

BAPTISM:
A DIVINE COMMANDMENT
TO BE
OBSERVED

*Being A Sermon Preached At Barbican, October 9,
1765 At The Baptism Of The Reverend Mr. Robert Carmichael,
Minister Of The Gospel In Edinburgh.*

By John Gill

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

(LONDON: GEORGE KEITH, 1766)

Copyright (Public Domain)

www.reformedontheweb.com/home/.html

(Reformed on the Web)

BAPTISM: A DIVINE COMMANDMENT TO BE OBSERVED

Being A Sermon Preached At Barbican, October 9,
1765 At The Baptism Of The Reverend Mr. Robert Carmichael,
Minister Of The Gospel In Edinburgh.

THE PREFACE

The following discourse was not designed for the press; had it, the subject of it would have been a little more enlarged upon; and, perhaps, might have appeared in a little better dress; but as the publication of it is become necessary, I chose to let it go just as it was delivered, as nearly in the very words and expressions, as my memory could assist me; the sense, I am sure, is no where departed from; that it might not be said, that any thing that was spoken is concealed, changed, or altered. The warmest solicitations of my friends would never have prevailed upon me to have made it public, being unwilling to renew the controversy about baptism unnecessarily; and being determined only to write in self-defense, when attacked, or whenever the controversy is renewed by others; for I am very sensible, that the argument on both sides is greatly exhausted, and scarce any thing new can be expected, that is serious and pertinent: but the rude attack upon the sermon in two letters in a news-paper, determined me at once to send it out into the world, as being a sufficient confutation of itself, without any remarks at all, of the lies and falsehoods, calumnies, cavils and impertinencies, with which the letters abound; whereby it will appear to every reader, how fairly that writer charges me *with railing against my brethren, and the whole Christian world*; and how injuriously he represents me, as treating all that differ from me as *fools, unlearned, ignorant of the scriptures, and unclean*. It is hard we cannot practice what we believe, and speak in vindication of our practice, without being abused, vilified and insulted in a public news-paper; is this treating us as *brethren*, as the writer of the letters, in a canting way, affects to call us? And how does this answer to the false character of *Candidus*, he assumes? I shall not let myself down so low, nor do I think it fitting and decent to go into, and carry on a religious controversy in a newspaper, and especially with so worthless a writer, and without a name. This base and cowardly way of

writing, is like the Indians' manner of fighting; who set up an hideous yell, pop off their guns behind bushes and hedges, and then run away and hide themselves in the thickets. However, if the publication of this discourse should be of any service to relieve or strengthen the minds of any, with respect to their duty in the observance of the ordinance of baptism, I am content to bear the indignities of men, and shall reckon it an over-balance to all their reproaches and insults.

J. G

BAPTISM: A DIVINE COMMANDMENT

Being about to administer the Ordinance of Baptism, before we enter upon the administration of it, I shall drop a few words on the occasion, from a passage of scripture you will find in

1 JOHN 5:3 *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.*

*What I shall say in the following discourse, will much depend upon the sense of the word **commandments**; by which are meant, not the ten commandments, or the commandments of the moral law delivered by Moses to the children of Israel;* which, though they are the commands of God, and to be observed by Christians under the present dispensation; since we are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ (1 Cor. 9:21); and are to be kept from a principle of love to God, for the end of the commandment is charity, or love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned (1 Tim. 1:5); yet these commands are not easy of observation, through the weakness of the flesh, or corruption of nature; nor can they be perfectly kept by any of *Adam's* fallen race; for there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not (Eccl. 7:20); and he that offends in one point is guilty of all (Jam. 2:10); and is exposed to the curse and condemnation of the law, which runs in this tenor, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them (Gal. 3:10); hence this law in general is called a fiery law, the letter which kills, and the ministration of condemnation and death, which make it terrible to offenders; however, it may be delighted in by believers in Christ after the inward man: ***nor are the commandments of the ceremonial law intended***, which being many and numerous, were burdensome; especially to carnal men, who were frequently ready to say concerning them, *What a weariness is it?* One of its precepts, circumcision, is called a *yoke*, which, says the apostle Peter, neither our fathers nor we were able to bear (Acts 15:10); because it bound persons to keep the whole law, which they could not do; and the whole is said to be a *yoke of bondage* (Gal. 5:1), and consequently its commandments grievous; besides this law was abrogated before the apostle *John* wrote this epistle, and its commandments were not to be kept; Christ had *abolished* this *law of commandments contained in ordinances*; and there is now a *dis-*

