inequality of our birth and our body, an infant could not be made equal with a person grown up and mature, nor could its little limbs fit and be equal to the larger limbs of a man. But in that is expressed the divine and spiritual equality, that all men are like and equal, since they have once been made by God; and our age may have a difference in the increase of our bodies, according to the world, but not according to God; unless that very grace also which is given to the baptized is given either less or more, according to the age of the receivers, whereas the Holy Spirit is not given with measure, but by the love and mercy of the Father alike to all...

May we ask, what is that age of grace? We are thus confronted with an arbitrary age of accountability.⁷

We should note that the above men all spoke before the *Church of Rome* started with Constantine, c. 330 AD. Accordingly, Paedobaptism came in with Rome, and is a holdover from Rome

Writing on Hebrews 6:4, John Gill (AD 1696–1771), points out:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c. The Syriac and Ethiopic versions render it, “baptized”; and the word is thought to be so used in Heb 10:32. And indeed baptism was called very early “illumination” by the ancients, as by Justin Martyr, and Clemens Alexandrinus {*Paedagog.* l. 1. c. 6. p. 93.}, because only enlightened persons were the proper subjects of it; and the word once here used seems to confirm this sense, since baptism, when rightly administered, was not repeated; but then this sense depends upon an use of a word, which it is not certain did as yet obtain; nor does the apostle take notice of baptism in a parallel place, Heb 10:26,27. This gave rise to, and seems to favour the error of Novatus, that those who fall into sin after baptism are to be cut off from the communion of the church, and never more to be restored unto it...⁸

Baptism, hence, is connected with illumination. Are infants illuminated to their sinful conditions?

Chapter 3

Protestant Paedobaptism's History

All the Reformers retained the custom of infant-baptism, and opposed rebaptism (*Wiedertaufe*) as a heresy. So far they agreed with the Catholics against the Anabaptists, or Catabaptists as they were called, although they rejected the name, because in their view the baptism of infants was no baptism at all.

The Anabaptists or Baptists (as distinct from Pedobaptists) sprang up in Germany, Holland, and Switzerland, and organized independent congregations. Their leaders were Huebmaier, Denck, Hätzer, and Grebel. They thought that the Reformers stopped half-way, and did not go to the root of the evil. They broke with the historical tradition, and constructed a new church of believers on the voluntary principle. Their fundamental doctrine was, that baptism is a voluntary act, and requires personal repentance, and faith in Christ. They rejected infant-baptism as an anti-scriptural invention. They could find no trace of it in the New Testament, the only authority in matters of faith. They were cruelly persecuted in Protestant as well as

⁷ Baptists are condemned for holding to an arbitrary age of accountability! All of the authors supporting Paedobaptism checked by this writer referred to an arbitrary age. Thus their charge against the Baptist about an arbitrary age is hypocrisy.

⁸ *Online Bible*, CDROM. Larry Pierce, 11 Holmwood St, Winterbourne, Ontario N0B 2V0. It is an extremely good, inexpensive shareware computer Bible program. A few years ago, this pastor removed a \$300.00 Bible program from his computer to replace with *OnLine Bible*. The CDROM is very inexpensive, and contains far more than the average Bible student will ever use.

Roman Catholic countries. We must carefully distinguish the better class of Baptists and the Mennonites from the restless revolutionary radicals and fanatics, like Carlstadt, Muenzer, and the leaders of the Muenster tragedy....⁹

Obviously, the Papists have always practiced infant baptism, so how did the Roman Papists' practice get through the Reformation? Thomas Armitage, in his extensively documented book, *A History of the Baptist*, gives this account:

Zwingli & the Inquisition

When Zwingli took the lead in the Swiss Reformation, he demanded obedience to the word of God in all Christian matters, and resolved to reject what it did not enjoin. When debating with Dr. Faber, before six hundred Catholic dignitaries at Zurich, 1523, he laid down this foundation principle... When Faber defended that doctrine ['show me,' he (Zwingli, *ed.*) demanded, 'the place in the Scripture where it is written that we are to invoke the saints.' *Ed.*] by the Councils, Zwingli showed that as these erred, nothing was binding but the Bible, and said that he would go to the universities if they accepted the Bible as the only judge. Dr. Blanche said: 'You understand the Scriptures in one way, and another in another. There must be judges in order to decide who has given the right interpretation.' But Zwingli refused to give any man a place above the Scriptures. Many of his hearers had strong Baptist tendencies and took in all this radical doctrine. Educated by so skillful a general, they turned his own weapons upon him when they took issue with him on other subjects; and he was powerless, being obliged to appeal to the sword drawn from the Catholic armory. He was the most advanced of all reformers biblically, but the moment that he fell into controversy with his own Baptist disciples, he broke with his fundamental principle and made the magistrates of Zurich the decisive judges in the dispute.

The Baptist said: On all such questions the Bible is autocratic; apply it honestly, under the divine right of private judgment, without trammel, and we will follow it; but we refuse to take the interpretations of it which the magistrates give us, for God has not made them our interpreters in such matters. This compelled Zwingli to fall back squarely on the Romish ground, and in turn to compel them to follow the Council. Then came the first break between him and them, on infant baptism. At that moment he was so nearly with them on the subject, that he was willing to delay the baptism of infants 'until they arrived at years of discretion.' [Burrage, *Anabaptists of Switz.*, p 121.] He said in 1525: 'The error that it would be better to baptize children when they had come to years of understanding, seized me too a few years ago;' giving as his reason that 'There is no clear utterance in the New Testament that commands the baptism of children.' Keller attests that, 'Luther at the outset designated Zwingli and his followers as the party associates of those who held views in reference to infant baptism, that were different from his own.' [Preussische Jahrbucher, 1882.] 'We can easily see,' says Hase, 'why the Baptist were not satisfied with the excuses of the Swiss reformers;' [Neue Propheten, p. 175.] and as easily we can see why Zwingli complained: 'The Papists call us heretics, and the Anabaptist call us half-papists.' [To Zwingli, 1527, St.w Ka., 1883, p. 173.] Sometimes he encouraged the practice, sometimes not, always denying the regenerating efficacy of baptism; but finally he **concluded to continue infant baptism on the ground that if it ceased the people would clamor for circumcision, as they must have a bond of visible union.** Ecolampadius had said: 'We have never dared to teach infant baptism as a command, but rather as an instinct of charity.' [Hist. of Prot. Theology, S. 294.] Like him, Zwingli feared a division in the Reformed ranks and resorted to these expedients to prevent this, until Pedobaptist pressure forced him to turn over the question to the civil power. As Dr. Dorner says: 'He saw the setting aside of infant baptism was the same as setting aside the national Church, exchanging a hitherto national reformation of the Church for one more or less Donatist. For, if infant baptism were given up, because faith was not yet, there only remained as the right time for it the moment when living faith and regeneration were certain. And then baptism would become the sign of fellowship of the regenerate, the saints, who bind themselves together as atoms out of the world.' [Hist. of Prot. Theology, S. 294.]¹⁰

The Baptist of Zurich began to assail infant baptism in 1523 – one of their pastors calling it a useless

⁹ Philip Schaff, 1819-1893, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. VII, p. 607.

¹⁰ *A History of the Baptist*, Thomas Armitage, in Two Volumes, published by Bryan, Taylor & Co., 1890. 1988 reprint by Baptist Heritage Press, P.O. Box 366, Watertown, Wisconsin. I.330, 331. [Text]—Armitage's references. Emp. added.

thing. ‘One might as well baptize a cow or a calf,’ he said. Then Grebel writes: ‘Those who understand the teaching of the Scriptures in reference to baptism refuse to allow their children to be baptized.’ Reublin rejected the practice and held a public discussion with the pastors of Zurich, the only result of which was, that the Council arrested two men of his congregation and three from the village of Zollikon near by for refusing to bring their children for baptism, fining them each one silver mark and thrusting them into prison.¹¹

Wicked use of Civil Authority

Thus we see that when the “Reformers” could not win the argument for infant baptism from Scripture, they fled to the civil authority to enforce infant baptism. When the Baptists refused to obey the civil authority to have all their infants baptized, the civil authority attempted to force them to baptize their infants, then they banished all who would not yield, and finally “organized itself into a Protestant inquisition, robbed Christ’s disciples of their freedom, tortured them, confiscated their property and put them to death,” all with Zwingli’s approval.¹²

Let us develop Zwingli’s actions for a moment: Zwingli used the civil magistrates to enforce his view of Paedobaptism. Balthazar Hubmeyer,

[E]mbraced Luther’s views in 1522, and leaving his preferments in the Catholic Church he settled at Waldshut, being in full communication with Zwingli. His power and eloquence moved that city; he assisted Zwingli in the great debated at Zurich with the Catholics, 1523, after which they became the closest and warmest friends. His powerful ministry almost destroyed Romanism in Waldshut, and Austra compelled him to seek refuge elsewhere. This he found in Schaffhausen, but soon discovered that the Reformation in Zurich had not gone back to the Apostolic model. He had laid the best thoughts before Zwingli and Ecolampadius, who at first saw their consistency, then rejected them. However, he followed his convictions, left the State Church and was baptized by Reublin, at Waldshut in 1525, with more than a hundred of his former congregation. He felt his way to Baptist principles very gradually and on the thorough conviction. At first when children were brought to him as a Reformed pastor for baptism, he preached on the little ones being brought to Christ and blessed by him without the use of water (Matt. xix); but if their parents still demanded christening, he gratified them without yielding his own views. After forming a Baptist church, he baptized more than three hundred of his former hearers, and the population became largely Baptist. He preached in the open air to great multitude at St. Gall also, and made a deep impression on the popular mind in the second disputation at Zurich. Being obliged to leave Waldshut the second time, he now found refuge amongst the Baptists of Zurich.

There he was soon arrested and cast into prison, where he lay four months, appealing to his old friend, to the emperor, to the Confederation and the Council, but in vain. His health was broken, his wife was in prison, and he lay in a dungeon with more than twenty others... The Zurich Inquisition used all methods to compel him to recant, for he had written several powerful books which were stirring the public mind; amongst them one ‘Concerning Heretics and those that burn them.’ He showed that all butchery under the pretense of zeal for Christ was a fraud, and an open denial of him who came to save men and not to burn them. Another work of his on Baptism so aroused the Reformers of Berne, Basel and Strasburg, that Zwingli was forced to reply. Haller said: ‘Many have been misled by Hubmeyer’s book, but do not be alarmed to much, *the Council has banished every Anabaptist.*’ Zwingli’s reply was so bitter and vindictive, that Hosek says: ‘He gave reins to his passions;’ and Stern writes of Hubmeyer’s production, that he ‘Showed moderation, respect for his opponents, and force, not in coarse or violent language, but in thought.’ Many of his positions were fresh and very forceful. In answer to the evasive and shallow pretensions of Zwingli, that the silence of the New Testament permitted infant baptism, he said that the spirit of our Lord’s command to baptize the believing forbade its use to babes, thus: ‘The command is to baptize those who believe. To baptize those who do not believe, therefore, is forbidden. For example, Christ commanded his Apostles ot preach the Gospel; in so doing, the doctrines of men were forbidden.’ Was he

¹¹. *Ibid.*

¹². *Ibid*, p 332.

correct?

Zwingli, Jud, Myconius and others visited him in prison, an by one means or another wrung from him a recantation. Faber says that he was laid on the rack, and Cunitz, that he was compelled to recant , April 6, 1526. His own words imply the same. His appeal to the Council of Schaffhausen says:

...I should be compelled by prison, torture, sword, fire or water, or permitted by the withdrawal of God's grace, to say or confess any thing different from the opinion by the enlightenment of God I now cherish...

He also tells us that he offered to discuss those and other issues with Zwingli in public, and if convicted of error they might put him to death; but if Zwingli were shown to be wrong, all that he asked of him was to preach the truth. This Evangelical Inquisition, however, thought the rack their most conclusive answer to his holy convictions... (And thus the rack convinced him to recant publicly, *ed.*)

The people were summoned to the great cathedral, which was crowded, to hear his recantation and the death-knell of the Baptist. Zwingli preached a great sermon on 'Christian steadfastness,' save the mark, and loud and long he declaimed against these heretics; then Hubmeyer was to mount the pulpit and renounce his firm faith, to the delectable edification of the Holy Inquisition of Zurich. Egli says that Zwingli warned the magistrates not to trust Hubmeyer to speak in the cathedral. [Egli, p. 53.] He had a lively memory of what many weeks of labor had failed to do in shaking his faith, till the rack summed up the whole Gospel case. As the inquisitors could not forego the show, all eyes now turned eagerly to the broken frame of the meek Baptist as he climbed the pulpit. He began to read his recantation in a broken, weak and quivering voice, until his heart choked his utterances and he broke down. He swayed to and fro before his audience like a bruised reed shaken by the wind; when suddenly the unseen hand of God was put forth to bind him up, and raising himself to his full height, he filled the sanctuary with the shout, that 'Infant baptism is not of God, and men must be baptized by faith in Christ!' The crowd surged like waves and burst into tumult. Some were seized with horror and some shouted applause, till the roof of the Minster rang. Zwingli screamed above the rest, and the inquisitors were in Pedobaptist panic, and the scene closed by dragging Hubmeyer from the pulpit, hustling him through the multitude, and thrusting him back into his dungeon...¹³

And thus the great "Reformer" Zwingli is documented as being one of the leaders in the religious persecutions of the Inquisitions of the 1500s. Confronted with Scripture, Zwingli had no defence for Pae-dobaptism save the rack, which he freely used through the civil magistrate.

All sorts of lame and flimsy pleas have been created to cover these barbarities, but their blood stains 'will not out.' These Protestant Inquisitors well knew that when their own religious opinions subjected them to civil tribunals, they resented such interferences. Their enthusiasm had only been fired and their convictions deepened by whippings, rackings and burnings, Yet they tried the same severity upon the Baptists which the Catholics had tried on them. And that, too, under the plea that while it was wicked for Catholics to torture them, it was but an act of saving love for Protestants to drown Baptists in murderous waters.¹⁴

Phillip Schaff gives this account of the Reformers' wicked actions:

§ 26. PERSECUTION OF THE ANABAPTISTS.

We pass now to the measures taken against the separatists. At first Zwingli tried to persuade them in private conferences, but in vain. Then followed a public disputation, which took place by order of the magistracy in the council hall, Jan. 17, 1525. Grebel was opposed to it, but appeared, together with Manz and Reubli. They urged the usual arguments against infant baptism, that infants cannot understand the gospel, cannot repent and exercise faith. Zwingli answered them, and appealed chiefly to circumcision and 1 Cor. 7:14, where Paul speaks of the children of Christian parents as "holy." He afterwards published his views in a book, "On Baptism, Rebaptism, and Infant Baptism" (May 27, 1525). Bullinger, who was present at the disputation, reports that the Anabaptists were unable to refute

¹³ *Ibid*, pp 336-339.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p 333. See *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, I.407 for Hastings' excellent account of the Zwingli and the civil authorities' move against those who would not yield to infant baptism, holding it to "an invention of the Pope, yea of Satan Himself"—the Antibaptist. We should mention that Hastings' quotes the Antibaptist who were taking the stand as baptized with pouring from a dipper.

Zwingli's arguments and to maintain their ground. Another disputation was held in March, and a third in November, but with no better result. The magistracy decided against them, and issued an order that infants should be baptized as heretofore, and that parents who refuse to have their children baptized should leave the city and canton with their families and goods.

The Anabaptists refused to obey, and ventured on bold demonstrations. They arranged processions, and passed as preachers of repentance, in sackcloth and girdled, through the streets of Zurich, singing, praying, exhorting, abusing the old dragon (Zwingli) and his horns, and exclaiming, "Woe, woe unto Zurich!"

The leaders were arrested and shut up in a room in the Augustinian convent. A commission of ministers and magistrates were sent to them to convert them. Twenty-four professed conversion, and were set free. Fourteen men and seven women were retained and shut up in the Witch Tower, but they made their escape April 5. Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock were rearrested, and charged with communistic and revolutionary teaching. After some other excesses, the magistracy proceeded to threaten those who stubbornly persisted in their error, with death by drowning. He who dips, shall be dipped,—a cruel irony.

It is not known whether Zwingli really consented to the death sentence, but he certainly did not openly oppose it.

Six executions in all took place in Zurich between 1527 and 1532. Manz was the first victim. He was bound, carried to a boat, and thrown into the river Limmat near the lake, Jan. 5, 1527. He praised God that he was about to die for the truth, and prayed with a loud voice, "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit!" Bullinger describes his heroic death. Grebel had escaped the same fate by previous death in 1526. The last executions took place March 23, 1532, when Heinrich Karpfis and Hans Herzog were drowned. The foreigners were punished by exile, and met death in Roman Catholic countries. Blaurock was scourged, expelled, and burnt, 1529, at Clausen in the Tyrol. Hätzer, who fell into carnal sins, was beheaded for adultery and bigamy at Constance, Feb. 24, 1529. John Zwick, a Zwinglian, says that "a nobler and more manful death was never seen in Constance." Thomas Blaurer bears a similar testimony. Hübmaier, who had fled from Waldshut to Zurich, December, 1525, was tried before the magistracy, recanted, and was sent out of the country to recant his recantation. He labored successfully in Moravia, and was burnt at the stake in Vienna, March 10, 1528. Three days afterwards his faithful wife, whom he had married in Waldshut, was drowned in the Danube.¹⁵

This writer has encountered the same spirit in some modern day professed followers of the Reformation. He was straightly told by one follower that a primary reason American is on its road to destruction is because Paedobaptism is not practiced by Christians in general: "American culture has been baptized," this writer was told — "that is, made Baptist in its culture, and God will not move until infant baptism is practiced by Christians in order to renew and continue the covenant."

One gets the idea that there are those today who would do just what the Reformers did in 1523 if they had the civil authority, *viz.* demand all infants of Christians be baptized and arrest and imprison those who refuse. Is this the Spirit of Christ? We might further ask, "Did this kind of spirit originate with Christ?" However, the same anger against unnecessary, willful and open violation of the Sabbath is not mentioned. Under the Law, violating the Sabbath was a capital offence (Exodus 35:2); on the other hand, failure to preform circumcision (which is seen as a carryover to Paedobaptism) was only excommunication (Genesis 17:14). Fallen men sure can get their priorities mixed up when it comes to personal preferences.

Something Visible

Knowing that people need a "visible union," the Reformers gave them infant baptism lest they should split the ranks. Lacking clear Scriptural support to enforce their view of Paedobaptism, the Reformers turned to the civil authority for enforcement. The researcher will find, moreover, that no honest Bible scholar produces one clear word from God requiring nor justifying infant baptism. In fact, most will admit there is no clear command to the New Testament church for Paedobaptism.

¹⁵ Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Ages Software, Vol VIII, pp. 83, 84

State Church Strengthened

It is interesting that the reformers understood infant baptism continued the power and authority of the “national Church,” so the reformation opened with a stand against Paedobaptism. Leading up to the confrontation between Zwingli and the Papists where Zwingli attempted to hold them to the Scripture, Armitage tells us:

...The sixteenth century opened with a general awakening throughout Europe to the need of religious reform, and this was specially marked in Switzerland, before Luther. In ideal, the Swiss reformers longed to get back to the Apostolic patters, to a spiritual Church free from the control of human policy, and their aims took a Baptist bearing. It is sheer ignorance to represent the Swiss Baptists as merely urging reform in a defective baptism. This is a monstrous bugbear to frighten superstitious folk, who count the refusal of a spurious baptism to what they call ‘covenanted babes,’ as an affront to Christ, and all one with ‘soul-killing.’ They held infant baptism in discredit, not only as a human institution, but as a flagrant impiety palming itself off as an institution of god, and asking the State to enforce in on pain of death, while the Church claimed to administer it by the authority of the Trinity! This double claim rendered it an abominable thing which stepped in between them and their children, robbing both of their natural rights. Looking upon it in this light, it became an alarming perversion of the whole genius of a spiritual religion, and a piece of wild fanaticism which forestalled all right of choice in either parent or child, in order to smuggle the babe into the State-Church. To force its baptism under the magisterial domination of pains and penalties was to bind the infant to a clerical despotism, which, if repeated in England or the United States to-day, would shiver their governments to atoms. The scenic caricatures of these Swiss Baptists have been a simple mendacity answering the end of an historical trick to nullify real facts and render honest men hateful.¹⁶

The Papists knew then and they know now the power of Paedobaptism: It gives tremendous power to the church and clergy, and thus to the state if the church is under the state’s authority.

A young man this writer knows was a good example: His protestant reform church refused to baptize his baby because he, the father, though not in any moral sin nor in violation of any state statute, was not doing the will of the elders. Thus either he had to line up with the will of the elders (obtain a state marriage license, for he had married with a “Coverture Marriage Contract” in a non-pedobaptist church) or the reformed church would not administer the ritual. The parents were fearful their child would remain “outside the covenant” if not baptized. Therefore, though disagreeing with the policy of having to submit their marriage to the state, they lined up with the elders’ demand, giving the family to the state. Of course, the option to find another church to baptize the infant was thwarted because all the pedobaptist churches they knew demanded the same submission to the state, and the parents were bound by the “superstition.”

Chapter 4

Paedobaptism, Unsupported by Scripture

Both the Papists and the Reformers admitted that Scripture does not command infant baptism:

...Bellarmine, the great Catholic disputant, saw the utter insufficiency of Scripture to sustain infant baptism, and the absolute necessity of sustaining it as an unwritten tradition, which cannot be proved by Scripture. [De Verbo die ch. 4.] Vilmar, also, reaches this conclusion: ‘If baptism does not regenerate, but is a mere symbol, then the symbol and regeneration must come together. The Baptist are profoundly logical.’ [*Theology of Facts*, p. 67.]¹⁷

¹⁶ *A History of the Baptist*, Thomas Armitage, pp 329, 330. “When Zwingli took the lead in the Swiss Reformation...” See above for the rest of this quote.

John Calvin

Calvin takes the same ground, but goes a step further. He says,

‘This principle must always be adhered to, That baptism is not conferred on infants that they may be made children of God. But because now, in this place and degree they may be reckoned with God, the grace of adoption is sealed in their flesh. Otherwise, the Anabaptists might justly exclude them from baptism. For unless the truth of the external sign applies to them, it will be mere profanation to call them into participation of the sign itself.’ [Calvin, Schyn. Hist. of Mennonites, p. 107.] ...¹⁸

This writer found Calvin justifying Paedobaptism thusly:

In the first place, then, it is a well-known doctrine, and one as to which all the pious are agreed... .. If reason is listened to, it will undoubtedly appear that baptism is properly administered to infants and a thing due to them... .. Circumcision, which, as is well known, corresponds to our baptism, was intended for infants...¹⁹

Calvin uses some very strong statements against those who demanded that he Scripturally support Paedobaptism, *e.g.*,

Let us now discuss the arguments by which some furious madmen cease not to assail this holy ordinance of God.²⁰

However, Calvin offers no Scriptural support that infant baptism is a “holy ordinance.”²¹ Calvin, in his 25 page argument for Paedobaptism, appeals to reason, offers analogies and calls forth assumptions, but he **gives no clear Scripture connecting** Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism. Rather, he assumes the connection, and builds upon his assumption, and condemns those who refuse to follow his departure from *Scripture Alone*. He uses the words of Christ to His disciples for rebuking the children (Matthew 19:13, &c.) as one of his primary supporting arguments for infant baptism. The argument, hence, by the paedobaptist is, among other things, that since Christ welcomed the little children into His lap, little children must be welcomed into baptism. See Calvin’s sad argument from human reason: See “Calvin’s Justification of Infant Baptism:” on page 80.

- **Parenthesis:**

The parallel passage of Matthew 19:13 is,

Luke 18:15 *And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.*

Evidently, the infants of Matthew 19:13 were old enough to respond to Christ’s call themselves. Though the parents were probably the ones bringing the children to Christ, Scripture clearly states that these children were not brought for baptism. John 4:2. Those who use Matthew 19:30 to justify paedobaptism wrest the Scripture to their own destruction and to the destruction of those brought to them. 2 Peter 3:16. (*Scripture Alone?*)

Calvin’s “well known” connection “to which all the pious are agreed” was established by the

¹⁷. *A History of the Baptist*, p 358.

¹⁸. *Ibid*, p 358, 359.

¹⁹. *Institutes of The Christian Religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge, II.529, 550. 1970 reprint by Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

²⁰. “Holy ordinance of God.” Such language adds to the word of God, for there is no such command anywhere in God’s word for an infant to be baptized. God has not pleasant things to say about adding to his word, Revelation 22:18.

²¹. *Ibid*, p 535.

Papists and clung to by “national Churches” with no Scriptural support. It spoke of the power of the clergy and of the state over the family through “national Churches.”²² What kind of hold could the state exercise over Christian families through infant baptism if the families believes it absolutely necessary for the spiritual well-being of their children?

Though the past Papists, Reformers, nor the modern Papaedobaptist have any clear Scriptural support to continue their practice of baptizing infants, they do it anyway. Lacking Scriptural support, they support their practice with assumptions, wrested Scripture, tradition and name calling, *e.g.*, “furious madmen.”²³ Paedobaptism is Romanism carried into Protestantism through the Reformation. Moreover, it allows power over families who faithfully believe in Paedobaptism to remain in the hands of the “elders,” or Priests in the case of Rome.

Which he commanded not

Let us conclude this brief historical sketch with a thought from Leviticus 10: the *strange fire* offered by Nadab and Abihu. In Leviticus 9:23, 24, the Lord had accepted the offering by sending fire out to consume the burnt offering. The people saw the Lord’s action, and fell on their faces. The very next verse, however, tells of two of Aaron’s sons offering *strange fire*, unauthorized fire, before the Lord. The Lord again sent out fire, but this time to kill the two presumptuous men without harming their clothing.

Keil Delitzsch

Keil points out that it had not yet been commanded by the Lord, in fact, never was, to take fire from the alter. Keil says the sin was that the boys made an offering at the wrong time, contrary to the time that had been given by the Lord. Keil develops the timing of the offering: The *burnt offering, without blemish* had been made and accepted by the Lord in chapter 9. The people fall down and worship the Lord. The next God-commanded step was for the families of the priests to eat the remaining meat. But the sons, 10:1, were overcome with emotion, and, instead of waiting for the next phase of the offering as commanded by the Lord, *i.e.* eating the meat (10:16.), they made an incense offering. Keil sums it up:

The fire of the holy God (Ex. xix. 18), which had just sanctified the service of Aaron as well-pleasing to God, brought destruction upon his two eldest sons, because they had not sanctified Jehovah in their hearts, but had taken upon themselves a self-willed service; just as the same gospel is to one a savour of life unto life, and to another a savour of death unto death (2 Cor. ii. 16)...²⁴

Thus the sons took it upon themselves to make an offering that was not according to that *commanded* by the Lord. Though the type of fire, *i.e.* from the alter, is involved, the primary violation of the *command* of the Lord was in the timing: The next order of events was the priest’s family eating the meat.

Albert Barnes

Barn’s Notes (edited by Cook) agrees: “The sin was improper timing.”

²² We could easily use the parallel of the Incorporated church today: It must line up with public policy, and, accordingly, the families within the church must line up with public policy, or baptism will be withheld from their children, and thus, according to Papists’ doctrine, the child cut off from the covenant.

²³ This pastor has found that when one lacks Scripture support, loud speaking and name calling is substituted for Scripture.

²⁴ *Keil-Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament* in Ten Volumes, I.351. 1986 reprint by Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Gustave Freidrich Oehler

On the other hand, Oehler uses the death of the boys in Leviticus 10, to assume that their *strange fire* was not of the fire from above:

All fire for the offerings of incense had to be taken from this sacred fire on the altar of burnt-offerings,—a thing which indeed, expressly commanded in the law, but was set forth practically by the heavy punishment inflicted on the sons of Aaron, who approached the Lord in offering of incense with strange fire (Lev. x).²⁵

John Gill

John Gill also mentions that the fire was strange because it was not from the fire that had come down from heaven, but he continues:

which he commanded not; yea, forbid, by sending fire from heaven, and ordering coals of fire for the incense to be taken off of the altar of burnt offering; and this, as Aben Ezra observes, they did of their own mind, and not by order. It does not appear that they had any command to offer incense at all at present, this belonged to Aaron, and not to them as yet; but **without any instruction and direction** they rushed into the holy place with their censers, and offered incense, even both of them, when only one priest was to offer at a time, when it was to be offered, and this they also did with strange fire. This may be an emblem of dissembled love, when a man performs religious duties, prays to God, or praises him without any cordial affection to him, or obeys commands not from love, but selfish views; or of an ignorant, false, and misguided zeal, a zeal not according to knowledge, superstitious and hypocritical; or of false and strange doctrines, such as are not of God, nor agree with the voice of Christ, and are foreign to the Scriptures; or of human ordinances, and the inventions of men, and of every thing that man brings of his own, in order to obtain eternal life and salvation.²⁶

Gill correctly points out that Nadab and Abihu moved “without any instructions and direction” to make the offering. Then Gill rightly compares such movement with acting on “human ordinances, and the inventions of men.” He concludes that those who act thusly in hope of obtaining eternal life and salvation will die.

Geneva

The Geneva note for v. 3, is:

I will punish them that serve me in other ways than I have commanded, not sparing the chief, that the people may fear and praise my judgments.

Which he commanded them not.

Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord because they, evidently with good intentions based upon 9:23, 24, rushed to do something which they were not specifically commanded to do. Has the law changed so much that man can today do those things not specifically commanded of them for his redemption by the Lord? Anything other than individual faith in the finished work of Christ must result in his death.

