

## INFANT BAPTISM.

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## I. PEDOBAPTISM AND BAPTIST OPPOSITION THERETO.

The word Pedobaptist means one who practices, or advocates infant baptism; hence it is that all denominations adhering to the baptism of children are called Pedobaptists. Baptists have ever refused to baptize any but believers, taking the ground that there is no scriptural warrant whatever, either by precept or example, for administering the rite where there can be no exercise of faith in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This firm stand is daily making itself felt among all Christian people, to the extent that the per cent. of infant baptisms is steadily and surely growing smaller each decade, as the statistics of the other denominations clearly show. There can be no doubt that the emphasizing of the Scripture teaching on this subject is the cause of this falling off, since the per cent. of decrease is greatest in those lands where Baptists have flourished most. The practice, however, is still defended and many persons think a mortal sin is committed by neglecting the so-called baptism of children. If this teaching were scriptural, it should not only be defended, but its practice should be urged by every disciple of our Lord. On the other hand, if it is not scriptural, as Baptists have ever contended, it should by all means be forever discarded from the role of Christian teaching.

## II. HOW INFANT BAPTISM GAINED RECOGNITION.

All are agreed that there is not a single case recorded in the whole Bible, which speaks of the baptism of an infant, either by Christ or by any of His disciples. Also, all are agreed that quite a number of clear and unmistakable cases of adult baptisms

are recorded. This being true, how, then, are we to account for the widespread practice of child baptism? Simply by reference to church history, since this is the only source of information we have after the inspired pen of faithful disciples ceased to write. Even in apostolic days errors were seeking admission into the churches, hence it is not at all startling to find that they continued to seek admission after our Lord's first disciples were called home. Error is like a disease which creeps in so gradually that one is hardly aware of its presence till it is so deep seated that it becomes hard, if not impossible to shake off. Thus it was that the error concerning baptism found its way into the early churches and gained so firm a hold upon Christendom that its power is still felt. To this ordinance was soon attached such importance that it was considered necessary for salvation. The Roman empire was fertile soil for growing just such a power as the Roman Catholic Church, and when imperial Rome chose to assume the dictatorship in religious matters, most of the Christian churches were merged into one great system, which opened the way for the poisonous blood of error to circulate in all of its parts. Churches which dared to speak against this power were either crushed or silenced till the day-dawn of religious toleration, and finally the full noon of religious freedom in some parts of the world gave them opportunity for growth and utterance. Two factors in the Roman system stood strongly for infant baptism. The first is found in her teaching of baptismal regeneration. The second is shown in the effort to bring everyone into her fold, and thus subjugate the world. Infant baptism is a logical outgrowth from the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. When a person once takes the ground that baptism is necessary for salvation, it then becomes reasonable and natural to believe that infants, too, must be baptized if they are to be saved. It was nearly two hundred years after Christ before any church historian made mention of pedobaptism. This considered in connection with the fact that there are no scriptural cases recorded makes it evident that those who cherish the custom must look elsewhere than in the Bible and early

church history to substantiate, by example, their right to continue the practice. Besides there was discovered in 1873 a document called "The Didache"; or "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles", which scholars date back to 70 or 100 A. D. In this work, express mention of, and clear direction for baptism is given. Its mention of the ordinance shows unmistakably that its framers knew nothing of infant baptism. In speaking of the preparation for the rite of baptism it says, "Before baptism let baptizer and the baptized fast, and whosoever others can, but the *baptized thou shalt command to fast one or two days before.*" Everyone can readily see that this excludes altogether the baptism of infants, since an infant could not be commanded to fast one or two days.

### III. HOW INFANT BAPTISM FOUND ITS WAY INTO PROTESTANT CHURCHES.

It is a well known historical fact uttered here with no thought of offending any, that the Protestant denominations which advocate infant baptism received it from the Roman Catholic Church. John Calvin, the father of Presbyterianism, was educated in that church for the priesthood; Martin Luther, the leading spirit in reform and founder of the Lutheran Church, was for years a Catholic priest; the Church of England, called in the United States, Episcopal Church, left the Roman Church in the time of Henry the VIII; the Methodist Church is a branch from the Episcopal Church; and infant baptism is one of the errors that all of these reformers failed to leave behind.

