

Emanuel Greenwald

# The Baptism of Children



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# The Baptism of Children

By Rev. Emanuel Greenwald, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY,  
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"In many localities our members live in the midst of those denominations who oppose the Baptism of children, and they need aid to enable them to defend themselves from attack, as well as to strengthen their own convictions of truth and duty. Such aid, it is hoped, this little manual will afford, which is prepared with special reference to their needs.

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[8. Children are included in the uniform practice of the universal Christian Church from the time of the apostles to the present time in the administration of Baptism.](#)

[What, now, are some of the conclusions which we should take with us from the discussion of this subject?](#)

1. All persons who were baptized in their infancy may be satisfied with their Baptism.

2. It is the duty of all parents to present their children for holy Baptism.

We would lay upon the conscience of every parent the following solemn considerations:

1. Christ's command includes children. (Matt. 28:19.)

2. Baptism initiates into Christ's Church. (John 3: 5.)

3. Baptism is in the place of circumcision. (Col. 2:11-13.)

4. Baptism is a means of regeneration.

5. Baptism, like circumcision, brings the soul into covenant relation with God. (Gen. 17: 10.)

6. Infant Baptism must be practiced, because the promise is to the children. (Acts 2:38-39.)

7. Baptism is really a saving ordinance; not, of course, as a mere opus operatum, a mere manipulation of the hands. But in God's economy it is a sacrament of saving efficacy, so says 1 Peter 3:21.

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# Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking spiritual truth.

EMANUEL GREENWALD, D. D. (1811-1885) was “a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.” He trained under the renowned Dr. David F. Schaeffer, “walking 14,000 miles in getting his education”, and was licensed by the Maryland Synod and then the Joint Synod of Ohio. Rev. Greenwald was the first president of the Board of Trustees of Capitol University, Columbus and established the first English Lutheran church of Columbus. As first editor of the *Lutheran Standard* he fought the “New Measures”. He served the latter part of his life as pastor in Easton, PA, and as president of the East Pennsylvania Synod. “Yet, warrior as he was to the end, battling during his last days against vice, Atheism and Romanism, he never forfeited the respect of good men by coarseness of language or unseemly ebullitions of temper. Like John, he was a ‘son of thunder,’ and at the same time a ‘beloved disciple’”.

His “practical, doctrinal, devotional, and controversial (books) constitute his abiding monument... His writings are bathed in love. Rising from a perusal of them the reader unhesitatingly pronounces the author a”good” man. Whatsoever things are spiritually lovely are illustrated and commended in Dr. Greenwald’s works.”

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# Preface

THE WANT OF A SMALL TRACT, of a few pages, containing a close, pointed, and earnest argument for Infant Baptism, has long been felt, and often expressed, by our Pastors and Church Members. This want the author has here endeavored to supply. He invokes for it the blessing of the Good Shepherd of the one fold, who knows His own sheep, and calls them by name, and who gathers the lambs with His arm, and carries them in His bosom.

E. G.

Lancaster, Pa., *August 28th, 1872.*

# The Baptism Of Children.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH ATTACHES MUCH IMPORTANCE TO INFANT BAPTISM. The Augsburg Confession, Article 9, expressly teaches “that children are to be baptized;” declares that “by Baptism they are offered to God,” and asserts that thereby they “are received into God’s favor.” It also expressly “condemns the Anabaptists who allow not the Baptism of children.”

The question of the right of our children to be in the Church with their parents is scarcely inferior in importance to that of the right of the parents themselves to such a connection. *The Sacrament of Baptism is known by all to be the divinely appointed initiatory ordinance by which we are initiated into the Church as members of it. He that is baptized is a member of the Christian Church, and is constituted such by the Sacrament of Baptism. He, on the other hand, that is not baptized, is not a member of the Christian Church, but is out of it.* Now the question must be seen by every one, especially by every Christian parent, to be very important which asks. May I bring my children with me into the Christian Church by Baptism? Does the Gospel require me to be in but my children to remain without? Whilst I am one of the sheep of Christ’s fold may my little ones also be with me in the fold as the lambs of Christ’s flock; or must they be excluded and remain out of the fold until they become adults? May I, like Lydia, and Cornelius, and Crispus, and Stephanas, and the jailer of Philippi, and others in the early years of the Christian Church, have my household baptized with me, and constitute with me a Christian family in the Christian Church; or must I go in alone, whilst they remain, like the unbaptized heathen, outside of it? Is the Church under the Gospel, unlike the Church under the Abrahamic dispensation, to be composed only of adults, and the children to be allowed no place?

But important as their formal admission to membership in the Christian Church by Baptism is, there is a question involved of still higher importance. It is a question of grace, of divine influence, of spiritual blessing, for *Christian Baptism, as a means of grace, conveys grace.* Not