Rules of Interpretation

One more important point to keep in mind — Rules of Interpretation. The Bible student knows that a primary rule of interpretation is that he cannot accept implied doctrine over clear, plain teaching of God’s Word, *viz.*, implications and/or obscure passages must be understood in agreement with, or in

²⁵ *Theology of the Old Testament*, by Dr. Gustav Friedrich Oehler, p 282. Originally published by T. & T. Clark, 1873. Klock and Klock reprint, 1978. Notice he *assumes* that the proper fire was to be from the altar.

²⁶ *OnLine Bible*, Leviticus 10:1. Emp added.

light of, clear, plain passages.²⁷

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. (Proverbs 30:5, 6)

Those who appeal to reason, offer analogies and call forth assumptions to dogmatically support things *which he commanded them not* are on very dangerous ground.

Having covered a very brief history of Paedobaptism, we will proceed to examine and develop passages and arguments used by pedobaptist. We will show from Scripture that Old Testament circumcision cannot Scripturally be identified with New Testament baptism. Rather, it speaks, as said Cyprian, of the New Testament circumcision of the heart accomplished by the resurrected Christ --- that is, the circumspect life.

The “Reformed Faith” is identified by “Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone, Scripture Alone.” It is sad indeed that those who claim the “Reformed Faith” reject “Scripture Alone” as they follow practices that cannot be supported from Scripture.

²⁷. This writer finds it interesting that some who would rightly hold others to Berkhof’s sound, Biblical premises found in *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* will readily use extremely obscure passages and implications to overcome Biblical difficulties with their desire to baptize infants.

Chapter II

Circumcision and the Old Testament

From this writer's understanding, the practice of infant baptism finds its basis in the Old Testament rite of circumcision. Therefore, as we consider the Old Testament rite of circumcision, we should remember that it was a rite instituted by God, Exodus 12.

Chronology—Exodus 12

We should not overlook the fact that Moses gives Exodus 12:43-51 after the first passover. Furthermore, though the dogmatic command concerning circumcision (Genesis 17:13, 14) had been in effect for over 400 years, Moses did not command that every male in each house be circumcised before taking part in the first passover in Egypt. (Vv. 43-51 are specifically placed after v. 42, which concludes the passover with the death of the unprotected firstborn.)

Moreover, Joshua 5:5 does not say the people were circumcised before they came out of Egypt; it simply says that all who came out of Egypt were circumcised. Thus according to the order given in Exodus 12, it is evident that all the males were circumcised after—not before—they came out of Egypt, and were circumcised before they partook of the second passover at the foot of the mount a year later. Therefore, the majority of males who partook of the first passover and came out of Egypt were uncircumcised, clearly showing us that circumcision was not a basic requirement for redemption from Egypt. Rather, redemption was based solely upon faith in the shed blood of the lamb.

It was the parent's faith in the Lord evidenced in the passover lamb that qualified the male child to eat of the first passover lamb, v. 3. (What about the first-born who were too young to partake of the passover, *i.e.* new-borns?) Many Egyptians partook of the passover by faith; from that time on, the Egyptians who came out with Israel were considered Israelites, 12:38. Admittedly, the parent's faith delivered the children from the wrath of God against Egypt at that point, but can we say that the parent's faith "saves" or "converts" infants under Christ?

All who came out of Egypt were circumcised after the first passover, Exodus 12, and before the second passover at the mount, but they were not circumcised again until they entered into the promised land, Joshua 5:1-8.

There were two basic requirements in the first passover: **First**, the lamb himself had to be unblemished, unbroken and totally used, and any unused portion had to be burned with fire. **Second**, the individual himself: Though the first instructions were given to the people of Israel, anyone could have faith in the shed blood, and could partake of the lamb's blood. V. 3 neither restricts the partakers to only natural born Israelites, nor requires circumcision.

V. 43, provision is made for those outside of the nation of Israel after the first passover: Starting with the second passover, no stranger could eat of it, but he did not have to remain a stranger. A stranger was defined as anyone who was not a member of the nation of Israel, *i.e.* the hired servant and/or uncircumcised foreigner dwelling in the land.

There were two methods of becoming a member of the nation of Israel: born of Israelite parents (*born in the land, i.e.* homeborn, v. 49), or conversion to the Hebrew religion, v. 48. Circumcision was the outward sign of conversion placed upon a male, but not upon a female. A female could marry into the nation, and the marriage could be either willing or unwilling on

her part, Deuteronomy 21:10.¹ Either method made one an heir to the Lord's covenant-promises to the nation of Israel, including the promise of the land of Canaan.

Visible Assembly

Though seemingly out of place at this point in our study (we are starting with the Old Testament rite of circumcision and working our way forward), we should consider the Lord's words to Peter. Peter's confession was the condition laid down by Christ for entrance into the New Testament congregation of the Lord, the **visible assembly** of the church. Christ's words, accordingly, present a very basic premise upon which all teaching concerning entrance into the Lord's assembly must be built.

Matthew 16:13-20, Christ said very clearly that His *church* must be built upon the profession of faith in Himself (not upon circumcision nor baptism). It is extremely important to note that this location is the first usage of the word *church* in the New Testament, and that it was used by the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord used the word *church* in His conversation with Peter, He established the Spirit's meaning for the word *church* from His point in time. All the rest of the New Testament teaching concerning the *church* must be viewed in the light of our Lord's words.

In this passage, the Lord Jesus Christ established the only basis for entrance into His church. Although the New Testament term "*church*" and the Old Testament term "*Church* or *Israel*" are identical, *i.e.*, the assembly of the Lord, Acts 7:38, Christ's method of entrance into the New Testament *church* carries a different emphasis—the Old Testament circumcision spoke of the circumcision of the heart which Peter reflected when he made his profession of faith in the Son of God.

Church

The word *church*, as used from the time of Matthew 16:18, is:

#1577 ekklesia {ek-klay-see'-ah} from a compound of 1537 and a derivative of 2564; TDNT - 3:487,394; n f

AV -church (112) - assembly (3) [115] I) a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly **1)** an assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating **2)** the assembly of the Israelites **3)** any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance, tumultuously **4)** in a Christian sense **4a)** an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting **4b)** a company of Christian, or of those who, hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, observe their own religious rites, hold their own religious meetings, and manage their own affairs, according to regulations prescribed for the body for order's sake; those who anywhere, in a city, village, constitute such a company and are united into one body; the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth; the assembly of faithful Christians already dead and received into heaven.²

Consequently, the word *church* in Matthew 16:18 clearly means a *visible, called out assembly* built upon a supernatural profession of faith in Himself as the Son of God, Lord and Saviour.³

¹It is interesting that the former war captive, upon marriage, was no longer considered anything but a full Israelite. She had all the rights of an endowed wife—she was not considered an unendowed concubine. If the man "divorced" her, she was permitted to freely go anywhere in Israel she desired.

Peter's Confession

The qualifications for membership in a local congregation is a profession of faith, not baptism. Therefore, New Testament passages referring to *church*, #1577, speak of a visible group of people united together based upon Peter's confession.⁴ In other words, according to Christ's words in Matthew 16:17, the only way the New Testament church would and can be built is upon the profession of faith as exemplified by Peter:

Thou art the Son of the living God... And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it...

Clearly, the New Testament church is built upon the *rock* of Peter's profession of faith in Christ, the Son of the living God. If we say any less, *e.g.* the church is built upon baptism, we must agree with the Papists concerning the apostolic succession of Peter. Such a church is not a New Testament church as defined by our Lord.

Church, #1577, is used in some interesting places, and is, therefore, founded upon Peter's Matthew 16:16-18, profession: **1)** The law given by Christ to the church in Matthew 18:17, is addressed to the ones who have entered via the confession of Peter. **2)** The ones added to the church in Acts 2:41-47 were added via Peter's confession in Christ as the Son of God—they made the supernatural confession of faith as did Peter, and were **then** baptized. **3)** Acts 8:1, Paul persecuted those who would not deny that Christ was the Son of God.⁵ **4)** Ephesians 3:10, the Lord will show Himself strong through those who have made Peter's confession of faith. **5)** The church of Ephesians 5 is built upon Peter's profession. **6)** Colossians 1:8, Christ is the head over those who have "made Peter's confession." Of course, He is head over all things, but especially over those who have professed Christ, Ephesians 1:22. **7)** 1 Timothy 3:5, 15, Paul, as he instructs Timothy, is clearly talking of the visible church (#1577) about its rulers and membership. He refers to the church as mentioned by Christ as built upon Peter's profession of faith in the Son of God. **8)** Genesis 22:17, God's promise to Abraham was of the New Testament church to come, Galatians 3:16, &c. Christ gave to Peter the condition upon which membership must be based. It is clear that infants cannot meet Christ's conditions.

Moreover, notice that Peter, under the inspiration of the Spirit, confessed the Lordship and Kingship of Christ before Christ was crucified and before Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father where He ever lives to make intercession for the saints. Christ clearly said that only upon the supernatural profession of faith—*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*—can one be allowed in fellowship in the church.

² *OnLine Bible*. Though I might not agree with *visible assembly*, can I change it to suit my ideas? Under **bb.**, Thayer continues: "the whole body of Christians scattered throughout the earth; collectively, all who worship and honor God and Christ in whatever place they may be: Mt. xvi.28... **cc.** the name is transferred to the assembly of faithful Christians dead and received into heaven: heb. xii.23..." The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, by Associated Publishers, Lafayette, IN. p. 196.

³ Follow the implications of the meaning of this word, *a visible assembly*. With these words, the Lord forbids membership in His church without a confession of faith. What kind of curse is upon those who make Him say something he does not? Only the Spirit can reveal the truth about Christ to an individual, John 6, 10, &c.

⁴ Obviously, *assembly*, #1577, Acts 19:32, 39, is not included.

⁵ He did not persecute those who were uncircumcised. Thus was he a good Israelite if he held circumcision in such low esteem? The Reformers persecuted those who did not baptize their infants, *qv.*

Can we accept anything less without changing the Word of God?

Though the New Testament church is a continuation of the Old Testament church (*i.e.*, the Elect race of God), there is no hint of the carryover of circumcision (thus paedobaptism if one makes that connection) into the new church. Commenting on Peter's First Epistle, Weise said:

It is, per se, very possible, that when Peter wrote to the churches of the dispersion, individual Gentiles who had become believers had already attached themselves to them; and if it were really the case that individual expressions of the Epistle refer expressly to Gentile Christians (which I, at least, cannot find to be the case), then we should have to conclude that the Gentile-Christian portion of these churches was not inconsiderable. But in such a case it would only come out the more clearly that Peter holds the believing Israelites to be the real stem, the substance of the Church, to which these Gentiles have been led by God before the time (cf. § 43, *b*). That even such as were not born Jews might enter into the elect race, and participate in its promises, was an idea which had become quite familiar to the Jewish consciousness through proselytism. It is true that circumcision was demanded from the actual proselytes to Judaism; but Peter had, according to § 43, *c*, acknowledged that even Gentiles as such, *i.e.* without accepting circumcision, could be incorporated by faith with God's people; and if even born and circumcised Israelites belonged to the elect race of the time of the consummation only inasmuch as they had become believers, it would certainly not have been a great step in advance to make faith, henceforth, the sole condition of participation in the salvation and promise of Israel. But as the apostolic decree had not thought of placing believing Gentiles in a subordinate position to the Jewish-Christian substance of the Church, after the analogy of the proselytes of the gate, so no such idea can be found in our Epistle, although Reuss (ii. 302 [E. Tr. ii. 272]) still discovers it in consequence of his false interpretation of the address of the Epistle. What, indeed, was the nature of the social relation subsisting between these Gentiles who were incorporated with the elect race and the stem of the Church, which undoubtedly remained true to the law, and whether this question had already arisen—as to these matters there is no indication whatever in our Epistle. The Jews in the far-off dispersion were scarcely accustomed to so strict an observance of the law, that their social relation to the uncircumcised members of the Church would become such a burning question as in the immediate neighbourhood of Palestine; and even in the Church at Antioch the controversy was imported from Jerusalem.⁶

The Elect race, *i.e.*, *the Israel of God*, is the same in both Testaments, grace through faith; incorporation into that race is the same in both Testaments, grace through faith; the outward sign of membership is the same in both Testaments, grace producing faith and Godliness. The New Testament emphasizes that Old Testament circumcision is not carried over into the New Testament church in any form.

Circumcision and the Original Command.

Though this at times is a confusing, abused and misused subject, we will attempt to deal with it in an orderly manner with several quotes, and then deal with the problems presented from the Word of God. The quotes are not well ordered, but the conclusions will be.

To find the truth about circumcision, we must go back to the original command, Genesis 17. The covenant promise of God to Abraham and his seed after him was marked in Abraham by circumcision, and was, accordingly, sealed in blood.⁷ The covenant-promise found in Genesis 12 contained the promise of: **1)** making a great nation from Abraham; **2)** making Abraham and his seed blessed from God; **3)** making Abraham's name great; **4)** making Abraham and his seed a blessing to all the

⁶*Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Dr. Bernhard Weiss, I.209, 210. Clark's Foreign Theological Library, New Series, Vol XII, T & T Clark, 38 George Street, Edinburgh. 1888. This pastor has a book length manuscript on "Who is Israel," containing a section on "The Conversion of Israel." It is far to lengthy to go into here.

⁷One should remember that circumcision included more than just Abraham's physical seed, e.g., purchased servants.

earth, and **5)** making those who bless Abraham's seed blessed of God, and who curse Abraham's seed cursed by God.⁸ According to Genesis 12, Abraham received the covenant-promise 24 years before receiving the sign of the covenant, *i.e.*, circumcision.⁹ The chronology of events between Genesis chapters 12 and 17 is important:

1) Abram is promised the land of Canaan, 12:7. **2)** There was a famine in the land, so Abram and Lot went down into Egypt where Pharaoh sent for and took Sarai. Only by God's intervention was Sarai delivered. Abram and Lot left Egypt wealthy, 13:2. **3)** Abraham and Lot part company, and again Abram is promised the land of Canaan, 13:15. Moreover, Abram is promised that his seed will be as the sand of the sea for its numbers, 13:16. **4)** Sodom and its inhabitants are defeated, and Lot is taken captive along with the kings of Sodom. Abram rescues Lot, 14:16. **5)** Abram meets Melchizedek, and gives to him the tithe of the spoil from the battle against the ones who took Lot captive. Melchizedek is an extremely important figure in Hebrews 7. **6)** The king of Sodom offers to pay Abram. Abram refuses, 13:23. **7)** The Lord appears to Abram, and gives him the promise of a seed of his own body to fulfill God's promise through. The Lord again promises such a multitude of seed that they cannot be counted. Abram believes God, and it is counted to him for righteousness, 15:6; Galatians 3:6. **8)** Even after this, Abram said, *Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?* (it being the land of Canaan, indicating Abram still had doubts), 15:8. **9)** This time the Lord confirms the covenant with Abram – which includes Abram's seed being in Egypt for 400 years and the specific possession of the land of Canaan – with the sacrifices of the heifer, the she goat, the ram, the turtle-dove and the young pigeon, 15:18. Abram is in a deep sleep, so God alone makes the covenant. Thus it is a covenant of grace which the Lord will fulfill regardless of Abram's actions. Circumcision is not yet given. **10)** Next we see Abram yielding to his wife and the birth of Ishmael to Hagar, Sarai's maid. Abram is 86 at the time, 16:16. **11)** Abram, loving Ishmael, desires that Ishmael would be the heir of the promise, 17:18. **12)** Though the Lord refuses to let Ishmael be the child of the covenant, the Lord does include Ishmael in the promise made with his dad of many seed, 15:10. Circumcision is still not yet given. **13)** thirteen years later (86-99), the Lord again appears to Abram, renewing the same covenant which had been given 24 years earlier. Only this time, there are some added things: **First**, Abram's name is changed to Abraham, reflecting the promise that he would indeed be the father of many nations; **second**, the Lord reaffirms the giving of the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession to Abraham's seed after him, which had already been promised, and **third**, circumcision is added.¹⁰

In God's order of time, it is extremely significant that the events of Genesis 17 follow the events of chapter 16 where Abram permitted his wife to convince him that they needed to take matters into their own hands, and Ishmael was born. Then after they had taken matters into their own hands, God renews the covenant to Abram, adding circumcision as a physical, visible sign that He will indeed fulfill the promises of the covenant — none of which were new promises in chapter 17.

God's initial command to Abraham in Genesis 17 concerning circumcision indeed presents some difficult considerations. God's original command of circumcision to Abraham was not optional upon his household and servants: Whether they believed in Abraham's God or not never entered into the question. Thus circumcision required no profession and/or evidence of faith in the God of Abraham

⁸Paul clearly tells us in Galatians 3 that Christ is the promised seed, and all who are in Christ by faith evidenced by Peter's confession, *q.v.*, are heirs to the promise. The difficulty being dealt with by Paul is that Jews—commonly known as the Judizers—were influencing the Galatians to follow the Jewish rites and rituals, especially circumcision. He strongly rebukes them. Galatians 6:15, 16. True heirship to the covenant is evidenced by walking according to the rules laid down by Paul in his letter to the Galatians, basically summed up in 5:22. In fact, Paul rebukes the Galatians for desiring to assume to the bondage of the Old Testament rites and rituals, 4:9, *q.v.*

⁹Abraham was 75 when he received the promise, and 99 when he received the sign of its fulfillment.

¹⁰In Christ, the SEED, the whole earth belongs to God's people; it is possessed through faith and preaching the gospel of peace. Romans 4:13.

by those circumcised. Abraham's household was quite large by Genesis 17. We cannot assume that they all had the faith and actions of Abraham. Therefore, many men who were not covenant-faithful, as was Abraham, were circumcised. Circumcision apart from faith basically held true until the time of Christ, and caused very heated conflicts in His day.

Unbelieving Adults Circumcised

The purchased servant was required to be circumcised, but there is no mention of any requirement of faith in the God of Israel on the servant's part: If he was bought with money, he was circumcised regardless of whether or not he wanted to be circumcised. (Genesis 17:12, Exodus 12:44.) Therefore, physical circumcision cannot be firmly equated with faith in the true and living God of Abraham, or even in the hope that one day he might have such a faith. In fact, the only way Abraham's servants could fail to be circumcised was to flee from Abraham's house.

On the other hand, circumcision was optional upon the stranger dwelling among Israel. (Exodus 12:48.) The stranger was permitted to *sojourn* with Israel, which meant he willingly subjected himself to Israel's laws. He could unite in circumcision, or refuse, but if he wanted to partake of the passover, he had to be circumcised. Thus according to Genesis 17, the requirement of faith in the God of Israel by the one being circumcised was not attached to the rite of circumcision.

Moreover, there were adults who were forced to be circumcised, maybe against their wishes. There were adults who united with Old Testament Israel simply by being circumcised, without any profession of faith in Israel's God. Therefore, to be consistent in carrying circumcision over to New Testament baptism, any adult, saved or openly unsaved, must be allowed baptism and membership in the visible New Israel of God, the church. (See "Visible Assembly" p. 22.)

Moreover, to be consistent with the Old Testament circumcision picture, are there adults who should be forced into baptism?¹¹

Consequently, it is obvious that we are looking for a general thought behind Old Testament circumcision that can be traced into the New, a thought upon which God's Word to Peter is built.

Abraham circumcised Ishmael after he was told that Ishmael was outside of the covenant-promise. (Genesis 17:12-27.)¹² Following through the implications of Old Testament circumcision into New Testament baptism, we must allow admittance to those who hate God in word and deed, which is quite contrary to God's Word. 2 Corinthians 6:14. "Scripture Alone?"

Consistent Inconsistencies

Some Paedobaptists this pastor has met are consistent, and rightly so if they are going to say the two are the same, in their belief that Old Testament circumcision must be literally and strictly carried over into New Testament baptism. They hold that **anyone**, regardless of their life-style (sodomites), desiring to be baptized and unite with a Christian assembly should be allowed to do so. (Is this a reason sodomites now hold offices in paedobaptist churches?) Moreover, they hold that all family members, no matter the age nor spiritual condition, should be baptized based upon the circumcision of every Old Testament purchased male servant and every household male member. Furthermore, passages such as Acts 16:14ff. (which we will deal with), that apparently refer to a complete household being baptized regardless of faith, are used to carry forward circumcision to baptism of even

¹¹ Admittedly, our Lord said the kingdom of God would have *dirty birds* in it, but are we to knowingly welcome the unclean? Matthew 13:32.

¹² Moreover, did not Ishmael hate and mock Isaac? Did not Abraham circumcise the additional sons born to him in chapter 25 whom he also knew were outside the covenant-promise? Yes! God included them in the promise as far as multiplying their seeds, but the Ishmaelites are not in the line mentioned by Paul in Galatians 3, &c.

infants.¹³

The obvious problem with such a literal New Testament application of the Old Testament rite is the fact that only males were circumcised. If one is going to bring the Old Testament rite of circumcision literally into the church through baptism, he **must**, therefore, exclude females from baptism and all the **benefits** pedobaptists claim it represents. Admittedly, views allowing openly non-Christians to unite with Christian assemblies are probably extreme, but to be consistent with a faith that says baptism continues the rite of circumcision, the view must be adhered to.¹⁴

Obviously, we might assume that God's command to Abraham was preceded by a profession of faith by those circumcised, but that is not what the text says. We rightly condemn others for building doctrine upon assumptions, but do we the same? Any idea that all who are willing to be baptized should be permitted membership into the visible assembly (see "Visible Assembly" p. 22.) presents a very great difficulty: Christ said very clearly that His church is to be built upon the supernatural profession of faith in Himself, and He made no distinction between a *visible* and *invisible* assembly. (Matthew 16:13-20.) Can infants make such a profession? According to the Lord's words, admittance into a Christian assembly apart from Peter's confession makes the assembly man's, not the Lord's. Though the clarity of our Lord's words should completely settle the issue of circumcision/baptism if we stick to "Scripture Alone," we will continue in this study and try to deal with some difficult questions.

Though Israel was uncircumcised before the Exodus, the Lord kept His covenant with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. Furthermore, the Lord brought them into Canaan uncircumcised, for Joshua circumcised Israel after they crossed the Jordan. (Joshua 5:5.) Consequently, circumcision was an outward sign that God would keep His promises — promises to all people, both believers and unbelievers, *i.e.*, Ishmael; it<\$ICircumcision; prefigured Christ's coming work upon the source of life, the heart. Thus all the world is equally responsible to God's law, and will be held so by the Lord. Circumcision showed a greater responsibility, but basically the responsibility was the same upon all mankind: All will be judged according to the law of truth whether they are circumcised or not. (Romans 2 & 3.)

In the circumcision of unbelievers, we no doubt see that no action by man can place God under any kind of obligation. Though circumcised, Ishmael and Esau were god-haters, and God was not obligated to change either's heart. (Romans 9:13.) No one was forced to become an Israelite at the source of life, the heart, though the infant and servant were forced to be circumcised.

Another thing that must be considered in Genesis 17: Both Abraham's and his wife's bodies were dead as far as any human prospects of reproduction. (Romans 4:17-21.) In other words, it is evident that both Abram and his wife saw their time for having children expiring in Genesis 16, so they grew weak in the faith, taking matters into their own hands.

Leupold

Leupold opens his comments on Genesis 17:

The basic fact to be observed for a proper approach to this chapter is that the covenant referred to is not a new one. For 15: 18 reports the establishment of the covenant, whose essential provisions are the same as those here outlined. Consequently this chapter marks an advance in this direction that the things previously guaranteed are now foretold as finally coming to pass: the one covenant promises certain

¹³In our day of educating younger and younger sodomites in the public schools, the circumcision argument would require baptizing open sodomites in the households of Christians. How can we take what we want from God's Word while discarding the rest? "Scripture Alone?"

¹⁴What benefit does an baptized infant in a "so-so" Christian home have over an unbaptized infant in a "good" Christian home?

blessings, the other the realization of these blessings when their appointed time has come.¹⁵

In Genesis 17:1, God came to Abram in visible form, and identified Himself to Abram as the *Almighty God*, or *El Shaddai*.

Keil-Dlitzsch

Let us follow Keil's comments on this matter, for they are extremely important in understanding the fact of circumcision.

At the establishment of the covenant, God had manifested Himself to him as Jehovah (xv.7); here Jehovah describes Himself as El Shaddai, God the Mighty One... This name is not to be regarded as identical with Elohim, that is to say, with God as Creator and Preserver of the world... It belongs to the sphere of salvation forming one element in the manifestation of Jehovah, and describing Jehovah, the covenant God, as possessing the power to realize His promises, even when the order of nature presented no prospect of their fulfillment, and the powers of nature were insufficient to secure it. The name which Jehovah thus gives to Himself was to be a pledge, that in spite of his own body now dead, and the deadness of Sarah's womb (Rom.iv.19), God could and would give him the promised innumerable posterity...¹⁶

Thus whereas in Elohim, 15:7, God described Himself as the mighty one, in El Shaddai, 17:1, God described Himself as the One Who compels nature to go against itself in order to fulfill His divine purpose. Both Abram and his wife had lost any natural ability and all hope of fulfilling the covenant, *viz.* their bodies were dead.

Abraham's hope before Circumcision

Abram and his wife tried to fulfill God's promise the natural way in Genesis 16, and failed. Old Testament circumcision, therefore, is a clear statement on God's part that the covenant will not be accomplished by natural means, *viz.* natural birth nor baptism. It says that God will accomplish the covenant through non-human means, the new birth: Both Abraham's and Sara's bodies were now dead. Circumcision of Abraham and his descendants said that they WOULD NOT accomplish God's promises through human means, but were dependent upon the Lord to fulfill the promises already made. (Genesis 12:1-3.) Circumcision assured them of nothing as far as spiritual blessings, *e.g.*, Ishmael and Esau. But it did protect the males of his people from being cast out of the congregation of the Lord as they were unfaithful:¹⁷ Ishmael was cast out though he was circumcised, for he mocked the promised seed, Isaac. There were many things which caused one to be cast out of the congregation though circumcised. Women were not circumcised; rather, they were under either their father's or husband's authority.

Covenant Signs and Conditions

Genesis 17:9-14, appears to say that God's condition for Abraham to receive the promise of the covenant was the circumcision of Abraham and all his male household members: v. 11, *shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you*, but that is not what vv 1-8 & 12:1-5 say. His inheritance of the covenant was based in obedience to the command-word of God. *Cf.* Exodus 23:20, The Angel. Furthermore, though circumcision appears to be the condition for inheriting the covenant-promise,

¹⁵*Exposition of Genesis*, I.511. H.C. Leupold, D.D., Professor of Old Testament Exegesis in the Capital University Seminary, Columbus, Oh. Barnes' Notes in 27 volumes. 1977 reprint by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids Michigan.

¹⁶Keil-Delitzsch, I.223. *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, 1986 reprint by William B. Eerdmans Publishers, Grand Rapids, Mich. *Online Bible*, this quote found at Genesis 17:1-3.

¹⁷Modern circumcision—that is, a circumspect life, as we will see, also prevents one from being cast out of the congregation of the Lord: As he lives what he professes, he remains safely in the Christian assembly.

that is not what chapter 17 says. As mentioned above, though Abraham knew Ishmael was not part of the covenant, Abraham circumcised him anyway. It was Abraham's faithful heart exhibited in obedience to God's Word that made him heir to the promises of God.

Consequently, physical circumcision cannot be viewed as an outward sign of inward faith because there was no requirement of faith attached to circumcision.¹⁸ This fact is what messed up the Jews, and Paul wrote Romans 4 to straighten it out: They felt that circumcision alone assured them of the covenant promise. Furthermore, they followed the new evangelists, e.g., Paul, over the then known world teaching the new Christians that circumcision was required in addition to the work of Christ. Paul points out that the physical act of circumcision was nothing more than a sign: The covenant was/is inherited by faith alone, not of works lest man should boast. (Romans 4:17.)

The covenant–promise itself is given several times starting with Genesis 12 through Genesis 17:1-8; all are before the rite of circumcision, 17:9-14. Vv. 1-8, the covenant included a new name for Abram, and was passed on to Abraham's seed, those who would walk perfect before the Lord, 17:7 (upright or sincere, marg).

Leupold at Genesis 17:1:

Perfect tamim, of course, involves not complete moral perfection, but since it involves the idea of complete and sound, it implies that no vital feature of a godly life is absent. Such a demand does not ask Abram to make himself fit to receive divine blessings, but it does warn him against doing those things whereby he renders himself unfit. God does not set up His covenant here; rather, He places it in force.

Abram's falling on his face was the proper response to the promise, so the Lord continues to speak.¹⁹

Accordingly, the covenant promise of the land of Canaan was already in force and agreed to by Abraham before he was circumcised. Circumcision was simply the blood confirmation of the covenant. It reminded Abraham and his seed that the covenant would not be fulfilled by natural means, and that the land was conditioned upon Godly living—a circumspect life. When Israel departed from Godly living, he broke the covenant, and he was vomited out of the land regardless of his circumcision. Thus the covenant (vv. 1-8, not vv. 9-14) said that if Abram and his seed would walk uprightly—circumspectly, then He, the Lord, would fulfill His promise to multiply Abram's seed exceedingly, and be their, *i.e.*, Abraham's decedents, God.²⁰

In Leupold's words,

In token of this new fact, Abram's name is changed by God... V. 9, *Thou shalt keep my covenant* This general statement implies quite a bit. It imposes the broad duty upon Abraham and all his descendants to live in a manner befitting those who are bound by God's covenant... V. 1 had very clearly covered these obligations in the word: walk before me and be thou perfect.²¹

Hence, both the sign and the condition placed upon the covenant is holy living, *i.e.*, the circumcised or circumspect life. Circumcision, vv. 9-14, was a physical sign added to Abraham's faith that the Lord indeed had started bringing the promise to pass, but not through natural means.