annulling of the whole of it, because of its *weakness* and *unprofitableness* (Eph. 2:15; Heb. 7:18); ***rather the commandments of faith and love the apostle speaks of in chapter 3:23 may be designed***; *And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment: there were exhortations, injunctions and commands of Christ to his disciples, which were to be kept by them, and were not grievous.* *Ye believe in God*, says he (John 14:1), *believe also in me*; and again, *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you* (John 8:34); but inasmuch as Christ, as lawgiver in his church, has appointed some special and peculiar laws and ordinances to be observed, and which he calls *his* commandments, he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me (John 14:21); very agreeably to our text; and after he had given his apostles a commission to preach and baptize, he adds, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you (Matthew 28:20); ***and whereas, among these commandments and ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper are the chief and principal***, I choose to understand the text of them;^[1] and since we are about to administer the first of these at this time, ***I shall confine my discourse chiefly to that, and shall attempt the following things.***

- I. To shew that baptism, water-baptism, is a command of God and Christ, or a divine command.
- II. That being a divine command, it ought to be kept and observed.
- III. The encouragement to keep it; it is the love of God, and it is a commandment not grievous.

I. The ordinance of water-baptism is a divine command. *John*, the forerunner of our Lord, was the first administrator of it, and from thence was called the *Baptist*; and he did not administer it of his own mind and will, but had a mission and commission from God to do it; *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John*; and he was sent by him, not to preach the gospel only, but to baptize; for so he himself says, he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, etc. (John 1:6, 33). Hence Christ put this question to the chief priests and elders of the Jews, the baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or of men? (Matthew 21:25, 26), this brought them into such a dilemma, that they knew not what answer to give, and chose to give none; our Lord's design by the question was to shew that *John's* baptism was of

divine institution, and not human; wherefore he charges the Pharisees and Lawyers with rejecting the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him (Luke 7:30), that is, of *John*; and he elsewhere (Matthew 3:15), speaks of his baptism as a part of righteousness to be fulfilled, and was fulfilled by him. Now *John's* baptism and Christ's were, as to the substance of them, the same; *John's baptism* was allowed of and approved of by Christ, as appears from his submission to it; and the ordinance was confirmed by the order he gave to his apostles to administer it: one of *John's* disciples said to his master, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him (John 3:26); though, as is said afterwards, Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples (John 4:2); that is, they baptized by his orders; and which were renewed after his resurrection from the dead, saying, Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them, etc. (Matthew 28:19), and which orders were obeyed by his apostles, as many instances in the *Acts of the Apostles* shew; and that it was water baptism they administered, according to Christ's instructions and directions.

In matters of worship there ought to be a command for what is done; as this ordinance of baptism is a solemn act of worship, being performed *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. God is a jealous God, and especially with respect to the worship of him; nor should any thing be introduced into it but what he has commanded; and careful should we be hereof, lest he should say unto us, *who hath required this at your hands?* (Isa. 1:12), it is not enough that such and such things are not forbidden; for on this footing a thousand fooleries may be brought into the worship of God, which will be relented by him. When *Nadab* and *Abihu* offered strange fire to the Lord, which he commanded not, fire came down from heaven and destroyed them: we should have a precept for what we do, and that not from men, but from God; lest we incur the charge of worshipping God in vain, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9), and involve ourselves in the guilt of superstition, and will-worship.

Wherefore, the baptism of infants must be wrong; since there is no command of God and Christ for it; if there was any, it might be expected in the New Testament, and in that only; it is absurd to send us to the Old Testament for a command to observe a New Testament-ordinance; it is a groin absurdity to send us so far back as to the 17th chapter of *Genesis*^[2] for a warrant for the

ordinance of baptism; we might as well be lent to the first chapter of that book; for there is no more relating to that ordinance in the one than in the other. Was there a like precept for the baptism of infants under the New Testament, as there was for the circumcision of infants under the Old Testament, there could be no objection to it; but it is an absurdity of absurdities to affirm, that baptism comes in the room of circumcision; since baptism was in force and use long before circumcision was abolished; circumcision was not abolished until the death of Christ, when that, with other ceremonies, had an end in him; but baptism was administered many years before to multitudes, by *John*, by the order of Christ, and by his apostles; now where is the good sense of saying, and with what propriety can it be laid, that one thing succeeds another, as baptism circumcision, when the one, said to succeed, was in use and force long before the other teared, it is pretended it succeeded?