only the adult, but the child also, needs grace. The spiritual blessings conveyed by the Sacrament of Baptism are as necessary for the spiritual welfare of the child as they are for the full-grown man. That man is conceived and born in sin, that is, that *all children have original sin and are born with a depraved nature, is admitted by all evangelical Christians*. All children, therefore, need God's grace to regenerate their natures, and remove the inbred depravity and corruption of their hearts. *They are not saved because they are born without sin, and are perfectly innocent by nature, and need no grace, as unbelievers and heretics teach. But they are saved by the expiation for sin by Jesus Christ, and the grace which the Gospel furnishes and applies*. There is for them, as well as for adults, no other name under heaven given whereby we must be saved but that of Jesus. They are "born of the flesh;" they must also be "born of the Spirit." *There is grace for the children, and the holy Sacrament of Baptism in the Christian Church, like the holy Sacrament of Circumcision in the Old Testament Church, is particularly designed and adapted for them*. They need to be born again, and by Baptism they are "born of water and of the Spirit," as Jesus requires all to be in order to an entrance into his kingdom, and their Baptism is, what the apostle expressly declares it to be, the washing of regeneration." By Baptism the liability or guilt of original sin is taken away; God's grace as a divine seed is implanted into their souls; they are incorporated into Christ; brought into covenant with him; his name and blessing are put upon them; and they, thereafter, sustain to him the relation, as variously expressed in the Scriptures, of branches engrafted into the vine, of lambs of his flock, and of children of his family. By it the Holy Spirit conveys to their souls:

"those secret spiritual influences by which the actual regeneration of those children who die in infancy is effected, and which is a germ of spiritual life in those who are spared to incline their will and affections to good, and to begin and maintain in them the war against inward and outward evil, so that they may be divinely assisted, as reason strengthens, to make their calling and election sure."

Baptism is, therefore, of the greatest spiritual importance to our children. It conveys to them the most precious spiritual blessings. They need those blessings, and they should not be deprived of them. The question of Infant Baptism is one of duty pressing upon the parent, and of blessings to be conferred upon the children.

In many localities our members live in the midst of those denominations who oppose the Baptism of children, and they need aid to enable them to defend themselves from attack, as well as to strengthen their own convictions of truth and duty. Such aid, it is hoped, this little manual will afford, which is prepared with special reference to their needs.

## **Do Children Have A Right Under The Gospel To Church-membership By Baptism?**

The answer to this question is very clear. They have such right. It is plainly taught in the Scriptures that they must be initiated into the Christian Church by Baptism. Not only the parents, but their children likewise, must be members of the Saviour's fold, and must be brought in through the divinely appointed door of initiation, which is the holy Sacrament of Baptism. Let the careful attention of all who read these pages be invited to the proof.

### **1. Instituted and Commanded By The Lord**

The Church-membership of children was directly instituted and positively commanded by the Lord himself as far back as the time of Abraham, in a covenant made with him, called expressly the Gospel, or covenant of grace, which Church-membership was not only not revoked by Jesus Christ, but was confirmed and established by him.

This proposition as thus stated covers the whole ground, and is as conclusive as it is possible for any proposition to be. Was the covenant which God made with Abraham the Gospel? Were children admitted into the Church under it? Did Christ not revoke but confirm that covenant which was the Gospel or covenant of grace? If these three points are established, then, of course, the right of children to Church-membership in the Christian Church by the sacrament appointed for that purpose is clear and unquestionable. Let us see what the Scriptures say, in proof of these points.

**First, Was the covenant with Abraham the covenant of grace, or the Gospel covenant?**

This is evident from many passages, but we will only quote one, as it is so clear and direct as to be alone sufficient for the purpose. In the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses of the third chapter of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians, we read:

“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

Here it is not only asserted that Abraham was a model believer; that he was the father of all believers; that all believers are children of Abraham; that all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, have the same blessings in the faithful Abraham; but it is expressly said that that which was preached to him was the Gospel; that the covenant made with him was the Gospel covenant; that his faith under that covenant was evangelical or Gospel faith; and that the blessings that descended to both Jews and Gentiles were based upon the promises and guarantees of that covenant made with Abraham. All this is so plainly stated that the most simple-minded reader perceives it. The first point is therefore proved beyond debate. The covenant with Abraham was the Gospel covenant, or covenant of grace. It was the Gospel that was preached to Abraham, and that was embodied in the covenant made with him. It stipulated that from Abraham the Saviour would descend; that in his seed all nations would be blessed; that his faith, and the faith of his descendants, under that covenant was evangelical, saving faith in a Redeemer that was to come; and that the blessings and privileges which all, whether Jews or Gentiles, would enjoy, would come to them on the ground of the gracious promises made in this covenant with Abraham. This is now clear, and needs no further discussion.

**The second question is, Were children admitted under this covenant, and into connection with it, by express stipulation, and by a formal and solemn rite, by which their Church relation to it was recognized and consummated?**

The answer to this question must be in the affirmative. They were so admitted, were admitted by a formal Church ordinance, which for

thousands of years was invariably practiced, and never disputed. For proof we refer to Genesis, seventeenth chapter, and from the ninth to the fourteenth verse; we read:

“And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee. Every man-child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.”

These words are very plain, and to the point. There is no misunderstanding them. Under this covenant with Abraham, which as we have seen is expressly called by St. Paul “the Gospel,” children at eight days old were expressly admitted, and not only admitted, but commanded on pain of being cut off from God’s people if not thus admitted, and admitted too by a formal, solemn rite, or Church ordinance. The Church-membership of children was thus constituted by a positive law or divine enactment. Directly, positively, in express words, the Church-membership of children was instituted and ordained, and from that time forward nothing else was known or practiced in this respect by the Church of the true and living God. The history of that people, who until the time of Christ constituted the only true Church of God, is a uniform testimony to the fidelity with which this enactment of the Lord was observed and practiced. No one doubts it. It is known and read of all men. Nothing else, in this respect, was known or thought of, but their male children were uniformly on the eighth day consecrated to God by the rite or sacrament of circumcision.