Leupold continues:

... It (circumcision, *ed.*) is not a sacrament efficacious in supplying the needed grace and the desired effect. (It had no grace for Ishmael nor Esau, *ed.*) But it suggests in a type or symbol what obligations

¹⁸Nor can circumcision be considered an outward sign of covenant membership, e.g., Ishmael, Esau. The fact that circumcision did not state an inward faith gives paedobaptists an excuse to baptise infants—they have no inward faith. Though some paedobaptist I have met will argue that point, saying that the infant has converting faith, unless life proves differently.

¹⁹Leupold at Genesis 17:1. Online Bible.

²⁰Of course, Christ was the fulfillment of the covenant, for He is the covenant. Isaiah 49:8, &c. In that sense, the covenant was unconditional, for Christ would come, regardless of man's actions.

²¹Leupold at Genesis 17: 4 & vv. 9, 10. Online Bible.

are laid upon those who stand in covenant relation with God, namely primarily to put away the foreskin of their hearts (Jer. 4:4), to circumcise the heart and “be no longer stiffnecked” (Deut. 10:16), an effect which, strictly speaking, only the Lord's grace can achieve in man (Deut. 30:6), which therefore, man in seeking to accomplish must seek from the Lord. Secondly, this rite is tied up closely with the Messianic hope. For if it indicates the purification of life at its source, it in the last analysis points forward to Him through whom all such purification is to be achieved, who is Himself also to be born by a woman, but is to be He in whom for the first time that which circumcision prefigures will be actually realized.²²

Here it should be remembered that this rite, even as it is not a sacrament, so, too, is not a divinely ordained instrumentality for initiation into the people of God, at least not for a native Israelite. **He was a member of the people of God by virtue of birth.** By circumcision he was made aware of his covenant obligations and received a perpetual badge or reminder of these obligations. That circumcision foreshadows baptism is, of course, undeniable.²³

Clearly Leupold rightly calls for a clean, separated, *circumspect* life apart from any dependance upon the flesh as the mark of Christ upon the believer. Circumcision spoke of purifying one's life at its source, for out of the heart are the issues of life, yet unbelievers were required to be circumcised. Circumcision looked forward to the work of Christ upon the heart. (John 8:56.)²⁴ Thus circumcision, in the last analysis, points forward to Him through whom all such purification is to be achieved. Circumcision was not a sacrament, but an Old Testament rite, an ordinance pointing forward to the work of Christ in the heart of the believer. It did not look forward to any outward action; Rather, it looked forward to the inward action of the Spirit.

It is extremely important that the reader keep in mind that circumcision looked forward to the work of Christ; therefore, it had to be a rite, or ordinance. Being such, it was thus done away with by the work of Christ upon the cross. (Colossians 2:14.)

Circumcision did not make one a native Israelite, no more than “baptism” makes a child a member of his Christian family. Moreover, the infant is identified as a “church” member through his parents. One was a member of the Old Testament congregation of God by virtue of birth. Circumcision was a perpetual reminder of the obligations placed upon the nation of God's people. It reminded both believers and unbelievers that they were responsible to the law of God, and would be blessed accordingly. They would be blessed according to outward obedience.

Leupold Back-peddles

Then in spite of his saying that the covenant was already given, affirmed and that circumcision had nothing to do with making one a covenant-member, Leupold, offering no Scriptural proof for his assumption, says, “That circumcision foreshadows baptism is, of course, undeniable.” For a reformed man who believes in “Scripture Alone,” such a statement is heresy.

In this writer's research, he found Leupold's statement quite typical of those holding to paedobaptism—Not one Bible Scholar could produce one scripture to even imply that Old Testament circumcision is continued in New Testament baptism. As we saw in the opening chapter, they simply start with a reasonable assumption, and build their theology upon that assumption.²⁵

We must confront the fact that faith was not required for circumcision. (See “Unbelieving Adults Circumcised” p. 26..) If Leupold's assumption is true—circumcision foreshadowed baptism, then one must say that no faith in the One True God and His Son is required for baptism regardless of the age the candidate,²⁶ Adults with no faith were commonly circumcised. One must also forbid baptism to

²²Leupold at Genesis 17:9. Online Bible

²³Emp. added. Ibid. Exposition of Genesis, I. pp. 520, 521.

²⁴Is Genesis 17 where Abraham saw the day of Christ, or was it in Genesis 12?

²⁵Zwingli knew he had to provide something if he were to keep his Roman followers. See “Something Visible” p. 14.

females.

Ishmael's and Esau's circumcision

Though it is clear they were not part of the covenant, why were they - Ishmael, Esau, and other ungodly men - circumcised? Here are some suggested answers:

First, to remind them, and all other unbelievers who were circumcised, that they were outside the covenant because of unbelief and unfaithfulness to the law of the covenant.

Second, it showed there was no merit before God in circumcision.

Third, it showed that the Lord calls whom He will regardless of parentage and/or any kind of physical action on man's part. (John 5:21, Romans 9:18.)

Keep in mind, there were many *perpetual* commands given in the Old Testament have passed away with Christ, *e.g.*, Exodus 27:20, 21, Leviticus 6:22, &c. Hence, they were only perpetual in the sense that they lasted until the end of the Old Testament Mosaic economy, they were fulfilled in Christ, or they are now kept in Christ, *e.g.*, Christ our passover. Circumcision is perpetuated in Christ, *i.e.*, in the circumcised heart, not in baptism.

One final point: Those of us who have studied Scripture know that one of Paul's big issue in the book of Galatians was circumcision. The false teachers were telling the people that in order to have the blessings promised to Abraham, they, among other rites and rituals, had to be circumcised. If baptism had replaced circumcision, as many today claim it did, would not have Paul said so in order to "calm the waters" at Glatia? "Scripture Alone!"

²⁶ Some paedobaptist make this claim. Is it any wonder the church is full of unsaved people. However, the credobaptist have more than their share of unsaved.

Chapter III

Circumcision, New Testament

Newness of Life!

All New Testament references to circumcision speak of putting off the old things of the flesh—of the old life—and serving God with newness of Spirit.

How can men, therefore, make an assumed connection between circumcision and baptism when there is not one New Testament passage which even remotely connects the Old Testament rite of circumcision with New Testament ordinance of baptism? Obviously, they argue from a presupposition requiring paedobaptism exemplified by Hodge's words quoted below, "In order to justify the baptism of infants, we must..." Which assumption, might we ask, comes first: that Old Testament circumcision must prefigure baptism or that infants must be baptized? From the history of paedobaptism, we would say that the effort was to support what the people wanted at the time of the Reformation.

Presumptions

This writer is not "throwing stones" at anyone, for only those who refuse to face facts say they do not argue from presuppositions. Every person does so to one extent or another. Only the unique work of the Spirit enables one to be freed from the *tradition* received from the fathers. (1 Peter 1:18.) The Christian must make a conscious effort to search God's word with an attitude of letting the Spirit free him from unsound doctrines. (Philippians 3:15, 16.) Accordingly, this writer was freed from a belief in which he had been thoroughly trained, Arminian Dispensationalism. Presumptions cause all of us to find scriptural grounds to support what we want or do not want to believe and/or do. Maybe the early church believed in the necessity of infant baptism, but does tradition vindicate an assumption? It is interesting that Jay E. Adams says:

And the historians George Fisher and Philip Schaff concur with the following words, "the ordinary mode of baptism was by immersion," (George P. Fisher, *History of the Christian Church*, [Scribners: N.Y., 1887], p. 41) and "the usual form of baptism was immersion." (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. I., [Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1950] p. 468) Even Calvin is gleefully quoted, "The very word *baptize*, however, signifies to immerse; and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church." (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. John Allen, Vol. II, [The Presbyterian Board of Christian Education: Philadelphia] p. 599.)¹

Though Mr. Adams claims to be reformed, he writes 55 pages to justify what he believes, infant baptism. He forgot "Scripture Alone."

Paul made it clear that he did not even hint at any kind of continuation of circumcision, whether in physical form (literal circumcision) or symbolic form (water baptism), Galatians 5:11. He clearly said that if he even remotely condoned the continuation of circumcision in any form, he would not have suffered persecution. In other words, if he had hinted that baptism replaced circumcision, the Jews would not have persecuted him. But because the gospel message was totally new (not new wine in old skins, but new wine in new skins), he was persecuted severely by those who demanded the old skins "the forms, rituals, rites and ceremonies of the old covenant" be retained. If baptism had replaced circumcision, the old skins would have been retained. But it did not.

Without exception, every New Testament reference to circumcision speaks of putting off the old things of the flesh and of the old life, and serving God with newness of Spirit. Note:

¹*The Meaning and Mode of Baptism*, Jay E. Adams, 1975, Presbyterian And Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, New Jersey, p 24.

Galatians 6:15, *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision [identified as baptism by the paedobaptist] availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

Galatians 5:6, *faith which worketh by love.* Galatians 6:15, *a new creature* is the New Testament mark of Christ. Ephesians 2:11, *reconciliation unto God by the work of Christ*, v. 15. Moreover, Colossians 2:11, 12, clearly states that the Old Testament circumcision is still with us, but not in any physical form. New Testament circumcision is a work of Christ in the heart of His people: *by the circumcision of Christ.* It is *the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of sins of the flesh*, v. 11. New Testament circumcision is not any kind of physical act, *i.e.* baptism; rather, it is *the operation of God* which puts off *the body of the sins of the flesh*—the Old Testament term is, cutting off the foreskin of the heart, making one a new creature in Christ. The *flesh* of the foreskin is identified as the wellspring of sin. (Romans 7:23, &c.) The cutting off of the old man, that is the translation from the old fleshly man to the new life of Christ, is accomplished only by conversion. (Colossians 1:13; 2:12.)

In other words, the Old Testament ordinance of circumcision clearly prefigured the New Testament work of Christ upon the heart of the elect; that ordinance is done away with and replaced by the actual work of God: *putting off the body of sins.* Therefore, the New Testament outward sign of this work of the Holy Spirit is holy living according to the revealed will of God in His Word, not the keeping of any rite, ritual nor ordinance. (Colossians 2:20.) Colossians 2:12 identifies baptism as the first act of obedience after the work of the Spirit in circumcising the heart. Baptism and circumcision are not identified as the same; rather, baptism is identified as a result of New Testament circumcision, *i.e.*, holy living, which requires baptism and identification with Christ.

The promise under the old covenant—represented by the outward sign of circumcision—was clearly of a new and better covenant to come. The promised new covenant was not according to the covenant made with the fathers—that is, the house of Israel starting with Abraham’s circumcision, but a covenant that would write God’s law in the heart and, accordingly, circumcises the heart. It would be exhibited outwardly by cutting off the works of the flesh, the works of the old man. The new covenant, as promised in the law and prophets, circumcises the heart, and replaces the old man with the new image of Christ. (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Deuteronomy 10:12-16; 30:6.) Paul explicitly refers to the fact that the true signs of the circumcised heart under the new covenant are new actions, *known and read of all men*; he makes no mention of baptism. (2 Corinthians 3:1-3.)

Though primarily speaking of being raised with Christ by regeneration through a work of the Spirit as a prerequisite for baptism, Colossians 2:12 calls for individual faith in the operation of God to raise one up into the life of Christ. (Cf. v. 11; 3:1; Ephesians 2:5, 6.) In Paul’s words, *uncircumcision* is clearly identified with *dead in sins*; therefore, circumcision must be identified with new life in the risen Christ exhibited by one’s actions. (Colossians 2:13.) If we try to make the passage speak primarily of water baptism, we must say that we believe in baptismal regeneration, which the Word of God militates against. Regeneration is totally a work of God accomplished through individual faith. (Ephesians 2:8, 9.)

Paul does make a clear reference to something in the life of the nation of Israel prefiguring New Testament baptism, but it had nothing to do with circumcision. It was the passage through the Red Sea. (1 Corinthians 10:2.) Paul does not even hint that Joshua’s actions in circumcising the people (Joshua 5) spoke of baptism. Even in the Old Testament, baptism and circumcision were two distinctly different acts.

Finally, consider *the reproach of Egypt*, Joshua 5:9: According to Leviticus 18:3, the reproach of Egypt was *the doings of the land of Egypt*. (Joshua 24:14, 1 Samuel 14:6, Ezekiel 20:7, 23:3, 8.) Thus outward circumcision is the laying aside of the works of Egypt, *i.e.*, the works of the flesh, not baptism.

Therefore, Scripturally, in both the Old and New Testaments, the outward sign of Biblical circum-

cision was/is holy living and departure from the works of the flesh, not baptism; this is what Leupold said on page 30.

Questions answered—Difficulties solved

Leupold makes an important point that circumcision prefigured Christ Who dealt with sin at its source. Thus the question is answered and the difficulty solved: Circumcision was an Old Testament ordinance prefiguring the work of Christ at the root of sin. His Spirit cuts off *the reproach of Egypt from* His people at the root: He deals with and changes—circumcises—the heart. Christ dealt and deals with the root of sin by writing His laws in the hearts of His people; He cuts off the natural man and all his hope in the flesh to please God. Therefore, in the Old Testament, only males were circumcised, for circumcision prepictured Christ's work, and all who were not circumcised were excommunicated from the congregation of Israel. If the figure of circumcision and baptism are to be connected, then ONLY MALES are permitted to be baptized according to the Old Testament figure; anything else destroys the connection; anything else would be inconsistent. But, of course, there is no connection except by Papist tradition.

Ordinance vs Sacrament

Though Leupold, and men like him, correctly identify Old Testament circumcision as an Old Testament ordinance prefiguring the work of Christ, they rename the rite, calling it a sacrament when they carry it over into the New Testament in baptism. Twice, Leupold said that circumcision was not a sacrament, yet he concludes by identifying it as a New Testament sacrament to be observed by the church. Theologians committed to paedobaptism must change the clear implications of circumcision from an ordinance prefiguring the work of Christ against the root of sin—the heart—to a sacrament in order to justify retaining it in New Testament water baptism. In Leupold's words, circumcision foreshadowed the work of Christ at the root of sin. Ordinances foreshadowed the work of Christ; therefore, circumcision was an Old Testament ordinance; baptism is a New Testament sacrament. The difference is important, and there is no clear Scriptural justification for identifying the ordinance of circumcision with the sacrament of baptism.

We must not overlook the fact that New Testament water baptism is commanded upon Believers by the Lord, as is the Lord's Supper. But God's Word gives no justification to carry over the old ordinance of circumcision into the New Testament sacrament of baptism, as He did with the Passover in the Lord's Supper. The ordinance of the Passover is clearly carried over by God's Word as something to be continued in remembrance of Christ's work as the Passover Lamb. (1 Corinthians 5:7ff., &c.)

Undeniably, Old Testament circumcision spoke of the work of the Spirit upon the heart, as does New Testament water baptism. But there is no Scriptural warrant for connecting the old ordinance (circumcision) with the new sacrament (water baptism).

Christ fulfilled the offerings, sacrifices and ordinances of the Old Testament law that spoke of His coming work upon the cross. Thus the Old Testament rite of circumcision was one of the ordinances of the law done away with at the cross of Christ. (Colossians 2:14.) Is not this the truth that Paul tried to communicate in Romans 4? If Christ removed the Christian from the ordinance of circumcision that spoke of His redemptive work against the root of sin, the heart, how can one justify placing the Christian back under that thing which tradition says replaced circumcision, baptism? (Galatians 4:9.)

We might also ask: "Why would Paul build again what he worked so hard to destroy?" He worked very hard to prove that the rite of circumcision was not carried over into the new church in any way. Why would he in any way imply that baptism (paedobaptism or otherwise) was a continuation of circumcision? (See Galatians 2:18.)

Paul said Abraham was made heir to the world before he was circumcised. (Romans 4:13.) Thus the promise is made to Israel *after the spirit* (Genesis 17:1-8.), not to Israel *after the flesh*, circumcision. (Genesis 17:9-14.) In other words, spiritual Israel is the heir to the promise made to Abraham, not physical Israel. Furthermore, the promise to the seed in Galatians 3:16, 29, was made before Genesis 17:9, and circumcision. Thus the promise is passed down by faith, not by circumcision and/or baptism. Canaan was given as an everlasting possession to the seed of Abraham, the physical nation of Israel, but since Christ, Canaan is only a small portion of the total possession of the seed of Abraham, the spiritual nation of Israel. Now the possession is the whole world.

According to Genesis 17:1-8, the true sign of the covenant is walking before the Lord uprightly, sincerely and perfectly; those who do are the true heirs to the covenant—promise. Circumcision reminded the man of his responsibility before God. Thus the New Testament sign of the covenant is a circumcised—circumspect—life before God according to His command—word. (See James 2:14ff.) There are no New Testament passages even hinting of anything but a circumcised life of obedience to *every word* that proceeds from God as proof of regeneration and ingrafting into Christ. (Luke 6:43ff.) The call to the believer, based upon the Old Testament law, is to be holy even as the Lord is holy. (1 Peter 1:15, 16; Exodus 19:6, &c.)

John the Baptist

The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? (Mark 11:30-33.) This question asked by the Saviour created a problem with the ones who held tradition over the Word of God. They knew that if they said *From heaven*, Christ would say, *Why then did ye not believe him?* They knew that if they said, *Of men*, the people would be hostile because *all men counted John* as a prophet sent from God. Obviously, the point Christ made was that John's baptism was a "new thing" from heaven: It was not passed down from men of old. Therefore, John's baptism had nothing to do with the Old Testament rite of circumcision; rather, it dealt solely with individual repentance, Luke 3. The baptizing which Jesus's disciples did was directly connected with John's, John 3:25-4:2.

We must conclude, accordingly, that the New Testament sacrament of baptism is rooted in John's baptism, which spoke of repentance over sin; it is not rooted in Old Testament circumcision. In order to connect the New Testament doctrine of baptism with the Old Testament doctrine of physical circumcision, one must bypass the meaning of the baptizing as practiced by both John's and Christ's disciples.

Chapter IV

Circumcision—According to Men

It may seem to the reader we are running circumcision into the ground, we will continue our examination of circumcision. Though no Scripture implies that Old Testament circumcision is changed to New Testament baptism, it is still used to justify paedobaptism. What does God say?

Though we have touched on the work of Christ, for emphasis sake, we will mention it again. The Second Commandment deals specifically with proper approach to the Heavenly Father, strictly forbidding any approach to the Father other than through God's authorized, substitutionary sacrifice, Exodus 20:2-6. Because the work and sacrifice of Christ fulfilled the first four commandments, including the Second, any approach to the Father other than through Christ is now rebellion and sin against the work of Christ. Any attempted approach to the Father by anyone, regardless of age, other than through faith in the shed blood of Christ is an obvious violation of this commandment¹

Circumcision's Visible Purpose.

Obviously, circumcision was simply an outward mark, speaking of God's covenant with Abraham, *i.e.*, if he and his seed would walk according to the conditions of the covenant, God would bless. Though Abraham agreed to the conditions before he was circumcised, Ishmael and Esau made no such agreement. However, all three were still bound by the law of the covenant. Nevertheless, the rite reminded the circumcised—Godly and unGodly—of their total dependance upon the Lord alone to accomplish His promises. The basic promise was of the Messiah Who would *come with salvation and healing in His wings*. Dependance upon the Lord alone to bring the promise about is contrasted with Genesis 16: Abram's effort to take matters into his own hands.

Circumcision was normally an outward sign of the individual's membership in the nation that was the heir of the covenant—promise, which included the land of Canaan and the Messiah. (Genesis 12:1-3. Ishmael and Esau were not members though circumcised; they had no part of the land nor of the Messiah.) Christ alone makes believers members of the promised seed and heirs to the promise, which, by the way, caused great turmoil and anger among circumcised Jews. (Romans 9:13; Galatians 3:16, 29; Hebrews 5:1-9.) Therefore, circumcision was an ordinance: It spoke of the assurance of the promises of the covenant; it spoke of the future work of Christ upon the heart.

If one says that circumcision of an eight day old Israelite male is any more than a visible sign of membership in the physical covenant—nation of Israel; if one says that the command to circumcise Abraham's children at eight days transferred any kind of mystical, spiritual benefit whatsoever, he must also say that the circumcision of those bought with money and/or the circumcision of strangers also transferred some kind of mystical, spiritual benefit to those adults. All three persons—child, stranger and purchased servant, as well as Ishmael and Esau—were covered in the same command. (Genesis 17:12, 13.)

Can we even begin to assume that circumcision, or baptism, of a stranger transferred any kind of grace from God to that individual? Is God's grace transferred according to man's works or according to faith? *One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.* (Exodus 12:49.) There is not the slightest hint anywhere in God's Word that circumcision meant one thing to a male infant and another to the 60 year old male stranger. Thus it transferred as much mystical, spiritual benefit to the stranger as it did to the infant, NONE!

¹We must also say that Christ fulfilled the Old Testament sabbath rest though the Christian sabbath still remains, Hebrews 10:25.

Matthew Henry

Consider a few points Matthew Henry develops concerning Exodus 12:43-51:

First, he starts the section with, “Some further precepts are here given concerning the passover, as it should be observed in times to come.” He says that this instruction is given after the first passover took place.

Second, he points out that none unbaptized should take part in the Lord’s Supper; even with the problem presented here by him connecting baptism and circumcision, he is correct, for only those who have united with the new *Israel of God*, the church, should partake of the Lord’s supper. Even Calvin agreed that infants and the unconverted are to be barred from the Lord’s Supper.²

Third, “Nor shall any partake of the benefit of Christ’s sacrifice, or feast upon it, who are not first circumcised in heart, Col. ii.11.” Correct again, for none except those professed believers should partake—the supper is in remembrance of Him. (Luke 22:19.)

Fourth, he points out that circumcision represents sincere dedication to God.

If in sincerity, and with that zeal which the thing requires and deserves, we give up ourselves to God, we shall, with ourselves, give up all we have to him, and do our utmost that all ours may be his too. Here is an early indication of favor to the poor Gentiles, that the stranger, if circumcised, stands upon the same level with the home-born Israelite. *One law* for both, Ex 12:49. This was a mortification to the jews, and taught them that it was their dedication to God, not their descent from Abraham, that entitled them to their privileges. A sincere proselyte was as welcome to the passover as a native Israelite, Isa. lvi. 6, 7.³

Circumcision protects redemption’s picture

Exodus 12:43-50: Israel had been delivered from bondage by the death of Egypt’s firstborn. Not only Israel came out of Egypt, but a great *mixed multitude* of foreigners came out of with the Israel. Though these foreigners had not been in bondage to Egypt, they decided to unite with Israel because of the power Israel’s God had exhibited through Moses. The Lord required Israel to commemorate the passover forever, and in order to protect the picture of the Passover representing national Israel’s birth, *i.e.*, deliverance from Egypt, provision had to be made for the foreigners.⁴

Keil explains it thusly:

These regulations, which were supplementary to the law of the Passover in vers. 3-11, were not communicated before the exodus; because it was only by the fact that a crowd of foreigners attached themselves to the Israelites, that Israel was brought into a connection with foreigners, which needed to be clearly defined, especially so far as the Passover was concerned, the festival of Israel’s birth as the people of God. If the Passover was still to retain this signification, of course no foreigner could participate in it.⁵

Keil continues:

If, therefore, a foreigner living among the Israelites wished to keep the Passover, he was first of all to be **spiritually incorporated** into the nation of Jehovah by circumcision.⁶

²But he held that baring infants “from the supper does not prevent them from belonging to the body of the Church.” *Institutes*, II.552. Translated by Henry Beveridge. 1970 printing by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

³*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, in six volumes, carefully revised and corrected, I.324. Macdonald Publishing Company, Mclean, Virginia 22101.

⁴These questions arise: Did Israel observe the passover in the wilderness? Did the children, up to 39 years old before they crossed over Jordan, who were uncircumcised in the wilderness partake of the passover? See Joshua 5.

⁵Keil on Exodus 12:43-48.

Can and does a physical act of obedience **spiritually incorporate** one into the body of Christ? Is one “saved,” “converted” or “born again” by a physical act, or is one placed in the heavens with Christ by the spiritual act of faith? Did God’s means of salvation change with Christ?⁷

No physical act can **spiritually incorporate** one into the heavens with Christ. Physical circumcision in the Old Testament was to represent spiritual circumcision, *i.e.*, conversion of the heart. (Leviticus 26:41; Jeramiah 6:10; Acts 7:51; Romans 2:29, &c.) It also looked forward to the future circumcision of the heart by the Spirit of God through Christ Jesus the Lord, or we must say one can enter into the promises of God by works of the flesh. Did not Paul rebuke the *foolish Galatians* for being under the influence of witchcraft? They believed they *Received...the Spirit* (that is, were **spiritually incorporated** into the nation of Jehovah) *by the works of the law* (that is, by obedience to the law requiring circumcision or baptism) rather than *by the hearing of faith?* (Galatians 3:1ff.)⁸

A.H. Strong & Others

A.H. Strong says this: “What takes the place of circumcision is not baptism but regeneration.”⁹

Alfred Edersheim

But, better far, it (Old Testament circumcision, *ed.*) pointed forward to the fulfillment of the covenant–promise in Christ Jesus, in whom there is now no other circumcision needed than that of the heart.¹⁰

Thus Christ, not baptism, replaced circumcision, for “there is now no other **circumcision** needed, *i.e.*, **baptism**. Circumcision is replaced by the work of the Spirit of Christ in the hearts and lives of the covenant people.

One more point: Regarding circumcision, A.W. Pink:

But we must turn now and consider the application of this (Joshua 5:5-circumcision, *ed.*) unto ourselves, for like all the ceremonial rites and institutions of the Old Testament times, circumcision is, antitypically, a real and substantial thing unto New Testament saints. Stating it first in a brief sentence, circumcision respected the *mortification of sin*, the putting off of the filth of the flesh. ... That which was shadowed forth by circumcision, namely the putting off of the filth of the flesh, all believers find the substance of *in Christ*, and the same is made good *in their souls*—in measure here, but perfectly so at death. In order to obtain a complete view of the Christian’s circumcision, we need to consider it federally and judicially, then spiritually and experimentally, and then practically and manifestatively. First, then, all believers are *legally* circumcised in Christ. That which circumcision prefigured was the removal of the pollution of sin, and that was accomplished for believers judicially in the death of their Head. Circumcision symbolized the entire mortification of sin, and that is the effect and fruit of Christ’s death for His people. “Ye are complete in Him [Christ], which is the Head of all principality and power.

⁶ Ver. 48, emp mine. Thus Keil excludes females from the spiritual nation of Jehovah.

⁷ Keil should have read Ephesians chps 2 & 3, for there he would have found that one is saved by grace through faith, and thus by faith seated in the heavens with Christ. Obviously, circumcision must be regarded as an act of **spiritually incorporation** into the nation by those who believe paedobaptism spiritually incorporates the infant into the body of Christ. Most paedobaptist this pastor knows believe that baptism only incorporates the infant into the visible body of Christ. However, this “visible” church certainly presents problems with the defination of church. See “Visible Assembly” p. 22.

⁸ Of course, paedobaptist must say that one is incorporated into the visible body of Christ by the parent’s works of the law, for an infant cannot exhibit the hearing of faith. Ishmael and Esau were not **spiritually incorporated** into the people of God; therefore, Old Testament physical circumcision could not **spiritually incorporate** anyone into the nation. Under both the Mosaic economy and under the Christian economy, **spiritual incorporation** must be a work of *grace through faith*, Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; 4:3; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38, &c. Besides, what will Keil do with women? By not being circumcised, were they, therefore, not spiritually incorporated into the nation of Jehovah? Is he not justifying paedobaptism without Scripture?

⁹ *Systematic Theology*, Three Volumes in One, p 655. The Griffith & Rowland Press. 1907.

¹⁰ *Bible history of the Old Testament*, 1.93.

In whom ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” (Col. ii, 10, 11). ...¹¹

Old Testament circumcision prefigured justification and regeneration which was/is fulfilled in Christ: It is fulfilled by the Spirit’s circumcision of the heart at the time of the new birth.

Colossians 2:11, 12. Paul is speaking against the efforts by the Judaizers to make physical circumcision any part of salvation. He is not equating physical circumcision with baptism. The circumcision of Christ of v. 11 is the spiritual circumcision of the heart made with the word of God. (Hebrews 4:12.) The heart circumcision which was to replace the physical circumcision was promised in the Old Testament. (Jeremiah 31:31ff., &c.) V. 11 has no reference to physical circumcision. (See Romans 2:26, Philippians 3:3.)

Rather, v. 11 tells us that spiritual circumcision replaced the physical circumcision. (Ephesians 2:11.) Those of the true circumcision are the ones who *worship God in the spirit*. (Philippians 3:3.) How old must one be *to worship God in the spirit*?

V. 12, tells us that baptism is the outward sign of the inward circumcision that was made without hands. Scripture is clear—every person, though he may be physically circumcised is spiritually uncircumcised until he is circumcised by the Spirit of Christ. This is done when the sinner is thoroughly convicted of sin, made naked and bare before God, and turns to Christ. V. 12, baptism is the result of one’s expression of faith in the operation of God that circumcised his heart, v. 11. Attempts to equate the spiritual with the physical of v. 11, and then carry the physical over to baptism changes the clear teaching of this passage. What happened to the reformed position of “Scripture Alone”?