If there is any precept for Infant-baptism, it must be in the New Testament; there only it can be expected, but there it cannot be found; not in Matthew 19:14, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven; which is no precept, but a permission, or grant, that little children might come, or be brought unto him; but for what? not for baptism; but for that for which they were brought, and which is mentioned by the evangelist in the preceding verse, *that he should put his hands on them, and pray*, or give them his blessing; as it reams it was usual in those times, and with those people, as formerly, to bring their children to persons venerable for religion and piety, to be blessed by them in this way; and such an one they might take Jesus to be, though they might not know he was the Messiah. Two other evangelists say, they were brought unto him *that he should touch them*; as he sometimes touched diseased persons when he healed them; and these children might be diseased, and brought to him to be cured of their diseases; however, not to be baptized by thrill, for he baptized none; they would rather have brought them to the disciples, had it been for such a purpose; and had it been the practice of the apostles to baptize infants, they would not have refused them; and our Lord's entire silence about Infant-baptism at this time, when there was so fair an opportunity to speak of it, and enjoin it, had it been his will, has no favorable aspect on that practice. The reason given by thus for the permission of infants to come to him, *for of such is the kingdom of heaven*, is figurative and metaphorical; and not to be

understood of the infants themselves, but of such as they; of such who are comparable to them for their humble deportment, and harmless lives; or to use our Lord's words elsewhere, such who are *converted, and become as little children* (Matthew 18:2).^[3] Nor is a command for Infant-baptism contained in the commission to baptize (Matthew 28:19), Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost.

It is argued, that "since all nations are to be baptized, and infants are a part of them, then, according to the command of Christ, they are to be baptized." But it should be observed, that the commission is indeed to *teach* all nations, but not to *baptize* all nations; the antecedent to the relative *them*, is not *all nations*; the words *παντα τα εθνη*, *all nations*, are of the neuter gender; but *αυτουσ*, *them*, is of the masculine, and do not agree; the antecedent is *μαθητασ*, *disciples*, which is understood, and supposed, and contained in the word *μαθητευσατε*, *teach*, or *make disciples*; and the sense is, teach all nations, and baptize them that are taught, or are made disciples by teaching. If the above argument proves any thing, it would prove too much; and what proves too much, proves nothing: it would prove, that not only the infants of Christians, but the infants of Turks, Jews, and Pagans, should be baptized, since they are part of all nations; yea, that every individual person in the world should be baptized, heathens, as well as Christians, and even the molt profligate and abandoned of mankind, since they are part of all nations.^[4]

And as there is no precept for the baptism of infants, so no precedent for it in the word of God. Though there was no clear and express command for it, which yet we think is necessary, and is required in such a case; yet, if there was a precedent of any one infant being baptized, we should think ourselves obliged to pay a regard unto it; but among the many thousands baptized by *John*, by *Christ*, or, however, by his order, and by his apostles, not one single instance of an infant being baptized can be found. We read, indeed, of households being baptized; from whence it is argued, that there might be, and it is probable there were, infants in them, who might be baptized; but it lies upon those who are of a different mind, to prove there were any in those households. To put us upon proving a negative, that there were none there, is unfair. However, as far as a negative can be proved, we are capable of it.^[5] There are but three families usually observed, if so many; *Lydia's*, the Jailor's, and that of *Stephanas*, if not the fame with the Jailor's, as some

think. As for *Lydia's* household, or those in her house, they were *brethren*; whom, afterwards, the apostles went to see, and whom they *comforted*; and so not infants. As for the Jailor's household, they were such as were capable of hearing the word preached to them, and of believing it; for it is said, *he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house* (Acts 16:40, 34): and if any man can find any other in his house, besides *all* that were in it, he must be reckoned a very sagacious person. As for the household of *Stephanas*, (if different from the Jailor's) it is said, that *they addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints* (1 Cor. 1:16; 16:15): and whether this be understood of the ministry of the word to the saints, or of the ministration of their substance to the poor, they must be adult persons, and not infants. Seeing then there is neither precept nor precedent for Infant-baptism in the word of God, of which I defy the whole world to give one tingle precedent, we cannot but condemn it as unscriptural, and unwarrantable.^[6]

I proceed,

II. To shew that the ordinance of water-baptism, being a divine command, it ought to be kept, and observed, as directed to in the word of God.

