

The Baptismal Regeneration / Believer's Baptism Debate

A theological and historical overview of the most contested
subject of the church age.

Dr. J.O. Hosler

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Chapter Six

Infant Baptism and Believer's Baptism

We observed in the previous chapter that there are those who take a regenerationist view of infant baptism and those who do not. Let us now attempt to diffuse a potential point of unnecessary offense. Because *baptismal regeneration* is such a common view among many Protestant groups, there is a misunderstanding when one of their members is required to be rebaptized by those of the *believer's baptism* position. The outrage stems from the judgment that the rebaptizers are attempting to deChristianize everyone in Christendom who had been baptized as an infant. This judgment would be correct when referring to those baptismal regenerationists who require immersion for salvation.¹ Even though these groups affirm *believer's baptism* by immersion, they do not hold that belief alone appropriates salvation. Many theologians of the Restoration movement (usually independent Christian churches) will distinguish between regeneration and forgiveness in a way that enables them to deny that they teach baptismal regeneration and yet affirm that no one is saved or forgiven until they are immersed into the *true Church*.² This would mean that a regenerate person could be damned for lack of baptism by immersion. Accordingly, this tradition is seen to be saying that all who are baptized as infants are not born again Christians until they are rebaptized by immersion.

It seems strange that most Protestants are not nearly as outraged at this position (baptismal salvation by immersion only) as they are those of the *baptistic* tradition. Most theologians of the Baptist tradition hold that no form of baptism contributes to personal salvation. The baptistic view of *believer's baptism* is not an attempt to deChristianize anyone baptized as an infant, and no such offense need be taken. That is why the baptistic view can recognize many paedobaptists as brothers in Christ. However, their theological tradition does require that only believers are to be baptized. This is the only baptism they can find in the New Testament.³ Though disagreeing with most Protestants regarding *mode* and *candidates* of Christian baptism, they recognize anyone as *brother in Christ* who professes that faith alone appropriates the saving grace of Christ. They do not see themselves as rebaptizing anyone, for they judge the baptism of an unbeliever to be no baptism at all.⁴ They are not proclaiming unbaptized believers to be lost and

¹ (e.g. The Oneness or "Jesus Only" Pentecostal movement and the Restoration movement).

² Isaac Errett, *Our Position* (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Standard Publishing Company), pp. 16, 17. "Baptists say that they baptize believers *because they are forgiven*, and they insist that they shall have the evidence of pardon before they are baptized. But the language used in the Scriptures declaring what baptism is for, is so plain and unequivocal, that the great majority of Protestants, as well as Roman Catholics, admit it in their creeds to be, in some sense, for the remission of sins...But *forgiveness* is something distinct from *regeneration*...In baptism he *appropriates God's promise of forgiveness*..."

³ This view is held today by a great number of churches and some organizations of churches which would never define themselves as *Baptists* (e.g. many Community churches and all independent Bible churches affiliated with the *Independent Fundamental Churches of America*). Therefore, we are not just talking about the Baptist tradition. Neither does it require becoming a Baptist to embrace *believer's baptism*.

⁴ The Seventh Council of Carthage, under Cyprian in the third century, concerned the baptism of heretics. It was determined by the majority of the eighty-seven bishops attending that an heretical baptism that was not an identification with the true Gospel was no baptism at all. Therefore the requirement of

unforgiven. Nevertheless, it is their firm belief that rituals never impart the saving grace of God—a position that has sparked contempt from many paedobaptist traditions against them.

So also, this present work does not deny the salvation of anyone who was baptized as an unbeliever, but we are saying that no one was saved by or through baptism. Many in the New Testament, who believed that circumcision appropriated salvation, came to this belief after they were redeemed by grace alone through faith alone in the finished work of Christ. So, even though they were now professing an apostate gospel, they were originally born again—

(e.g. Gal. 1:6-9) I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

However, the one who had never believed anything but the position that circumcision saves, had therefore not trusted the finished work of Christ alone for eternal life. So, there were *saved* and *unsaved* advocates of *circumcisional salvation*. We must not attempt to determine which ones were saved or lost; but they, for their own sakes, needed to make that determination for themselves—

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? (Gal. 3:2, 3).

We can only determine that circumcision was not the gospel or an essential part of the gospel.⁵

Strong makes the point that, *the rise of infant baptism in the history of the church is due to sacramental conceptions of Christianity, so that all arguments in its favor from the writings of the first three centuries are equally arguments for baptismal regeneration.*⁶

Infant baptism must have been practiced as early as the third century where we find Tertullian arguing against it when he says:⁷

Christian baptism should not be considered *rebaptism*. One of the bishops, Adelphius of Thasvalte, said: "Certain persons without reason impugn the truth by false and envious words, in saying that we rebaptize, when the Church does not rebaptize heretics, but baptizes them." Cyprian, *Seventh Council of Carthage* in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: down to A.D. 325*, Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D., Editors (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), Vol. V, p. 569.

⁵ We are often asked, "Who cares what people believe about circumcision as long as they believe in Jesus also?" Christ plus works is not the gospel. It is belief in the work of Christ alone that is the faith that appropriates salvation. To further study this question one should re-read Chapter One of this present work.

⁶ August Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA.: The Judson Press, 1907), p. 953.

⁷ *Ibid.*, *New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 675. "Tertullian began writing in Carthage, North Africa, towards the end of the 2nd century, his undisputed works dating from c. A.D. 196 to c. A.D. 212."

...And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally however, in the case of little children. For why is it necessary—if (baptism itself) is not so necessary—that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger? Who both themselves, by reason of mortality, may fail to fulfil their promises, and may be disappointed by the development of an evil disposition, *in those for whom they stood*? The Lord does indeed say, “forbid them not to come unto me.”⁸ Let them “come,” then, while they are learning, while they are learning whither to come;⁹ Let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ...Let them know how to “ask” for salvation, that you may seem (at least) to have given “to him that asketh”...If any understand the weighty import of baptism, they will fear its reception more than its delay: sound faith is secure of salvation.¹⁰

Cyprian,¹¹ on the other hand, believed that ritual infant baptism was spiritual circumcision and therefore should never be delayed till the eighth day like circumcision of the flesh—

But in respect of the case of the infants, which you say ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, and that the law of ancient circumcision should be regarded, so that you think that one who is just born should not be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day, we all thought very differently in our council. For in this course which you thought was to be taken, no one agreed; but we all rather judge that the mercy and grace of God is not to be refused to any one born of man.

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

For which reason we think that no one is to be hindered from obtaining grace by that law which was already ordained, and that spiritual circumcision ought not to be hindered by carnal circumcision, but that absolutely every man is to be admitted to the grace of Christ...¹²

In the following pages we will now list the reasons which have been offered throughout church history in defense of the affirmation that infants are to be baptized in

⁸ Matt. 19:14; Mk. 10:14; Lk18:16.

⁹ Or, “whither they are coming.”

¹⁰ Tertullian, *On Baptism [Chapter xviii]*, *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), Vol. III, p. 678. Perhaps his view was evolving for in Chapters vii and xii he argues that ritual baptism is necessary to salvation, Vol. III, pp. 672, 674, 675.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, *New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 184. Cyprian was a, “Latin church father, and Bishop of Carthage from about 249 until his death.”