It does not diminish in the smallest degree the force of this fact, that only a part of their children, the males, were the subjects of the rite. However we may account for the fact that the males only, were the subjects of the rite, the fact that all the male children were circumcised on the eighth day establishes the principle of infant membership of the Church as clearly as if there were no exceptions. It proves beyond dispute that a child eight days old was capable of being the subject of a holy, divine ordinance, and, in consequence thereof, a member of the Church of God. This cannot be

disputed. And if this is admitted, our second point is proved beyond all debate.

**The third question is, Did Christ come to confirm and establish the covenant of grace, or the Gospel covenant, made with Abraham, with all its hopes, and blessings, and privileges; or did he come to abrogate it?**

We would suppose that to ask this question was to answer it. No one can suppose that Christ came to abrogate the Gospel, to annul the covenant of grace. This would be strange indeed. He came, of course, to establish the Gospel, to confirm all the promises that had been made concerning his gracious purposes of mercy to the world that had been announced for ages before his birth, and to fulfill all the types, and symbols, and covenants that had existed, and by which the blessings of his coming were guaranteed to mankind. This would seem to be so plain from the general tenor of the New Testament scriptures, as not to require the citation of particular passages. But let us see what is expressly said by St. Paul in the third chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, and at the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth verses; we read:

“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men, though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, therefore. That the covenant that was confirmed before of God, in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.”

Here it is positively stated that the covenant, that was long before made with Abraham by the Almighty God, “was confirmed in Christ.” It is declared that the seed mentioned in that covenant, as the seed of Abraham in which all nations should be blessed, was Christ himself, who would descend from Abraham by genealogical lineage, and that all the blessings of grace and salvation which that covenant promised were those which Jesus by his redemption secured for the world. Nothing that occurred afterwards could annul this covenant. The law of Moses as a covenant of works, which was done away in Christ, and which had been given four hundred and thirty years after the covenant had been made with Abraham, could not, and did



not, annul that previous covenant. It had been made by God, and was confirmed in Christ, and therefore stands sure as an everlasting covenant that never would be abrogated. All this is most plainly and positively declared in these verses. It is plain too that they could do nothing less. If the covenant with Abraham was the Gospel, Christ of course came to confirm it. He did not annul the Gospel. To make known, to establish, to confirm the Gospel in all its covenanted privileges and blessings was, necessarily, the object of his coming.

Have we not now clearly established our proposition, namely, that the Church-membership of children was directly instituted and positively commanded by God. himself, as far back as the time of Abraham, in a solemn covenant made with him, called the Gospel or covenant of grace, which Church-membership was not only not revoked, but was positively confirmed and established by Jesus Christ? The three chief points in it we have clearly proved. The covenant was the Gospel; children were expressly admitted into it; and Christ came not to abrogate, but to confirm it. Is not, therefore, infant membership of the Church in all its full, original force? As membership under the covenant is necessarily, as it was declared at its original institution to be, an essential part of the covenant itself (see Genesis 11:10), the confirmation of the covenant of course included the confirmation of its membership. If its membership had been annulled the covenant would not have been confirmed. If Christ has changed the external form of the two great sacraments of the Old Testament Church, viz.. Circumcision and the Passover, into the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for the purpose of adapting them to the more general and widespread condition of the Christian Church among the Gentile world, still all their essential characteristics are the same, and remain unchanged, and the same persons that were entitled to the former are also entitled to the latter. There is no question that the right and divine authority of infant membership in the Church remain unchanged. It is in as full force as it ever was. No man, or set of men, dare abrogate or annul what Christ has positively established and confirmed.

“Since the children of believers were put into the Church *by positive law of God,*” says a vigorous writer, “they can be put out only by positive law of God. Inferences will not answer the purpose. You cannot *infer* men out of their political rights. Men do not reason so infallibly that we may safely trust our rights and privileges to their deductions and inferences. I enjoy the

rights of a citizen of these United States by the plain letter of the Constitution. If you wish to deprive me of these rights you must prove that the Constitution has been so altered as to exclude me. You must, in order to deprive me of my political, rights, find law as positive, and of as high authority, as that which originally conferred them. The principle holds equally good in ecclesiastical matters. If I prove that God put certain persons into his Church you cannot exclude them unless you can point to the law authorizing you to do so. God *did* put the children of believers into his Church by clear and positive enactment, and you cannot exclude them except by an enactment equally as clear and positive.”<sup>1</sup>

But where is such a law excluding them? We have a law putting children into the Church, but where is there a law that puts them out? So far from there being such a law, there is not the remotest intimation of any design or purpose to exclude them from the Church, but every intimation of a design and purpose to retain them there. This we shall now proceed to show. Having proved our first point, viz., that children are included in the covenant, we remark:

## **2. Children are included in the promise connected with that covenant.**

We have seen that children are directly, and by special enactment included in the Abrahamic covenant. All divine covenants have promises connected with them, and are enacted for the purpose of giving to men the assurance that the blessings promised will be bestowed. Now the “promise” given in this covenant with Abraham is expressly cited as the ground or warrant for the Baptism of both adults and children, under the Christian dispensation. Hear the apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, as recorded Acts 2: 38, 39:

“Then Peter said unto them. Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you and to your children.”