First, I shall shew, by whom it is to be kept and observed.

1. By sensible, repenting sinners. *John's* baptism was called *the baptism of repentance* (Mark 1:4); because repentance was previous to it; and the very first persons that were baptized by him, were such who were sensible of their sins, repented of them, and ingenuously confessed them; for it is said, they were *baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins*; and whereas others applied to him for baptism, of whom he had no good opinion, he required of them, that they would first bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and not to think with themselves, we have Abraham to our father (Matthew 3:6-9); since such a plea would be of no avail with him; and the very first persons that were baptized after our Lord had given to his apostles the commission to baptize, were penitent ones; for under the first sermon after this, three thousand were pricked in their heart, and cried out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* To whom the apostle *Peter* gave this instruction and direction: Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38); and accordingly, on their repentance, they were baptized.

2. This command is to be kept and observed by believers in Christ; *he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved* (Mark 16:16). Faith goes before

baptism, and is a pre-requisite to it; as the various instances of baptism recorded in the scriptures shew. *Philip* went down to *Samaria*, and preached Christ there to the inhabitants of it; and when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women (Acts 8:12).

The same minister of the word was bid to join himself to the chariot of an Eunuch, returning from *Jerusalem*, where he had been to worship, and whom he found reading a prophecy in *Isaiah*; and said unto him, *Understandest thou what thou readest?* To which he answered, *How can I, except some man should guide me?* And being taken up into the chariot with him: from that scripture, *Philip* preached Jesus to him, his word, and ordinances, as the sequel shews; for when they came to a certain water, the Eunuch laid, *See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?* And *Philip* said, *If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.* Otherwise not, it seems; for notwithstanding his religion and devotion, without faith in Christ, he had no right to that ordinance; He answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:36, 37); upon which profession of his faith, he was baptized. The apostle *Paul* preached the gospel at *Corinth* with success; and it is observed by the historian, that many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized (Acts 18:8). First they heard the word, then they believed in Christ, the sum and substance of the word, and upon the profession of their faith, were baptized.

3. The ordinance of water-baptism is to be attended to, and observed by such who are the disciples of Christ; it is said that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (John 4:1). First made them disciples, and then baptized them; that is, ordered his apostles to baptize them; with which his commission to them agrees, *Teach all nations, baptizing them; make disciples, and baptize them that are so made.* Now, what is it to be disciples of Christ? Such may be said to be so, who have learned to know Christ, and believe in him; who are taught to deny sinful self, righteous self, and civil self, for his sake, and to take up the cross and follow him, in the exercise of grace and in the discharge of duty: and,

4. Such as have received the Spirit of God, are proper persons to observe the ordinance of baptism, and submit unto it: Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the holy Ghost as well as

we? (Acts 10:47); as a Spirit of illumination and conviction, as a Spirit of sanctification, faith and consolation, and as a Spirit of adoption.

Secondly, Next let us consider in what manner the ordinance of baptism is to be kept and observed: and,

1. It should be kept in faith; for *without faith it is impossible to please God; and whatsoever is not of faith, is sin* (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 14:23).