### IV. EFFORTS TO FIND SCRIPTURE SANCTION FOR THE RITE.

Pedobaptism, like affusion, has many defenders who claim to have Scripture warrant for its existence. The steady opposition of Baptists to this misuse of baptism has necessitated something more satisfying to the laity than mere sentiment and tradition; hence it is that the Bible has been searched through and

through for passages said to favor it. It is not our purpose to impeach the sincerity of those who so read the Scriptures, but rather to refute their argument, and thus show the falsity of their position.

Every candid student observes at the very outset of this study that the Scriptures commonly quoted in defense of infant baptism are by no means clear cut. Not one single reference is found wherein is mentioned the baptism of an infant. This, then, undoubtedly leaves those who advocate the practice without any direct scriptural evidence whatever. This fact is substantiated by a little careful examination. Matt. 19:13, 14 is sometimes claimed as in favor of child baptism. Similar references are found in Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17. This is shown, however, not to be a valid claim, as the subject of baptism is not mentioned at all in the above references; besides John 4:2 tells us that Jesus Himself baptized no one, which gives conclusive evidence that the children brought to Christ were not baptized. Then we are referred to the household baptisms, and told that infants must have been included there among the baptized. We find nothing whatever to favor such a supposition, but much to discredit it. The Bible specially mentions four cases of household baptism, and three of these use language that shows intelligent action and voluntary decision on the part of those who were the recipients of baptism. The one instance where the account is not thus detailed is in the case of Lydia, Acts 16:13-15. But to say that she had infant children would hang the argument on a slender thread indeed, since no intimation of children is given, and besides, Lydia is supposed to be away from home and "a seller of purple", and nobody knows whether or not she had ever been married, much less as to whether or not she had infant children with her. Besides, Acts 16:40 clearly implies *that* those baptized in her household were adults, as Paul and Silas, after their release from prison, went to her house and exhorted the new disciples.

Acts 16:23-34 records the second household baptism. Here the 32nd verse settles the question as to who were baptized:

“And they spoke the word of the Lord unto him WITH ALL THAT WERE IN HIS HOUSE.” The 34th verse says that all REJOICED and BELIEVED in God, thus nullifying even the remotest possibility of including infants among those baptized. The third household baptism spoken of is recorded in Acts 18:18. “And Crispus the ruler of the synagogue, BELIEVED in the Lord WITH ALL HIS HOUSE; and many of the Corinthians hearing, BELIEVED AND WERE BAPTIZED.” Again clearly showing that faith preceded the ordinance. The fourth and last case is recorded in 1 Cor. 1:14-16, where Paul cites the instances of baptism administered by him at Corinth, and in 1 Cor. 16:15 he mentions this household again and says: “THEY HAVE SET THEMSELVES TO MINISTER UNTO THE SAINTS.” Thus it is explicitly shown in the records of these cases themselves, that there is no ground whatever for even supposing that infants were among the baptized. Let the reader himself turn to the Scripture references and make his own comparisons, which will assuredly verify what is here shown.

#### V. INFANT BAPTISM DOES NOT TAKE THE PLACE OF CIRCUMCISION.

The bulk of the argument for infant baptism now comes from the endeavor to prove that it takes the place of circumcision. This position leads Pedobaptists through the entire Old Testament, whence they bring forth a large array of passages, which are said to prove the point. However much may be said and claimed by this method, the fact still remains that they never find so much as one passage that says or even intimates that baptism superseded circumcision. Col. 2:11, 12, is sometimes cited as evidence that circumcision is supplanted by baptism, but here no reference is made to the circumcision of the flesh, nor is the slightest connection shown to exist between the two rites. All of this laborious argument is cut short by a few references to the New Testament, where the subject of circumcision is discussed and its relation to Christianity shown. Every Bible