Here the apostle Peter in urging upon the Jewish parents to whom he was speaking, the duty of receiving Christian Baptism, expressly informed them that the promises of the covenant, which authorized their Baptism, included their children as well as themselves. The parents who heard him must be

baptized, and thus be brought into the New Testament or Gospel Church, for the promises of the covenant of grace with Abraham included them, and in order to enjoy the blessings promised, their Baptism was necessary. But their children must also be baptized and brought in, for the covenant, and the promised blessings of the covenant, included not them only, but their children also. Just as before Christ's coming, parents and children were brought into the Church of God by the ordinance appointed for that purpose, so too, now that Christ has come, parents and their children must be brought into the renovated Church of God under another dispensation, by the sacrament ordained for that object. Circumcision under the old, and Baptism under the new dispensation stand at the threshold of their respective dispensations as the divinely appointed mode of initiation, and through the latter as through the former, children as well as their parents enter into the covenant, and are admitted to the participation of the blessings which it stipulates. Can anything be plainer than this passage, and the right of children to Church- membership which it guarantees? Why did Peter mention the children of the Jewish parents before him at all in connection with their Baptism, if he intended that they should be excluded? On the contrary, he most positively requires that because the promise was unto the children, as well as to their parents, they must be baptized as well as their parents. The right of both to Baptism is placed on the same basis, and we have no more right to exclude the children than we have to exclude the parents. "Repent and be baptized every one of you, for the promise is unto you and to your children." You and your children may be baptized and brought into the New Testament Church, for the promise is both to you and to them. To you, but not to you alone, to your children also. If we may exclude the one, we may exclude the other likewise, for the same promise of the covenant is the basis on which the Baptism of both alike rests. But because we have no right to exclude the one, we have no right to exclude the other. With such a positive declaration of a divinely inspired apostle as this before him, who would venture to exclude a child from holy Baptism?

### **3. Children are included in Christ's invitation, and declared to be fit subjects for the New Testament Church or kingdom.**

In Mark 10:13-16 we read:

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them. Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.”

The term “kingdom of God” is used almost invariably in the New Testament, to mean the Church under the Gospel dispensation; the reign of God amongst men in the Church. In these verses, Christ explicitly asserts that young children are qualified to enter into, and compose his kingdom, i.e., his Church. “Of such is the kingdom of God,” i.e., the Christian Church. *Now the only door of entrance into the Church or kingdom of Christ is Baptism.* In proof, we cite John 3:3, which says, “Except a man be born of water, and of the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” To be born of water is to be baptized; whosoever, therefore, is not baptized is not in the Church or kingdom of Christ, but is out of it, just as he that was not circumcised was not a member of the Church of God under the Jewish dispensation. But Christ says, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.” When we put these three things together, the definition of the kingdom as meaning the Christian Church, the relation of Baptism to it as the divinely ordained mode of initiation, and this positive declaration of Christ, that “of such is the kingdom,” I scarcely know how he could have more plainly asserted the admissibility of little children to holy Baptism. If Jesus says his “kingdom” is constituted “of such,” who will dare to contradict him? If he says “suffer them to come to me,” who will presume to say they shall not? If he was “much displeased” with his disciples for rebuking the mothers that brought them, who has not reason very much to fear the displeasure of the Lord, who would place himself between a little child and Christ, and discourage or prevent its introduction into his kingdom by Baptism? Who would not tremble to take upon himself such a dreadful responsibility?

#### **4. Children are included in Christ’s original command commissioning and authorizing his ministers to administer the Sacrament of Baptism.**

In Matthew 28:19, 20, we have Christ’s parting command to his disciples, directing them how to proceed in the work of extending his Church among

men. He says, "Go ye and teach" (or as is admitted by all biblical scholars on all sides of this question as a more correct translation), "Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This passage contains the Great Commission, on the authority of which we, as ministers of the Gospel, baptize at all. If we had not this commission we would have no authority either to preach or to baptize. It is our warrant or letter of instructions from the Lord himself, and by it our action must be regulated. It teaches how we must baptize, viz., "in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy, Ghost," without which words used in the administration of the ordinance, we believe that the application of water to the subject would not be Baptism. It likewise teaches whom we must baptize, viz., "all nations." The term "all nations" is comprehensive, and includes all persons who are enumerated as belonging to and composing a nation. It does not specify in so many different words, either men, women or children, but it uses a single term that plainly includes them all. What does the term "all nations" mean? We may be aided in ascertaining its meaning by reference to a familiar illustration. In the year 1870, the census of our country was taken. The intention was to ascertain who constitute the "nation." The marshals or census takers passed through every district, visited every family, and took down and counted the name of every man, woman, and child that was born before, and living at, twelve o'clock on the first day of June, 1870. It mattered not if a child was but one hour old, it was counted as a part of our nation, as well as the man of threescore years and ten, and the entire sum of men, women, and children thus enumerated, amounting to many millions, constitute the nation. When we ask who compose this nation? we answer the men, women, and children enumerated as belonging to it. And the same answer must be given to the question, who constitute any other nation? Now the command requires us to baptize "all nations," meaning, of course, all that belong to the nations, and that constitute the nations. We have seen that men, women, and children constitute the nations; men, women, and children are, therefore, required by this command to be baptized. Is not this plain? I have no authority to add to, nor have I any right to take away from, the plain import of the command of my Master. It is my commission, and I must construe it correctly. By it my action as a minister of the Gospel must be regulated. It plainly authorizes me to baptize men, women, and children. Children as well as adults are plainly included in my commission. I must comply strictly with its

meaning. I dare not exclude what this command does not exclude. If I refused to baptize children, I would feel that I was breaking Christ's parting command, and incurring the serious displeasure of my Lord. He has given not the least intimation that they are to be excepted from the subjects of this command. On the contrary, we have already seen how strong, in addition to the import of the command itself, are the reasons for the conviction that they must be included. I cannot doubt, therefore, that it is his will that children, as well as men and women, must be baptized. I can come to no other conclusion. I cannot, therefore, do otherwise. I may not refuse to baptize children. If I refused, I would be setting up my will in opposition to the will of him who has sent me to act in his name, and of such presumption and disobedience I dare not be guilty.