¹² Cyprian, *The Epistles of Cyprian LVIII, Ante-Nicene Fathers: Fathers of the Third Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), Vol. V, pp. 253, 254.

order to receive the saving grace of God. Along with these reasons we will offer a biblical and theological response and then conclude with a Scriptural and historical defense of the *believer's baptism* position..

Reason # 1: Infant baptism is believer's baptism because an infant in the womb of a believer is also a believer. Martin Luther said: *Since our baptizing has been thus from the beginning of Christianity and the custom has been to baptize children, and*

*since no one can prove with good reasons that they do not have faith, we should not make changes and build on such weak arguments.*¹³ Concerning rebaptizers he comments: *When they say, "Children cannot believe," how can they be sure of that? Where is the Scripture by which they would prove it and on which they would build? They imagine this, I suppose, because children do not speak or have understanding. But such a fancy is deceptive, yea, altogether false, and we cannot build on what we imagine.*¹⁴ Luther uses Scripture to prove that infants can believe, though they do not speak or understand:

So, Ps. 72 [106:37f.], describes how the Jews offered their sons and daughters to idols, shedding innocent blood. If, as the text says, it was innocent blood, then the children have to be considered pure and holy—this they could not be without spirit and faith. Likewise the innocent children whom Herod had murdered were not over two years of age [Matt. 2:16]. Admittedly they could not speak or understand. Yet they were holy and blessed. Christ himself says in Matt. 18 [19:14], "The kingdom of heaven belongs to children." And St. John was a child in his mother's womb [Luke 1:41] but, as I believe, could have faith.

Yes, you say, but John was an exception. This is not proof that all baptized children have faith. I answer, wait a minute. I am not yet at the point of proving that children believe. I am giving proof that your foundation for rebaptism is uncertain and false inasmuch as you cannot prove that there may not be faith in children. Inasmuch as John had faith, though he could not speak or understand, your argument fails,

¹³ *Luther's Works: Church and Ministry II*, Conrad Bergendoff, Editor; Helmut T. Lehmann, General Editor (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), Vol. 40, p. 241. The introduction to this volume states that *there is no later or more elaborate treatise on the subject [of rebaptism] by Luther. But the controversy seems to have stimulated him to deeper study of the significance of baptism...*, pp. 227, 228. In defense of Luther and contemporary Lutheranism we must say that in this volume Luther gives the impression that he does not know sufficiently what the teachings of the Anabaptists were, p. 261. Balthasar Hubmaier had written a book in defense of the Anabaptist doctrine in 1525 but there is no evidence that Luther had read it. Hubmaier, who had claimed Luther as a friend, was a former Roman Catholic who had studied theology at the University in Freiburg. In 1512 he became professor of theology at Ingolstadt. He served as cathedral preacher at Regensburg in 1519, where he declared himself in favor of the Reformation. However, upon further study, he associated with, and embraced the cause of, the Anabaptists at Waldshut. Denying the validity of infant baptism, he became a heretic in Catholic and Protestant territories. He fled for his life from Waldshut in Austria to Zurich in Switzerland and then to Moravia. He was finally burned at the stake for this heresy in Vienna in 1528. It would be wise for the interested reader to study his life and work.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 242.

that children are not able to believe. To hold that a child believes, as St. John is an example, is not contrary to Scriptures. If it is not contrary to the Scripture to hold that children believe, but rather in accord with Scripture, then your argument, that children cannot believe, must be unscriptural. That is my first point.

Who has made you so sure that baptized children do not believe in the face of what I here prove that they can believe? But if you are not sure, why then are you so bold as to discard the first baptism, since you do not and cannot know that it is meaningless? ...Now it is up to you to bring forth a single Scripture verse which proves that children cannot believe in baptism. I have cited these many verses showing that they can believe, and that it be reasonable to hold that they do believe.¹⁵

It is a fallacy of logic to ask someone to prove a negative (e.g. if you cannot disprove the existence of green men on Mars then I have therefore proven their existence). Luther placed the burden of proof on those who did not find that John The Baptist was a believer in his mother's womb. But when the burden of proof was placed on him he would respond as follows:

On the other hand we cannot prove that children do believe with any Scripture verse that clearly and expressly declares in so many words, or the like, "you are to baptize children because they also believe." Whoever compels us to produce such a statement has the upper hand and wins, for we cannot find such words. But sincere and sensible Christians do not require such proof. The quarrelsome, obstinate rebellious spirits do in order to seem to be clever. But on their side they can produce no statement which says, "you are to baptize adults but no children." We are however persuaded by many good reasons to hold that child baptism is right and that children do believe.¹⁶

Luther's comments are based on his belief that OT infants were brought into the covenant of grace through their circumcision and that infant baptism serves the same function—

If the old covenant and the sign of circumcision made the children of Abraham believe that they were, and were called the people of God, according to the promise, I will be the God of thy descendants [Gen. 17:7], then this new covenant and sign must be much more effectual and make those a people of God who receive it.¹⁷

Luther thought that the advocates of *believer's baptism* were literally withholding the saving grace of God from infants for whom Christ died—

For if, as we believe, baptism is right and useful and brings the children to salvation, and I then did away with it, then I would be responsible for all the children who were lost because they were unbaptized—a cruel and terrible thing. If baptism is not right, that is, without value or help to the children, then I would be guilty of no greater sin than that the Word of God had been spoken and his sign given in vain. I would

¹⁵ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, pp. 242, 243.

¹⁶ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 254.

¹⁷ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, pp. 257, 258.

not be responsible for the loss of any soul, but only of an effectual use of the Word and sign of God.¹⁸

Luther uses I Jn. 2:14 as further proof of infant baptism where St. John writes to little children, that they know the Father.¹⁹ And again he says of rebaptizers that, *They are indeed regular thieves and murderers of souls, blasphemers, and enemies of Christ and his churches.*²⁰

The advocates of *believer's baptism* hold that all unborn and born infants are in the saving grace of God. What they cannot understand is the logic of arguing for the faith and salvation of infants in the womb while simultaneously arguing that only ritual baptism can wash away original sin.

Reason # 2: (Mt. 18:10) *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.* All believers seem to have guardian angels (Ps. 34:7). The argument is that if these *little ones* have guardian angels, then they must have been brought into the covenant of grace by their infant baptism. But the angels of these *little ones* (*mikron touton*; cf. 18:6, 14) are entrusted to their care and are in constant communication with the heavenly Father (cf. Ps. 91:11; Acts 12:15; Heb. 1:14). This passage is telling us that either all children are under God's special care or that only believing children have special guardian angels. Vss. 12-14 seem to indicate believing children having gone astray.²¹ However, most advocates of *believer's baptism* hold that all infants are alive in Christ (see Reason #3). Regardless of which view one holds, this passage does not teach nor authorize paedobaptism. It should be considered dangerous, however, to treat a believer or an infant with contempt if God and the angels are so actively involved in their well-being.