The standard “Reformed” position seems to be: “Baptism is the sign of the renewed covenant, replacing circumcision.” But Scripturally speaking, did Old Testament circumcision prefigure the work of God’s grace upon the heart, “the source of life,” or did it prefigure the work of man upon the outside flesh, *baptism*? Where is the Scriptural support (as we have for the Passover/Lord’s Supper) for the above statement? The only way baptism and circumcision can be reconciled as similar signs of regeneration, justification and sanctification, would be by baptizing only after the profession of faith—profession of the Spirit’s circumcision of the heart—as Christ told Peter: Peter gave the sign of new life from God when he, under the Spirit’s direction, professed Christ. We build New Testament doctrine concerning the New Testament church membership upon Christ’s clear words to Peter.

William Shedd

According to Shedd (1820-1894),

Baptism is the *infallible* sign of regeneration, when the infant dies in infancy. All baptized infants dying before the age of self-consciousness, are regenerated without exception. Baptism is the *probable* sign of regeneration, when the infant lives to years of discretion. It is possible that the baptized child of believing parents may prove, in the day of judgment, not to have been regenerated, but not probable. The history of the church and daily observation show it to be the general fact that infant church members become adult church members. (Note the emphasis upon outward forms, *church members* rather than upon conversion, *ed.*) Yet exceptions are possible. A baptized infant, on reaching years of discretion, may to human view appear not to have been regenerated, as a baptized convert may. The fact of unregenerance, however, must be proved, before it can be acted upon... The possible exceptions to the general fact that baptism is a sign of regeneration are not more numerous in the case of baptized infants, than of baptized converts.

Comments: What is the age of *discretion*? And *they* fuss at the Baptists for having an arbitrary age of **accountability**. In other words, according to Shedd, a child is not born with a sin nature, but is only considered a sinner if he acts like one when he comes *of age*. Shedd continues to complicate the mat-

¹¹ *Gleanings in Joshua*, by A.W. Pink, 125, 126.

ter:

The reason why there is not an *infallible* connection between infant baptism and regeneration, when the infant lives to years of discretion, so that all baptized children of true believers are regenerated without a single exception, (*i.e.*, **Baptismal regeneration**, *ed.*) is the fact that the covenant is not observed on the human side with absolute perfection. Should the believer keep the promise on his part with entire completeness, God would be bound to fulfill the promise on his part. But the believer's fulfillment of the terms of the covenant, in respect to faith in God's promise, to prayer, to nurture and education of the child, through filial and spiritual, is yet imperfect. God is, therefore, not absolutely *indebted* to the believer, by reason of the believer's action, in respect to the regeneration of the child. (In other words, the baptism of the child by the covenanted parents does not guarantee the regeneration of the child, *ed.*) Consequently, he may exercise a sovereignty, if he so please, in the bestowment of regeneration grace, even in the case of a believer's child (or He may not, *ed.*). We have seen (p. 516) that the regeneration of an unbaptized adult, depending as it does upon election, cannot be made infallibly certain by the use of common grace, though it may be made highly probable by it. In like manner, the regeneration of a baptized child, depending also upon election, may be made highly probable by the imperfect faith and fidelity of the parents, yet not infallibly and necessarily certain.¹²

Oddly enough, Shedd quotes Hodge's Systematic Theology, III.590, as part of his argument for infant baptism, failing to mention that Hodge clearly says in that particular section of his theology that Scripture clearly requires believer baptism only; therefore, the part Shedd quotes is Hodge's defence of his personal belief requiring infant baptism.¹³ Note these difficulties with Shedd's argument:

First, his argument is inconsistent: His statements are anything but dogmatic. Question: Does not the Word of God speak dogmatically concerning eternal life? Can one be sure beyond any doubt of his eternal life? Shedd says that one cannot be dogmatic that a *baptized child of believing parents* is regenerated; rather, it is *probable*, but not *infallible*. What a horrible possibility of rearing a child to believe he *regenerated* when, actually, he may not be. Remember, only male children were circumcised, and, therefore, strictly speaking, only male infants can be baptized. The day of judgment will be too late to find out the truth. If one holds to Shedd's position, they must ignore inconsistencies:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. John 20:31¹⁴

Second, the *believing parents*, or even the elder who baptized the child, who had the marks of regeneration when the child was baptized, might not have been, in fact, believers themselves. If one says that the parent's covenant-relationship is transferred to the male child through baptism, then one must also say that if his parents are not actually covenant members, unknown to themselves, their non-covenant relationship is also transferred to the male child. (To remain consistent with circumcision/paedobaptism, only males can be baptised.)

Is the male child made a member of the covenant at his baptism though his parents, unbeknown to them at the time, are not members of the covenant, or does the *mystical transfer* only work to the future good, not to the bad? In other words, only *covenant-membership* is transferred if the parents are genuinely converted; on the other hand, if the parents are not genuinely converted, *covenant-non-membership* is not transferred.¹⁵

¹² *Dogmatic Theology*, by William Shedd, II.576-578. Originally published by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889. Klock & Klock reprint, 2517 Girard Ave. N. Minneapolis, Minn. 1979. Dr. Shedd was professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary from 1863-1875.

¹³ See Hodge, q.v.

¹⁴ See also 1 John 5:10-13. Were not the religious leaders of Christ's day trained in the law to believe they were *saved*, not needing anything more than the faith that they were saved, thus rejecting Christ?

¹⁵ The Reformers stood hard against any mystical change of the wine and bread to the literal body of Christ. How can they now claim a mystical transformation of God's grace to a baby from its parents?

John Trapp (1601 - 1669)

Commenting on David's victory over Goliath, Trapp said:

(1 Sam. 17.) Ver. 36, *This uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them.*] Death sweepeth, and hell swalloweth all such as are out of the covenant: and although circumcision be nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; yet as circumcision saved David, a believer, from Goliath; so doeth baptism now shend and save us from Satan, yet not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet. iii.21).¹⁶

Thus Trapp implies that David's victory over the uncircumcised Philistine was due to the fact that David was circumcised, which he carries over into the New Testament ordinance of baptism.

Though one must agree that baptism is necessary for a *good conscience toward God*, it borders on heresy to attribute David's victory over Goliath to the fact that David was circumcised and the Philistine was not. David clearly states that his boldness and victory in the time of battle with the lion and bear was because of his faith in his God, not to his circumcision, 1 Samuel 17:37. Thus how can one say that his boldness and victory over Goliath was any different?

Admittedly, we all view Scripture from our preconceived beliefs, but our desire and prayer must be that the Spirit of the Lord would see fit to deliver us from anything that is contrary to his word.

Christ and Peter

The question which must be addressed is this: Did Christ mean what He said in His conversation with Peter, or did He not? Is His church and Kingdom built upon the firm rock of faith, or upon the sinking waters of baptism? Does Scripture justify parents or pastors giving anyone, especially children, assurance of *regeneration* apart from one's own personal profession of trust in Christ, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and his or her Redeemer? Is it by the proclamation of the gospel that God has chosen to awaken and call the redeemed elect unto Himself, or is it by the waters of baptism. (Romans 10:9, 10, 17; 1 Corinthians 1:17-2; 1 Cor 2:1ff.) Therefore, we must preach the gospel to every creature.

Shedd also makes regeneration of a baptized infant conditional on the child keeping the covenant to one degree or another, not upon the individual's awakening to his "lost," separated condition from God and Christ's atoning work for him. In other words, assurance of covenant-membership is based upon works for a baptized child, but for the baptized adult it is based on the grace, mercy and the providence of God. Is such inconsistent theology according to the Word of God?¹⁷

Questions: Can a believer keep his part of the covenant with entire completeness and place God under obligation to him? Shedd rightly says he can not; therefore, he had to make *exception* for baptized infants. Why did Christ have to die if one could keep the terms of the covenant complete enough that he would not have to be converted, only baptized? If one says that the baptized child of believing parents is regenerated as long as he does not violate the covenant, how much covenant-keeping is enough? How much violation of the terms of the covenant is enough of a violation to cut him off from the covenant? The Lord said that a man looking with lust is an adulterer. Does this mean that if one looks on another with lust, he is not in the covenant? We must say that regeneration *is not of works, least any man should boast*, including works of baptism. What Scripture warrants permitting regener-

¹⁶John Trapp, Commentary on the Old & New Testaments, I.448. First published, 1865-1868. Republished, Tanski Publications, Eureka, CA, 1977. I have found Trapp to usually be a very good commentator, well worth the cost of his commentaries. Trapp is on Online Bible.

¹⁷Some Pedobaptist hold that elect adults have no need to be *born again*. To them, God's freely given grace *saves* them regardless of their actions of awakening to and receiving the gospel. This especially holds true if they have been *baptized* as an infant. This writer agrees totally that genuine conversion WILL BE evidenced by a love for the Law of God, and growth in desire and ability to obey the law of the Lord.

ation apart from an act hearing the words of life and individual faith *provided by the Spirit of God* in the finished work of Christ? Again, we also ask, *Where are females placed if one holds consistently to the circumcision/baptism faith?*

L. Berkhof (1873-1957)

Berkhof is another theologian whom this pastor greatly respect. His statements on infant baptism, however, are based on his suppositions and opinions. He opens by correctly identifying Christian Baptism:

The Institution of the Christian Baptism:

“It would seem to be correct to say that the two were *essentially* identical [Christian and John’s], though differing in some points. The baptism of John, like the Christian baptism, (a) was instituted by God Himself, Matt. 21:25; John 1:33; (b) was connected with a radical change of life, Luke 1:1-17; John 1:20-30; (c) stood in sacramental relation to the forgiveness of sins, Matt. 3:7, 8; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3 (comp. Acts 2:28) and (d) employed the same material element, namely, water. At the same time there were several points of differences: (a) the baptism of John still belonged to the old dispensation, and as such pointed forward to Christ; (b) in harmony with the dispensation of the law in general, it stressed the necessity of repentance, though not entirely to the exclusion of faith; (c) it was intended for the Jews only, and therefore represented the Old Testament particularism rather than the New Testament universalism; and (d) since the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out in pentecostal fulness, it was not yet accompanied with as great a measure of spiritual gifts as the later Christian baptism.¹⁸

Others went beyond this position [Baltic Confession] and maintained that the children of the covenant were to be regarded as *presumptively* regenerated. This is not equivalent to saying that they are all regenerated, when they are presented for baptism, but that they are assumed to be regenerated until the contrary appears in their lives....¹⁹

- **Cleansing, purification**

Berkhof holds to sprinkling, obviously. Rather than quoting Scripture for his proof, he quotes the Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 69, saying that the sprinkling with water “symbolizes cleansing or purification...” Among his proof passages:

1 Corinthians 6:11, *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

Titus 3:5, *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost²⁰*

However, does scripture speak of water as sanctifying and regenerating the sinner, or of the washing of the blood of Christ? Is it not heresy to say that anything except the blood of Christ can cleans one from sin.

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, Revelation 1:5

It is clearly the blood of Christ that purifies, not the water of baptism. Can there be genuine salvation if one is looking to the water to purify him of sin? How can a theologian avoid our Lord’s command,

¹⁸L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 623, 624. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids MI. 1979 reprint.

¹⁹*Ibid*, p 627

²⁰*Ibid*, p 628.

“Ye must be born again”?

Berkof proceeds to ridicule Baptist who hold to immersion rather than to pouring or sprinkling. “Neither do the Biblical examples of baptism stress any particular mode.”²¹

He continues by quoting Dr. Carson, *Baptism in its Mode and Subjects*, pp. 44ff. “The word *baptizo* perhaps *does not so necessarily express the action of butting under water*, as in general a thing’s being in that condition, *no matter how it comes to be so, whether it is put into the water, or the water comes over it*; though, indeed, to put into the water is the most natural way and th e most common, and is, therefore, usually and pretty constantly, but it may not be necessarily, implied.” Note, p. 97.

Thus he grasps at straws, for Dr. Carson does not speak dogmatically, as does Berkof. Even Calvin admitted that immersion was the practice by the early church. Rome’s influence was and is still quite strong. Berkof continues with terms such as “would seem,” and then argues from reason, starting with John: “Was John the Baptist capable of the enormous task of immersing the multitudes that flocked unto him at the river Jordan, or did he simply pour water on them as some of the early inscriptions would seem to indicate...”

Subjects of Baptism

Baptism is intended only for properly qualified rational beings, namely, for believers and their children.
22

With this statement, he completely voids the statement made under “*The Institution of the Christian Baptism:*” p. 43.

He admits that adult “baptism must be preceded by a profession of faith...” He then states that baptism is “also a means of grace.”²³

“a. *The Scriptural basis for infant baptism.* It may be said at the onset that there is no explicit Icommand in the Bible to baptize children, and that there is not a single instance in which we are plainly told that children were baptized. But this does not necessarily make infant baptism un-Biblical. The Scriptural ground for it is found in the following data:”²⁴

He then proceeds to draw assumptions to support his faith from the same passages used by other paedobaptist, moving from Old Testament circumcision to New Testament baptism. However, as we point out elsewhere, Old Testament circumcision of adults did not require faith, yet the paedobaptist say that adults must profess faith before baptism. However, infants do not need to profess faith. The inconsistency is astounding. Let me ask: At what age must a child be before a profession of faith is required before baptism?

He makes this dogmatic statement: “(4) In the new dispensation baptism is by divine authority substituted for circumcision as the initiatory sign and seal of the covenant of grace.”²⁵ But he does not let his lack of Scriptural basis stop him, as he continues to build upon his assumptions, admitting that all the statements in his previous “are based on the commandment of God to circumcise the children of the covenant, for in this last analysis that commandment is the ground of infant baptism.”²⁶ Again, he, and others like him, make a dogmatic statement with no supporting Scripture.

“(5) As was pointed out in the preceding, the New Testament contains no direct evidence for the

²¹ *Ibid*, p 629,

²² *Ibid*, p 631

²³ *Ibid*, p 631, 632

²⁴ *Ibid*, p 632

²⁵ *Ibid*, p 634.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p 638

practice of infant baptism in the days of the apostles.”²⁷ Being honest that there is no New Testament Scripture to justify infant baptism, he reasons his way out of the box.

He continually points out that there is no New Testament command to baptize infants, even admitting that “it is perfectly true that the Bible points to faith as a prerequisite for baptism,”²⁸ yet he continues to with appealing reasons for infant baptism without faith. His argument is not based in Scripture, but in the Baltic Confession, Art. XXXIV, as he continues to quote it, and the Westminster Confession, for his support.²⁹

We could pursue Berkof further and show his assumptions are unsupportable from Scripture, but we will leave him with this quote:

“We do not baptize the children of believers on the ground of an assumption, but on the ground of a command and an act of God. Children must be baptized in virtue of the covenant of God” (translation mine). Presumptive regeneration naturally cannot be regarded as the *legal* ground of infant baptism; this can only be in the covenant promise of God. Moreover, it cannot be the ground in any sense of the word, since the ground of baptism must be something objective, as the advocates of the fiew in question themselves are constrained to admit. If they are asked, why they assume the regeneration of children presented for baptism, they can only answer, Because they are born of believing parents, that is, because they are born in the covenant. Naturally, to deny that presumptive regeneration is the ground of infant baptism, is not equivalent to saying that it is entirely unwarranted to assume that infant children of believers are regenerated. This is a question that must be considered on its own merits.³⁰

Is he not saying that baptism of the infants of believers presumes they are regenerated, which would be the logical conclusion to *covenant membership*.

Presumptive regeneration... What evil paths can infant baptism lead down!

Berkof continually justifies his position by quoting various Confessions.³¹ How sad that such great men hang their hopes and faith upon presumptions and Confessions rather than upon the word of God.

Charles Hodge (1797-1878)

Charles Hodge’s rightly defines New Testament Baptism, but, at the same time, digs a pit for himself:

The difficulty on this subject is that baptism from its very nature involves a profession of faith; it is the way in which by the ordinance of Christ, He is to be confessed before men; but infants are incapable of making such a confession; therefore they are not the proper subjects of baptism. Or, to state the matter in another form: the sacraments belong to the members of the Church; but the Church is the company of believers; infants cannot exercise faith, therefore they are not members of the Church, and consequently ought not to be baptized.³²

Thus Old Testament circumcision represented the cutting work upon the heart of the believer, and then that work is exemplified by the outward sign of baptism. Baptism takes place after the Spirit

²⁷. *Ibid*, p 634

²⁸. *Ibid*, p 637

²⁹. *Ibid*, pp 638, 642.

³⁰. *Ibid*, p 639, 640

³¹. *Ibid*, pp 641-643

³². *Systematic Theology*, by Charles Hodge, in three volumes, III.546, 547. Reprint by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 1977. Please note that this pastor considers Hodge one of the greatest theologians of all time. However, here he clearly shot himself in the foot. Don’t we all at one point or another?

shows the individual the truth of Matthew 16:16.

Study to justify

To Hodge's credit, he admits that the nature of baptism involves a profession of faith, which placed him in a difficult situation with his personal beliefs. So he says:

In order to justify the baptism of infants, we must attain and authenticate such an idea of the Church as that it shall include the children of believing parents...

With this statement, he tells us that his personal presupposition demands that infants be baptized, so he proceeds with a 44 page argument to justify what his religion demands, i.e., paedobaptism. It is amusing that a great many theologians flee to Hodge's 44 page argument for infant baptism without mentioning that Hodge is justifying what he already admitted Scripture clearly teaches against.

He concludes his lengthy argument with this statement:

It does not follow from this that the benefits of redemption may not be conferred on infants at the time of their baptism. That is in the hands of God. What is to hinder the imputation to them of the righteousness of Christ, or their receiving the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*, so that their whole nature may be developed in the state of *reconciliation with God*? Doubtless this often occurs; but whether it does or not, their baptism stands good; it assures them of salvation *if they do not renounce* their baptismal covenant...³³

Hodge tells us that he is assuming some things which are not clearly taught in Scripture by saying, *imputation of the righteousness of Christ by baptism, What is to hinder...*, Furthermore, *their baptism stands good, &c.* One wonders what are his Scriptural grounds for saying Christ's righteousness can be imputed by water baptism, and *their baptism stands good*, for he offers no Scripture saying that Christ's righteousness is imputed to an infant by baptism. Thus the infant's salvation is based in a covenant of works, e.g., *if they do not renounce...*, not of grace through faith. Is there any hint that Christ's righteousness is imputed through any other method than through the personal, individual faith of the individual?

• Wrong motive, inconsistencies, confusion

The inconsistencies and speculations concerning paedobaptism are astounding even among men who, in this writer's opinion, are some of the greatest theologians of all time. Compare Hodge's statement here with Leupold's, Keil's and Shedd's statements above:

Leupold — "It (circumcision, *ed.*) is not a sacrament efficacious in supplying the needed grace and the desired effect... Here it should be remembered that this rite, even as it is not a sacrament, so, too, is not a divinely ordained instrumentality for initiation into the people of God..."

Keil — circumcision "spiritually incorporated into the nation of Jehovah," thus excluding females from that nation.

Shedd — "It is *probable* but not *infallible*..." Rather than faith, Hodge says that paedobaptism is a divinely ordained instrument for reconciliation with God.

With no firm foundation for paedobaptism in the Word of God, one man's opinion is as good as another's. But we are talking of the most important doctrine in the Word of God: RECONCILIATION to God the Father. Is it through baptism's water or *by grace through faith*?

Who is right, Leupold, Keil, Shedd or Hodge, or the Word of God? The Word of God right clearly

³³Emp added. *Ibid*, p 590. How much renouncing is enough to cut one off? John 3:5 is used by some Paedobaptist to prove the baptismal regeneration of infants. If such a doctrine is not Papist, this writer does not know what is. Note also that the "baptismal covenant" was made for them by the parents. The infant had nothing to do with the baptismal covenant. Can parents marry their infant children to other infant children, and expect that marriage vow made by the parents to be valid?

tells us that the preaching of God's Word is God's means of bringing faith and conversion? Reconciliation to the Father is only through faith in the finished work of Christ and His shed blood. Before one uses Hodge's defence, he should remember that Hodge, though using the Words of God, is not arguing from the Word of God; rather, he is arguing to justify a ritual he desires to retain. Is this not typical of a Mormon, JW, SDA or Cambelite? Hodge clearly said that he is arguing to support his belief in paedobaptism; thus he uses Scripture to justify what he believes, very convincingly, I might add.³⁴

Hodge's argument's inconsistencies are obvious as he argues from his preconceived notion, not from Scriptures. What has happened to the "reformed faith's" statement, "Grace Alone"? These men are clearly saying that the "reformed faith" is "Grace Alone, along with infant baptism."

Difficult questions raised, confronted

Though there might be a few usable passages to imply that believers' children are justified apart from a personal work of the Spirit in their hearts, *e.g., and all their house*, the vast majority of Scriptures speak plainly that each person must be dealt with, and the Lord deal's with each person individually.³⁵ Let us refer again to the basic rule of Scriptural Interpretation: One cannot accept implied doctrine over the clear, plain teaching of God's Word — implications and/or obscure passages must be interpreted in agreement with, or in light of, clear, plain passages.

We must answer this question: Does God ever operate contrary to the law which He has established? The answer must be, Yes, He does. We say this based upon what the Lord did concerning David and his sin with another man's wife and her husband. The law required death, but God did not enforce the physical death, though He certainly enforced His judgment against David and his family.

Let us be a little more specific: Does God ever violate His Word concerning redemption? That is, does God provide another means of redemption other than through faith in the finished work of Christ by the individual, *i.e.*, one method for children and one for adults? To this we must say, **NO!** There may be a few New Testament Scriptures that appear to indicate something other than individual faith exemplified in Peter's profession, but the overwhelming majority of verses are like John 3:3, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

Salvation is hinged upon individual faith in the finished work of Christ: *born again*. The grace of God is applied by the exercise of faith by the individual. We will deal with the New Testament passages below. (Ephesians 2:8, 9.) And, of course, that faith to claim the grace of God is also a work of the Holy Spirit.³⁶

As a personal note: This writer believes that it is a supported fact that missionaries have encountered untouched *heathens* who have proper faith though they have never heard the details of the gospel.

Hodge gives the following outline concerning The Plan of Salvation:

³⁴-*Systematic Theology*, III.546, 547, 590. Might we mention that *The Classic Bible Dictionary*, pp 173-180, though not written by Hodge, follows Hodge's line of reasoning almost point for point. Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, Lafayette, Indiana 47902. 1988. Edited by Jay P. Green, Sr.

³⁵-I believe one will find that before all in a house were baptised, they {"believed on the Lord, *e.g.*, Acts 16 & 18.

³⁶-Baptists have an equally serious problem with two plans of salvation, one for children and one for adults. They many times will tell a child to *ask jesus into his heart*; yet for adults, they will explain the true plan of salvation, *Trust Christ as your Substitute, Lord and Saviour*. Paedobaptism does not reconcile sinners to God any more than *Ask jesus into your heart* reconciles sinners to God. They are both clearly without Scriptural support. See the little booklet, *The other jesus*, by this writer. ovid.need@gmail.com. Thus the Baptist had best first *cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye*, Matthew 7:3. In this writers opinion and based upon his personal experience, modern Baptist have sent far more young children to hell with *Ask jesus into your heart* than the Pedobaptist have with their baptismal regeneration.

The Augustinian scheme includes the following points: (1.) That the glory of God, or the manifestation of his perfections, is the highest and ultimate end of all things. (2.) For that end God purposed the creation of the universe, and the whole plan of providence and redemption. (3.) That He placed man in a state of probation, making Adam, their first parent, their head and representative. (4.) That the fall of Adam brought all his posterity into a state of condemnation, sin, and misery, from which they are utterly unable to deliver themselves. (5.) From the mass of fallen men God elected a number innumerable to eternal life, and left the rest of mankind to the just recompense of their sins. (6.) That the ground of this election is not the foresight of anything in the one class to distinguish them favorably from the members of the other class, but the good pleasure of God. (7.) That for the salvation of those thus chosen to eternal life, God gave his own Son, to become man, and to obey and suffer for his people, thus making a full satisfaction for sin and bringing in everlasting righteousness, rendering the ultimate salvation of the elect absolutely certain. (8.) That while the Holy Spirit, in his common operations, is present with every man, so long as he lives, restraining evil and exciting good, his certainly efficacious and saving power is exercised only in behalf of the elect. (9.) That all those whom God has thus chosen to life, and for whom Christ specially gave Himself in the covenant of redemption, shall certainly (unless they die in infancy), be brought to the knowledge of the truth, to the exercise of faith, and to perseverance in holy living unto the end.

Such is the great scheme of doctrine known in history as the Pauline, Augustinian, or Calvinistic, taught, as we believe, in the Scriptures...³⁷

The purpose in the quoting Hodge at length in the above statement is to point out that part of the Calvinistic doctrine is that the Holy Spirit must awaken the individual to the knowledge of the truth, and then give to the individual the power to exercise faith in the redemptive work of Christ. The elect individual must, at some time in his life, be awakened to his lost condition and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice, however, how inconsistent Hodge's statement that the individual must be *brought to the knowledge of the truth* before he can have the righteousness of Christ, is with his statement, "What is to hinder the imputation to them of the righteousness of Christ... apart from individual awakening," *i.e.*, infants. But Hodge fails to address Christ's statement to Peter which makes covenant membership, both in the visible and invisible church, conditional upon the profession of faith, not upon baptism. Baptism into the visible church is based upon or is a result of Peter's profession. (See "Peter's Confession" p. 23.)

• **Imputation, Reconciliation, Regeneration**

Though the reader is no doubt very familiar with the Scriptural doctrine of Imputation, let us mention a few things in light of paedobaptism.

Righteousness of Christ: Romans 4:8, Paul clearly states that the righteousness of Christ is imputed only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ apart from any works either on the parents' or the individual's part, v. 6. Circumcision has nothing to do with imputation: Faith alone imputes Christ's righteousness, James 2:23. Therefore, to say that baptism imputes the righteousness of Christ to anyone, including infants, is totally without Scriptural support. When the Father looks at a sinner, only the righteousness and faithfulness of Christ will prevent His seeing sin in that person. Thus it is Christ's righteousness imputed to the sinner, and we are all shapened in iniquity, not the parents' righteousness, as claimed by pedobaptists.³⁸ (See Colossians 2:11, 12, under "Leupold" p. 27.) The means ordained by God whereby He imputes Christ's righteousness to the individual is through faith, which is a gift from God, and comes by hearing the Word of God.³⁹ What would hinder God imputing Christ's righteousness through baptism, as claimed by Berkof? We should ask, "Is there anything

³⁷Hodge goes on to show that this statement has been the consistent stand of Protestant and reformed churches down through the ages. *Systematic Theology*, III. p 333.

³⁸Psalms 51:5, includes infants who are presumed to be redeemed. See

³⁹Romans 10; Ephesians 2:8.)

clearly presented in the Word of God that tells us that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the sinner in any way other than through faith?" If not, then we had best avoid such doctrine as unscriptural.

Renewing by the Holy Ghost: Titus 3:5, clearly places the renewing work of the Spirit not as a result of any *works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy...* The context requires that the renewing take place after the new birth, v. 3. Colossians 3:8ff., the renewing work of the Spirit is a continuing work in the life of the born-again believer.

Reconciliation: We are reconciled by faith in the finished work of Christ. (Romans 5:10.) And reconciliation comes through the spoken word. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21.) The wicked works of Colossians 1:21, are any works done outside of the new birth, including baptism if that baptism is seen as a means of reconciling of man with God. (Matthew 7:21.)

Regeneration: Clearly, regeneration is not through good works. But can one be saved based upon another's good works, *i.e.*, one's parents baptism of him or her as an infant and the parents' covenant relationship? Is the parents' relationship, good or bad, with God mystically transfused to their infants with water?

If one can be saved—converted—through baptism by believing parents, is he kept by continuing in good works? In other words, what does it take to renounce the baptismal covenant? How much sin is too much? Does violation of the Sabbath or dietary laws violate the covenant as it did under the old covenant, causing the covenant-breaker to be removed from the congregation of the Lord? What about looking on someone with lust? How about covetousness? **THIS QUESTION MUST BE ANSWERED** if one holds that infant baptism confers the benefits of the covenant as long as the baptized one remains faithful to the covenant: "What extent of violation voids one's baptism."

Hodge's last statement before his last paragraph quoted above, says: "Baptism, therefore, benefits infants just as it does adults, and on the same condition." ("Charles Hodge (1797-1878)" p. 45.) Realizing that the "water gets murky"—no pun intended—when we talk of covenant-membership, is he referring to the physical or spiritual covenant-membership? If the baptized infant's membership in the spiritual covenant, with no conversion required on his or her part, is conditioned upon faithfulness to the covenant, then is an adult's membership dependent upon his faithfulness to the covenant? Certainly, the adult's physical membership is determined upon covenant-faithfulness, but the adult's entrance into the spiritual covenant is based upon hearing the gospel, the work of the Spirit in his heart and Peter's profession of faith, 1 Corinthians chapters 1-5. Chapter 5 opens with, *It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you..* Among whom? Among the converted church members at Corinth. Can chapter 5 be removed from its context without destroying its meaning? Can it be applied to infants when Paul was not addressing baptism at all?