2. In love, and from a principle of love to Christ, and which is the end of every commandment, and of this; *If ye love me, says Christ's, keep my commandments* (John 14:15 3). It should be kept as it was at first delivered and observed: the manner in which it is to be performed and submitted to, is immersion, or covering the whole body in water; and which agrees with the primary sense of the word βαπτίζω, which signifies to *dip* or *plunge*, as all learned men know;^[z] and he must be a novice in the Greek language, that will take upon him to contradict what has been ingenuously owned by so many men of learning. Had our translators thought fit to have translated the word, which they have not in those places where the ordinance of baptism is made mention of, for reasons easily to be guessed at, but have adopted the Greek word *baptize* in all such places; had they truly translated it, the eyes of the people would have been opened, and the controversy at once would have been at an end, with respect to this part of it, the mode of baptism; ***however we have proof sufficient that it was performed, and ought to be performed by immersion, as appears,***

1. By the places where it was administered, as the river *Jordan*, where *John* baptized many, and where our Lord himself was baptized; and *AEnon*, near *Salim*, which he chose for this reason, *because there was much water there* (Matthew 3:6, 13); now if the ordinance was administered in any other way than by immersion, what need was there to make choice of rivers and places abounding with water to baptize in?

2. By the instances of persons baptized, and the circumstances attending their baptism, as that of our Lord, of whom it is said, When he was baptized, he went up straightway out of the water (Matthew 3:16); which manifestly implies that he had been in it, of which there would have been no need, had the ordinance been administered to him in any other way than by immersion; as by sprinkling or pouring a little water on his head, as the painter ridiculously describes it. The baptism of the Eunuch is another instance

proving baptism by immersion; when he and *Philip* were come to a certain water, and it was agreed to baptize him, it is said, they went down both into the waters both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip (Acts 8:38, 39). The circumstances of *going down into* the water, and *coming up out of* it, manifestly shew in what manner the Eunuch was baptized, namely, by immersion; for what reason can be given why they should go *into* the water, had it been performed in any other way?

3.^[8] The end of baptism, which is to represent the burial and resurrection of Christ, cannot be answered any other way than by immersion; that it is an emblem of the burial and resurrection of Christ, and of the burial and resurrection of believers in him, is clear from Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12 *buried with him by baptism*, and in *baptism*. Now only an immersion or covering of the whole body in water, and not pouring or sprinkling a little water on the face, can be a representation of a burial; will any man in his senses say, that a corpse is buried, when only a little dust or earth is sprinkled or poured on its face?

4. The figurative baptisms, or the allusions made to baptism in scripture, shew in what manner it was administered; the passage of the Israelites under the cloud, and through the sea, is called a being *baptized in the cloud and in the sea* (1 Cor. 10:1, 2); and with great propriety may it be called a baptism, as that is by immersion; for the waters standing up as a wall on each side of them, through which, and the cloud over their heads, under which they passed, they were like persons immersed in water:^[9] likewise the overwhelming sufferings of Christ are fitly called a baptism, in allusion to baptism by immersion. I have a baptism to be baptized with, says he; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished? (Luke 12:50); and which sufferings of Christ, in prophetic language, agreeable to baptism by immersion, are thus described; I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me (Ps.119:1, 2). Once more; the extraordinary donation of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, is called a being *baptized with the holy Ghost* (Acts 1:5); the emblem of which was a rushing mighty wind, which filled all the house where they were sitting (Acts 2:2); so that they were as if immersed into it, and covered with it, and therefore very properly called *a baptism*, in allusion to baptism by immersion.^[10] I go on,

III. To observe the encouragement, motives, and reasons given to keep this ordinance, as well as others,

1. The apostle says, *this is the love of God*; that is, this shews love to God; it is a plain case, that a man loves God, when he keeps his commandments; this is an evidence, that he loves not in word, and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth. Others may say that they love God and Christ; but this is the man that truly loves them, even he that *hath my commandments*, says Christ (John 14:21), *and keepeth them; he it is that loveth me*: and it is a clear care, that such a man has a sense of the love of God and Christ; the love of the Father is in him; and the love of Christ constrains him to observe his ordinances, and keep his commands; and such may expect greater manifestations of the love of God and Christ unto them; for of such that keep the commandments of Christ, he says, I will love him, and manifest myself to him; — and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him (John 14:23); which is no small inducement and encouragement to an observation of the ordinances and commands of Christ, and among the rest this of baptism.