Reason # 3: (Mtt. 19:14) *But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Thus, withholding baptism from infants can keep them from the kingdom of heaven.* The Greek word for "little Children" is *paidia* and can refer to those ranging from babies to preteens. Notice how the same word is translated *damsel* in Mk. 5:39 [a twelve-year-old girl, vs. 42]. However, the word *brephos* is used in the parallel passage of Luke 18:15.²² This word could refer to an "embryo," "young," "infant," or "small child."²³ So from a language perspective of this passage, the ages of the children could be argued both ways.

¹⁸ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 254.

¹⁹ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 245.

²⁰ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 384.

²¹ Jamieson, Fausset & Brown, *Commentary On The Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), pp. 933, 934. "Among men, those who nurse and rear the royal children, however humble in themselves, are allowed free entrance with their charge, and a degree of familiarity which even the highest state ministers dare not assume. Probably our Lord means that, in virtue of their charge over His disciples (Heb. 1:13; John 1:51), the angels have *errands* to the throne, a *welcome* there, and a *dear familiarity* in dealing with 'His father which is in heaven,' which on their own matters they could not assume."

²² It is notable that John uses *brephos* in vs. 15 and *paidion* in vs. 17 as if to make them interchangeable in this passage.

²³ Paul uses this word for "baby" referring to one who had known the Scriptures at that age: "And that from a child [*brephous*] thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15).

Yet Jesus gives us the clue in Lk. 18:17 when He says, *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child [paidion] shall in no wise enter therein.* Jesus is saying that, like children, we need to come realizing that we are not sufficient in ourselves to rescue ourselves. We must realize that we are totally dependent on another for deliverance. Jesus is describing an intelligent childlike realization and attitude in adults which, if not there, will mean that they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.²⁴

The point we must face is that the passage is not about baptism or circumcision. These children were not brought to Christ to be baptized by Him; for Christ baptized no one, young or old. If they had been brought for baptism, they would have been brought to the disciples and not to Christ. And if the disciples were practicing infant baptism, it would not have been their business to forbid it. Mothers, fathers, and other adults were bringing these children to Jesus that He might touch them and confer a blessing on their lives (Mtt. 19:15). This could refer to a centuries old custom with Jews (Gen. 48:14, 15) of the laying on of hands for blessing of the young, which had nothing to do with circumcision or bestowing personal salvation. Mark and Luke say that they were brought to Him, *that he would touch them*, as when he healed the diseased. These children might have been diseased and brought for healing.

If these children were newborn infants, they did not need to be brought to Jesus for salvation for the Kingdom of Heaven was already made up of their like. Most contemporary advocates of *believer's baptism* take the position that all infants are saved regardless of their baptism or circumcision. David's son by Bathsheba died before being circumcised, but David knew he would see him again saying, *But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me* (II Sam. 13:23). David was not finding consolation in the thought that he would someday be buried in the plot next to his son.

Most advocates of *believer's baptism* deny that there are any babies or aborted fetuses in Hell.²⁵ For this position, they have often been falsely accused of *Pelagianism*. Pelagius believed that infants were born without an Adamic nature and in a state of perfect innocence. This is the primary reason why Pelagius believed departed infants were in heaven. It would be difficult to find an advocate of *believer's baptism* who thought that infants were void of original sin.

²⁴ This is the sense in which Origen refers to the children in his Commentary on Matthew: "...as, for example, that, if any one be converted, and, though a man, such an one becomes as a child in respect of anger; and, as is the child in relation to grief, so that sometimes he laughs and plays at the very time that his father or mother, or brother is dead, he who is converted would become such an one as little children...as, for example, in the case of children there is a forgetfulness of their evils at the very time of their tears, for they change in a moment, and laugh and play along with those who were thought to grieve and terrify them, but in truth had wrought in them no such emotion...Wherefore you may see those who are not altogether infants, up to three or four years of age, like to those who are of mean birth, though they may seem to be of noble birth, and not appearing at all to love rich children rather than the poor." *Origen's Commentary on Matthew* [Book III, 16], *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), Vol. X, p. 484. Origen (c. 185-c. 254) was considered a master exegete. He was imprisoned and tortured during the Decian persecution and died shortly thereafter at Tyre.

²⁵ In chapter seven we will discuss the fact that advocates of *believer's baptism* were executed as baby-killers in that they withheld baptism from their infants. They were looked upon as casting their children into hell, and therefore worthy of death.

Most contemporary advocates of *believer's baptism* recognize the imputed Adamic sin nature in all infants. They deny that it [original sin] is removed by circumcision or baptism. But if it is not removed, then upon what grounds are they entitled to heaven? Before answering that question we should ask, upon what grounds does anyone go to hell? If people go to hell for having a sin nature, then everyone is going there. If people go to hell for sinning or for having a disposition to sin, then everyone is going there. No one ever completely stops sinning before or after salvation (I Jn. 1:9). People still have a disposition to sin after salvation, which is why they are challenged to, *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof* (Rom. 6:12) and, *Neither Yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness* (6:13a). This is why the saved are told to, *through the spirit...mortify the deeds of the body...*(8:13b) and to *...Present your bodies a living sacrifice...and be not conformed to this world...*(12:1b, 2a.). Some brothers in Christ have failed to do this (I Cor. 3:1-3) and will experience the severe discipline of God but not His condemnation (Rom. 8:1). People go to hell because of unbelief (Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:18, 36).²⁶ Jesus said to Martha:

... I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? (Jn. 11:25b, 26).

Martha's response was: *...Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.* (vs. 27b; cf. I Jn. 5:1).

Back to the question, upon what grounds are infants entitled to heaven? Those who believe that all infants are saved regardless of circumcision or baptism are sternly admonished against building an encompassing doctrine from David's statement regarding his uncircumcised, dead son in II Sam. 12. However, those who hold to the *believer's baptism* position struggle with the idea that the departed infants of all lost people and the unbaptized infants of all advocates of *believer's baptism* are burning in hell or confined to *limbo*. They are struggling with the more than thirty-million aborted babies in the United States alone. One popular American history text book quotes Johnathan Edwards as believing that hell was *paved with the skulls of unbaptized infants*.²⁷ Though Edwards cannot be found to have said it in those words, his writings reflect this to be the view of both the reformed and holiness divines of his day. Volume III of the AGES edition of his works contain lengthy discussions affirming that infant baptism brings the children of true Christians into the invisible as well as the visible church and that the infants of unconverted adults should not be baptized—which would of course leave them outside the covenant relationship of the invisible church.²⁸

²⁶ See Jn.8:24, 25; 10:26; 12:37-40, 48; Rom. 11:20; II Thess. 1:8, 9; 2:11, 12.

²⁷ Thomas A. Bailey & David M. Kennedy, *The American Pageant: A History of the Republic*, Eighth Edition (Lexington, Massachusetts; Toronto: D. C. Heath and Company, 1987), p. 65. We cannot find this statement by Edwards in the works available to us. There is room for doubt that he ever said it. However, as we will demonstrate in a later chapter, it was a common belief among early American colonial Puritans that Baptists were worthy of death for withholding baptism from infants and consigning them to hell. This view of infants in hell is clearly Augustinian in its content, as we will study from Augustines writings in chapter seven of this present work.