Hodge's argument is inconsistent: Paul made it clear in Romans 3, that circumcision was only good when it was conditioned on faith. Circumcision is counted as uncircumcision without faith in the redemptive work of Christ. Hodge admits this, yet he justifies baptism of infants apart from individual faith. If one equates Old Testament circumcision with New Testament baptism, then Romans 3 clearly says that baptism, *i.e.*, paedobaptism, without faith on the part of the candidate is counted as *unbaptism*. Can an infant exercise faith? Hodge's 44 page argument for infant baptism is based upon a false premise, *i.e.*, *This is not what God's Word teaches, but I believe it anyway; therefore, in order to justify...* According to a malady common to all men, his false premise leads to an effort to make God say something that even he admitted God did not say in His Word. False premise leads to a false conclusion.⁴⁰

Some who cling to paedobaptism hold that verses such as John 3, Romans 10:9, 10, 17; 1 Corin-

⁴⁰I have been told that Hodge, and others like him, was not really a good Bible scholar when he said there is no Scriptural evidence to justify infant baptism. They felt they could provide the proper justification. Obviously, they felt they were better Bible Scholars than Hodge and others like him. Thus, they missed their calling, and should be professional Bible Scholars.

thians 1:27, and the ones used in the points above, were only given to the new church until a generation of Christian parents was raised up. Then the children of the new generation were exempt by baptism from the requirements of the passages unless the children exhibit non-covenant tendencies.⁴¹

Spencer, Duane E.

This writer found that one of the “strongest,” most “dogmatic” writers for paedobaptism and defender of sprinkling/pouring over immersion, exhibiting the most animosity against “immersionist,” was Duane E. Spencer. Though this writer found Spencer’s book generally inconsistent with Scripture, the most obvious inconsistency is found by comparing the statement on his dust cover with a concluding statement in the book. The cover statement is by James B. Jordan:

Furthermore, our children are baptized, at God’s command. The sign and seal of the covenant is placed upon them as a sign that they are welcome at Jesus’ lap. Small children naturally believe in Jesus, if they have been taught to. The task of parents is to nourish them in this faith. Thus, because God has placed His sign upon them, and claimed them as His own, we always count our children as Christians, and treat them as such.⁴²

One should note the blatant, opening assumption, typical throughout the book: “Small children naturally believe in Jesus,” and, therefore, all parents need do is train them up properly, and they are Christians. He clearly denied a key point of the Calvinistic doctrine claims to support: The total depravity of man. Did not David speak of being conceived in sin? (Psalms 51:5.) Did not Paul point out that *there is none that seeketh after God*. (Romans 3:10.) Consequently, based upon Romans 3, how can one assume a child of a Christian is conceived as a Christian? Moreover, Jordan gives no supporting Scripture for his statement, “At God’s command.” May God see fit to deliver us from such assumptive Bible exegesis. The Word of God clearly tells us that one must be *born again*. How, therefore, can we assume otherwise?⁴³ Mr. Spencer himself destroys his own argument for paedobaptism that he laboured so strenuously to establish in his book with these few words opening his concluding 2 page chapter:

Admittedly there is no direct evidence, either in principle or in practice, that the New Testament Church administered Christian baptism to infants. On the other hand there is no direct evidence that children of Christian parents were given “believer’s baptism” upon profession of faith. Although we are told about Timothy’s having *professed a good profession before many witnesses* not a single word is said about his being baptized. Why? because the silence of the New Testament in this is a resounding affirmation that infant baptism was taken so for granted that there was no need for explicit mention of it...⁴⁴

Thus Spencer concludes his multitude of arguments for infant baptism—including Mr. Jordan’s dogmatic statement that God commanded infants to be baptized—by clearly admitting that there is no evidence “that the New Testament Church administered Christian baptism to infants.” Let the reader draw his own conclusion concerning *Holy Baptism*, but this writer will ask, “Is New Testament silence on a particular subject or practice a sign of God’s approval of that particular subject or practice?”

Those who add to or detract from the word of God in order to support what they want to believe or

⁴¹This writer found that some of the strongest supporters of paedobaptism, that is, baptismal regeneration, had some of the most misbehaved children around, yet the parents refused to see the non-covenant tendencies.

⁴²*Holy Baptism, Word Keys which Unlock the Covenant*, inside front dust cover. Published by Geneva Ministries, Tyler, Texas, 1984. Mr. Spencer uses the NASV for his reference book.

⁴³How inconsistent of “Calvinists” to believe in the total depravity of all men, yet believe that the children of professed Christians are not born depraved!

⁴⁴*Ibid*, p 167. This writer was motivated to pursue this topic of paedobaptism when he was confronted by some who held that a “baptized infant” of Christian parents does not need to be *born again from above*; that is, converted in accord with John 3:3, 5, &c., baptismal regeneration.

to support church tradition are clearly under the curse of God:

Deuteronomy 4:2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Proverbs 30:6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Even harsher, God calls those who make his word say things it does not say, liars, regardless of how important others consider them. The unregenerate, baptized children will pay the price.

Chapter V

A consistent view

Oehler, Dr. Gustav Freidrich (1812-1872)

An author who appears to deal with circumcision in a consistent manner is Dr. Gustav Freidrich Oehler. Concerning circumcision, Oehler says:

To save her husband, Zipporah performs the circumcision, but tells him that she is united to him in a marriage the children of which must be bought with blood. The *Rabbinical* exegesis is, that the mother calls the *son* [spouse] upon his circumcision, as the Arabs use the verb *hhathana* of circumcision. The act of circumcision would, on this view, be regarded as a betrothal of the new-born offshoot of the people to the covenant God (4). But this whole interpretation is opposed to the fact that it is Moses, and not the child, that is in danger of death because the circumcision is omitted (5). Moreover, and this consideration is decisive, the Old Testament applies the symbol of the bridal and marriage relation only to the fellowship of God with His people—not to His fellowship with individual members of the nation [the church in general is the bride of Christ, individuals are sons of God through adoption, *ed*]. Circumcision is essentially distinguished from Christian baptism by not constituting an *immediate*, personal relation between God and the recipient of the ordinance. It does not operate as an individual means of grace. Circumcision is no vehicle of sanctifying forces, as it makes no demand in reference to the internal state of the recipient; of whom no more is presupposed than that he is by birth of Israelitish descent, or, if a born heathen, has been externally incorporated in to the commonwealth of Israel. The rite effects admission to the fellowship of the covenant people as an *opus operatum*, securing to the individual as a member of the nation his share in the promises and saving benefits granted to the nation as a whole (6). On the other hand, circumcision certainly makes ethical demands on him who *has* received it. It binds him to obedience to God, whose covenant sign he bears in his body and to a blameless walk before Him (cf. Gen xvii.1). Thus it is the *symbol of the renewal and purification of the heart*. This signification of the rite is in the Old Testament specially brought out in the use of the phrase, *uncircumcision of heart*, to a want of receptivity for the things of God, Lev. xxvi.41, Jer. ix. 25 (Ezek. xlv. 7); while, on the other hand, the purification of the heart, by which it becomes receptive for the things of God, and capable of executing God's will, is called circumcision of the heart, Deut. x. 16, xxx. 6 (Jer. iv. 4), etc. (7)."¹

Before looking at some things here concerning circumcision, we should quickly review the reason for the threat to Moses' life. Oehler correctly mentions that because Moses was going to Pharaoh to claim Egypt's firstborn for God through death, Moses needed to correct the fact that his own son had not been given to God through circumcision. Moses was in death's grip, not his son. Note what Oehler said: Circumcision had nothing to do with the individual's relationship with God, and meant nothing more than that one was a member of the literal nation of Israel, thus an heir to the covenant promise made to the visible nation of Israel. Circumcision did not make one a member of the nation. (See "Keil-Dlitzsch" p. 28. And "Leupold" p. 27.) Consequently, if one remains true to the Old Testament form in maintaining that infant baptism represents covenant membership, then one MUST say that baptism means no more than the child is a member of the new nation of Israel, the visible church—it has no mystical value. But birth into an Israelite family made the child a member of the covenant-nation regardless of their circumcision. Jacob (Isaac, Ishmael and Esau were Hebrews, being sons of Abraham the Hebrew) was the first Israelite. Moreover, the uncircumcised born in the wilderness were Israelites. Inconsistency destroys an argument.

Circumcision had nothing to do with the individual's personal relationship with the God of the

¹Emp added. *Theology of the Old Testament*, G. F. Ohler, p 193, 194. Klock & Klock. 1873. He taught in Switzerland and then in Germany. In time, he became one of the foremost conservative scholars of his day, particularly in the "Theocratic Kingdom concept."

covenant, a matter that still had to be settled by the individual; hence, the circumcised heart. Without the circumcised heart, the Lord of the covenant was/is an Enemy.

If one remains true to infant baptism representing the Old Testament covenant membership, he must also say that the individual must still settle his personal relationship with the God of the covenant. That relationship can only be settled by Spirit awakened faith in the Covenant Himself, that is, Christ. (Isaiah 49:8, Matthew 16:16.) True circumcision will then be seen in the converted life. Old Testament circumcision never claimed to make one receptive in heart to the things of God; in fact, circumcision led to hardening of the heart and false confidence on the part of those circumcised. The heart's circumcision was an operation of the Spirit of God which had yet to be performed. See "Jewish thought" p. 69.

Infant baptism, if practiced, must be viewed the same way because, according to the Old Testament picture of circumcision, baptism makes no claim upon the heart. God makes His claim upon the heart by His awakening Spirit through the preaching and hearing of the gospel. (Romans 10:12-17; 1 Corinthians 1.)

We might mention that only pagans practiced circumcision of girls.

The Old Testament uncircumcised were to be cut off from the nation of God, excommunicated from the congregation of the Lord, *i.e.*, *Israel—the Old Testament congregation of the Lord*. The New Testament uncircumcised are also commanded to be excommunicated from the congregation of the Lord—that is, those who with their lives exhibit uncircumcised hearts are to be removed from the Christian assembly. (1 Corinthians 5:5.)

Oehler wrote:

But the main sign of the covenant is *circumcision* which is the constant symbol of covenant obligations, and of consequent covenant rights... it is the *symbol of the renewal and purification of heart*... With circumcision was combined the naming of the child...²

Can we say that anything except redemption gives one covenant rights? Only redemption, or conversion, being born again, gives one "covenant obligations and covenant rights," and a new name.³

We should note that there are an abundance of books on the market attempting to justify infant baptism. *If* infant baptism were so clearly taught in the Word of God, *then* why must such a large amount of ink be used for its justification?

²*Ibid*, pp 191-194.

³This author realizes that the whole world is under the covenant law and will be judged accordingly, not according to their circumcision or baptism. But that is not our thrust in this document. See "Identifying Identity" by this author.

Chapter VI

Children

Obviously, the emphasis of paedobaptism is on children, even infants. So, how about children? The Word of God clearly teaches that children are a heritage of the Lord: they come from the Lord, and they belong to the Lord. The parents are stewards under God, and are responsible to train up His children in His ways. (Deuteronomy 6, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, &c.)

The children of Christian parents: **First**, as in the Old Testament, children are born by God's Sovereign Providential grace, not baptized, into Christian families, so thus their births bring them into all of their covenant families' activities, including church. **Second**, from birth, children are to be made aware that they are responsible to the Covenant God in Christ the Christians' children's opportunities are greater, and, hence, their responsibilities and accountabilities are greater (Romans 3). **Third**, children are to be raised in the knowledge of the Lord; and **fourth**, children are to be instructed in the importance of total dependance upon the Lord apart from the works of the flesh and according to the Christian *faith which worketh by love*.¹

The outward mark of a child's Christian heritage is not circumcision, *i.e.*, *baptism*. Rather, it is the Christ-like spirit, attitudes and life apart from the works of the flesh.(Proverbs20:11, 20, &c.) Children are expected as much as are their parents to live a holy life. Furthermore, the parents will be responsible before God to train their children to live holy and to see that they do live holy.

Can converted sinners bind the sovereign God of heaven and earth to do their desire? Can parents place God under obligation to them?

Baptism and children

Maybe they could be *baptized*, showing the parents' faith that the Lord will call the children unto Himself, but to equate infant baptism with circumcision implies baptism equal to regeneration or conversion, for circumcision spoke of regeneration.²

Households and children.

Before we deal with the New Testament considerations, let us look at some unique features of the first passover. **First**, death was the God-enforced penalty for failure to follow God's explicit instructions concerning the passover, but death was not enforced concerning circumcision. The death was only against the firstborn of man and beast.³The firstborn was safe under the protection of the blood applied by his faithful father. If the firstborn was not under his father's authority, *i.e.*, he was married, then he was responsible for himself. Physical death for failure in any aspect of the requirements of the first passover was unique to the first passover. Later, we are told that neither the father nor the children will die for the other's sins. (Deuteronomy 24:16.)

Second, under the Old Testament passover, the family was protected from death by the faithful, obedient father, but protection was provided apart from circumcision because Moses did not require circumcision before the original passover. We find this patriarchal system consistent throughout the Old Testament, *viz.* the father was the high priest of the family, as he still is today. **Third**, it had to be

¹. Dependance upon the Lord is shown to the children primarily through the parent's obedience to His Word contrasted with dependance on the gods of this world. See 1 Corinthians 1 & 2.

². However, we have shown that circumcision had nothing to do with regeneration, or conversion. Only the Spirit of God can convert a person, *i.e.*, circumcise the heart.

³. Must the beast be baptized today? Do not the Papists believe this as they have their beasts sprinkled with *holy water*.

the father who killed the lamb, not the mother nor any of the children in the house. If the father failed to slay the lamb AND strike the blood on the door, the firstborn would die no matter how holy the wife and/or children were. **Fourth**, the passover lamb was to be eaten by those trusting in its protection in the houses where the blood was shed and applied. **Fifth**, Deuteronomy 16:1-8 changes the requirement: the lamb is now required to be sacrificed in the place chosen by the Lord and not at all *within any of thy gates*, v. 5. **Finally**, after the first passover, the children of those who failed to observe the ordinance of the passover did not die. Furthermore, only those who were responsible to keep it were cast out of the congregation for failure to observe it properly.

New Testament considerations

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.*

Though mentioning the children of one believing parent, the Spirit clearly omits any mention of baptism. Neither this passage nor its context remotely refers to baptism in any way. In fact, vv 18 & 19 speak against baptism if one connects circumcision and baptism. A child is born into a covenant-family in the New Testament just as it was born into a covenant-family in the Old Testament and ever since Eve. The child was born into the physical nation of Israel in the Old Testament just as one is born into any physical nation today; therefore, a child was not made a member of the nation of Israel by circumcision, for he was already a member. A girl was a member of the nation though uncircumcised. The one Christian parent can still train up a child in the way he should go and offer protection for that child, e.g., Timothy. If 1 Corinthians 7 is used to condone infant baptism, or any baptism for that matter, then in order to be consistent, one must say that baptism cleanses the baptized from sin, viz. *else were your children unclean*. As we have already seen, some mighty good theologians hold to *infant baptismal regeneration* while denying *adult baptismal regeneration*.

Acts 10:46 *For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?*

When Peter commands baptism for those who evidenced salvation by speaking in tongues, he DID NOT say that every one gave such evidence.⁴ Who was in the household? How old were they? Can we assume that all ages were *baptized* regardless of their attitude toward Peter's message? Considering what the Lord Jesus told Peter in Matthew 16, undoubtedly Peter would not have baptized anyone who did not profess faith in Christ. (See "Peter's Confession" p. 23.)

Acts 16:14 *And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.*

We are not told the ages of those in Lydia's household. Does the Word of God permit one to assume that if there were 5 people in her household, e.g., 14, 21, 25, 48 & 52 years of age, and only 3 believed the gospel, e.g., the 14, 48 & 21 year olds, that the ones who did not believe were also baptized? I think not!⁵

⁴ We will not deal with tongues here. See our book, *Tongues, A Biblical View*.

⁵ Example: "I do not believe that garbage about Christ," said the 14 year old member of Lydia's household, but he was baptized anyway being subject to the wishes of his parents. This writer does not think we have any Scriptural grounds at all to justify believing Peter would have baptized one with such an attitude toward Christ. Therefore, we **must** assume that they all professed faith in the Christ which Peter preached to them as Peter professed his faith when confronted by Jesus Himself. I have just as much right to assume the ages as do those who assume infants being present. Really, we do not have the right to assume anything that is not spelled out in Scripture.

Acts 16:34 *And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

Acts 16:34 presents the same situation. Again, if the ones of the Jailer's household were mature young and older adults, can we assume that unbelieving, Christ-deniers were also baptized?

The above assumed ages of the members of these households are as valid as assuming that each household contained infants who were baptized with the others who believed. We **MUST** be careful, or we will make the Scriptures say many things that they do not.

Some New Testament conclusions

First, the first passage, Acts 10:46, upon which the rest are built indicates that only those who evidenced conversion by speaking in tongues were baptized regardless of the age of those in the household.⁶ Thus baptism is a result of conversion, not a means of conversion.

Now this occurrence at Pentecost reveals the unity of Christian Baptism. IBaptism; Those who are first baptized by the Spirit are then to be baptized by water. This unity is clearly evidenced in the preaching of the gospel to the gentiles.⁷

Second, if one tries to use the above three passages in Acts to encourage infant baptism or to bind one to baptism for salvation, he **MUST** also permit individuals of all ages to be baptized, even those who mock God. Remember, Ishmael was also circumcised! (See "Ishmael's and Esau's circumcision" p. 31.) We have as much authority to assume that members of each of the three households above rejected the gospel as did Ishmael, as we do to assume that some of each household were infants, or that every one in the household was saved: We have no right to assume anything, so why do so many good men build upon unsupportable assumptions. All we know is what we are told by Holy Writ, and that must be accepted in light of other Scripture, especially Peter's words in Matthew 16. (See "Peter's Confession" p. 23.)

Third, no passage will stand alone, not even the ones used to support paedobaptism. The foundation of every New Testament passage must be the *law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms*, Luke 24:44-47.

Fourth, does the Biblical doctrine of election permit us to assume anyone is saved or will be saved, thus relieving us of responsibility to reach them with the gospel? Would not the same assumption apply to both children and adults? Though everyone who diligently studies Scripture is controlled to some degree by assumptions and presuppositions, the power and command of God is to be free from the traditions of the elders, 1 Peter 1:18. Note that it is the blood of Christ that frees one from tradition and cleanses one from sin, not the water of baptism, Revelation 1:5.

Fifth, the shed blood of the passover lamb, when applied to the door, spared the household. Circumcision was not required for this "salvation from death." After the first passover, Moses instituted the passover for an everlasting commemoration for the nation of Israel, and made provision for a foreigner to become an Israelite, *i.e.*, circumcision with no profession of faith in Genesis 17. But for the 40 years in the wilderness, circumcision was not practiced. Why? Because that generation was not living a circumcised life: They were Egyptians in heart and action.

⁶ This passage is the first message of the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles.

⁷ *The Meaning and Mode of Baptism*, Jay E. Adams, p 24. Presbyterian And Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, New Jersey. 1975. Though Adams is presenting the Scriptural reasons for pouring or sprinkling rather than immersing, he makes the above statement. I assume he also defends pedobaptism though he makes the clear statement that there must be a work in the heart by the Spirit before baptism.

Chapter VII

Mode—Washings, Sprinklings

Though this chapter deals primarily with the washings and sprinklings as traced into the New Testament, we will open with a short word concerning the mode of baptism

The next step after redemption was passage through the Red Sea, which, in the New Testament, is identified as baptism.

1 Corinthians 10:1 *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*

Though personally this writer is not as concerned about the mode of baptism as he is about the meaning of baptism, we will mention a few points about the mode. 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2, *under the cloud, and through the sea*. We need to observe that Paul specifically says that Israel went *under the cloud*, not through the cloud; accordingly, Scripture tells us the cloud went above them to protect them from the burning sun, not to keep them wet. In fact, the texts in Exodus 13:21, 22, 14:19, 20, say nothing at all about the cloud being made up of water droplets; rather, it was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The Cloud

The cloud was the manifest glory of God, and is always represented as a cloud of smoke, *e.g.*, Solomon's temple. God appeared to Abraham to confirm the covenant in a cloud that explicitly spoke of the cloud leading Abraham's seed out of Egypt, Genesis 15:17, 18. Biblically, the cloud was a cloud of smoke, protecting Israel from his enemies: Egypt, the burning sun and the rain, Isaiah 4:5, 6

According to Keil, when this cloud went before the army of Israel, it assumed the form of a column, so that by day it resembled a dark column of smoke raising up towards heaven, and by night a column of fire, to show the whole army what direction to take.

Moreover, our God is a consuming fire, not a soaking rain, though His judgment and mercy are at times compared to rain.

Psalms 74:13 *Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength... **Divide**, the margin reads, *break*. The thought is that the sea was cleanly broken, not bent or splintered: It was a wall to them on both sides, Psalms 106:9. Their passage through the depth of the sea was *as through the wilderness*, Psalms 66:6, Hebrews 11:29. We must assume that the inspired writers of the Holy Scriptures knew the difference between damp and dry land. Thus the ground was completely dry, hard as a rock, and it remained so. Otherwise, 3 million people with their livestock—herdsmen by divine calling—would agitate enough mud to make passage impassable. There could be no mist without making the ground damp, and we are specifically told that it was as the ground in the wilderness. It was not a muddy mess.*

This writer has encountered the assumption that because *the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left*, the people passed through the sea in a **mist**. Therefore, it is said, sprinkling is the only proper mode of baptism in spite of clear Scriptural evidence *that the children of Israel went into the midst [not mist] of the sea upon the dry*. (Exodus 14:22. *Ground* is added by the translators.) If there were enough mist to "sprinkle" the people, there would have been enough to cause the ground to be damp or even wet, but the text specifically says that both the people and the ground were dry. Therefore, it is Scripturally untenable to assume that the people were "sprinkled" as they passed through the sea.

Washings, sprinklings

This is one of the more important sections in our study of Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism. How do the Old Testament washings and sprinklings fit into the overall teaching of the Scriptures? The Old Testament washings and sprinklings spoke of the work of Christ upon the heart of the redeemed: His shed blood which washes us from our sins.¹ Although alluded to above, we should mention the fact that circumcision spoke of a covenant of blood, so let us cover the use of blood in the covenant at this point.

Circumcision and the covenant of blood

The blood of the covenant: Exodus 24:6-8, under the old covenant, Moses took the blood of the sacrifice of the peace offering—peace between the holy righteous God and His people—and sprinkled half on the altar and half on the people. This sprinkling sealed the covenant between the people and their God. From that point on, any approach to the Holy Heavenly Father had to be through the blood.

1 Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Blood in the Old Testament

According to ISBE,

The shedding of Blood was necessary to the validity of any covenant between tribes or individuals. The rite of blood signifies the exchange of blood on the part of the contracting parties, and therefore the establishment of physical affinity between them. An alliance based on blood-relationship was inviolable...The rite of circumcision is an Old Testament form of blood ceremony. Apart from the probable sanitary importance of the act is the deeper meaning in the establishment of a bond of friendship between the one upon whom the act is performed and Jeh Himself. In order that Abraham might become *the friend of God* he was commanded that he should be circumcised as a token of the covenant between him and God (Gen 17:10-11)..

[C]ircumcision is looked upon as the ratification of the agreement. Yahweh undertook to be the God of Abraham and of his descendants. Abraham was to be the father of a multitude of nations and the founder of a line of kings. He and his descendants were to inherit Canaan. The agreement thus formed was permanent; Abraham's posterity should come within the scope of it.. Anyone who had experienced the rite of blood stood within the scope of the covenant which existed between the tribe and the tribal god, and enjoyed all the privileges of tribal society...²

Blood spoke of life, and was regarded very highly by the ancients. Thus in the ancient world before Christ, there could be no binding of two parties, pagan or otherwise, without the use of blood in some form or another. Circumcision spoke of sealing the covenant between God and Abraham with blood. Therefore, it is obvious that it is the sacrifice of Christ and the shedding of His blood which was foreshadowed by the Old Testament shedding of the blood in circumcision. The Spirit of Christ circumcises the heart through the sprinkling of His blood upon the heart of the believer, Romans 5:9, Ephesians 2:13, Colossians 1:20, Hebrews 9:18. The first testament was dedicated with blood through circumcision and sacrifices; the new testament was dedicated with the blood of Christ, Hebrews 13:20.

¹ See *Washings*.. Ephesians 5:26, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 9:10 and *Sprinkling*.. He 9, 10, 11, 12 & 1 Peter 1:2. These passages clearly tell us that the Old Testament washings and sprinklings spoke of the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the heart of the believer.

² *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, pp 489, 675, 656, 657. Reprint of the original 1915 Edition by Associated Publishers and Authors, Wilmington, Delaware 19808.

“The shedding of Blood” was necessary to the validity of any covenant between tribes or individuals. The rite of blood signifies the exchange of blood on the part of the contracting parties, and therefore the establishment of physical affinity between them. An alliance based on blood-relationship was inviolable.³

The division of the blood had reference to the two parties to the covenant, who were to be brought by the covenant into a living unity; but it had no connection whatever with the heathen customs...⁴

Keil gives these reasons for the blood:

First, a pure life for the impure life of the offerer, and thus restoring fellowship between the pure God and the impure offerer through the expiation of sin. **Second**, the sacrificial blood signified the principle of the divine power and grace communicated to the people through the sprinkling of the blood. **Third**, the one blood divided between the two, the altar of the Lord and the people, signified unity between the Lord and His people. **Fourth**, “In the blood sprinkled upon the altar and then the people, the natural life of the people was given up to God, as a life that had passed through death, to be pervaded by His grace; and then through the sprinkling upon the people it was restored to them again, as a life renewed by the grace of God.” And **fifth**, the blood united Israel and his God, transposed Israel into the kingdom of God, “in which it was filled with the powers of God’s spirit of grace, and sanctified into a kingdom of priests, a holy nation of Jehovah.”

Blood spoke of life, and was regarded very highly by the ancients. Thus in the ancient world before Christ, there could be no binding of two parties—pagan or otherwise—without the use of blood in some form or another. Accordingly, though its significance has been totally lost to “Christian” Western culture, what Moses did in regard to blood at God’s instruction in Exodus 24, was very obvious to Israel. They realized precisely what was going on with the shedding of the blood. It might be similar to signing a contract today. Maybe a term would be, “signed in blood.”

The covenant and the conscience

Blood in the New Testament

We need to look at the New Testament to understand the significant of the covenant mediated by Moses between God and His people, Israel, and sealed with blood. Hebrews was written specifically to compare and point out the difference between the old covenant and the new. In Hebrews 9:1-10, we see that the old covenant required many separations between the people and their God. He was “in the tabernacle’s Holy of Hollies,” and could only be approached once a year through a priest and through the blood of a sacrifice.

Hebrews gives us these points: **First**, 9:9, all the carnal ordinances (defined as rites [including circumcision], rituals, ceremonies [including the sprinklings of the blood, water and oil on the altar and upon the priest] required under the *first covenant*) could not satisfy the conscience, for they only spoke of the coming work of Christ upon the hearts of the redeemed. **Second**, 10:22, the *second covenant*, i.e., the New Covenant, which the first foreshadowed, provides the sacrifice of Christ and the shedding of His blood. **Third**, 9:10, the true *reformation* was the sacrifice of Christ which did away with the old offerings.

Hebrews 9:11, everything required to approach the Holy Heavenly Father prefigured Christ and what His coming work would do. Christ’s work dealt with the heart. Christ, as High Priest, offered up Himself as the sacrifice for sin. He then took the blood of that sacrifice, His own blood, and sprinkled it on the altar before the Heavenly Father. The other half of His blood He sprinkled on *the hearts* of

³. *Ibid*, p 675.

⁴. *Keil–Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament*, V. I, p 158.

His people, thus purifying and cleansing their hearts and *conscience*, v. 14. He circumcises their hearts with His own blood.

As a parenthesis, let us mention a few words about the temple: V. 11, even His body was prefigured by the tabernacle of the Old Covenant,

But I say unto you, That in this place is [one] greater than the temple, Matthew 12:6. We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands, Mark 14:58. And said, This [fellow] said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days, Matthew 26:61. Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body, John 2:19-21

Accordingly, Christ's body, the church, is the *greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building*. Hebrews 9:11 It is His body that Ezekiel describes as the new temple for the people of God, chapters 40 on. Christ built Ezekiel's temple. Thus the old temple made with hands was replaced with the new temple made without hands.⁵

Fourth. Hebrews 9:18-22, refers to Exodus 24 where Moses sprinkled the blood of the peace offering upon the people, the book of the law and the instruments of the ministry—ministry of mediation between God and His people. Paul makes a clear distinction between the Old and New Covenant. Whereas the Old only affected the outside as the blood was sprinkled on the outside of the people of God, the New affects the heart—the conscience—because it is sprinkled on the inside of the people of God by the Spirit of God. The ordinance given to Moses, consisting of purifying all things by sprinkling them with blood, simply prefigured the true sprinkling Christ would do with His own blood upon the hearts of His people many hundreds of years later. Hebrews 9:23-25.

Another parenthesis: *The end of the world*. Though not really in our study at this point, make a note of this while we are here, *viz, the end of the world...*, Hebrews 9:26. The context of this phrase here and in 1 Corinthians 10:11 (cf. Galatians 4:4, Ephesians 1:10) requires that this *end of the world* must refer to *the end of the old Hebrew world, i.e., the world of the old covenant*. Hebrews 8:13.

Hebrews 9:27, 28, one death, one judgment, one offering for sin and a second appearing.

The Law and the New Covenant

There are actually two laws of the covenant referred to by the New Testament authors, and the context of their usages will make clear which is being referred to: 1) the method of approach to the God of the covenant, *i.e.*, carnal ordinances, and 2) the actual law of the covenant, *i.e.*, the Ten Commandments.