**5. Children are the lambs of Christ's flock, as their parents are the sheep of his fold, and, therefore, their relation both to the Shepherd and to the flock forbids that they should be excluded from the fold.**

In John 10: 16 Jesus says:

“Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.”

The Church is here called a “fold,” and Christ the Head of the Church the “shepherd.” He refers especially to the calling of the Gentiles. We are born by nature not in the fold, but out of it, for we are born in a state of sin, and this verse says that we are “not of the fold,” but that he must “bring” us before we can become so. Now the door of entrance into his fold, i.e., the Christian Church, is, as has already been shown, the holy Sacrament of Baptism. Will Christ, therefore, admit the sheep into his fold by the door which he has opened, and will he shut out the little lambs of the flock? Have we any fears that he will do this, especially as he is called the “good shepherd,” and will “gather the lambs with his arms and carry them in his bosom?” Does a farmer, an earthly shepherd, admit to the warm shelter of his fold, the sheep, and exclude the tender lambs to brave the pitiless peltings of the wintry storm without? Do the sheep only need the benefit of

the fold, and do the lambs not need it? Does an earthly farmer or shepherd stand at the door of his fold as the sheep and lambs come up to enter, and does he carefully let in the sheep and keep out the lambs? Would he not be a cruel shepherd that would do so?

## **6. Children were included in the host of the Israelites as they were baptized unto Moses in their passage through the Red Sea, and which is declared to be an example or type of Christian Baptism.**

In 1 Cor. 10:1, 2, 6, we read:

“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, now that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. . . . Now these were our examples.”

Here the Baptism of the children of Israel, as they passed on dry ground through the miraculously opened channel of the Red Sea, by the waters of the cloud under which they walked being, as David says in the seventy-seventh Psalm, “poured out,” or rained in a sprinkling mist upon them, is said to be an example or type of Christian Baptism. It is an example both as to the subjects and the mode. The mode, as we have noticed, was by the cloud sprinkling its waters upon them. As to the subjects, it is expressly stated that they “*were all baptized.*” Now who composed that company? Let us see. When we turn to the history of the event, recorded in Exodus 12: 31, we find the answer to the question. We there read, “And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children.” Here it is expressly stated that there were children in that company. If then, as Paul says, they “were all baptized,” were not those children baptized also? Those who reject Infant Baptism frequently say, “Show us an instance in the Scriptures where children were baptized and we will give up our objections, and consent to their Baptism.” Now here we have an instance of the Baptism of children in language almost as plain as it can be recorded. With such a case before us, expressly declared to be a type or example of Christian Baptism, can anyone who believes the Bible still continue to reject the Baptism of children?

## **7. Children were included in the numerous family or household Baptisms that are recorded in the Scriptures.**

Let us first examine the case of the jailer at Philippi, and his family, recorded in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts. In the thirty-first verse Paul and Silas said to him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;" and then in the thirty-third verse we are told that "he was baptized, he and all his, straightway." "He and all his" what? Of course, he and all his "house." Since it was said, verse 31, that he and all his "house" would be "saved," it is plain, therefore, that the meaning is, he and all his house were baptized. Now what was his "house" that was baptized? Not the building in which he lived, but his household, his family; he, his wife, his children. Every plain reader of the Scriptures will understand the expression, "he and all his house were baptized," to mean he and all his children., But to put the matter beyond all dispute, we will ascertain what is the meaning of the word "house," as used in this connection in the Scriptures, for the Scriptures are their own best interpreter. For this purpose let us turn to 1 Timothy 3: 4, where we find the following passage: "A bishop must be blameless, . . . one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." Here the word "house" is expressly explained by the word "children." The man's "house" consisted of his "children," and especially young children whom their parent was required to keep in "subjection." This settles the meaning of the word "house." Then the conclusion is irresistible, that when it is said, "the jailer and all his house were baptized," it means the jailer and all his "children."