²⁸ *Jonathan Edwards, The Works of* (Albany, Or: AGES Software [*The Master Christian Library* version 6], 1977), Vol. III, pp. 205, 331-334, 355-357, 469-473.

Responding to the challenge against building their position from II Sam. 12, some have taken a fresh look at Romans chapter seven. Here the Apostle Paul explicitly states: *For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.* When was this? He was not without the law as a growing child because he was the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), and lived in stringent conformity to the traditions of this sect (Acts 26:5). Paul was speaking of a time before he was cognizant of or could have known the law (Mosaic or natural)—*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* Some take the position that this is describing infancy. John A. Witmer addresses this question in his commentary on Romans as follows:

Evidently the apostle was speaking of his personal experience as a child and perhaps even as a youth prior to the awareness and understanding of the full impact of God's commandments. The clause, **but when the commandment came**, does not speak of the giving of the Mosaic Law, but the dawning of the significance of the commandment ("Do not covet") on Paul's mind and heart before conversion. The result was that the principle of sin within made its presence and power known (it **sprang to life**) in his volitions of the **commandment**. As a result Paul **died** spiritually (cf. 6:23a) under the sentence of judgment by the Law he had broken.²⁹ [Emphasis added].

This is not a denial of original sin or of the sin nature in infants and therefore not subject to the false charge of *Pelagianism*. People in hell are bearing the eternal consequences of their inherited Adamic natures, their sins, and particularly the sin of willful unbelief. But it is their willful unbelief that kept them from salvation. Paul speaks of the damnation of Tribulation citizens as resulting from their willful rejection of the truth prior to the rapture:

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (II Thess. 2:9-12).³⁰

Unable to comprehend the consignment of billions of babies in hell, some cautiously construct the position that Christ, in His work on the cross, forgives all infants of having an Adamic nature. He does not eradicate the imputed sin of Adam (Pelagianism), but he forgives it. Therefore, all infants are *alive without the law* and will be under condemnation only when they become willful unbelievers and sinners against the Law. Original sin is there, and still worthy of condemnation, but it is forgiven. The *believer's baptism* view denies that original sin is removed through an outward ritual.

²⁹ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty*, New Testament edition; John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, Editors (USA, Canada, England: Victor Books, 1983), pp. 646, 647.

³⁰ "They all" in this passage refers to those who had the opportunity to believe prior to the rapture but refused and now find themselves in the 70th week of Daniel. But during this same week of years, 144 thousand Jews will be saved and a multitude of Gentiles that no man can number (Rev. 7:4, 9).

Where would Paul have spent eternity if he had died when he was *alive without the Law*? Many in the *believer's baptism* camp will argue that he would have gone to heaven.³¹

One thing of which we can be reasonably certain is that Matt. 19:14 does not teach infant baptism either literally or by special illumination.

Reason # 4: (Mtt. 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.* The idea that the citizens of nations are to be required to submit to baptism stems from the national-church theory. Some variations of this theocratic view hold that the people of any province or nation are bound together into a provincial or national organization, and that this organization has jurisdiction over all church matters. So, just as one born in a particular province is automatically and naturally a citizen of that territory, he is also under the authority of the organized, established church there. This is the pretext upon which laws have been decreed which required the baptism of all infants within the boundaries of a particular nation. In the case of the Roman church, the boundaries were the world, which, of course, would require conquest in order to implement enforcement. In the year 346 non-Christian temples were ordered closed in the Roman Empire and the death penalty was imposed for sacrifices. Theodosius' edict of 392 forbade even the simplest offerings to household gods.³²

When Augustine was a young advocate of orthodoxy in North Africa, an area controlled by heretics, he pled for freedom of conscience. But when orthodoxy became favored by the state, he called on the civil power to suppress the dissidents in the church. He felt that it was better for heretics to be punished and purged from their error, than that they should die unsaved. Compulsion in such cases was considered benevolent, for what is a worse killer of the soul than freedom to err?³³ C. J. Alexander writes that because of Augustine, more than any other person, *the Medieval Church was intolerant, was the source and author of persecution, justified and defended the most violent measures which could be taken against those who differed from it.*³⁴ Augustine and Thomas Aquinas taught that salvation could be achieved through compulsion, and that oppression and persecution of heretics was the holy duty of the Church—(e.g. *In Iceland in the year 1000, the entire population was made Christian by law, and all who had not previously accepted baptism were required to do so.*)³⁵ The knights who conquered the Baltic seacoast likewise forced Christianity upon the natives there.³⁶ Persecution and oppression of heretics became universal and systematic under Pope Innocent III in the thirteenth century as he *called on secular princes to organize a crusade against the heretical Albigenses [rebaptizers], and the result was mass executions. This was followed by the establishment of the Inquisition about the second quarter of the thirteenth century.*³⁷ The Spanish Inquisition, established by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1480, lasted

³¹ An exception can be found in some reformed Baptists who hold the view that only the infants of the elect are saved and all other infants proceed to Hell upon death.

³² M. Searle Bates, *Religious Liberty: An Inquiry* (New York and London: International Missionary Council, 1945), p. 134.

³³ *Ibid.*, Bates, pp. 137, 138.

³⁴ Carlyle J. Alexander, *The Christian Church and Liberty* (London: J. Clarke, 1924), p. 96.

³⁵ Leo Pfeffer, *Church, State, and Freedom* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953), p. 18.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Bates, pp. 142, 143.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Pfeffer, p. 19.

for centuries longer than any other. It burnt heretics at the stake as late as 1781 and was not abolished until 1834.

Historian, W. W. Sweet writes:

There is widespread notion among Protestant groups that the separation of Church and State, and thus religious liberty, was one of the immediate products of the Reformation, that the early Protestants were advocates of a large tolerance, and that religious liberty was but the logical development of the principles held by all of the reformers. Just where this notion arose is difficult to say, and no reputable historian of our times would endorse it. The fact is that the rise of Protestantism was accompanied by an unprecedented outburst of intolerance and cruelty in which both Protestants and Catholics participated.³⁸

When expecting excommunication and assassination, Luther pleaded for separation of Church and state and for religious toleration. Declaring that heretics were to be converted with the Scriptures, and not by fire, he wrote:

I say, then, neither pope, nor bishop, nor any man whatever has the right of making one syllable binding on a Christian man, unless it be done with his own consent. Whatever is done otherwise is done in the spirit of tyranny....I cry aloud on behalf of liberty and conscience, and I proclaim with confidence that no kind of law can with any justice be imposed on Christians, except so far as they themselves will; for we are free from all.³⁹

But once Luther became allied with the secular state and was no longer a hunted heretic, his position changed completely as he wrote:

Heretics are not to be disputed with, but to be condemned unheard, and whilst they perish by fire, the faithful ought to pursue the evil to its source, and bathe their hands in the blood of the Catholic bishops, and of the Pope, who is a devil in disguise.⁴⁰

Luther's disciple, Melancthon, *taught that dissenting sects ought to be put down by the sword, and that any person who started new opinions ought to be punished with death.*⁴¹

The theocratic element was strongest in Calvin. Like Augustine and Luther, his earliest writings proclaim tolerance. But when he established his theocracy in Geneva, absenteeism from church services was a crime, and missing the sacrament was penalized by banishment for a year. Criticism of the clergy was a blasphemy punishable by death. In fact, denial that blasphemy was punishable by death was itself blasphemy—

Whoever shall now contend that it is unjust to put heretics and blasphemers to death, will, knowingly and willingly, incur their very guilt. This is not laid down on human authority; it is God that speaks and prescribes a perpetual rule for His Church.⁴²

³⁸ William Warren Sweet, *Religion in Colonial America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), p. 320.