Hebrews 10:1-6, *the law* must be the law of 9:10; 10:8, *i.e.*, carnal ordinances, which could not deal with the heart nor conscience; therefore, the law of the Old Covenant, *i.e.*, carnal ordinances, could not *purge the conscience of sins*, v. 2. In fact, rather than the law cleansing the conscience of sins, it only brought to *remembrance again* those past sins, v. 3. If *the law*—carnal ordinances—of the Old Covenant could have solved the problem of the heart and conscience, if obedience to *the law*—carnal ordinances—could have pleased the Heavenly Father, there would have been no need of Christ and the New Covenant, vv. 4-7.

Everything in the *volume of the book* spoke of the work of Christ, and thus the insufficiency of *the law*, both carnal ordinances and Ten Commandments, v. 7. Note that Christ did indeed replace, fulfill, the whole of the law—He replaced everything that spoke of His sacrificial death and payment for the sins of His people, and thus the insufficiency to the law, carnal ordinances, including circumcision.

Hebrews 9:10 & 10:8: Everything spoke of: **First**, Christ doing the will of the Father, which was

⁵: 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17, 19. See also, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:21, Revelation 3:12, 11:1, 2, 19, 21:22, &c.

that Christ take away the first law of the covenant (carnal ordinances of sprinklings and washings), that He might establish the second with the sacrifice of His own body and blood, vv. 9, 10. **Second**, His priestly function of offering the sacrifice before the Father for His people, v. 18. The first testament was dedicated with blood through circumcision and sacrifices, and the second testament was dedicated with the blood of Christ,. (Hebrews 13:20.) His sacrifice established Him at the right hand of the Father in the position of all power and glory where He will remain *till his enemies be made his footstool*, according to the eternal covenant between the Father and the Son. (Hebrews 10:11, 12. **Third**, making His people perfect *forever*. (Hebrews 10:14.) This perfection deals with the heart and conscience of His people as His Spirit writes His laws, the Ten Commandments, upon their hearts, and forever separates the guilt of their sins from them—the circumcised heart. (10:16, 17.) Thus there is no need for further offerings, washings, pourings, sprinklings and rites for the sins of His people because they are forever remitted. (10:18.) **Fourth**, the one time offering of Christ and the remission of the sins—contrasted with the covering of sins under the old law of the covenant with its carnal ordinances—of His people gives them *boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way*. His people can now draw near to the Father *with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*, 10:22.) The Old Testament sprinklings spoke of Christ's New Testament sprinkling of the heart.

Hebrews 10:8ff.: Clearly, the author of Hebrews in this passage is not talking of the Ten Commandments; rather, he is talking of the carnal ordinances required under the Old Covenant for covering one's sin for his approach to the Holy Heavenly Father in the old tabernacle, 20. The New Covenant consists of placing the law of the covenant, the Ten Commandments, upon the heart, which the Old did not; it consists of assuring the conscience of remission of sins. (8:10; 10:16.) Thus the New Covenant, Christ, provides boldness to enter into the very presence of God which was forbidden under the Old.

Hebrews 10:23ff.: not only is the author of Hebrews dealing with the law governing the conscience, *i.e.* carnal ordinances, but he is also dealing with the Ten Commandments, v. 12, *viz.* when we *sin willfully* (presumptuously, v. 26), there is no sacrifice which will clear the conscience.⁶

Melchisedec/Aaron

Christ's priesthood was not after the order of Aaron (Levi). The Aaronic priesthood was replaced with the priesthood of the believer, not with the priesthood of Christ. The Levitical priesthood was done away with by the work of Christ, making all believers priests and kings to the Most High God. Christ's priesthood was after the order of Melchisedec, which was established while Levi was still in the loins of his father, Abraham, Hebrews 7. The author of Hebrews argues that the Levitical priesthood, while still in Abraham, was subject to Christ, and that Christ is a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, not after the order of Aaron: *And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of carnal commandment, but after the power of endless life*, v. 15. The book of Hebrews proves to the Hebrews, who had been under the Levitical priesthood for many hundreds of years, that Christ could be and was the High Priest though He was not of the priestly line of Aaron. Thus we must be cautious about connecting Aaron's and Christ's priesthood, or we will mix something that the author of Hebrews made a clear distinction between.

Hebrews 9:9, 10, clearly tells us that the carnal washings and sprinklings of the Old Testament tabernacle and priesthood prefigured the work of Christ upon the conscience of the believer. They did not prefigure any kind of outward washings or sprinklings upon the outward flesh (baptisms) of the believer as some argue.

⁶ That is, *continually sin willfully*. This understanding alone would satisfy the total of Scripture. Cf. Numbers 15:30 & 1 John 3:4.

Boldness vs Liberty

Thus the new law of the covenant is the law permitting His people to enter boldly into the presence of God. It is contrasted with the old requiring rites, rituals and ordinances of sprinklings and washings. The new covenant is the new agreement between the Father and the Son, permitting the bold approach to the Father, Hebrews 10:19. *Boldness...* The margin reads *liberty*. Thayer: *free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance.*⁷

Boldness before God, accordingly, is basically assurance that our sins are forgiven and that we can stand before Him with a clear conscience; this boldness is provided through the *sprinkling of the blood of Christ* upon the heart of the believer. The Geneva Bible margin reads here,

The sum of the former treatise: We are not shut out now of the holy place as the Fathers were, but we have an entrance into the true holy place (that is, into heaven) seeing that we are purged with the blood not of beasts, but of Jesus. Neither as in times past, doeth the high Priest shut us out by setting the vail against us, but through the vail, which is his flesh, he hath brought us in to heaven it self, being present with us, so that we have now truly an high Priest, which is over the house of God.

- **Boldness—clear conscience**

Furthermore, if the old covenant emphasized outward signs and ordinances, the New will emphasize inward signs and ordinances; the new sign of the covenant is in the heart, not the flesh, *i.e.*, the new circumcised heart compared with the old circumcised flesh.

Ordinances and Rituals replace Christ's work

Many Protestants today seem to feel that observing Rome's rituals and holy days will make them more spiritual, though there is not a hint in Scripture for those rituals—holy days celebrated in the name of "Christianity." Hebrews gives us some very important implications: It implies that there is an inborn desire in the breast of every person for two things: ritual to approach deity, and a basic knowledge of right and wrong. Carnal ordinances were given under the Old Testament, satisfying the desire for some kind of mediation. When Christ came and a person is born again, the desire for carnal ordinances is fulfilled by His work in the heart, though, undoubtedly, the desire for ritual is still present.

In Galatians 4:9, 19, Paul expressed his concern for the Galatians' salvation because they desired to turn again to *the weak and beggarly elements*—the old carnal ordinances—from which they were delivered by Christ. Paul continues with the implication that those who desire to return to the *weak and beggarly elements*, defined in Hebrews as carnal ordinances, are lacking the formation of Christ in them, v. 19.

John Brown

Writing in 1875, Brown said,

From this passage, (Galatians 4:10, ed.) it is plain that some of the Galatian converts had yielded to the Judaizing teachers, and commenced in good earnest to keep the law. While they were Gentiles, they performed a set of useless ceremonies in honor of their false deities; and now they do the same thing though unintentionally, in honor of the true God...

It seems plain, from the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, that though the apostle considered the observing of these institutions on the part even of believing Jews as unnecessary, he did not consider it as unlawful, so long as they viewed them not as a means of justification, but merely as institutions originally of Divine appointment, and in their estimation unrepealed. But for believing Gentiles,

⁷ Philippians 1:20, 1 Timothy 3:13, 2 Corinthians 7:14, Philemon 1:8, Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 3:6, 10:19, 20, 35, 4:16, 1 John 2:28, 3:21, 4:17, 5:24.

who never had been subject to the law, to engage in these services, had a very suspicious aspect indeed, and certainly seemed to say that they wanted something more than was to be found in Christ and in Christianity... The great object of a Christian teacher is to bring men to the enjoyment of the blessings of Christianity, by leading them to understand and believe “the truth as it is in Jesus.” And whenever men who profess to believe the gospel act in a manner which gives reason to think that they really do not understand and believe the gospel, then the Christian teacher has reason to fear that he has bestowed labor on them in vain.⁸

- **Observe:**

1) The now useless Jewish, Jewish ceremonies were very similar to the ones the Gentile Galatian converts had formerly practiced in honor of their false gods, making it easy for the false Judaizing teachers to convince them that they needed to partake in the “carnal ordinances” of the Mosaic law.

2) Romans chapters 14 & 15, implies that Paul permitted the Jewish Christians—who were once subject to the “carnal ordinances”— to continue in their former Jewish ceremonies as long as they in no way connected them with justification, which would be sin on their part.

3) On the other hand, it was very suspicious indeed for the Gentile Christians who were never under the “carnal ordinances” to, under the influence of the Judaizing teachers, adopt the old Jewish “carnal ordinances.” When they did, it appeared to Paul that they did not understand the work of Christ in replacing those “carnal ordinances.”

4) As mentioned above,

The great object of a Christian teacher is to bring men to the enjoyment of the blessings of Christianity, by leading them to understand and believe “the truth as it is in Jesus.” And whenever men who profess to believe the gospel act in a manner which gives reason to think that they really do not understand and believe the gospel, then the Christian teacher has reason to fear that he has bestowed labor on them in vain.⁹

Notice the bondage referred to by Paul in Galatians 4 is bondage to *observing days, and months, and times, and years*, or the carnal ordinances referred to in Hebrews. (Galatians 4:9, 10.) Moreover, the more these people desired to serve the Old Testament carnal ordinances, the more fear Paul expressed for them. (Galatians 4:11, 20.) Christ did not free His people from the Ten Commandments; rather, He freed them from the carnal ordinances of the law. Though the Ten Commandments most certainly were and are *a school-master* to bring sinful man to Christ (they showed man how far he was from God; they showed man his hopeless, sinful condition), the primary laws of the Old Covenant that pointed to the work of Christ were the carnal ordinances. Thus there were basally two laws of the Old Covenant, and neither the ordinances nor the Commandments could justify fallen man. The curse of death rested upon all who violate the Commandments, *i.e.*, every person who ever lived.

One of the major reasons services which include many rites, rituals and ceremonies (including *meats, drinks and divers washings & baptisms*) are gaining such popularity today may be because the people have an outward form of godliness, but they know not the inner power thereof. They have every outward action of godliness, yet they have not the clear conscience because they have never been born again.¹⁰

According to the passages in Hebrews dealing with the old carnal ordinances and the new law of

⁸. John Brown, *An Exposition of Galatians*, p 89. 1857. A reprint by Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc., Lafayette, Indiana. He graduated from Edinburg University, and was senior minister of the United Presbyterian Congregation in Edinburg, and professor of exegetical theology to the United Presbyterian Church.

⁹. *Ibid.*

¹⁰. US News article some time ago talked about the growth of churches that practiced lots of rituals. It is sad the many Protestant groups that are falling the Rome’s rituals.

the covenant, many of those hungering after the carnal ordinances, rites, rituals and ceremonies that prefigured the redemptive work of Christ and His circumcising work on the heart, do so because they have a false assurance: Maybe they feel they have always been Christians because they have been baptized and have the outward works to prove it. But according to Hebrews, even with all their works of the Ten Commandments, they still have an uneasy conscience that they try to cover with rites, rituals and ceremonies. Only the washing of regeneration cleans the conscience; only by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon the heart by the Spirit through regeneration will one ever have this clear conscience.

Moreover, we should be very careful about the word *law* in Galatians: It could refer to the Ten Commandments and/or to the carnal ordinances as it does the book of Hebrews. The context of the word *law* will tell to which law Paul refers. Clearly, Galatians 4:9 & 10, refers to the carnal ordinances, but Galatians 3:13 refers to the Commandments. Note that the goal of the Judaisers and their followers was to bring the new Christians back under the carnal ordinances.¹¹

Conclusion

Sprinkling

The sprinkling of the blood in the Old Testament and the washing of the sacrificial animals clearly spoke of the coming work of Christ, *viz.* the sprinkling of His blood upon the heart of the believer and upon the heavenly altar, and of the washing of regeneration by the Spirit of God. Thus the diverse washings and sprinklings were completely done away with in the work of Christ. Furthermore, circumcision, being a covenant of blood, was also fulfilled by the true blood of the covenant, Christ's. Any effort to reinstate the old ordinances, rites and/or rituals in any way denies that Christ did indeed fulfill all the law and the prophets.

Jeremiah 31:36, Israel never ceased from being a nation before the Lord. A problem we have is in defining Israel. There have always been two Israels: one claiming physical heirship to Abraham, signified by physical circumcision, and the other whom God identifies by the spiritual heirship to Abraham, signified by spiritual circumcision, *i.e.*, the faith and works of Abraham. The spiritual Israel will never cease; the physical Israel no longer exists.¹²

It should be observed at this point that the *sprinklings* of the law, *e.g.*, Leviticus 8:11, had nothing whatsoever to do with New Testament baptism in mode nor meaning. Leviticus 8:10-12, was a sprinkling of consecration and sanctification to the Lord. The New Testament is extremely clear concerning the sprinkling which Moses did in Leviticus 8: Both the washing of the priest and the sprinkling of the oil, blood and water is fulfilled in a spiritual sense with the blood of Christ, v. 12.

sprinkle, #4472, AV—sprinkle—the word is only used 4 times in New Testament, meaning: *to sprinkle, to cleanse by sprinkling, hence to purify, cleanse*. Every time it is used, it has nothing to do with water as it did in the Old Testament. Therefore, it is clear that the New Testament meaning of this rite of sprinkling the persons of Aaron, his sons and all that pertained to the tabernacle looked forward to the spiritual sprinkling of the blood of Christ on the heart of the believer—the priesthood of the believer—by the Holy Spirit when they would exercise faith in His shed blood.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Hebrews 9:13, 14. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the

¹¹ See John Brown's *Exposition on Galatians*, p. 170.>

¹² An obvious parallel is the spiritual church made up of truly born again believers and the physical, visible church made up of all who profess faith in Christ. See App A. See Michael A. Hoffman's book, **Judaism's Strange gods**.

blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Herews 9:19-21.

Certainly, the Word of God teaches immersion, typifying the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and being raised to new life in Him.

Immersion

Colossians 2:12 *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

Baptism: 908 [Greek word] baptisma bap'-tis-mah from 907; TDNT-1:545,92; n n
AV-baptism 22; 22

1) immersion, submersion

1a) of calamities and afflictions with which one is quite overwhelmed

1b) of John's baptism, that purification rite by which men on confessing their sins were bound to spiritual reformation, obtained the pardon of their past sins and became qualified for the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom soon to be set up. This was valid Christian baptism, as this was the only baptism the apostles received and it is not recorded anywhere that they were ever rebaptised after Pentecost.

1c) of Christian baptism; a rite of immersion in water as commanded by Christ, by which one after confessing his sins and professing his faith in Christ, having been born again by the Holy Spirit unto a new life, identifies publicly with the fellowship of Christ and the church.

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In #Ro 6:3 Paul states we are "baptised unto death" meaning that we are not only dead to our former ways, but they are buried. To return to them is as unthinkable for a Christian as for one to dig up a dead corpse! In Moslem countries a new believer has little trouble with Moslems until he is publicly baptised. It is then, that the Moslems' know he means business, and then the persecution starts. See also discussion of baptism under No. 907.

907 [greek word] baptizo bap-tid'-zorum a derivative of 911; TDNT-1:529,92; verb
AV-baptize (76), wash 2, baptist 1, baptized + 2258 1; 80

1) to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk)

2) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe

3) to overwhelm

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Not to be confused with 911, bapto. The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (bapto) into boiling water and then 'baptised' (baptizo) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. e.g. #Mr 16:16. 'He that believes and is baptised shall be saved'. Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle! (Bible Study Magazine, James Montgomery Boice, May 1989).¹³

However, if others believe that God requires sprinkling or pouring, that is between them and the Lord. Our present concern is the meaning of baptism.¹⁴ The idea that baptism somehow has a mystical

¹³Online Bible

¹⁴ See Leviticus15:6ff.; 17:15, &c. Immersion as the proper mode of Baptism follows far closer the Old Testament principles established by washing than does sprinkling. Did not Christ tell Peter that he, Peter, had to be washed all over rather than just a superficial sprinkling? Our Lord compared conversion to a total washing, and the continual daily cleansing to sprinkling, John 13.

value to transfer Divine Grace to the recipient at any age, child or adult, cannot be supported from Scripture; Divine grace is transfused only by faith in Christ and His work for the sinner. Furthermore, the belief that a physical act of baptism somehow transmits Divine grace offers an opportunity for serious error. Baptism is a step of obedience to the Lord; Divine grace is transferred through faithful obedience to the gospel of Christ.

Concerning NT applicatins of OT ordinances

Every time an Old Testament ordinance is carried over into the New Testament, we are told specifically what it is and what it means. Observe: 1) when the feast of unleavened bread was carried over, we are told specifically that it is and what it means, 1 Corinthians 5:8; 2) when the passover was carried over, we are told specifically what it is and what it means, *viz.* Christ our passover, 1 Corinthians 5:7; 3) when baptism is carried over, we are told specifically what it typifies, *viz.* Israel's passage through the Red Sea after redemption from Egypt, 1 Corinthians 10:2, and 4) when circumcision is carried over, we are told specifically that it means a holy life before God and man, Colossians 2:11.

Exodus 23:13, *that I have said unto you be **circumspect***. Though the word is not *circumcised*, note its meaning:¹⁵ “Secondly it expresses the careful attention to be paid to the obligations of a covenant, to laws, statues, etc.” Thus the thought of *circumspect* is the same as *circumcision*: a reminder of covenant responsibilities. Ephesians 5:15, *circumspectly*, (199): “to live carefully, *circumspectly*, deviating in no respect from the law of duty.” Admittedly, the words for *circumspect* and *circumcision* are not the same, but the idea behind both are undeniably the same, more so than the supposed connection between *circumcision* and water baptism. Though Exodus 23:13 and Ephesians 5:15 may be speculative, Colossians 2:11-13 cannot be mistaken. The Old Testament ordinance of circumcision is specifically carried over into the New Testament as an operation of the Spirit of God cutting off the works of the flesh from the heart after conversion. The *circumcised* heart will result in a *circumspect* life in the believer.

Consequently, in every instance, we see that when an Old Testament ordinance is applied to the New Testament church, there is specific instruction as to its name and its New Testament meaning. There is no specific instruction connecting New Testament baptism and circumcision. There is a tremendous amount of New Testament space devoted to circumcision, but never is there the slightest hint of Scripture connecting water baptism and physical circumcision. Many good, Godly men attempt to make a connection, but they offer no clear Scripture to tie the two together. Rather, they assume that everyone accepts the tradition of the elders passed down to them from the Papists, and then they set about to prove the Papist's doctrine from Scripture. See Revelation 22:19. There is much stronger Biblical evidence to support a connection between *circumcision* and *circumspect*.

Let us not build doctrines on assumptions, especially assumptions which have no clear Scriptural support, or we will be found wanting in that day.

¹⁵. Theological Word Book of the Old Testament, TWOT, p. 214

Chapter VIII

Concluding thoughts – Circumcision

Scriptures: What does the Word of God say about circumcision?

And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Leviticus 26:41. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. Deuteronomy 10:16. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. Jeremiah 4:4. To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. Jeremiah 6:10. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart. Jeremiah 9:26.

The Lord, in the law and the prophets, could not be any clearer: Circumcision was an outward sign of the willingly subdued—inwardly circumcised—heart to the Lord. The genuine, outward circumcision is the circumcised life. (Jeremiah 4:4, Colossians 2:11.) The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all **uncircumcised** hearts, *i.e.*, ungodliness. (Romans 2.) Furthermore, circumcision says that the person has given up all hope in natural generation to inherit the promise of God; rather, he depends completely upon spiritual generation, *viz.* regeneration. Genuine regeneration is in the heart, not in any outward action. Obviously, what is in the heart will come out.

Jewish thought

Charles Hodge wrote in his 1835 commentary on Romans:

It is obvious that the Jews regarded circumcision as in some way securing their salvation. That they did so regard it, may be proved not only from such passages of the New Testament where the sentiment is implied, but also by the direct assertion of their own writers. Such assertions have been gathered in abundance from their works by Eisenmenger, Schoettgen, and others. For example, the Rabbi Menachem, in his Commentary on the Books of Moses, Fol. 43, col. 3, says, “Our Rabbins have said, that no circumcised man will see hell.” In the Jalkut Rubeni, num. 1. it is taught, “Circumcision saves from hell.” In the Medrasch Tillim, fol. 7, col 2, it is said, “God swore to Abraham, that no one who was circumcised should be sent to hell.” In the book Akedath Jizehak, fol. 54, col. 2, it is taught that “Abraham sits before the gate of hell, and does not allow that any circumcised Israelite should enter there.” The apostle considers circumcision under two different aspects. First, as a rite supposed to possess some inherent virtue or merit of its own; and secondly, as a sign and seal of God’s covenant.¹

However, Pink, writing on Joshua 5:4-7, says this about the “seal of God’s covenant:”

Thus for thirty-eight years (Deut. ii, 14) Israel was in a state of *apostasy*, and during that time their children bore the reproach of the same by being *denied* the “token” or “sign of the covenant” (Gen. xvii, 11)—wrongly termed by men “the *seal* of the covenant,” for circumcision never *sealed* anything to anyone saving only to Abraham (Rom. iv, 11).²

In other words, circumcision was simply a “‘token’ or ‘sign,’” not any kind of a seal to anyone except

¹ A *Commentary on Romans*, p. 63. 1973 reprint by Banner of Truth Trust, PO Box 652, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. It is odd that one so dedicated to justify what he believes concerning circumcision and infant baptism could write elsewhere so clearly on circumcision’s false hope.

² *Joshua*, A.W. Pink, 123, 124. Moody Press, Chicago. 1964.

Abraham.

Giving the traditional teaching of the Old Testament Jews, The Midrash recounts how a man was supernaturally rescued from an attack by his enemies because he had just been circumcised.³

Thus we see that to the false teachers circumcision guaranteed them a place in heaven as well as protection in time of need. For these false teachers, Christ did not change His required **NEW BIRTH**. Those who carry over an idea that infant baptism replaced infant circumcision—or that baptism in general replaced circumcision—have the same faith as did the false teachers of Christ’s day. The argument may be: “But we believe that if the person baptized as an infant later falls away from faithfulness to the covenant—law, his/her infant baptism is not valid.” This argument says that those circumcised under the law did not need a later work of God in their heart to circumcise their hearts.

This writer personally knows a young man who was “baptized” as an infant. Though the young man exhibits no desire toward the Lord, he is firmly convinced he is “saved” because he was baptized as an infant.

Furthermore, if such a thing as the Old Testament circumcision, *i.e.*, baptism, assured regeneration as some Paedobaptist might contend, then why did Christ have to come and shed His blood for the remission of sins? We are overrun with false professions today in every form, which the Lord deals with in Matthew 7:21. Many profess a covenant–relationship, maybe even “godly actions according to the law of Moses (or to church doctrine whatever that might be)” as proof of salvation, yet their hearts were never circumcised.

Note an additional problem: One can live a good life in the world’s eyes without genuine heart conversion. Reminding one of their Paedobaptism to motivate a good life can easily lead to believing

True Circumcision

The circumcised heart speaks of a purified heart through regeneration, a heart that desires to please its Lord with a meek spirit of love for the brethren,

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Titus 2:14

Paul never presented anything new, nor did Christ nor any New Testament author: What Paul presented in Titus was well established many hundreds of years previously in the law and the prophets:

And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. Deuteronomy 30:6. *Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.* Isaiah 52:1

Both of the above passages deal with the true circumcision, *i.e.*, genuine, Godly regeneration that results in a pure heart desire to serve the Lord. Even the Lord tells us that the true circumcision — regeneration or conversion—is worshiping the Father through Himself. John 4:23, 24. Paul deals with the problem of false circumcision in Galatians, *e.g.*, 3:17, pointing out that the true covenant people have always been and always will be those who are in Christ by faith. When outward, physical circumcision was given to Abraham, he had already been circumcised in his heart for many years. In Paul’s words,

But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. Romans 2:29.

³ *Midrash Rabbah*, Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices under the Editorship of Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman, B.A., PH.D. and Maurice Simon, M.A. In Ten Volumes, v. I, p 396. The Soncino Press, London. First Printing, 1939. “The Midrash thus created and brought into shape by the *Soferim* for the purpose of expounding the Torah—and later also other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures—fulfilled a vital necessity...” From the Foreword, v. I, p xi.

The obvious teaching throughout the Scriptures is simply what Christ said: The true, chosen, covenant people of God, the true circumcision, are those who worship God in the spirit, *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* Philippians 3:3.⁴ The true circumcision is having no confidence in the flesh for justification; rather, all confidence has been placed in the Lord Jesus Christ, EVIDENCED BY HOLY, OBEDIENT, CIRCUMSPECT LIVING before God and man.

Not only Israel, but every elect person from the time of Adam has been brought to serve the Lord through God's call. Abraham was called by God, and he obeyed, thus becoming the propagator of a family, a nation and later a race of the people of God. The Pharisees of Christ's day were proud of their heritage, *i.e.* circumcised physical seed of Abraham, but Christ made it clear that only by God's divine call would one be a genuine seed of Abraham. John 6, Romans 3:9-20. God could have called the rocks to be a seed of Abraham if He so desired.

Moreover, fallen man is incapable of answering God's call apart from God's divine aid. Ephesians 2:8, 9.) Even the faith to come to Christ for redemption must be provided by the Spirit of God. If man had it within himself to exercise faith, then he could boast of his works. Then those who answer God's call have God's divine work accomplished in them, *and whom he called, them he also justified...* Romans 8:30. The Lord makes it clear that He called Israel not because of any good on Israel's part, but by His grace and mercy. Though He called them unto Himself to be His peculiar people, He could have called anyone, even the stones. Deuteronomy 4:20, 7:6, Isaiah 43:1, Hosea 11:1.

Throughout Scripture, the Lord condemns those who are called by His name, yet are not truly converted in their hearts, *viz.* they remain uncircumcised of heart. Those professing to be His but whose heart is elsewhere are called uncircumcised of heart. Circumcision of the heart is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His work in redemption and regeneration, worked out in the circumspect life of the believer.

Concluding thoughts

Circumcision was given in Exodus 12 so the non-Israelite could be brought into the covenant-nation and partake of the passover, which was restricted to only Israelites, vv. 43-51. Accordingly, circumcision **cannot represent baptism**; rather, **it must represent salvation**, conversion, because it was required before the passover could be eaten. The uncircumcised could eat of the first passover, which represented deliverance through the shed blood of the Lamb of God. It was faith in the shed blood, not circumcision, that delivered from death. Certainly, the later command was to circumcise, but if one was not circumcised, he was not killed; he was cut off from the people.

Baptism

So what is baptism? It is the first outward, obedient step to the faith within the heart. Matthew 28:19, 20.⁵ Writing in 1857 on Galatians 3:27, John Brown said that:

To be "*baptized into Christ Jesus*" obviously means something more than to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The phrase occurs here only and in the sixth chapter of the Romans, verse 3b, and in both places, something is predicated of those who are "baptized *into* Christ," which cannot by any means be said of all who are baptized, whether in infancy or mature age, in the primary sense of the term. All who are baptized into Christ, are there said to be "baptized into His death," and "buried with Him by baptism unto death, and risen with Him," etc. And here all who are "baptized into Christ Jesus" are said to "put on Christ." Union with Christ as dying and buried, and raised again, is obviously the idea in the sixth Chapter of the Epistle of the Romans. To be baptized into Christ is, I apprehend, just equivalent to be united or intimately related to Christ by that faith of which a profession is made in baptism.

⁴ Notice Paul DID NOT say, "*We are the circumcision* who have been baptized as infants."

We cannot understand the apostle's words as applying to all who, either in infancy or mature age, have undergone the rite of Christian baptism, for they are not true of them all. They plainly refer to those who have received the doctrine of Christ, who "by one Spirit have been baptized into one body, and have been made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13.); who are saved "by the washing of regeneration," which is not baptism, "and" – even "the renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. 3:5.). The baptism here spoken of is the "one baptism" which belongs to those who have one God and one Lord—one spirit, one faith, one hope. It is that of which external baptism is the emblem—a blessing not at all necessarily connected with, the administration of the external rite. In the case of an adult, the possession of this spiritual baptism is pre-supposed. It is not external baptism that unites to Christ.⁶

Surprisingly, Dr. Brown can be very firm that the only possible method one can be in Christ is by the washing of regeneration of the Spirit, which is not baptism because it is only an external emblem, yet can imply an exception for infants, "In the case of an adult." Dare we make baptism any more or any less than what it is: an outward emblem of obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ representing repentance from dead works, death to the old man and new life in Christ?

Using the Old Testament passover as the foundation, if we connect baptism with Old Testament circumcision, we teach baptismal regeneration, as do Papists and many Paedobaptist. Moreover, we teach that one must be baptized first before he can apply the shed blood of Christ because circumcision had to take place before one could partake of the passover—after the first passover. Can we forget that only males were circumcised, and accordingly, only males can be baptized?