2. Another encouraging motive and reason is, the commandments of God and Christ are not grievous, hard and difficult to be performed. The Lord's supper is not; nor is baptism. What is baptism in water, to the baptism of sufferings Christ endured for us? And yet how desirous was he of accomplishing it? (Luke 12:50). And therefore why should we think it an hardship, or be backward to comply with his will, in submitting to the ordinance of water-baptism? When *Naaman* was bid by *Elisha* to dip himself in *Jordan*, and be clean; which he relented as too little and trifling a thing, and thought he might as well have stayed in his own land, and dipped himself in one of the rivers of *Syria*; one of his servants took upon him to allay and repress the heat of his passion and resentment, by observing, that if the prophet had bid him do some great thing, which was hard and difficult to be performed, he would have gone about it readily; how much rather then, he argued, should he attend to the direction of the prophet, when he only bid him *wash in Jordan, and be clean*? (2 Kings 5:13). There are many that will go into baths, and plunge themselves in them for pleasure or profit, to refresh their bodies, or cure them of disorders; but if plunging in water is directed to, as an ordinance of God, then it is a grievous thing; and, indeed, no ordinance is grateful to a carnal mind; but to believers in Christ, *wisdom's ways are ways*

of pleasantness, and her paths of peace. Christ's yoke, if it may be called so, is easy, and his burden light.

Now to close with a few words:

- 1.** Let none despise this command of God, the ordinance of baptism; remember it is a command of his; be it at your peril if you do; it is hard kicking against the pricks; it is dangerous to treat with contempt any of the commands of God, and ordinances of Christ; *beware*, lest that should come upon you, and be fulfilled in you, *behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.* (Acts 8:40, 41).
- 2.** Let such who see it their duty to be baptized, not tarry, but immediately submit unto it; let them make haste, and delay not, to keep this command; remembering the motives, and encouragement to it.
- 3.** Let those that yield obedience to it, do it in the name and strength of Christ; in the faith of him, from love to him, and with a view to his glory.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Let the commandments be what they may, which are chiefly intended in the text; yet since water-baptism is a commandment of God, and allowed to be such, and the rest of the commandments mentioned are not denied to be, nor excluded from being the commandments of God; there can be no impropriety in treating on the commandment of baptism particularly and singly from this passage of scripture; and it might have escaped, one would have thought, a sneer, though it has not, of a scurrilous writer, in a late newspaper, referred to in the preface.

[2] That we are ever referred to this chap. or, for a proof of Infant-baptism, is denied, and pronounced a willful, misrepresentation, by the above mentioned writer, in his second letter in the newspaper. This man must have read very little in the controversy, to be ignorant of this. The very last writer that wrote in the controversy, that I know of, calls the covenant made with *Abraham* in that chapter “the grand turning point, on which the issue of the controversy very much depends; and that if *Abraham’s* covenant, which included his infant-children, and gave them a sight to circumcision, was not the covenant of grace; then he freely confesses, that the *main ground*, on which they assert the *right of infants to baptism*, is taken away; and consequently, the principal arguments in support of the doctrine, are overturned.” Bostwick’s *Fair and Rational Vindication of the Right of Infants to the Ordinance of Baptism*, etc. p. 19.

[3] The above letter-writer, in the news-paper, observes, “that the *kingdom of heaven* signifies either the kingdom, or church of Christ here, or the kingdom of glory above. If the former, they are declared, by Christ himself, real subjects of his among men; if the latter, if members of the invisible church, why not of the visible?” But, in fact, they themselves are not intended, only such as they; such who are comparable to them for meekness and humility; for freedom from malice, pride, and ambition. But admitting that the words are to be understood of infants literally, the kingdom of heaven cannot design the kingdom, or church of Christ under the gospel dispensation, which is not national, but congregational; consisting of men gathered out of the world, by the grace of God, and who make a public profession of Christ, which infants are not capable of, and so cannot be real subjects of it; and if they were, they must have an equal right to the Lord’s supper, as to baptism, of which they

are equally capable. The kingdom of glory then being recant, it is asked, if members of the invisible church, why not of the visible? They may be, when it appears that they are of the invisible church, which only can be manifest by the grace of God bestowed on them; and it is time enough to talk of their baptism when that is evident; and when it is clear they have both a right unto, and meetness for the kingdom of heaven.