³⁹ Henry Wace and C. A. Buchheim, *Luther's primary works* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1885), pp. 194, 195.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Pfeffer, p. 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Pfeffer, p. 21.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Pfeffer, p. 22, referring to Calvin and his close associate Beza.

During the Reformation, Calvin extended the authority and duty of civil government to *cherish and support the external worship of God, to preserve the true doctrine of religion, to defend the constitution of the Church and to regulate our lives in a manner requisite for the social welfare.*⁴³ This became the pretext upon which persecution by the State was justified. Offenses against the Church/State were punishable by fines, imprisonment, exile, and, if necessary, by death. On this ground the execution of Servetus and other heretics was justified.⁴⁴ According to Schaff, Calvin aimed at the sole rule of Christ and His Word both in Church and State, but without mixture and interference. The law for both church and State, for Calvin, was the revealed will of God in the Holy Scriptures.⁴⁵

The Peace of Augsburg (1555) was a compromise between Lutherans and Catholics in the German states whereby the religion of a province was determined by the religion of its prince. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) ended the terrible thirty years of religious war and extended a modified Augsburg principle to the Calvinist states. The Edict of Nantes granted a limited freedom of conscience, and was therefore condemned by Pope Clement VIII. It became limited further under Henry's successors until it was completely revoked by Louis XIV when he launched a campaign of forced conversion against the Huguenots. The persecution of Protestants finally abated in France when a more conservative form of the Nantes edict was revived in 1787 (the eve of the French Revolution).

When Henry VIII established the Church of England, he retained almost all of Catholicism except the Pope. The *Bloody Statute* enacted by Parliament in 1539 made the denial of the doctrine of transubstantiation punishable by burning at the stake and confiscation of goods. The constitution established by Oliver Cromwell in 1647 granted liberty to all Protestant sects, but denied all toleration to Catholics

A similar theocratic concept followed the Church of England and the Puritans to the early American Colonies. Looking at colonial America, it is easy to see why the colony of Massachusetts could not tolerate Roger Williams' views. Consider the words of its *Body of Liberties* (December 10, 1641, Section 58, 59, 94):

Civill Authoritie hath power and libertie to see the peace, ordinances and Rules of Christ observed in every church according to his word. So it be done in a Civill and not in an Ecclesiastical way...(Section 59)
Civill Authoritie hath power and libertie to deale with any Church member in a way of Civill Justice, notwithstanding any Church relation, office or interest...(Section 94) If any man after legal conviction shall have or worship any other god, but the lord god, he shall be put to death, if any man shall blaspheme the name of god, the Father Sonne, or Holie ghost, with direct, expresse, presumptious or high handed blasphemie, or shall curse god in the like manner, he shall be put to death.⁴⁶

⁴³ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), Vol. 8, p. 462.

⁴⁴ Servetus was an Anabaptist tried by the Inquisition in France. Calvin provided the Inquisitors with the evidence that helped secure his condemnation. Servetus escaped to Geneva, where he was denounced by Calvin and sentenced to death by the town council.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Schaff, Vol. 8, pp. 471-473.

⁴⁶ Massachusetts *Body of liberties* (December 10, 1641, Sections 58, 59, 94) in Richard L. Perry, *Sources Of Our Liberties* (Chicago: American Bar Foundation, 1959), pp. 154-158.

In 1635 Massachusetts Bay Colony banished Roger Williams for advocating the separation of church and state and for denying the right of civil authorities to punish citizens for, among other things, withholding infant baptism—

That if any Christian within this jurisdiction, shall go about to subvert and destroy the Christian faith and religion, by broaching and maintaining any damnable heresies; as denying the immortality of the soul, or resurrection of the body, or any sin to be repented of in the regenerate, or any evil done by the outward man to be accounted sin, or denying that Christ gave Himself a ransom for our sins, or shall affirm that we are not justified by His death and righteousness, but by the perfections of our own works, or shall deny the morality of the fourth commandment, **or shall openly condemn or oppose the baptising of infants, or shall purposely depart the congregation at the administration of that ordinance,** or shall deny the ordinance of magistracy, or their lawful authority to make war, or to punish the outward breaches of the first table, or shall endeavor to seduce others to any of the errors or heresies above mentioned; **every such person continuing obstinate therein, after due means of conviction, shall be sentenced to banishment ...And if any person so banished, be taken the second time within this jurisdiction upon lawful trial and conviction, he shall be put to death.**⁴⁷ [Emphasis added].

In 1646, at the Bay colony, anyone expressing contempt toward an established clergyman was punished by standing four feet high on a block wearing a placard with the words, *An Open and Obstinate Contemner of God's Holy Ordinances*.⁴⁸

Ann Hutchinson was a Boston Congregationalist who defied the religious establishment by holding meetings in her home, preaching a *covenant of grace* grounded on an individual's direct intuition of God's grace and love. This flew in the face of the established religion based on obedience to the laws of church and state. She was tried and condemned in 1638 and was exiled and excommunicated. She fled with her children to Rhode Island, and then migrated to New York, where, in 1642, she and most of her children were killed by the Native Americans.

Myers writes: *Puritans have put many Quakers to death, of other provinces. First they banished them as Quakers upon pain of death, and then executed them for returning. They have beaten some of them to jelly and been exceedingly cruel to others.*⁴⁹

The royal charters testified to their missionary aim of colonization in America. Captain John Smith declared that the first duty of Virginians was to *preach, baptise into the Christian religion and by the propagation of the Gospel to recover out of the arms of the devil, a number of poor and miserable souls wrapt up unto death in almost invincible ignorance.*⁵⁰ The Anglican Church became established in Virginia where Governor

⁴⁷ *American State Papers on Religious Freedom* (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1949), pp. 32-34.

⁴⁸ Sanford H. Cobb, *The rise of Religious Liberty in America* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902), pp. 176, 177.

⁴⁹ Gustavus Myers, *History of Bigotry in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1943), p. 5.

⁵⁰ Charles A. Beard and Mary R., *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947) Vol. I, p. 10.