Self examination, 1 Cor. 11:23

Though we have already mentioned this point, we will quickly mention it again. The instructions concerning the Lord's Supper are given in 1 Corinthians 11:23-34, where Paul explicitly says, *but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup*, v. 28. Additionally, v. 31 tells those who partake that they are to judge themselves according to the law of God to keep from being judged and chastened of the Lord. Thus one of the qualifications for partaking of this ordinance is self-examination and self-judgment, that is, outward circumcision of the flesh (right living) vs inward circumcision of the heart. There are many false professions of redemption among those professing to be God's people today; they are known by their fruit. On the other hand, outward profes-

⁵ Though not at all the subject of this current examination into paedobaptism, the reader might be interested to know that the forerunner of C.I. Scofield, J.N. Darby, though heatedly breaking with the state Anglican Church of his day, around 1827, and soundly condemning the Papists, he retained both the Anglican's and the Papist' teaching concerning infant baptism. Though admitting there was "no *command* for infants to be baptized, "he *supposed a moral effect* for the practice. But he did not suppose the same moral effect for adults – *Letters of J.N.D.*, II.283. 1971 reprint by Bible Truth Publishers, Oak Park, Ill. His mystic view of Christianity flows over into his view of infant baptism: He held that baptism applies God's grace to infants, taking them in from the world "where Satan governs." – *Ibid*, v. II, pp 50, 280, 282, 294, &c. Darby reiterated many times his contention that the twelve apostles were not baptized. – *Ibid*, v. II, pp 286, 290, &c. He dealt with the problem presented by the Baptist of his day who took the command of Matthew 28:19, 20 at face value by saying that the Lord spoke there to the apostles and sent them to Israel, not to the Gentiles; he ignored Peter's command to go to Cornelius. Darby contends that Paul went to the Gentiles with no command to baptise his Gentile converts. Thus he dispensationalized the problem of "believer's baptism" out of his Bible, *e.g.*, that command was for a different dispensation. Writing in 1874, he said, "In this (the christening of infants. He said baptizing actually meant christening, *ed.*) the Establishment is right; the Baptist, according to scripture, clearly wrong." – *Ibid*, II.285. Thus he admitted that infant baptism was a stronghold of the state over Christian families. Perhaps his impetus for retaining infant baptism was the fact that Darby "was christened" in the Church of England. If he admitted that the Baptist were right, he would have to admit he had never been baptized. Clemens Alexandrinus (A.D. 150–215), however, said, "Yes, truly, the apostles were baptized, as Clement of Stromatist relates in the fifth book of the Hypotyposes. For, in explaining the apostolic statement, 'I thank God that I baptized none of you,' he says, Christ is said to have baptized Peter alone, and Peter Andrew, and Andrew John, and they James and the rest. [See *Kaye*, p. 442, and the eleventh chapter entire.] *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, II.578. For a much more serious study into the evils set in motion by Darby and the movement he founded, see *The Death of the Church Victorious*, by this writer.

⁶ *An Exposition of Galatians*, 1857, p 74. Reprint by Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc., Lafayette, Indiana. John Brown was a graduate of Edinburg University, senior minister of the United Presbyterian Congregation in Edinburg, and professor of Exegetical Theology to the United Presbyterian Church.

sions of redemption by no means replace inward redemption: Because one lives “godly,” does not mean he has been converted. Jeremiah 9:25, 26, promises God’s judgment against all false professors, as does Matthew 7. But inward redemption results in outward profession, Matthew 10:32. Again, baptism cannot be equated with circumcision.

Moreover, some paedobaptists insist that the baptized infant be admitted to the Lord’s table, but how can they say that infant has *examined himself* to determine if he is worthy? Accordingly, does he not bring upon himself, the infant that is, damnation? Read the passage!

Calvin, however, rightly denies the Lord’s table to those not mature enough to *examine himself*. Calvin tells us that though the early church, *e.g.*, Cyprian and Augustine, gave the Lord’s supper to infants, “the practice justly became obsolete.” In fact, Calvin says that to give young children the Lord’s Supper is to “stretch out poison to our young children instead of vivifying food.”⁷

Furthermore, circumcision represented the rejection of natural generation for redemption, and represented dependence upon the Lord and supernatural regeneration for redemption. Thus even *if* baptism and circumcision could be Scripturally connected, which they cannot, it would represent the hope of the parents that the Lord would see fit to convert the child in His good time, fitting better with Abraham’s circumcision of Ishmael—did he not plead with the Lord to allow Ishmael be the covenant–child. Some Paedobaptists hope in the Lord to speak to the infant in later years. Circumcision could not place the Sovereign God of the universe under obligation to man in any way, *e.g.*, Ishmael and Esau. Is it not strange that there are those who preach loudly that the Sovereign God of the universe cannot be placed under obligation to man, yet they will say that the same God can be placed under obligation through infant baptism? Old Testament circumcision represented either hope of a genuine repentance and conversion—at which time a new name is given to the believer, Christian—in the life of the child, or that the adult did convert to the God of Israel; but the conversion could have been outward only. With Israel, the outward profession of love for the Lord (circumcision made with hands) without the inward conversion and heart (circumcision made without hands) toward God brought down the wrath of God.

Under the new economy brought about by the work of Christ, according to 1 Corinthians 7:14 (and other passages such as with Cornelius and others mentioning the salvation of the household) one saved parent can offer a certain amount of God’s protection and blessing for the children under that parent’s authority. But our Lord is clear: No person will enter into the kingdom of heaven apart from being *born again*. How much protection and safety does a faithful parent provide for the children? We can only speculate, for we are not clearly told. We do know, however, that there is a time when the Father, through the agency of the Spirit, calls His elect to the Son; John 6 is extremely clear on this point, as is 1 Corinthians chapters 1 and 2.

Covenant–Faithfulness

We cannot conclude this study without mentioning covenant–faithfulness. We get the impression from some “Reformed” thinkers that God’s blessings upon His people depend upon their covenant–faithfulness concerning baptism in one form or another. We must not deny that infant baptism was one of the basic premises of the Reformation movement, but we saw previously that it was retained from Romanism to keep the people happy. See “Zwingli & the Inquisition” p. 11.

Is God’s judgement against the church today because it is not baptizing the infants as implied by some Paedobaptists?

Clearly, that is not the problem. The law of the covenant is found in the Ten Commandments,

⁷ *Institutes* II, p. 550. Translated by Henry Beveridge. 1970 reprint by Eerdmens Publishing Company. Sadly, many of the same people who hold to Calvin’s view of infant baptism reject his view of “poisoning” young children with the Lord’s supper. How like fallen man to pick and chose what he wants to believe.

Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9-15, &c., and circumcision was not part of that law; Abraham was a law or covenant–keeper having God’s blessings long before circumcision was even given, which is Paul’s argument in Romans. The wrath of God is upon the world today because they have forsaken His law of the covenant, Hosea 4:6, &c. Furthermore, note 1 John 3:4, *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law* of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. The New Testament sign of covenant–faithfulness is the *circumspect* life according to the Ten Commandments: It is being holy even as our God is holy. The blessings of God upon the Reformers was not because they retained paedobaptism from the church of Rome they warred against; God’s blessings were because they applied the law of the covenant to every area of life and thought. Exodus 19:5, 6, Deuteronomy 28.

Thus covenant–faithfulness is faithfulness to the law of the covenant as given in the Ten Commandments. Furthermore, violation of the Second Commandment—attempted approach to the Father other than through the sacrifice of Christ, *i.e.*, adult or infant baptism—clearly violates the covenant. God’s blessings will only be renewed today as His people renew their faithfulness to His Commandments in their lives and in their societies.

A closing word for Paedobaptism’s defenders

If the practice of paedobaptism were clearly commanded by God, folks would not have to devote so many words in its defence; rather, they could simply point out the Scriptures requiring infants to be baptized, and this writer will baptize his infants. The problem is, however, that there are NO clear commands from God for such a practice. As we have seen, honest Bible students admit there is no clear command from God for the practice. Rather, paedobaptism was brought through the Reformation because the people needed a visible sign other than adult baptism. Lacking clear Scriptural support, many volumes of works have been written by paedobaptists in its defence, attempting to justify what they *feel* the Lord should have more clearly stated.

This pastor has noticed that the defenders of paedobaptism have been and are generally more argumentative than Scriptural. What they cannot prove by Scripture, they use human reason and understanding upon which to base their assumptions. They will readily refer to inconsistencies found in those opposing their views, but they will not admit to any inconsistencies in their views. Their intolerance toward anyone who does not see Scripture their way is evident, and at times seems to border on hatred against opposition. This pastor has been given the strong impression by some defenders that they would organize the civil government, as did Zwingli, and persecute all who do not agree to have their children “baptized” as did the Reformers of the 1500s.

We must have freedom and liberty in Christ to “agree to disagree agreeably.”

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, that is, freedom of conscience, freedom from sin and freedom to serve the Lord God of the Bible as dictated by one’s heart and the Command–Word of God.

Appendix A

Discussion with an Elder

This appendix contains a discussion with an elder in a paedobaptist church. I was in the congregation when he referred to Colossians 2:11, 12:

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

My wife, daughter and myself were listening to him speak when we heard him say that when he understood that the circumcision there meant physical circumcision, he knew he must baptize his children.

The following week, I privately challenged him by e mail, sending copies of the e mails to the other elders of the church. I sent him a tape and my book on infant baptism. Following is part of the exchange. “[text]” is added as I go through it again for this Appendix.

As so common with those who defend paedobaptism, his argument was based upon tradition, catichisms, the elders of the reformation and emotions. He absolutely refused to discuss the Scriptural merits of his point. He wanted to meet face to face, but he makes a very good living by confronting corporate CEOs with persuasive words to persuade them to foolow his way of thinking. Therefore, I kept the discussion in written form.

My experience with paedobaptist has been quite similar to the following. They absolutely refuse to justify their position form Scripture, for they canot. It is all based upon tradition from Rome. Their Justification is always from that which seems right to the fallen nature. The following is quite typical of their response to challenges to their tradition of infant baptism

- **ELDER:**

September 16, 2002

Ovid, thanks for the material you sent and your approach to the disagreement regarding baptism. I appreciate the way you have chosen to handle it. I apologize for the length of my response. I mean no offense here, so I hope you will overlook anything I have written as simply my inability to express myself in a completely inoffensive way while at the same time pointing out what I so earnestly believe.

First, we all have the same issue of “presuppositions.” And we must be careful that they not influence what we understand the scripture to be saying in support of our position. Presuppositions will influence our approach to god’s Word as one seeks to buttress a position. Many hours of research will not overcome that.

When you say I am wrong about Col. 2:11,12, you set yourself at odds with the great Reformers, Calvin, Knox, Zwingli, as well as others like Ursinus (Heidelberg Catechism) etc. I’d include Luther but he had some problems around baptismal regeneration. They all understood what Paul was getting at the same way. I am not sure whether you refer to yourself as a reformed Baptist but when you cast aside one of the key positions of the reformers you separate yourself from the reformed camp on a critical issue of the covenant.

[Sadly, this seems to be the standard response by paedobaptist when challenged about the scripturalness of their practice. Rather than justifying their deeds with Scripture, they justify themselves by men of the past. This elder just would not back down from the traditions of the “Reformation” elders.]

- **NEED**

Please pardon my overkill!! I am known for this problem. At a preacher's meeting, one of the speakers joked that he asked his wife about something. She suggested he contact Bro Need. He said that he told her that he did not want that much information about anything. But here it is anyway.

Though our disagreement must be centered on what God says about the matter, I will include a few quotes to show that I am not alone in my understanding of Scripture.

James 3:1 ¶ *My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*

Brother, we who have been placed by God into the position of teachers of His word to His people hold a very serious place, a place not to be taken lightly. Nor do I enter into this discussion lightly. Again, I preface this with the understanding that I know where you all stand in these matters, and I realize you will not change, and that I am only causing contention. But I cannot give a "free pass" on the arbitrary changes of God's Word I perceive that came from the pulpit, *e.g.*, Colossians 2:11, God's word was changed from *the circumcision made without hands*, to *the circumcision made with hands* as found in the Old. It is like the McArthur tape—though McArthur spoke at Sproul's invitation, and Sproul had no answer to McArthur's Scriptural message, Sproul did not change. (The tape is in the mail to you.)

Moreover, the first page of [his church's bulletin] has this statement: "*Sola Et Tota Scriptura.*" You say "Scripture alone", so please center the discussion around Scripture, not around what some good men said.

However, if I know my heart (I realize that the heart is desperately wicked, and no man can know it), if I could be shown from God's Word even one instance where we are told that New Testament baptism replaces Old Testament circumcision, I would submit to that teaching. But I have studied the matter in great detail, and have found no such command nor a passage that makes that connection. The best I have been able to make out is that infant baptism is a hold-over from Rome, retained so the Reformation could hold its followers out of the Roman religion. They needed something physical to identify with, so they kept infant baptism.

- **Now to the point at hand.**

If I understand the theme of the Reformation properly, it was "Scripture Alone." Based upon "Scripture Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone, Grace Alone, and Glory to God Alone", I consider myself "Reformed." My identity with the Reformed Faith is not based upon what the "Fathers" of the Reformed Faith taught. We will stand before God based upon God's inspired Word and our faithfulness to it. (2 Cor. 5:10.) We will NOT stand before Him based upon Calvin (who used the civil government to kill a man who did not agree with him), Zwingli, (who admitted there was no Scriptural basis for Infant Baptism, but did it anyway to get the people to follow him), as well as others like Ursinus, &c. Therefore, when we defend our position on what the "fathers" say about a passage, then have we not violated Scripture in favor of the tradition of the elders? (Mat. 15:2.)

I do not think the cry of the Reformation was "*The Elders, the Elders, the Elders,*" nor was it, "*Tradition, Tradition, Tradition.*" Rather, it was "*Scripture, Scripture, Scripture.*" Where does the Word of God stand on any particular issue? If my "Reformed" position is judged on how much I follow the great men of the past rather than the Word of God, then I want nothing to do with "Reformed." Rather than "Reformed," then I am simply a Bible Believing Christian. When you tell me I am at odds with the great Reformers of the past, you sound as though the front statement of [the Elder's church's bulletin] is "Only and All of the Reformers and Tradition". I really don't believe the [church] stands upon the foundation of the "Reformers". Rather, I hope it stands upon the firm foundation of the Word of God.

I am really not interested in the “traditions of the elders”, for the Lord had no good things to say for those “traditions”. I am asking, however, that **you Scripturally defend your position** that the circumcision of Colossians 2:11, 12, is *circumcision made with hands* rather than the *circumcision that is made without hands* by the Spirit of Christ. When we defend our position based upon what the “fathers” taught, do we not void the word of God by tradition? (Mark 7:9, 13, Col. 2:8.)

I realize Paul called on Christians to follow the tradition received from him (2 Thes. 3:6), but: first, he was inspired, and, second, he never taught that physical circumcision was the same as the Spiritual circumcision performed by the Spirit of Christ, or did I miss something? Moreover, did not Peter tell us that the blood of Christ frees us from the traditions of the fathers that run contrary to the word of God. (1 Peter 1:18.) Where are the passages that teach water baptism replaces physical circumcision?

Colossians 2

I understand that Paul is in chapter four dealing with the truth of the simplicity of the gospel, but since v. 11, is being misused (wrested? 2 Peter 3:16) by godly men to say that *the circumcision made without hands* which is accomplished by the Spirit of Christ is actually *the Old Testament circumcision made with hands* and thus equals baptism, which is the tradition of the fathers, I will deal with the passage as condemning traditions of the fathers which are accepted over the clear teaching of God’s Word.

Colossians 2:4 ¶ *And this I say, lest any man should beguile (3884) you with enticing words (4086).*

(3884) from 3844 and 3049; v

AV-beguile 1, deceive 1; 2

1) to reckon wrong, miscount 2) to cheat by false reckoning 2a) to deceive by false reasoning 3) **to deceive, delude, circumvent**: Col. ii:4; Jas. i:22. (*Thayer*)

Beguile or delude—that is, “to count aside and so wrong, to cheat by false reckoning, to deceive by false reasoning (Epictetus).” (*Robertson’s NT Word Pictures.*)

(4086) from a compound of a derivative of 3982 and 3056; ; n f

AV-enticing words 1; 1

1) speech adapted to persuade, discourse in which probable arguments are adduced 2) in a bad sense, **persuasiveness of speech, specious discourse leading others into error**: Col. ii.4. (*Thayer*)

Enticing words—“With persuasiveness of speech... speech, adapted to persuade, then speciously leading astray. Only here in N.T. One papyrus example. The art of persuasion is the height of oratory, but it easily degenerates into trickery and momentary and flashy deceit such as Paul disclaimed in #1Co 2:4” (*RWP*)

V. 4, Paul warns against those who would *beguile*, lead God’s people astray with *enticing words*, *i.e.*, “speech adapted to lead others into error”, or in a way contrary to the clearly revealed Word of God.

The sum of Paul’s warning is found in,

Colossians 2:8 *Beware lest any man spoil (plunder, or rob, as when plunder is taken in war, Albert Barns) you through **philosophy** and vain deceit, after the **tradition of men**, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Through philosophy. The Greek philosophy prevailed much in the regions around Colosse, and perhaps also the Oriental or Gnostic philosophy. See the Intro. They were exposed to the influences of these **plausible systems**. They consisted much of **speculations** respecting the nature of the Divine existence; and the danger of the Colossians was, that they would rely rather on the **deductions** of that

specious *reasoning*, than on what they had been taught by their Christian teachers.

And vain deceit. Mere fallacy. The idea is, that the doctrines which were advanced till those systems were maintained by plausible, not by solid arguments; by considerations not fitted to lead to the truth, but to lead astray. (Emp added. *Barns' Notes.*)

We are warned against replacing the teaching of God's word with *the tradition of men*. Paul warns against men who would persuade God's people to follow the traditions received from men, even good men like Knox and Calvin, &c., if those traditions depart from God's Word. He is not condemning knowledge, but only false knowledge used to support *traditions* and not the doctrine of Christ as clearly spelled out in His Word.

2:8 {4} Beware lest any man {i} spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, {5} after the tradition of men, {6} after the {k} rudiments of the world, {7} and not after Christ.

(4) He brings all corruptions under three types. The first is that which rests on vain and curious speculations, and yet bears a show of certain subtle wisdom. (i) This is a word of war, and it is as much as to drive or carry away a spoil or booty. (5) The second, which is manifestly superstitious and vain, and stands only upon custom and pretended inspirations. (6) The third type was of those who joined the rudiments of the world (that is to say, the **ceremonies of the Law**) with the Gospel. (k) Principles and rules, with which God ruled his Church, as it were under a schoolmaster. (7) A general confutation of all corruptions is this, that if it adds anything to Christ, it must necessarily be a false religion. (Emp added. Geneva.)

Through philosophy. As many have mistakingly imagined that *philosophy* is here condemned by Paul, we must point out what he means by this term. Now, in my opinion, he means everything that **men contrive of themselves when wishing to be wise through means of their own understanding**, and that not without a specious pretext of reason, so as to have a plausible appearance. For there is no difficulty in rejecting those contrivances of men which have nothing to set them off, {2} but in rejecting those that captivate men's minds by a false conceit of wisdom. Or should any one prefer to have it expressed in one word, philosophy is nothing else than a persuasive speech, which **insinuates itself into the minds of men by elegant and plausible arguments**. Of such a nature, I acknowledge, will all the subtleties of philosophers be, if they are inclined to add anything of their own to the pure word of God. Hence philosophy will be **nothing else than a corruption of spiritual doctrine**, if it is mixed up with Christ. Let us, however, bear in mind, that under the term philosophy Paul has merely condemned all spurious doctrines which come forth from man's head, whatever appearance of reason they may have. What immediately follows, as to vain deceit, I explain thus; "Beware of *philosophy*, which is nothing else than *vain deceit*," so that this is added by way of *apposition*. {3} (Emp. added. Calvin.)

Calvin himself warned against using persuasive speech and plausible arguments to change God's Word to make it say what appeals to the mind of men, though he used persuasive speech and plausible arguments, as did the rest of the "Reformers" to support paedobaptism.

According to the tradition of men. He points out more precisely what kind of *philosophy* he reproves, and at the same time convicts it of vanity on a twofold account— because it is *not according to Christ*, but **according to the inclinations of men**; ("I am inclined to believe this..." *ed.*) {4} and because it consists in the elements of the world. Observe, however, that he places Christ in opposition to the *elements of the world*, equally as to the *tradition of men*, by which he intimates, that whatever is hatched in man's brain is not in accordance with Christ, who has been appointed us by the Father as our sole Teacher, that he might retain us in the simplicity of his gospel. Now, that is corrupted by even a small portion of the leaven of *human traditions*. He intimates also, that all doctrines are foreign to Christ that make the worship of God, which we know to be spiritual, according to Christ's rule, to consist in the *elements of the world*, {5} and also

such as fetter the minds of men by such trifles and frivolities, while Christ calls us directly to himself. (Emp added. *Ibid.*)

But what is meant by the phrase—elements of the world? {6} There can be no doubt that it means **ceremonies**. For he immediately afterwards adduces one instance by way of example—*circumcision*. The reason why he calls them by such a name is usually explained in two ways. Some think that it is a metaphor, so that the *elements* are the rudiments of children, which do not lead forward to mature doctrine. Others take it in its proper signification, as denoting things that are outward and are liable to corruption, which avail nothing for the kingdom of God. The former exposition I rather approve of, as also in #Ga 4:3. (Emp added. *Ibid.*)

Those who attempt to make the word of God say something it does not say are, of necessity, promoting a false religion, regardless of whether it is Calvin, Knox, Zwingli, &c. Christ's condemnation is especially harsh against those who hold to the tradition of the elders over the clear teaching of God's word, e.g., Matthew 15:6.

Colossians 2:11 *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:*

V. 11, "... What Paul contends for is this—that, inasmuch as what was shadowed forth by a circumcision made with hands, has been completed in Christ, there is now no fruit or advantage from it. {1} Hence he says, that the circumcision which is made in the heart is the circumcision of Christ, and that, on this account, that which is outward is not now required, because, where the reality exists, that shadowy emblem vanishes, {2} inasmuch as it has no place except in the absence of the reality. ... " (Calvin.)

Calvin said that physical circumcision was only a shadowy emblem of the spiritual circumcision which is completed in Christ. Thus, Calvin cannot be used, as you suggested, to change this verse to mean that the Old Testament circumcision "of Moses" (Calvin's term) is replaced by baptism. He makes no such connection.

For the life of me, I cannot see how *the circumcision made without hands* which is so clearly presented here as *the circumcision of Christ*, can be understood as Old Testament physical circumcision. And then that physical circumcision replaced with baptism when the text as well as the context so clearly speaks of the new spirit brought about by faith in Christ. Vv. 11 & 12 are clearly speaking of the new life of Christ, v. 13.

[Note: Galatians 6:15 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.* Thus, Paul clearly says that Old Testament circumcision was replaced by a *new creature*—that is, an new, circumcised heart and life.]

Calvin seems to shoot himself in the foot with his comments on the next verse:

12 *Buried* [4916] *with him in baptism* [908], *wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.* (See *Buried* and *baptism* below.)

Calvin:

Christ, says [Paul], **accomplishes in us spiritual circumcision**, not through means of that ancient sign, which was in force under Moses, but by baptism. Baptism, therefore, is a sign of the thing that is presented to us, which while absent was prefigured by circumcision. The argument is taken from the economy {1} which God has appointed; for those who retain circumcision contrive a mode of dispensation different from that which God has appointed.

Calvin, wisely avoiding the words *Buried* [4916] and *baptism* [908] for they would upset his system of theology, says here that **baptism accomplishes in us spiritual circumcision**, and he argues not from Scripture, but from Jewish history, "The argument is taken from the economy..." It is a shame he does not take his argument from the Word of God, but he cannot, for the connection is not there. In

this verse, he clearly teaches “baptismal regeneration”, saying that baptism accomplishes in us spiritual circumcision, a doctrine totally contrary to all for which the Reformation stood—“By Faith Alone.”

(Parentheses: I will only mention in passing that in the “Order for the Administration of the Baptism of Casey Morrison,” there are some statements that teach “baptismal regeneration”, *e.g.*, once the child is baptized, he is told to not be ashamed to confess his faith in Christ. Moreover, I really know of no place where Christ commanded to bring the children unto him, though He did rebuke those who sought to hinder the children from coming to Him.)

Though I could not check all my commentaries on Colossians, for most are still packed, I could not find one commentator who equates the *circumcision made without hands* of Colossians 2:11 with the *circumcision made with hands* as found in the Old Testament, which would allow the baptism of v. 12 to replace the circumcision found in the Old Testament—the circumcision of v. 11 is the “spiritual circumcision, divinely performed”. It is the ethical circumcision, “*i.e.*, translated by conversion from the estate of sin into that of the Christian life of faith and righteousness”. ... The context requires this by the further explanation of the thing itself in ver. 12.” (*Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament*, 1833. Reprint by Alpha Publications.)

There are a great many more arguments from the Word of God, which alone, according to [the church’s statement] “*Sola Et Tota Scriptura*”, can be the basis for our understanding of any doctrine. Does not basing a doctrine on the teachings of the fathers makes us no better than the pharisees Christ so roundly condemned; does it not make us no better than Rome itself that bases its beliefs on the teachings of the Church Fathers.

• **But what about HISTORY?**

[This section of my letter to the elder is left out. It consisted of “Protestant Paedobaptism’s History” on page 10.]

Calvin’s Justification of Infant Baptism:

Though he, and the rest of the “Reformers,” supposedly held to “Scripture Alone”, he gives no Scripture supporting “This principle” that “the grace of adoption is sealed in their flesh” One would think that if the “doctrine” were so dogmatic from God’s Word, there would be sound Scripture, but where is it? Rather than admit the “Antibaptists” were right, he justified infant baptism thusly:

In the first place, then, it is a well-known doctrine, and one as to which all the pious are agreed...
... If reason is listened to, it will undoubtedly appear that baptism is properly administered to infants and a thing due to them... ... Circumcision, which, as is well known, corresponds to our baptism, was intended for infants...¹

But contrary to what he claimed was the basic principle of the Reformation, he offers no Scripture to support his claim for the “doctrine”, only that it is a “well-known” and that “all the pious are agreed” upon it. However, in saying that, he excludes great men like John Gill and C.H. Spurgeon from being a “pious” person. Evidently, the doctrine is well-known among the Papists, from where infant baptism came, and the pious are restricted to only those who hold to the doctrine he supposes.

Those who will be honest about the Scripture must admit that there is NO Scriptural command to baptize infants. If it is not commanded, then what authority does the church have to enforce baptism on infants, even as Zwingli did with the Inquisition of the 1523? Apparently, the only authority supporters can muster is the authority of church tradition, but that tradition came from Rome, and the authority of the state as did Zwingli. The Reformation stopped short of a complete Reformation. It is

¹ *Institutes of The Christian Religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge, II.529, 550.

time for those of us who claim to believe in “Scripture Alone” to base all faith and action on what is clearly taught by Scripture.

Show me from God’s Word what I should do, and by His Grace, I will do it.

- **ELDER:**

Before getting to your points, I think it important to deal with one issue in particular where in your 4th paragraph. You say... “every person, though he may be physically circumcised is spiritually uncircumcised until he is circumcised by Christ and his Spirit. This is done when he is thoroughly convicted of sin, made naked and bare before God, and turns to Christ.” The point may seem to be a small one, but this is surely incorrect.

I know you have in your tract preached and written against the idea of making a decision for Christ and asking Jesus into your heart, and that is commendable, but this seems simply a higher sounding way of saying the same thing. One is not circumcised by Christ and his Spirit after he is thoroughly convicted of sin and turns to Christ. We are all dead in our trespasses and sin and cannot and will not turn to Christ. One is circumcised by Christ and given a new heart and now has a heart of flesh not of stone and is thus irresistibly attracted to the god of the living. John deals with it in 1 John 5:1 when he points out that it is those who believe in Christ who are born again (i.e. they are born again people). Unless and until God changes our hearts we cannot and will not be convicted of sin and see our nakedness before God.

- **NEED**

I notice you rightly admit that Christ is the one who must circumcise the heart, which is the whole discussion concerning Colossians 2:11: The circumcision there is the one made without hands, while you are saying it is the one made with hands, and using the reformers to support your understanding. Furthermore, it sounds like you are saying in your second paragraph the same thing I said in your first paragraph—God must change the heart before one can be convicted of sin and see his nakedness before God, a requirement for being *born again from above*. Let me ask: Does that change take place without the knowledge of the person being changed? When does that change take place? Before birth, as you imply? Why did Christ command the elect to be born again if the change is before birth?

If the change comes before birth, what will we do with Romans 10:13-17, *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God?* When does *hearing* and *faith* take place, before birth, as an infant or as an cognizant person? Or how about 1 Corinthians 1:21 *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* How does a unborn or born infant hear and understand *preaching*, which is required by God for the elect to be saved?

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God:*

Scripturally, grace must come before the *new birth*, for man does not have within himself to even desire to seek after God, Romans 3:10.

What is grace?

Philippians 2:13 *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure.*

Grace is the desire and the power to do *his good pleasure*. Grace is given at God’s good pleasure, not at man’s, and man can do nothing to deserve that grace. The unregenerate elect must be given grace (preventing grace, or grace that goes before the new birth) before he can even see his need of Christ. When is that grace given, and when is it manifested in the individual’s life?

You said no conviction is necessary, and then you say conviction is required. Which do you mean?

If there is no conviction of sin required for salvation, then does one come to Christ at ease in his sin? Did the parents bring an infant to Christ, so that the infant will not need to come to Christ later? Apparently, salvation is reduced to simply being able to quote the catechism concerning one's sin and Christ's work.

I attended one time a "Reformed Baptist" church where children were questioned before being baptized. It sure appeared to me that all that was required of the children was to be old enough to quote the catechism concerning salvation. I worked in children's churches for 11 years, and I am violently opposed to such a low standard of a "profession of faith." Is salvation to the "Reformed" community no more than having the right answers?