The Scriptures contain a number of other instances of family or household Baptisms. In Acts 16: 14, 15, it is said that "Lydia was baptized, and her household." In 1 Cor. 1: 16, Paul informs us that he "baptized the household of Stephanas." In the tenth chapter of the Acts, we are told of the Baptism of Cornelius and his house; and in the eighteenth chapter of the Acts, of the Baptism of Crispus and his house. Here, including the family of the jailer, we have not less than five direct instances of the Baptism of families. The fact is stated without any qualification. The head of the family is first mentioned, and then it is stated that his household, as well as himself, were baptized. The idea, of course, is that he and his whole family were baptized; he, his wife, and their children; or in the case of Lydia, the mother and her children. This is the plain, common-sense meaning of the



passages, such as any plain man would ascribe to the same expressions if found in any other connection. And the plain meaning is the correct one. The “house,” the “household” are the “children.” A man’s “house” or “household” are the man’s wife and children. This requires no learned exegesis to understand. Any plain, unlettered person can understand it as well. To find young children in families is the rule; the contrary is the exception. It would seem very strange, indeed, if these five instances recorded in the Scriptures of the Baptism of whole families, happened to be all exceptions. Surely it is not asking too much to require those who oppose Infant Baptism to prove that all these instances were exceptions to one of the commonest rules in the world! Are those persons following apostolic example who baptize the heads of families, and by denying Baptism to their children, refuse to baptize their household? Could those ministers describe their Baptisms in the same language of the apostles as having baptized parents and all their households, who never baptize their households at all? Would not their reports, if presented in the language of the apostles, need a good deal of explanation before the reader would understand that by the word “household,” they really do not mean what the word really means, and what all other persons understand it to mean!

## **8. Children are included in the uniform practice of the universal Christian Church from the time of the apostles to the present time in the administration of Baptism.**

Infant Baptism is not of yesterday. It can be traced back as the general practice of the Christian Church from the present time through all intervening centuries, until we reach the time of the apostles. There never was a time in the history of the Christian Church when Infant Baptism was not generally practiced. Let me cite a few proofs. We need not quote testimony to prove that such has been the practice for three hundred years past, or for a thousand years past. Every reader of Church history knows that it was practiced by Luther, and in every period of the Lutheran Church since. Every one too that knows from history, what the practice of the Church has been for a thousand years or for fifteen hundred years past, knows that Infant Baptism was the general practice. But whilst this is admitted by every one competent to express an opinion on the subject, it may, perhaps, be denied that the Christian Church in the very first centuries

after the time of the apostles, practiced Infant Baptism. Let us see. We will begin to call our witnesses from the middle of the fourth century, and ascend from that point up to the time of the apostles.

We will first call *Pelagius*, born about the middle of the fourth century. He declares, in an extract carefully translated from his writings, "I have never heard of even any impious heretics who asserted that infants ought not to be baptized." Again he asks, "Who can be so impious as to hinder the Baptism of infants?" This is his testimony. It is very plain and conclusive. Pelagius is here a witness of high authority. He was born in Britain, and traveled through France, Italy, Africa proper, and Egypt, to Jerusalem. Had Infant Baptism been rejected in his time (he was born about the year 330 after Christ), it is impossible that he should not have heard of it. He was also an inquisitive and learned man, and must therefore have been well informed concerning the practice of the Churches in preceding periods. At the same time the doctrine of Infant Baptism was cited by Augustine, his great opponent, as furnishing an objection against some of the opinions which Pelagius held, in such a manner that Pelagius knew not how to defend himself, and this accounts for the form and tone of the extract which I have just quoted. And yet his testimony to the universal practice of Infant Baptism is direct and positive.

We will next call *Augustine*, the contemporary and great opponent of Pelagius. He says, and his testimony is correctly translated, "The whole Church practices Infant Baptism. It was not instituted by councils, but was always in use." He also says that he did not remember ever to have read of any person, whether Catholic or heretic, who maintained that Baptism ought to be denied to infants. "This," he says, "the Church has always maintained." This is plain and conclusive testimony from one of the most learned and distinguished divines of the ancient Church. He lived little more than three hundred years after the time of the apostles. Living so near, and being so eminent for learning and piety, did he not know? Assuredly.

Let us go up and approach still nearer to the time of the apostles. *Cyprian* was a learned Church father, born about the year 200, and was bishop of the renowned city of Carthage. *Fidus*, a bishop in Africa, had some difficulty in his mind about the propriety of baptizing children before they were eight days old. Believing that Baptism was instituted in the place of Circumcision, just as the Lord's Supper was in the place of the Passover, and as circumcision was never administered until the eighth day, he was

uncertain as to the course to be pursued when, on account of sickness or for other reasons, he was called upon to baptize a child under eight days old. When the child was once eight days old he had no difficulty, for Infant Baptism was universally practiced; the only difficulty was when the child was not yet eight days old. Having confidence in the learning and judgment of Cyprian, he applied to him for advice. Let it be well borne in mind that the question was not whether infants should be baptized at all, for when they were once eight days old he had no difficulty on the subject. The question was, May they be baptized before the eighth day? Cyprian laid the question before the council that met at Carthage in the year 254. There were sixty-six bishops present at the council over which Cyprian presided. After the adjournment of the council Cyprian forwarded to Fidus an official account of the decision had upon the question. It is preserved in the Epistles of Cyprian, from which the following extract is a translation:

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

No one who reads this Epistle of Cyprian can doubt whether Infant Baptism was generally practiced in the Church in the year A.D. 254, about one hundred and fifty years after the death of St. John, the last of the apostles. Nothing can be more certain. And so greatly was the Church interested in the Baptism of the children, that when there was danger of their not living until the eighth day, they were baptized before they were eight days old.