Thomas Dale in 1612 decreed the *Laws Divine, Moral and Martial*. Sanford Cobb gives us the substance of the religious sections and in number eight he states:

Every person in the colony, or who should come into it, was required to repair to the minister for examination in the faith. If he should be unsound, he was to be instructed. If any refused to go to the minister, he should be whipt; on a second refusal he should be whipt twice and compelled to “acknowledge his fault on Sabath day in the assembly of the congregation”; for a third refusal he should be “whipt every day until he makes acknowledgment.”⁵¹

Under Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch Reformed Church was established and supported by the state in New York. Law required the baptism of all children to be performed only by an established minister of the Reformed church.⁵² Baptists who held religious services in their homes were subject to arrest, fine, whipping, and banishment.⁵³

Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780) was an English jurist who in the 1760s wrote a famous work called *Commentaries on the Law of England*. By the time the *Declaration of Independence* was signed, there were probably more copies of his commentaries in America than in Britain. His works shaped the perspective of American law at that time and will serve to enlighten us regarding the English background of Colonial Anglican and

Puritan political thought. In chapter 5 of his *Commentary* Blackstone lists the offences against God and religion in English law such as apostasy; failure to express belief in a future state of rewards and punishments when taking judicial oaths; heresy; **reviling the ordinances of the Church**; absence from Divine worship; gross impieties; blasphemy; cursing; witchcraft and sorcery; Sabbath-breaking; drunkenness; open lewdness and bearing bastard children.⁵⁴

Often when advocates of *believer's baptism* would rebaptize a believer within the territory of an established state church, it was considered the equivalent of walking into a church building and disrupting the service. It was believed that the Church was to exercise dominion over the world and therefore require the baptism of all nations.

So, just as the Jews of the intertestamental period assumed the divine right to force proselytism and circumcision on whole heathen nations, many Puritan, Anglican and Reformed churches believed that God's Church was equally a theocracy of God whose doctrines must be forced by coercion. However, God does not command the baptizing of all nations; but the baptism only of such who are taught or made disciples by teaching of

the Word of God. If infants are to be baptized because they are a part of all nations, then this would require the forceful baptism of the infants of heathens, Moslems, Hindus, Jews, etc., since they are a large part of all nations. Disciples and learners are the same,

⁵¹ Ibid., Cobb, p. 78.

⁵² Ibid., Cobb, p. 315.

⁵³ Ibid., Cobb, pp. 317, 318.

⁵⁴ William Blackstone, *Blackstone's Commentaries On The Law*, Edited by Bernard C. Gavit, Dean, Indiana University School of Law (Washington, D. C.: Washington Law Book Co., 1941), pp. 770-779.

and one must be a learner in order to be a disciple. Disciples ought to learn something of Christ before they are baptized in his name. Athanasius (c. 297-373) said it best:⁵⁵

For not he who simply says, 'O Lord,' gives Baptism; but he who with the Name has also the right faith. On this account therefore our Saviour also did not simply command to baptize, but first says, 'Teach;' then thus: 'Baptize into the Name of Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost;' that the right faith might follow upon learning, and together with faith might come the consecration of Baptism.⁵⁶

Just because the State is the "mother" of the children born within its territorial boundaries, it does not follow that the church is no less the mother of all children born within the boundaries of its parish or diocese.

Reason # 5: The Bible teaches by example the baptism of whole households, and it is certain that there were infants in these families. John Calvin stressed this point in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* when he wrote:

Every one must now see that paedobaptism, which receives such strong support from Scripture, is by no means of human invention. Nor is there anything plausible in the objection, that we nowhere read of even one infant having been baptized by the hands of the apostles. For although this is not expressly narrated by the Evangelists, yet as they are not expressly excluded when mention is made of any baptized family (Acts xvi. 15, 32), what man of sense will argue from this that they were not baptized?⁵⁷

There is, indeed, reference to whole households, or families, being baptized during apostolic times. However, if we are going to rest the personal, eternal salvation of millions of souls on a doctrine, it would be most advantageous if we could be certain that there were infants in these families and that they were baptized. It is not as if this is one of those peripheral doctrinal controversies, such as *mode* of baptism, which will not affect one's personal salvation either way.

There are usually three families in the New Testament that are cited to make this point. The first is that of Lydia and her household—

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

Again, if we are going to build the personal assurance of salvation for millions of souls on such a passage, should we not wonder whether she was single or married, maid or widow; and if married, whether she had any children, or ever had any; and if so, were they living and were they infants, adolescents, or adults? And if infants, did she bring them with her from Thyatira to Phillipi, where she seems to have been on a business trip?

⁵⁵ Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, was the great defender of the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity against the heretical Arians.

⁵⁶ St. Athanasius, *Select Works and Letters: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), p. 371.

⁵⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), Vol. II, p. 534.

Was she the bread-winner in her family, and was her husband traveling with her? If she was there on business, did she have a hired house for the duration of her stay? Could her household have constituted menial servants brought along to assist her in business? From vss. 14, 15 we cannot satisfy any of these queries. What then can we know? When Paul and Silas came out of prison they again entered her house and met the brethren and were able to comfort them—*And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.* These *brethren* may have been distressed and troubled about the recent social upheaval regarding the apostolic ministry (vss. 22-24). At best, this is not a passage upon which to build a soul-saving gospel for infants.

The second instance is the jailer and his household, which consisted of adult persons; for the apostle Paul spoke the word of the Lord to *all* that were in his house (Acts 16:33). Were they not capable of hearing and understanding? The jailer *rejoiced* at the good news of salvation and everyone in his house *rejoiced* and *believed* with him— *And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house* (Acts 16:32-34). Again, this is not a passage upon which to build the assurance of salvation by the infant baptism of millions of souls.

The third instance is the household of Stephanus (I Cor. 1:16). They of his household were the first fruits of Achaia, the first converts of those parts, who had *addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints* (I Cor. 16:15). Is this something that infants do? There are too many unanswered questions regarding all three of these instances to allow us to read into them an absolute mandate to baptize infants, believing that the ritual will wash away original sin, regenerate their souls, and place them into the Body of Christ.

Reason # 6: Infants of believers in the Old Testament were taken into the covenant of grace by their circumcision, and in the New Testament infant baptism replaces circumcision. Luther admits that, according to his view, females were saved differently than males in the OT:

With regard to the girls among the Jews the answer is easy. For because this sign was prescribed only for the male sex, it does not pertain to the girls. Nevertheless, since the girls are Abraham's descendants, they are not excluded from Abraham's righteousness; they attain it through faith. But those adults who despised circumcision or who despise Baptism are surely damned.⁵⁸

It cannot be denied that Ps.77 [106:37] speaks of girls and uncircumcised when it says that they were offered to the idols of Canaan. Yet they were described as innocent blood. And surely Moses in Lev. 12 [:15] included girls in the regulation of offerings for purification and atonement. Everybody knows that boys alone were subjected to circumcision, but that girls participated in its benefits also by virtue of the saying spoken by God to Abraham (Gen. 17 [:7]): "I will be the God of thy descendants, and circumcision shall be a covenant between me and you and your descendants after you." Surely

⁵⁸ *Luther's Works: Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 15-20*, Jeroslav Pelikan, Editor (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), Vol. 3, p. 103.

girls are the descendants of Abraham, and through this promise God is indeed their God, though they are not circumcised as are the boys.⁵⁹

If the old covenant and the sign of circumcision made the children of Abraham believe that they were, and were called the people of God, according to the promise, I will be the God of thy descendants [Gen. 17:7], then this new covenant and sign must be much more effectual and make those a people of God who receive it.⁶⁰

Calvin discounts those who would argue with this position as *furiosus madmen*—

Let us now discuss the arguments by which some furious madmen cease not to assail this holy ordinance of God. And, first, feeling themselves pressed beyond measure by the resemblance between baptism and circumcision, they contend that there is a wide difference between the two signs, that the one has nothing in common with the other. They maintain that the things meant are different, the covenant is altogether different, and that the persons included under the name of children are different...The Jews they depict as so carnal as to resemble brutes more than men, representing the covenant which was made with them as reaching no farther than a temporary life, and the promises which were given to them as dwindling down into present and corporeal blessings⁶¹

If Calvin would take his view one step further, it would logically follow that NT baptism was, in a sense, rebaptism, for what was supposed to have really happened at circumcision (removal of sin and placing into the covenant of grace) was to be repeated under a different form. If this be the case, then why such harsh words for the *rebaptizers*? Why condemn rebaptism if NT baptism itself was nothing more than a repetition of circumcision?