I realize that when one admits there must be the convicting work of the Spirit before there can be salvation, then babies are excluded from salvation until the child can be convicted, and can examine himself. Was not a chief work of the Spirit conviction of a sinner of his sin:

John 16:8 *And when he is come, he will **reprove** the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

Reprove, 1651, — 1. *To convict, refute, confute*, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted. ... *by conviction to bring to light, to expose* ... Used of exposure and confutation of false teachers of Christianity... 2. *To find fault with, correct*; a. *by word; to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove... to call to account, show one his fault...* b. *by deed; to chasten, punish...*²

Note that all definitions have to do with the Spirit convicting of sin, and none of them can be applied to children before the age of reasoning. One of the jobs of the Spirit is to convict of sin. Can there be Biblical salvation without conviction? At what age is one capable of "believing" as required in John 3:18, 36? It is interesting that John 4:1, 2 speaks of Jesus baptizing disciples. At what age can one be a disciple of Jesus?

Is not the changed heart a result of the Holy Spirit working in the individual, showing him his need of Christ? Are you saying that a person can come to Christ without the conviction of sin and the drawing of the Spirit of God? The Bible clearly teaches that the choice of one's "salvation" is up to God. Are you saying that the choice of a person's salvation is up to his or her parents? Are you saying that there is no need for the Spirit to speak to a person to draw him to Christ?

John 6:44 *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. 47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

John 3:18 *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

While this close, let me mention,

1 Corinthians 11:28 *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of [that] bread, and drink of [that] cup.*

How old must one be before he can obey this command?

- **ELDER:**

Baptism is not the result of one's expression of faith if you mean baptism of the Spirit - it is the cause of one's expression of faith in the operation of God. Water baptism is a sign that one is a member of the covenant and God's name has been put on them. They are now recipients of all the benefits

² *Thayer*. Thayer gives various locations for each definition, but the location in John 16, and others, was not listed.

of the Lord's church.

- **NEED:**

Who places God's name upon a person, men or God? Are you saying that the adulterer, whore-monger and sodomite can be recipient of all the benefits of the Lord's church simply through water baptism? What happened To conversion and the new heart—that is, the faith of Abraham that places one into the covenant promise? (Jer. 31:33.)

- **ELDER:**

Unfortunately many today, think God must not only repeat Himself with regard to biblical principles of the OT but He is required to make a direct statement that “baptism has replaced circumcision”. But it is only those who reject infant baptism as a starting point who insist then that the passage in Colossians cannot mean what it says. These folks seem to think that there has been some complicated change from the OT to the NT instead of a simple fulfilling of the OT in Christ. They strain to find reasons to support their position.

- **NEED:**

“infant baptism as a starting point...” According to God's Word, the new birth is the starting point in a Christian's life. Are you not teaching “baptismal regeneration”? There is NO SCRIPTURAL BASIS to say that baptism replaces circumcision, nor that “infant baptism is a starting point” in one's Christian life. You say you are reformed, then show me that you believe Scripture Alone, Faith Alone (whose faith, the parents faith or the child's?), Christ Alone, and Grace Alone.

As I point out in my research (*Paedobaptism and the Word of God*) I sent to you, Nadab and Abihu died for offering strange fire before the Lord:

Leviticus 10:1 ¶ *And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.*

These men were killed for doing something which was not commanded of them by the Lord. (See “John Gill (1696-1771)” on page 8.) Can we criticize Rome for doing all kinds of things not commanded of them in Scripture when we do the same?

- **ELDER:**

The move away from infant baptism is a relatively recent phenomenon having only occurred in the early 1500's and flies in the face of 1500 prior years of church history and great theologians. The rejection of infant baptism is nothing less than a failure to understand covenant and an emphasis on individualism. God is a covenant making and keeping God.

You included references to some church fathers in your treatise so I think it's important to point out what some of them have said on the topic.

Baptism was an apostolic tradition. Justin Martyr in 138 says “there were among Christians of his time many persons of both sexes, some sixty and some seventy years old, who had been made disciples of Christ from their infancy. Irenaeus says “He came to save all by Himself; all I say who by Him were born again unto God, infants, and little children and youths”. It was acknowledged by Tertullian. Origen, declares that it was “the usage of the church to baptize infants” and “the church had received the tradition from the Apostle”. Cyprian, together with an entire synod over which he presided, decided that baptism should be administered to infants before the eighth day. Augustine declared that this “doctrine is held by the whole church, not instituted by councils but always retained”. Even Pelagius admitted that, although the fact was so repugnant to his system.

Infant baptism has prevailed from the apostolic age, in all sections of the ancient church, uninterruptedly to the present time in every one of the great historical churches of the Reformation. It should be remembered that the Scripture contains examples of infants regenerated even before birth (Jacob, John the baptiser).

You included a reference to Charles Hodge and his seeming confusion. It is clear from A.A. Hodge, his son, that the son has no confusion at all and says, under the circumstances, intelligent neglect of the sacraments looks very like treason (*against the King, added*)

You place yourself at odds with not only the reformers but with the greatest theologians the US has produced over the years. Men such as Hodge, Warfield, Dabney et al. William Hendricksen in his commentary on Colossians says: “What then is the meaning of the phrase ‘in your baptism’? Evidently Paul in this entire paragraph magnifies Christian baptism as much as he, by the clear implication, disapproves of the continuation of the rite of circumcision if viewed as having anything to do with salvation. The definite implication, therefore, is that baptism has taken the place of circumcision. Hence, what is said with reference to circumcision in Rom 4:11, as being a sign and a seal, holds also for baptism. In the Colossian context baptism is specifically a sign and seal of having been buried with Christ and of having been raised with him. It is, accordingly, a sign and seal of union with Christ, of entrance into his covenant, of incorporation into Christ’s body, the church.”

You make the fact that Paul was dealing with Judaizers a limiting interpretation of Col. 2:11,12. It is not. All agree that Paul has made the connection of circumcision with baptism. You hold a view that is contrary to the reformed perspective.

- **NEED:**

I believe you just said that Jacob was regenerated before his birth. If I remember right, he was named “Deceiver”. I believe he was not renamed until he wrestled with the man all night, which would be more like “conversion”, Genesis 32. If Jacob is an example of all the elect being regenerated before birth rather than the words of Christ, *ye must be born again*, then why preach the gospel? What is the purpose of evangelism and preaching the gospel? Why should a believer train up his child in the ways of the Lord if the child is regenerated before birth? Moreover, I really do not believe we can use John the Baptist as an example, for the Lord Himself said there was not a greater man born of woman.

Give me the references, so I can check them out. Yes, failure to baptize infants was viewed as treason by the Reformers, but their definition of treason seemed to be treason against the state, not against the King of kings. They proved this view of treason by the inquisition led by men such as Zwingli. (See “Zwingli & the Inquisition” on page 11.)

You are telling me, “Tradition, Tradition, Tradition,” “The Fathers, The Fathers” and “The Fathers, the Fathers” as you present your case from tradition and the fathers. Why can’t you say, “Scripture, Scripture, Scripture”? Scripture does not agree that Paul’s circumcision of Colossians 2:11 is physical circumcision. So it really does not matter if the great men of the past taught otherwise; it is the inspired Word of God being violated, not “Baptist Doctrine”. {May God see fit to deliver us one day from “Tradition,” the “Fathers” and from Rome.

- **ELDER:**

By the way, as I said, (when going through the catechism on Lord’s Day 26), I was immersed in a Baptist Church. I had been baptized as an infant in a Presbyterian church, grew up in an Episcopal church and was confirmed, attended others, was converted at the age of 35 and immediately went to a Baptist church and attended Bible churches etc. But then God began to explain the covenant and I had to study the issues that I had railed against. One conclusion I came to was that the Baptist method of

baptism, that is immersion is without biblical warrant, there being no instances in the scripture of such a practice. In fact the only examples of immersion appeared in the OT and it was the wicked who were immersed in the flood and at the Red Sea. There are none in the NT.

- **NEED:**

“No instances in scripture” for immersion!! What Bible are you using?

Colossians 2:12 *Buried* [4916] *with him in baptism* [908], *wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

4916 from 4862 and 2290; TDNT-7:786,1102; v

AV-bury with 2; 2

1) to bury together with

For all who in the rite of believer's baptism are plunged into the water, thereby declare that they put faith in the expiatory death of Christ for the pardon of their past sins; therefore Paul likens baptism to a burial by which the former sinfulness is buried, i.e. utterly taken away. (*Thayer.*)

908 from 907; TDNT-1:545,92; n n

AV-baptism 22; 22

A word peculiar to N.T. with eccl. Writ., *immersion, submersion;*

1. of calamities and afflictions with which one is quite overwhelmed ...

2. of John's baptism, that purification rite by which men on confessing their sins were bound to spiritual reformation, obtained the pardon of their past sins and became qualified for the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom soon to be set up. This was valid Christian baptism, as this was the only baptism the apostles received and it is not recorded anywhere that they were ever rebaptised after Pentecost. ...

3. of Christian baptism; a rite of immersion in water as commanded by Christ, by which one after confessing his sins and professing his faith in Christ, having been born again by the Holy Spirit unto a new life, identifies publicly with the fellowship of Christ and the church (1 Co. xii. 13), and are made partakers of eternal salvation; [but see art. "Baptism" in BB.DD., McC. and S., Schaff-Herzog]: Eph. iv. 5; Col. ii. 12 ... ; 1 Pet. iii. 21; ... Ro. vi. 4. (*Thayer*)

Romans 6:4, *Therefore we are buried with <4916> (5648) him by baptism <908>...* "... This foundation being laid, Christians may very suitably be exhorted to strive to respond to their calling. Farther, it is not to the point to say, that this power is not apparent in all the baptized; for Paul, according to his usual manner, where he speaks of the faithful, connects the reality and the effect with the outward sign; for we know that whatever the Lord offers by the visible symbol is confirmed and ratified by their faith. In short, he teaches what is the real character of baptism when rightly received. So he testifies to the Galatians, that all who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. (Ga 3:27). Thus indeed must we speak, as long as the institution of the Lord and the faith of the godly unite together; for we never have naked and empty symbols, except when our ingratitude and wickedness hinder the working of divine beneficence. {1}" (Calvin.)

Does not even Calvin himself say here that baptism is the visible symbol of the inward faith of the candidate?

John the Baptist immersed those who came forward in repentance over their sin, and Christ was compared to John in baptizing his disciples:

John 4:1 ¶ *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized [907] more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized [907] not, but his disciples,)*

There are so many references to 907 in the New Testament that I will only use the one in John 4:

907 ... II. In the N.T. it is used particularly of the rite of sacred ablution, first instituted by John the Baptist, afterwards by Christ's command received by Christians and adjusted to the contents and nature of their religion..., viz. An immersion in water, performed as a sign of the removal of sin, and administered to those who, impelled by a desire for salvation, sought admission to the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom; [for patristic reff. Respecting the mode, ministrature, subjects, etc. of the rite, cf.

Soph. Lex. S.v.; Dict. Of Christ. Antiq. S.v. Baptism]. A. The word is used absolutely, to administer the rite of ablution, to baptize, (Vulg. Bapizo; Tertull. Tingo, tinguo, [cf. Mergito, de corona mil. § 3]): Mk. i.4; Jn. i. 25 sq. 28; iii. 22 sq. 26; iv. 2; x. 40; 1 Co. i.17... (Thayer)

Certainly, I am at *serious odds* with those who boldly change the Word of God to make it say something it does not say, as should every Bible believing Christian, whether the changer is the Pope, Hodge, Warfield, Dabney, Hendricksen, &c.

Colossians 2:11 *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

Quoting you: “All agree that Paul has made the connection of circumcision with baptism. You hold a vie, Spurgeon, Strong and multitudes of Godly and doctrinally sound men of the past, as I point out the research I sent to you. I can’t give you more at this time because most of my books are still in boxes.

Moreover, if “Reformed” means changing the clear teaching of God’s Word so I can believe something that appeals to the flesh, then I want nothing to do with the “Reformation.” However, “Reformed” means “Scripture Alone (a principle regularly violated by those who what to believe something not clearly taught by God’s Word), Faith Alone, Christ Alone, and Grace Alone.” I can gladly and joyfully fellowship with those who hold to these points.

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It does not matter if the Pope himself spoke *ex cathedra* that Paul actually meant in Colossians 2:11, *circumcision made with hands*, the Pope cannot change the Word of God. (Romans 3:4, Rev. 22:18, 19.) You might check Rushdoony’s *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 41, 42, 756ff. for a good meaning of circumcision and of Colossians 2:11, 12.

- **ELDER**

May God be glorified as we all seek to know Him better. 1 Sam. 12.24

- **NEED**

Thanks for looking over my concerns about this matter.

I proudly identify with those who hold to the key points of the Reformation: “Grace Alone. Faith Alone. Christ Alone, Scripture Alone, and Glory to God Alone.”

By His Sovereign Grace Alone,

Bro Need

Order for the Administration of the Baptism of ...

(My comments are in [text].)

Elder: Hear the words of the Gospel, written by Saint Mark, in the 10th Chapter, at the 13th & 14th verses:

They brought young children to Christ, that He should touch them; and His disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was very displeased, and said to them.

Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the Kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.

Beloved, you hear in this Gospel the words of our Savior Christ, that He commanded the children to be brought to Him; how He rebuked those who would have kept them from Him; how He instructs all men to come to Him as children. You see how, by His word and action, He declared His good will toward them, for He embraced them in His arms, He laid His hands on them, and blessed them. Do not doubt, then, but earnestly believe, that He who now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on High, is the same tender Savior who, on earth, so loved little children.

[**Comment:** I don't know how such a command is read into these words, except by faith, and that faith has little or nothing to do with the command-word of God, for Christ DID NOT command the children be brought to him. Christ's rebuke was to those who tried to keep the parents from bring the children to Christ for him to bless. Christ was not baptizing the children, nor were his disciples. He did not tell them to bring the children to be baptized. He did say that unless one becomes as a little child, he cannot enter into the kingdom, which has nothing to do with baptism. Matthew 18:3. Certainly, Christ loved little children, but only by faith can one believe in evolution, and only by faith can one believe that Christ commanded children be brought to him for baptism.]

Being thereby persuaded of the good will of our Savior toward children, let us not doubt that He commands us to bring this little one to Him. Let us faithfully and devoutly call upon our Father God, and ask that He will grant to this child by His bountiful mercy that which he cannot have by nature; that he may be baptized with water and the Holy Spirit, and thus distinguished from the children of unbelievers, received into Christ's Holy Church, and made a living member of the same, saying:

Elder: Dearly beloved, you have brought this child to be baptized; you have prayed that our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, would be pleased to receive him, to release him from his sins, to sanctify him with the Holy Spirit, to give him the Kingdom of Heaven and everlasting life. I ask therefore:

[**Comment:** Though not saying it outright, the elder here strongly implies that baptism influences the Lord to receive the baby and release him from sin, sanctifies him (thus performing conversion for these things are only accomplishes in conversion or salvation), as well as give him everlasting life, all as an infant. Thus, clearly the elder is presenting baptismal regeneration. If the child grows believing that he was given everlasting life at his infant baptism, then why should he expect conversion at a later age? He said here that through baptism, it is hoped that the Lord will save him though being yet a very young infant.]

Elder to Parents: Do you believe all the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed; and do you acknowledge your obligation, as far as in you lies, to bring up this child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to diligently instruct him in the Holy Scriptures, and to teach him the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health?

[text].)

Parents: We do!**Elder to Congregation:** (Congregation's Response in Bold Italics)

Do you, this congregation, promise in like manner to support these Christian parents with your encouragement and especially with your prayers in this Godly task which has been set before them? *We do!*

O merciful God, grant that the old Adam in this child may be so buried, that the new nature may be raised up in him. *Amen.*

Grant that all sinful affections in his life may die, and all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him. *Amen.*

Grant that he have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the world, the flesh, and the devil. *Amen.*

Grant that all who are given to You in baptism, may also be filled with heavenly virtues, and everlastingly rewarded, through Your mercy, O blessed Lord God, Who lives and governs all things, world without end. **Amen.**

[**Comment:** The several above statements are clearly teaching baptismal regeneration, for these things are only a result of conversion, or salvation.]

Almighty, ever living God, whose most dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ, gave commandment to His disciples, that they should go teach all nations, and baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; regard, we ask You, our prayers, that this child may receive the fullness of Your grace, and ever remain in the number of Your faithful children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Elder to Parents: what name do you give this child?**Parents:** ...**Elder:** ... I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**Congregation:** Amen.

Elder: We receive ... into the congregation of Christ's flock and pray that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified; but ably fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.

[**Comment:** Is it the Lord's church if it is built upon men's ideas rather than upon the foundation established by the Lord?

Matthew 16:15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Is it any wonder why the gates of hell are prevailing against the church, as men attempt to build it upon a foundation other than the command-word of Christ.]

Congregation: Amen.

Elder: Forasmuch as you, [father] & [mother] have promised to bring up your son up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, I exhort you to always remember the solemn obligation you are under. You are, then, to diligently rear this child to lead a Godly Christian life; to remember always that baptism also represents our profession, which is to follow the example of our Savior Jesus Christ, and to be made like unto Him, that, as He died and rose again for us, so we, who are baptized, should

die from sin, and rise again to righteousness, continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt desires, and daily living in all virtue and godliness.

[**Comment:** No mention of the necessity of regeneration. It is assumed above that the baptism does the regeneration, and now all the child must do is “live out” what took place at his baptism.]

[**Speaking to the few day old child, the elder said:**] And you, ..., in God's good design and providence, have been born to these Christian parents. Therefore we must believe that our Almighty God and Father has determined to either bless you or curse you according to the terms of His gracious Covenant. May God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be pleased to bless you by granting to you His Holy Spirit as He has signified in the waters of baptism and by granting to you the full benefits and privileges of the Covenant in all of its promises, so that you may grow in the grace, and knowledge, and power of God, to that full exercise of the offices of prophet, priest, and king, which this sacrament signifies.

[**Comment:** This last paragraph can be understood two ways: 1) That God may see fit one day to call the individual baptized to Himself, and give to him His Good Spirit. 2) That God did upon his baptism did give His Good Spirit, and now his responsibility is to live accordingly. By the context of the whole ceremony, it appears that the elder was saying that the child received the Holy Spirit at baptism. “We must believe...” What will they do with Esau, who was born of “Christian” parents, yet was hated by God? My understanding is that it is not baptism that grants one the “full benefits and privileges of the Covenant in all of its promises.” Rather, it is the new birth, and holy living. One’s birth does not place God under any special obligation. Furthermore, whether one is “baptized” or not, God will bless or curse according to this everlasting covenant. See “Identifying Identity” by this writer.]

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you, and remain with you forever. Amen.

Additional study

Sacrament. The word deserves some examination.

A little research concerning *sacrament* and *ordinance* turned up some interesting facts. It turns out that the term and modern religious meaning of *sacrament* has no Scriptural warrant. It evolved in and is handed down from Rome. On the other hand, *ordinance* is a term derived from and found in Scripture. Baptism is not a *sacrament* unless you are from Rome. Rather, baptism is one of several *ordinances* handed down to us from the Lord and from the apostles.

Sacrament

(from the Lat. *sacramentum*, a military oath of enlistment), a word adopted by the writers of the Latin Church to denote those ordinances of religion by which Christians come under an obligation of obedience to God, and which obligation, they supposed, was equally sacred with that of an oath. Considering the simplicity of the manner and the brevity of the terms in which the Lord Jesus Christ instituted certain general and perpetual observances for the Church which he founded, it is difficult to repress amazement at the extent of the discussions and the voluminousness of the controversies that have sprung up in reference to them. Many of those controversies are now obsolete, and all of them shrink to comparative unimportance when the Word of God is taken as the one only source of authoritative instruction on the subject. In order to make proper distinctions between the divine teachings and human theories, and also to see how doctrines have been promulgated in successive periods without the shadow of scriptural authority, it is well first to note both the letter and the spirit of the New Testament teaching in reference to what we now call sacraments. We may then the more intelligently follow the line of historical development and practice, however that may have been corrupted from the simplicity of the Gospel. A negative lesson of no little significance is taught in the

fact that the term sacrament is not found in the N.T.; neither is the Greek word *musthriion* in any instance applied to either baptism or the Lord's supper, or any other outward observance. That word, however, came subsequently into ecclesiastical usage as the equivalent of the Latin *sacramentum*. The Greek Church still uses it in that sense, designating as the seven mysteries what the Roman Church calls the seven sacraments. ...¹

There are only two methods of instruction in the New Testament concerning baptism and the Lord's supper. 1) example and precepts of Christ himself. 2) subsequent practice and teaching of the apostles. The gospel history opens with John's baptism, which was distinctly declared to be "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin." (Mark 1:4.) John's baptism must be regarded as the connecting link between the old and new dispensation, and it was sanctioned by Christ's demand to be baptized at the hands of John, in order to "fulfil all righteousness."

By this expression we may understand that Christ not only fulfilled, in his own person, the law of the Abrahamic covenant in circumcision, but also the spiritual law of Christianity which he was about to establish, and of which baptism was to be the appointed emblem.²

Thus baptism is from the beginning as initiatory to Christian discipleship, as Jesus himself made and baptized disciples, though his disciples did the baptizing. (John 3:22, 4:1, 2.) Thus we see that "baptism was fully established as a custom of the initial Church prior to the formal command by which, in the great Commission, its perpetual observance was enjoined. From the first exercise of their appointed office, the apostles preached baptism as a duty (Acts 2:38), and administered it to those professing Christianity (see Acts 2:41; 8:12, 13, 16, 38; 9:18; 16:15,³ 33;⁴ 18:8, etc.)."

One must note that baptism was instituted BEFORE circumcision was done away with at the cross. (Colossians 2:14.) Thus, the two cannot be connected, for both were being practiced at the same time. They can, however, be connected in the fact that they were both grounds of entrance to the congregation of the Lord. However, Christ conditioned New Testament entrance upon confession of sin, repentance, and Peter's confession before one can be accepted into Christ's church. Anything less is Roman baptism.

The "mystical" value placed upon baptism and the Lord's supper comes straight from Rome. There are no Scriptures attributing any *mystical* value to either, other than the value of obedience to the word of God. The "magical or supernatural influence" of the Roman priests has, far too often, been transferred to the "Elders" of "Reformed" churches:

¹. McClintock & Strong's Cyclopedia, sv., Sacrament. AGES Software.

². *bid.*

³. *And her household* (kai o oikov authv). Who constituted her "household"? The term *oikov*, originally means the building as below, "into my house" and then it includes the inmates of a house. There is nothing here to show whether Lydia's "household" went beyond "the women" employed by her who like her had heard the preaching of Paul and had believed. "Possibly Euodia and Syntyche and the other women, Php 4:2,3, may have been included in the family of Lydia, who may have employed many slaves and freed women in her trade" (Knowling). "This statement cannot be claimed as any argument for infant baptism, since the Greek word may mean her servants or her work-people" (Furneaux). In the household baptisms (Cornelius, Lydia, the jailor, Crispus) one sees "infants" or not according to his predilections or preferences. (RWP, OLB.) *and her household*; they were baptized also, being converted at the same time; these seem to be her menial servants, who came along with her from her native place upon business, and who attended on her; accordingly the Ethiopic version renders it, "and she was baptized with all her men"; and these were believers, and are called "the brethren", Ac 16:40 hence this passage will by no means serve the cause of infant baptism: whether Lydia was a maid, a wife, or widow, cannot be said; it looks, however, as if she had no husband now, since she is mentioned as a trader herself; and whether she had any children or not, is not certain, nor can it be concluded from this clause, for there are many households that have no children; and if she had young children, it is not likely she should bring them with her to such a distant place, whither she was come upon trade and business: the pleaders for infant baptism must prove that she had children; that these were her household, or part of her household here spoken of; and that they were baptized; or this instance will be of no service to their cause: (Gill, OLB.) The passages speaking of the whole household being baptized must also be understood in light of Peter's confession, for membership in Christ's church must be based upon that confession. However, if one's faith requires membership without Peter's confession, then that faith will void the word of God, as does the evolutionists' faith.

As thus formulated, [the “sacramental theory of the Roman Catholic Church”] was an ingenious and authoritative digest of views that had been developed during long centuries in which tradition and superstitious inventiveness had usurped the supreme control in matters of religion. During that period the living oracles were silent, and nearly all the prevailing influences united to enhance the prerogatives of the clergy by attaching magical or supernatural influence to their supposed priestly functions. Baptism, loaded down with accumulated ceremonies, became the essential agency of regeneration; absolution from sin was given or withheld at the option of a priest; while extreme unction was regarded as an important, if not an essential passport to usher a dying person into the presence of God. But it was the Lord’s supper in which all that was most solemn and mysterious was concentrated. That rite had become the holy of holies in the Christianity then prevalent. In it the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ was believed to be secured as often as the priest performed the act of consecration; but the manner of that presence was for a long time undiscussed, being neither defined by canon, agitated before council, nor determined by pope. “During all those centuries no language was thought too strong to express the overpowering awe and reverence of the worshippers. The oratory of the pulpit and the hortatory treatise had indulged freely in the boldest images; the innate poetry of the faith had worked those images into realities.” A specimen of the oratorical hyperbole employed in reference to this subject may be taken from Chrysostom, written in his treatise on the priesthood, about A.D. “The priestly office is discharged upon earth, but holds the rank of heavenly things, and very rightly so.... For when you behold the Lord sacrificed and prostrate, and the priest standing over the sacrifice, and praying, and all stained with that precious blood, do you then suppose you are among men and standing upon earth? Are you not immediately transported to heaven? . . . Oh, the marvel! Oh, the love of God to man! He who sits with the Father on high is at that moment held in the hands of all, and gives himself to those who are willing to embrace and to receive him!”⁵

In other words, the modern term *sacrament* and all the mystical value that is attributed to it has no Scriptural warrant, and is a clear holdover from Rome.⁶

Ordinance

[A]n institution established by lawful authority. Religious ordinances must be instituted by the great institutor of religion, or they are not binding; minor regulations are not properly ordinances. Ordinances once established are not to be varied by human caprice or mutability.⁷

What makes binding ordinance of the Christian Church, *e.g.*, the Lord’s Supper and Baptism:

1. Illustrated by our Lord’s own example and enjoined by his specific command.
2. Enjoined upon the whole Church as a perpetual obligation.
3. Recognized by the apostles and the New Testament churches in the character stated, and by them observed in the form and spirit of their appointment;
4. Each of the institutions named had an important significance with reference to the whole scheme of

⁴ *and was baptized, he and all his*, straightway; by immersion, that being the only way in which baptism was administered, or can be, so as to be called a baptism: and which might be administered, either in the pool, which Grotius supposes to have been in the prison; or in the river near the city, where the oratory was, #Ac 16:13 and it is no unreasonable thought to suppose, that they might go out of the prison thither, and administer the ordinance, and return to the prison again before morning unobserved by any; and after that, enter into the jailer’s house and be refreshed, as in the following verse; and as this instance does not at all help the cause of sprinkling, so neither the baptism of infants; for as the jailer’s family were baptized as well as he, so they had the word of the Lord spoken to them as well as he, and believed as well as he, and rejoiced as he did; all which cannot be said of infants; and besides, it must be proved that he had infants in his house, and that these were taken out of their beds in the middle of the night, and baptized by Paul, ere the instance can be thought to be of any service to infant baptism. (Gill, OLB.)

⁵ McClintock & Strong’s Cyclopedia, sv., Sacrament. AGES Software. Several of the “Reformed” Presbyterian style churches this writer has attended border on both baptismal regeneration and transubstantiation. Though claiming not to believe in either, the words used in both rites say otherwise.

⁶ Because their local “Reformed” Presbyterian church would not marry a young couple without the state’s involvement, they came to this pastor. I preformed a “coverture” marriage for them. However, when they had their first child and wanted him baptized by their church, their Pastor, “Elder,” refused to do it unless they submitted to his demand that they obtain a state license. Thus, he held as much magical power over that young couple as any Roman priest could hold over his people.

⁷ McClintock & Strong’s Cyclopedia, sv., Ordinance. AGES Software.

salvation, and was adapted to serve as a means of grace to all Christians.⁸

Based upon the four points above, the following are *Ordinances Of The Gospel*

These are institutions of divine authority relating to the worship of God; such as,

1, baptism (Matthew 28:19);

2, the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:24, etc.);

3, public ministry, or preaching and reading the Word (Romans 10:15; Ephesians 4:13; Mark 16:15);

4, hearing the Gospel (Mark 4:24; Romans 10:17);

5, public prayer (1 Corinthians 14:15, 19; Matthew 6:6; Psalm 5:1, 7);

6, singing of psalms (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19);

7, fasting (James 1:9; Matthew 9:15; Joel 2:12);

8, solemn thanksgiving (Psalm 1, 14; 1 Thessalonians 5:18).⁹

Accordingly, not only is paedobaptism a holdover from Rome that made it through the “Reformation,” so is the word *sacrament* and the mystical meaning given to the *sacraments*. Scripture does not use the word, nor does it give any mystical meaning to whatever the *sacrament* may be.

On the other hand, an *ordinance* is “an institution established by lawful authority,” and that lawful authority is the law-word of God. Thus, not only are the Lord’s Supper and Baptism ordinances, but there are at least six more “institution established” by God’s lawful authority, his word. Men also establish ordinances, which are to be obeyed, unless they are contrary to the “higher authority.” (Romans 13.)

Thus there are NO *sacraments* given by God to the church, but there are at least eight ordinances.

Rev. Ovid Need

⁸. McClintock & Strong’s Cyclopeda, sv., Sacrament. AGES Software.

⁹. McClintock & Strong’s Cyclopeda, sv., Ordinance. AGES Software.

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