[4] But our letter-writer says, “When the apostles received their commission, they could not understand it otherwise than to baptize the *parents* that embraced the faith of Christ; through their preaching, and all their *children* with them, as was the manner of the ministers of God in preceding ages, by circumcision;” but if they so understood it, and could not other ways understand it, it is strange they should not practice according to it, and baptize children with their parents; of which we have no one instance. By the *ministers of God in preceding ages*, I suppose, he means the priests and prophets, under the Old Testament-dispensation; but these were not the operators of circumcision, which was done by parents and others: and surely it cannot be said, it was the usual manner of ministers to baptize parents, and their children with them in those ages; and it is pretty unaccountable how they should baptize them by circumcision, as is affirmed; this is something unheard of before, and monstrously ridiculous and absurd.

[5] The above writer affirms, that my manner of “proving the negative, was *by barely asserting* there were no children in any of the families, mentioned in the scriptures, as baptized.” The falsity of which appears by the following descriptive, characters given of the patrons in the several, families, and the reasonings upon them.

[6] In his turn, the writer in the news-paper, “defies me to produce one scripture precept, or precedent, for delaying the *baptism of children of* Christian parents; or for baptizing adult persons, born of such parents. On this the controversy hinges.” It is ridiculous to talk of a precept for delaying that which was not in being; and of a precedent for delaying that which had never been practiced. If a warrant is required for baptizing adult persons, believers, it is ready at hand (Mark 16:16), and precedents enough: and we know of no precept to baptize any other, let them be born of whom they may; and as for precedents of the baptism of adult persons, born of Christian parents, it cannot be expected, nor reasonably required of us; since the Acts of the

Apostles only give an account of the planting of the first churches; and of the baptism of those of which they first consisted; and not of those that in a course of years were added to them. Wherefore, to demand instances of persons, born of Christian parents, and brought up by them, as baptized in adult age, which would require length of time, is unreasonable; and if the controversy hinges on this, it ought to be at an end, and given up by them.

[7] The letter-writer makes me to say, “All the world acknowledge βαπτίζω, signifies to dip or plunge, and never to sprinkle or pour water on any thing,” which is a false representation of my words, and of the manner in which they were delivered; however, this I affirm, that in all the Greek Lexicons I ever saw, and I have seen a pretty many, I do not pretend in having seen all that have been published; yet in what my small library furnishes me with, the word is always rendered in the first and primary sense by *mergo*, *immergo*, to *dip* or *plunge into*; and in a secondary and consequential sense, by *abluo*, *lavo*, to *wash*, because what is dipped is washed; and never by *persundo* or *aspergo*, to *pour or sprinkle*; as the Lexicon published by *Constantine*, *Budaeus*, etc. those of *Hadrian*, *Junius*, *Plantinus*, *Scapula*. *Sebreveius*, and *Stockins*, besides a great number of critics that might be mentioned; and if this writer can produce any one Lexicographer of any note, that renders the word to *pour or sprinkle*, let him name him. This *ignorant scribbler* puts the following questions, “Did the Jews plunge their whole bodies in water always before they did eat? Did they dip their pots, brazen vessels and beds?” He does not suffer me to answer the questions, but answers for me, “He knows the contrary.” But if I may be allowed to answer for myself, I must say, by the testimonies of the Jews themselves, and of others, I know they did; that is, when they came from market, having touched the common people, or their clothes, immersed themselves in water; so says *Maimonides* in *Misn. Chagigah. c. e. sect. 7*. “If the Pharisees touched but the garments of the common people they were defiled, and needed immersion, and were obliged to it.” And *Scaliger* observes, *de Emend. Temp. 1. 6. p. 271*. “That the more superstitious part of the Jews, every day before they sat down to meat, dipped the whole body; hence the Pharisee’s admiration at Christ (Luke 11:38).” According to the law of *Moses* (Lev. 11:32), unclean vessels were washed by putting or dipping them into water; and according to the traditions of the elders, to which our Lord refers (Mark 7:4), not only brazen vessels and tables, but even beds, bolsters and pillows unclean, in a ceremonial sense,

were washed by immersion in water. So the Jews say in their Misnah, or book of traditions, “A bed that is wholly defiled, a man dips it part by part.” Celim, c. 26. sect. 14. See also Mikvaot, c. 7. sect. 7.