But let us go up still further. *Origen* was born about the year 184, only about eighty-four years after the death of St. John. He was a man of more information than any one of his time. He wrote so largely upon the Scriptures, and quoted them so often, that it has been well said, that if the New Testament was lost, it could all be recovered again from the works of Origen. He is in every respect a competent witness. Let us hear him. In his

eighth Homily on Leviticus, twelfth chapter, when arguing against those who deny that infants have original sin, he says: "According to the usage of the Church, Baptism is given even to infants, when if there were nothing in infants which needed forgiveness and merit, the grace of Baptism would not seem to be necessary." Again, in his Homily, on Luke, fourteenth chapter, he says: "Infants are baptized for the remission of sins. Of what sins? Or when have they sinned? Or can there be any reason for the laver in their case, unless it be according to the sense which we have mentioned above, viz., that no one is free from pollution though he has lived but one day upon earth? And because by Baptism native pollution is taken away, therefore infants are baptized." Again, in his Comment on Romans, he says: "For this cause it was that the Church received an order from the apostles to give Baptism to infants."

This testimony is positive. There is no getting round it. It cannot be disputed. The fact of the prevalence of the practice of Infant Baptism in his time, and before, is distinctly attested, and its origin positively ascribed to the apostles. And living at that early age, within one step of the apostles, when many were still living who had seen or heard St. John, the last surviving apostle, had he not every opportunity of knowing what the apostolic practice was? If we doubt such a witness as this, and refuse to believe such direct and positive testimony to the fact of the practice of Infant Baptism in his time, whose testimony can we believe on any subject whatever? What fact of any past age can we receive if we must reject this? But no, we dare not refuse to believe such testimony as this. All the value of history, all the business of life, would be overthrown, and universal skepticism prevail in the world, if we must reject the testimony of such a witness as this, to the truth of a fact so plain as that whereof he affirms.

We might rest here, but we can go still higher. *Irenaeus*, born about the year 91, a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John, says: "Christ came to save all persons, who by him are born again unto God, infants and little ones, and children, and youths, and elder persons." By being "born again," Irenaeus means being baptized, as he himself elsewhere explains, and in accordance with the then generally received doctrine of baptismal regeneration. This testimony brings us quite up to the time of St. John. It renders the fact certain that at that time "infants, and little ones, and children," were baptized.

We will cite one more witness. *Justin Martyr* was born before Irenaeus, and he remarks, when speaking of those who were then members of the Christian Church, “a part of them were sixty or seventy years old, who were made disciples to Christ from their infancy.” He refers of course to the passage, Matthew 28:19, “Go ye into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” By being made disciples to Christ from their infancy he plainly means being baptized. They were made disciples in their infancy, by being baptized in their infancy. There never was, and there is not now, any other mode of making persons disciples of Christ in their infancy but by their Baptism. This was in accordance with the language habitually used at that time, and with the language of Jesus himself. It proves beyond a doubt, that in the time of Justin Martyr, there were then living persons who had been baptized in their infancy, perhaps by the apostles themselves.

Here we rest our evidence. The historical argument in favor of Infant Baptism is equally as positive as the scriptural argument. Both together render it absolutely certain. The chain of testimony to its apostolic origin is so strong that it cannot be broken. What we do now was done from the beginning. We are practicing what was practiced by the apostles and by the first Christians, and by the universal Church of Christ. In baptizing our children we are doing what the Church of Christ has always done.

## **What, now, are some of the conclusions which we should take with us from the discussion of this subject?**

### **1. All persons who were baptized in their infancy may be satisfied with their Baptism.**

They have been truly and properly baptized. It is scriptural and right. It is sufficient. You need not have a moment's doubt about its validity. No other Baptism could be more complete than your Baptism. Baptism in adult years is not on any account to be preferred. You have been baptized in accordance with the teaching of Christ and the apostles, and with the general practice of the Christian Church from the beginning, and in all ages. You may rest

content, and entertain not a moment's uneasiness about the correctness and sufficiency of your Baptism.

Particularly do not by any persuasion of others suffer yourselves to be rebaptized, and thereby renounce the true faith of God's word, and disown the pious and holy act of your parents who presented you for Baptism. Perhaps the father's or mother's arm that held you as a babe for the water of Baptism is lying mouldering in the grave. Do not dishonor their piety, and love, and bring sin and shame on yourselves by spurning their holy act, and treating the covenant they entered into for you with contempt. Your parents' blessing, as well as the blessing of God, is on you now. Beware, lest in casting it from you, you would once give worlds, if you had them, to bring that blessing back again.

## **2. It is the duty of all parents to present their children for holy Baptism.**

They owe it to themselves, and they owe it to them. Let them not withhold their dear children from the grace that is conveyed from God through this holy means of grace. We urge the Baptism of children upon all Christian parents as a solemn duty. Some persons, who do not absolutely reject it, simply tolerate it. They say it does no good, but they also believe it does no harm, and therefore they suffer it to be done. But they are sadly in error. Infant Baptism must be practiced on account of its positive benefits. No true Christian parent that loves his child will withhold it from the blessings of holy Baptism. He will not through any fault of his suffer his child to die unbaptized. We do not say that the child is lost that, through no fault of its own, dies without Baptism. The old Lutheran maxim tells us, "It is not the guiltless want, but the guilty neglect, of Baptism that condemns." Those persons utter that which is not true when they charge Lutheran pastors with teaching that children that die unbaptized are lost. They teach no such thing. But they do, nevertheless, urge very strongly upon parents not to suffer, through any fault of theirs, their child, or children, to die unbaptized. Whatever may be the future condition of a child that dies without the grace conferred through Baptism, the parent will be held to answer for his willful neglect. And we may even go farther and say, that the future happiness of the child may depend to a far greater extent than we know upon the fact of its being "received into God's favor" by the holy Sacrament of Baptism. If

God requires the Baptism of children, as we know he does from what has been said in these pages, we may be sure he has good and weighty reasons for it. It will be better for all to yield to what he requires, without interposing their imperfect reasons in opposition to God's reasons, and because they can see no use in it conclude, notwithstanding God's express word, that there is no use in it. There may be much more involved than we can understand, and it is always safest and best for us to submit our limited understanding to God's infinite mind, and not risk our happiness, and the happiness of our children, by choosing our own way rather than his.