student knows something of the trouble given the early churches by some Jewish Christians who endeavored to force the law of Moses on the followers of Christ. If the reader has enough concern in this matter to read the references here cited, he will have no difficulty in readily understanding that the apostles indicated no connection whatever between baptism and circumcision. The 15th chapter of Acts alone is enough to settle once and for all this discussion. There the question of circumcision is the bone of contention, and action on it was taken by a body of chosen men, some of whom were apostles. It had become manifestly necessary for a thorough understanding of this matter among the early Christians; i. e., were they to circumcise or not? The question was a vital one, so much so that it threatened to divide the churches. This 15th chapter of Acts gives two speeches and a carefully prepared letter relative to the discussion, besides saying that Paul, Barnabas, Judas and Silas made speeches. But amid all of these utterances, caused by the very subject of circumcision, not one syllable even intimates that baptism had superseded it. Now, if baptism were intended to take the place of circumcision, could any candid mind hold for a moment that it is in any way reasonable to believe that all of this discussion on the very heart of the contention would have passed without so much as a single word having been recorded to show that this was really the case? The object of the discussion was to settle forever the question of circumcision among the disciples of Christ, and most surely if infant baptism was to take its place it would have been so stated here in no uncertain words. Paul refers to this same dispute, in the 2nd chapter of Galatians, and there brings up the subject of dispute, but says not one word about baptism. The churches in Galatia were also vexed with the circumcision question, and Paul is endeavoring to set them right in the matter, and for that reason refers to this former trouble recorded in the 15th chapter of Acts. Some Jews of Galatia were endeavoring to impose upon the Gentile Christians there the law of Moses. Paul devotes Gal. 5:1-15 to the question of circumcision, endeavoring to set these churches right by showing that

circumcision was null and void; but again it is seen that not a word nor the slightest intimation is given to show that baptism has taken its place. The realm of fanciful speculation alone is open to those who would put baptism in the room of circumcision.

VI. CLEAR AND DIRECT SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM. The Scriptures not only do not say anything favoring infant baptism, but do say much against it. There are several accounts of baptism described, and all of them show that the persons involved were believers. Besides there are other references to the subject which most clearly show that the ordinance is for believers only. Acts 2:38: REPENT YE and be baptized every one of you." Acts 2:41: "They that RECEIVED HIS WORD were baptized." Acts 8:12: "But when they BELIEVED—they were baptized, both MEN and WOMEN." No reference whatever to infants.

VII. THE GREAT COMMISSION AGAINST IT. Aside from the above, there are two other passages which should satisfy any seeker after the Scripture teaching as to who are fit subjects for baptism. Matt. 28:19, 20: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them, etc." Some would here twist the Scripture so as to make the language mean that the nations are disciplined by baptism, and hence find, as they think, a place for infant baptism. Any such supposition as that, however, is annulled by reference to the same commission, given in another form by Mark in 16:15, 16. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved." This account is clear cut and leaves no room for quibbling over language, and it is folly for one to imagine, even, that this commission in any way regards infants as fit subjects for baptism.

VIII. INFANT BAPTISM IS NOT ONLY UNSCRIPTURAL, BUT ITS PRACTICE IS POSITIVELY WRONG. As a last resort many persons say often: "Well, anyway it will do no harm to have children baptized," and seem to find some consolation in such a thought. Let it be noted however, that it is WRONG and DOES DO HARM.

*First*, It is done without any scriptural authority whatever for it, and in direct opposition to divine authority against it.

*Second*. It hinders, and often defeats voluntary choice in one's faith, as he is urged by others not to break vows imposed upon him in his unconscious infancy.

*Third*, It is anti-scriptural, since its practice causes disobedience to the plain command of God's word.

*Fourth*, It deceives the parent, and later the child, when it is grown up, by having begotten the idea that some sort of a charm or especial efficacy accompanied the rite.

*Fifth*, It displaces the ordinance by destroying its symbolism, and putting it before faith, when the Scripture explicitly commands that it should follow the exercise of faith on the part of the recipient.

*Sixth*, It fills the churches practicing it with unregenerate people, deceiving them, and at the same time bringing reproach upon Christianity. Roman Catholicism is one striking example of the logical result of infant baptism.

*Seventh*, It is against religious liberty, since the child's religious belief is chosen for it by others, and it is also compelled to submit to the rite, regardless of what might afterward be its wish in the matter. Just here may be found one of the reasons why Baptists have ever been the champions of religious liberty, and have suffered persecution almost everywhere for steadily opposing infant baptism.