[8] The above letter-writer asks, “How often must I be told, that the particle εἰς and ἐκ are in hundreds of places in the New Testament rendered *unto* and *from*?” be it so; it follows not, that they must be so rendered here. Greek particles or prepositions have different significations, according to the words and circumstances with which they are used; nor is it as proper or a more just reading of the words, “they went down *unto* the water and came up from it;” it is neither proper nor just; for before this, they are expressly said to come to a certain water, to the waterside; wherefore when they went down, they went not *unto* it, if they were there before, but *into* it; as it must be allowed the preposition sometimes, at least, signifies; and circumstances require that it should be so rendered here, let it signify what it may elsewhere; and this determines the sense of the other preposition, that it too and ought to be rendered out of; for as they went down into the water, when they came up, it must be out of it. What he means by the strange question that follows, “What will he make of Christ’s going *into a mountain*?” I cannot devise, unless he thinks the translation of Luke 6:12 is wrong, or nonsense, or both; but has this wiseacre never heard or read of a cave in a mountain, into which men may go, and properly be said to go into the mountain; and such an one it is highly probable our Lord went into, to pray alone; such as the cave in mount Horeb, into which *Elijah* went. But his tip-top translation of all is that of John’s baptizing in *Jordan*, which he supposes might be rendered, by baptizing the people *with the river Jordan*. This is the man that reproaches me with very freely finding fault with the translators; my complaint is only of a non-translation, not of a wrong one; but this man finds fault with the translation as wrong, or however thinks it may be corrected or mended, and that in more places than one.

[9] The letter-writer I have often referred to, affirms, that “the learned world universally maintain, that the Israelites were no other ways *baptized in the sea*, than by being sprinkled with the spray of the tolling waves, agitated by the wind that blew as they passed through the channel.” Who the learned world be, that maintain this whimsical notion, I own, I am quite ignorant of, having never yet met with any learned man that ever asserted it. It is a mere conceit and a wild imagination, and contrary to the sacred scriptures, which

represent the waves of the feat through which the Israelites passed, not as agitated and tossed about, but as standing unmoved, as a wall on each side of them, whatever was the care in that part where the Egyptians were; *The floods*, says the inspired writer, *stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea* (Ex. 15:8). And if there was a continual spray of the tossing waves, as the Israelites passed through the channel, how could they pass through the sea on *dry ground*? As they are said to do (Ex. 14:16, 22, 29). What this man scoffs at, the celebrated *Grotius*, who is universally allowed to be a man of learning and sense, expresses in a note on 1 Corinthians 10:2 “*were baptized*, that is, as if they were baptized; for there was some likeness in it; the cloud was over their heads, and so water is over them that are baptized; the sea encompassed the sides of them, and so water those that are baptized.”

[10] The same writer is pleased to represent this explanation of the baptism of the Spirit as ridiculous; but some of greater learning than he can pretend to, have so explained it, as particularly Dr. *Casaubon*, famous for his great knowledge of the Greek language; though perhaps this *very illiberal* man will call the learned doctor a dunce for what he says; his words on Acts 1:5 are these, “though I do not disapprove of the word *baptize* being retained here, that the antithesis may be full; yet I am of opinion that regard is had in this place to its proper signification, for βαπτίζειν is to immerse, so as to *plunge* or *dip*; and in this sense the apostles were truly said to be baptized; for the house in which this was done was filled with the holy Ghost, so that the apostles seemed to be plunged into it as into a pool.” In confirmation of which, he makes mention on Acts 2:2 of an observation in a Greek commentary on it, “the wind filled the whole house, filling it like a pool; since it was promised to them (the apostles) that they should be *baptized, with the Holy Ghost*.” It seems to be the same commentary, *Erasmus*, on the place, says went under the name of *Chrysostom*, in which are these words, as he gives them, “the whole house was so filled with fire, though invisible, as a pool is filled with water.” — Our scribbler, in order to expose the notion of dipping, as used in the baptism of the spirit, and fire, condescends, for once, to read *dip*, instead of *baptize*; “*John* said I indeed dip you *with* water, but one, mightier than I, cometh, he shall *dip* you *with* the holy Ghost, and *with* fire.” But not only the word *baptize* should be read *dip*, but the preposition “should be rendered *in*; *in* water; and *in* the holy Ghost; and *in* fire; and the

phrase *of dipping in* fire, is no unusual one, both in Jewish and Greek authors; as I have shewn in my Exposition of the place, and of Acts 2:3.