## **We would lay upon the conscience of every parent the following solemn considerations:**

### **1. Christ's command includes children. (Matt. 28:19.)**

“All nations” must be baptized; children compose a large part of all nations. They must, therefore, be baptized. Christ meant that they should be baptized. Unbaptized children have not been aided to obey this command. It is disobeyed because their parents have refused to bring them for Baptism. The children must obey the command through their parents. The parents must believe, and obey for their children. They do this in a thousand earthly things, and they do it every day in the way of food and medicine, and education, and care. And they must also believe and act for their children in religious things. They daily do it in teaching them, and praying for them, and exerting their influence upon them to rear them free from error and sin. Abraham believed and acted for his child Isaac, when he had him circumcised the eighth day, and every Christian believer, after faithful Abraham's example, must believe and act for his child when he has it baptized in infancy. Like the Israelitish mothers that believed God's word to Moses, for their children, snatched them in their arms, rushed with them through the channel of the Red Sea, and had them baptized by the cloud sprinkling its rain-drops upon them; so Christian parents must believe and act as the sponsors for their children in bringing them in their arms to Jesus, and having them baptized in his name. Will you not do this? Can you have the heart to refuse such a command for such a service?

## **2. Baptism initiates into Christ's Church. (John 3: 5.)**

“Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Unbaptized children are out of the Church. Their parents keep them out. They will not bring them in. They are very desirous themselves to be in Christ's fold, but they leave the lambs outside. And these lambs are their own children! How perverted must be their ideas of the true relation of their children to the Church of Christ, or how unnaturally cruel must be their hearts, as evinced by such neglect of duty to them! Will you not change both your opinions and your conduct?

## **3. Baptism is in the place of circumcision. (Col. 2:11-13.)**

An uncircumcised child was cut off from the Lord's people (Gen. 17: 14), “that soul shall be cut off from his people.” If it was so with the uncircumcised child, how will it be with the unbaptized child? If the soul of a child should suffer detriment through its parent's guilty neglect, who would be willing to stand in that parent's place when God will call to judgment for that neglect?

## **4. Baptism is a means of regeneration.**

It is directly so declared. (Titus 3: 5.) “The washing of regeneration,” (John 3; 5.) “Born of water and the spirit.” Baptism is here called the laver of regeneration. The child needs regeneration equally with the parents. It must be born of God a spiritual birth as well as a natural birth. It must be of grace; but God's grace is bestowed through the means of grace. Baptism is a means of grace. Are you not withholding your child from God's grace, by withholding it from the means? Ought you not to be desirous of employing all the means and aids that God has instituted in order to promote the salvation of your child? If it lives and dies unregenerate through your neglect of the means, how will you meet it at the bar of God?

## **5. Baptism, like circumcision, brings the soul into covenant relation with God. (Gen. 17: 10.)**



We have seen that this covenant was the covenant of grace, and that, therefore, baptism does what circumcision did. An unbaptized child is consequently out of the covenant. Are you willing that your child should be out of God's covenant, and risk uncovenanted mercies? God has laid down a settled economy by which he will bless and save men; will we despise that economy, and place ourselves and our children outside of it, and trust in a way of salvation that has no divine word of promise in its favor?

## **6. Infant Baptism must be practiced, because the promise is to the children. (Acts 2:38-39.)**

“The promise is unto you and to your children.” Will you, by the neglect of Baptism, withhold your children from the blessings of the promise? Will you claim those promised blessings for yourselves by your own Baptism, but will you deprive your children of them by refusing to have them baptized? Why should you value for yourselves that which you despise in reference to your children? If Baptism is a blessing to you, why is it not equally a blessing to them?

## **7. Baptism is really a saving ordinance; not, of course, as a mere opus operatum, a mere manipulation of the hands. But in God's economy it is a sacrament of saving efficacy, so says 1 Peter 3:21.**

“Baptism doth also now save us.” If God's grace is in it, ought not your child to be brought under its influence? What can justify you in withholding your child from this saving grace? If, as this passage asserts, Baptism will help to save us, why should you deprive your child of this help? Cyprian and the Council of Carthage, as was seen above, said to Fidus, “We ought not to hinder any child from Baptism and the grace of God;” will you hinder your child from the benefit of the grace which God will impart to it through Baptism? How can you meet that child at the bar of God, if its soul shall receive injury from your neglect to use in its behalf those means that God has appointed for its salvation, and placed within your power?

Parents have the strongest reasons for offering their children for Holy Baptism. They have not one reason for withholding them from it. Will they

not yield to the force of the reasons which we have presented in these pages, and without delay discharge the duty which they owe to the immortal souls that God has placed under their care? They owe it to God and his Church, to themselves and their children; and happy will we be if any shall be led by what we have written to recognize the force of these obligations.

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1. Dr. N. L. Rice.↩

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Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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