We recommend that the reader, at this point, review again the previous chapter of this work wherein we demonstrated that the call of Abraham, the Abrahamic covenant, and the covenant of circumcision were three separate propositions. It was shown that circumcision never brought a soul into the bonds of eternal life, but did entitle the recipient to the temporal blessings of Jewish citizenship within the promised land of Palestine. We must recall that Jewish males were not to be circumcised until the eighth day. If performed sooner, it would have been unlawful. But David's son, who died uncircumcised before the eighth day, was in the grace of God from birth, or even from conception (II Sam. 12). Israelites and their infants at Horeb had not been circumcised and were still uncircumcised when they entered into covenant with Jehovah in Deut. 29:10-15. If circumcision insured the grace of salvation in the OT, then the human race must have been without a plan of salvation from Adam to Abraham, or under a different plan of salvation.

NT baptism, on the other hand, is administered to Jews and Gentiles, to male and female, and to believers only. Circumcision was used to distinguish the natural seed of Abraham from others. If circumcision made one the spiritual seed of Abraham, the Bible would not be constantly confronting unregenerate, yet circumcised, Jews with their lost

⁵⁹ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 244.

⁶⁰ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, pp. 257, 258.

⁶¹ Ibid., *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. II, p. 535.

condition. Neither would the Bible so clearly distinguish, in both testaments, between fleshly circumcision and circumcision of the heart, if so they are one and the same. Circumcision was a badge for the fleshly seed of Abraham, whereas baptism is a badge of the spiritual seed of Christ, and the answer of a good conscience towards God. The conscience of an infant is not altered by a ritual.

Also, baptism was established before circumcision was disestablished (after the death of Christ). Can that which is established before the other is disestablished be said to succeed or replace the other?

Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, said to the Jews: *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call* (Acts 2:39). Peter is not promising this multitude that they are already saved because they are circumcised. In fact, he is certain that they are lost, saying: *save yourselves from this untoward generation* (2:40). Neither is Peter referring to salvation promised through baptism. The *promise* is no other than the promise of life and salvation by Christ, and remission of sins by his blood, and of an increase of grace from his Spirit.⁶² And though the audience was guilty of the blood of Christ, they were told that the promise would be made good to their posterity also, provided that they did as directed. This would be true of Jews afar off in distant lands and future ages who would look on Christ and believe. This promise is for those who would be called by grace—*as many as the Lord our God shall call*. If there never was a time when circumcision saved a soul for eternity, why is it thought that infant baptism (which is said to be circumcision under a different form) will do a work of salvation that circumcision could not?

Reason # 7: (Rom. 11:16) *For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. Thus, the children of believers are also in the covenant of grace by their baptism.* Does this mean that if parents are saved, their children are also saved? If it does, then it also means that the infant fatalities of all heathen are burning in hell at this very moment. This passage must be studied in the full context of Romans 9, 10, and 11. The firstfruits and the root are the patriarchs of Israel and Abraham in particular. The lump and the branches represent Israel. Thus, Israel is set apart or sanctified unto God as a nation. This does not guarantee eternal life to all individual Israelites, for Paul speaks of some who were broken off because of unbelief (11:20), and that their only possibility of being saved was if they *abide not still in unbelief* (11:23). But even though most of Israel are broken off, the nation as a *lump* will be saved at the revelation of Jesus Christ in His second coming (11:26-27). There is not one word or syllable about baptism, much less infant baptism, in this passage; and such should not be concluded from it.

We contend that all infants are in the grace of God regardless (Rom. 7:9). But if we say that children are saved because their parents are in the faith, then we are declaring the infants of all heathen to be lost and outside the bounds of God's grace. This is a declaration which most advocates of believer's baptism refuse to make. Neither do they excuse themselves by declaring limited agnosticism on this point for if only the baptized are saved, then the unbaptized are certainly lost.

⁶² The OT promise was not a prediction of the institution of the NT ritual of baptism, though the OT does repeatedly promise salvation by Christ. The NT writers use the Red Sea and the Flood as types of baptism by way of illustration, but no OT Jewish scholar understood these literal stories as a prophecy of ritual baptism.

Reason # 8: (I Cor. 7:14) *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. This gives a claim to covenant privileges, and therefore, baptism.*

But if children, by virtue of parental holiness, have a claim to baptism, then so also does the unbelieving spouse who is sanctified by the faith of the believing yokefellow. Why is it commonly interpreted that the faith of a wife entitles an infant to baptism but not an unbelieving husband? Again, it is assumed that the children of unbelieving parents are unsanctified, and therefore, damned.

It would be much more coherent with all of Scripture if the words of 7:14 were understood as matrimonial holiness. The Jews often expressed the very act of marriage as being *sanctified*. The Hebrew often expresses the word *sanctified* as *espoused*. In this case the passage would read: *for the unbelieving husband is espoused to the wife, and the unbelieving wife is espoused to the husband*. They are legally married to each other and should not separate because of their different religious persuasions. Now if they are not truly married (or *sanctified*) to one another, their children are born out of wedlock and are therefore illegitimate. This is the sense of the following words: *else were your children unclean, but now are they holy*. And if they separate because one becomes converted, the departure would declare to all the world that their children were illegitimate; which is a reason why they ought to get legally married and stay together. Paul wanted them to avoid divorce because the Christian spouse was a channel of God's blessing in the marriage. God's blessings on the believer affected the family as a whole.⁶³ So Paul is saying that as the parents are legitimately espoused, so also, the children are holy (*sanctified*) in a civil and legal sense, that is, legitimate. John Gill has an extensive discussion giving the same sense to this passage that we are suggesting here:

The sense I have given of this passage, is agreeable to the mind of several interpreters, ancient and modern, as Jerom, Ambrose, Erasmus, Camerarius, Musculus, etc. which last writer makes this ingenuous confession: formerly, says he, I have abused this place against the Anabaptists, thinking the meaning was, that the children were holy for the parents' faith; which though true, the present place makes nothing for the purpose: and I hope, that, upon reading this, every one that has abused it too such a purpose will make the like acknowledgment; I am sure they ought.⁶⁴

The subject of baptism is not addressed in the I Cor. 7:14 passage and should never be imposed upon it.

Reason # 9: The New Testament records that those who believed were baptized, but it is nowhere written that they were the only ones. Where is the verse that says that infants were not baptized? In response to this question we might ask, where is the verse that forbids the baptism of pets, corpses, and livestock? Were not the first born of Israelite livestock spared at the first Passover when God said, *When I see the*

⁶³ (e.g. Jacob in Laban's household [Gen. 30:27] and Joseph in Potiphar's household (Gen. 39:5).

⁶⁴ John Gill, D. D., *Exposition: The New Testament* (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1852) Vol. 2, p. 192. Gill was a great Baptist theologian who was born at Kettering, in Northamptonshire, Nov. 23, 1697.

blood I will pass over you (Ex. 11:5-7)? Unquestionably, infants and livestock were spared at the first Passover. However, the Passover lamb did not spare them from eternal condemnation. It was earthly life that was spared. The first Passover served as a picture of the coming suffering Savior, but only the Savior could take away sin and deliver from condemnation (I Cor. 5:7; Jn. 1:29, 36). But if we were to use the Passover as a soul-saving ordinance, we would have as much ground to baptize livestock and dogs as we do for the baptism of infants. Actually, we should not use the Passover as grounds for the

baptism of either.

As discussed previously, it is not logically legitimate to place the burden of proof on someone to prove a negative. The burden of truth is upon him who affirms. The question is not, *where is the verse that forbids baptism of infants?*, but rather, *where is the verse that commands the baptism of unbelievers?*

Reason # 10: In the Old Testament, unbelieving infants were not cut off from the seal of the covenant, and therefore, not cut off from the covenant. So also with infant baptism in the New Testament. We observed previously in this study that OT infants who were uncircumcised were not thereby cut off from the covenant of personal salvation (e.g. Abel, Seth, Enoch, Enos, Noah, Lot, descendents of Esau, David's son by Bathsheba, etc.). Thus, we affirm again: if circumcision never removed original sin, and if baptism is circumcision under a different form, why should we conclude that baptism removes original sin?

Reason # 11: Infant baptism is an older tradition than believer's baptism in the history of the Church; therefore, it is a tradition received from the apostles. Luther wrote: *since our baptizing has been thus from the beginning of Christianity and the custom has been to baptize children, and since no one can prove with good reasons that they do not have faith, we should not make changes and build on such weak arguments.*⁶⁵ When challenged to prove his position from the Bible, Luther replies:

You say, this does not prove that child baptism is certain. For there is no passage in Scripture for it. My answer: that is true. From Scripture we cannot clearly conclude that you could establish Child baptism as a practice among the first Christians after the apostles. But you can well conclude that in our day no one may reject or neglect the practice of child baptism which has so long a tradition, since God actually not only has permitted it, but from the beginning so ordered, that it has not yet disappeared.

...if the first, or child, baptism were not right it would follow that for more than a thousand years there was no baptism or any Christendom, which is impossible...For over a thousand years there were hardly any other but child baptisms. If this baptism is wrong then for that long period Christendom would have been without baptism, and if it were without baptism it would not be Christendom...But the fact that child baptism has spread throughout all the Christian world to this day gives rise to no probability that it is wrong, but rather to a strong indication that it is right.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 241.

⁶⁶ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, pp. 256, 257.

It is commonly contended that infant baptism is a tradition of the church received from the apostles, yet no other proof can be given but the testimony of Origen (c. 185-c. 254) and none before that. Gill states that the Origen references are not in his genuine Greek writings, but only from some Latin translations—*confessedly interpolated, and so corrupted, that it is owned, one is at a loss to find Origen in Origen*.⁶⁷ Gill further contends that no mention of infant baptism is made in the first two centuries. It first appears in the third century when Tertullian speaks against it.⁶⁸

Reason # 12: Ritual must precede reality by divine order before the inner work of God's saving grace can take place. Luther comments:

Now when God sends forth his holy gospel he deals with us in a twofold manner, first outwardly, then inwardly. Outwardly he deals with us through the oral word of the gospel and through the material signs, that is, baptism and the sacrament of the altar. Inwardly he deals with us through the Holy Spirit, faith, and other gifts. But whatever their measure or order the outward factor should and must precede. The inward experience follows and is effected by the outward. God has determined to give the inward to no one except through the outward. For he wants to give no one the Spirit or faith outside the outward Word and sign instituted by him, as he says in Luke 16 [:29], "Let them hear Moses and the prophets." Accordingly Paul can call baptism a "washing of regeneration" wherein God "richly pours out the Holy Spirit" [Titus 3:5]...Observe carefully, my brother, this order, for everything depends on it. However cleverly this factious spirit makes believe that he regards highly the Word and Spirit of God and declaims passionately about love and zeal for the truth and righteousness of God, he nevertheless has as his purpose to reverse this order. His insolence leads him to set up a contrary order and, as we have said, seeks to subordinate God's outward order to an inner spiritual one.⁶⁹

Packer uses Acts 10:43, 44 to prove that baptism of the Spirit into the Body of Christ preceded faith—

Since Pentecost, becoming a member of God's family according to his revealed will—Christian initiation, to use the technical phrase—has involved three factors: repentance and faith, plus Christian baptism, plus the coming of the Spirit for new covenant ministry (cf. Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9ff.; Ephesians 1:13ff.). In experience, the order has varied; apparently it was faith-baptism-Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:38-42), Spirit-faith-baptism at the "Gentile Pentecost" (Acts 10:44-48), faith-Spirit-baptism at Galatia (Galatians 3:2); certainly, it has been baptism-faith-Spirit for all those Christians down the centuries who were baptized as infants. The order scarcely matters; what matters is that all three links between us and Jesus Christ—faith, baptism, Spirit—should actually be there.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ John Gill, *Body of Divinity* (Atlanta, Georgia: Turner Lassetter, 1965), p. 909.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Gill, p. 909. Also, "The antiquity of a custom, is no proof of the truth and genuineness of it; *The customs of the people are vain*, Jer. X. 3".

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, *Luther*, Vol. 40, pp. 146, 147.

⁷⁰ J. I. Packer, *Growing in Christ* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994), pp. 124, 125.

Actually, there are no examples in the NT of the baptism of the Spirit prior to faith, and no examples of Scriptural water baptism prior to faith.

We respond to Luther and J. I. Packer by asking several questions. Why did John the Baptist require evidence of an inward change before he would baptize the Pharisees (Matt. 3:7, 8)? Why does faith precede baptism in Mark 16:16 if the outward sign must always precede inward grace? Why did the house of Cornelius receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit before ritual baptism (Acts 10:47; 11:15, 16)? Why did Peter liken this occasion to his own salvation and to that of the church of Jerusalem (Acts 11:17)? Why did the Jerusalem church recognize the experience of Acts 10:43, 44 to be a *repentance unto life* (Acts 11:18)? Why did Peter argue at the Jerusalem council that their [house of Cornelius] baptism of the Spirit into the Body of Christ was an inward work of the Spirit in their hearts prior to their ritual baptism (Acts 15:8, 9)? Why did Peter insist that our salvation experience must be the same as theirs in order to be real (Acts. 15:11)? Why does Paul refer to the gospel of Christ as *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek* (Rom. 1:16)? And if the imputed righteousness of God is revealed from baptism to faith, why does Paul say, *for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith...?*

Reason # 13: Submitting to rebaptism as an adult could bring damnation to one's soul through blasphemy. Luther writes: *for whoever permits himself to be rebaptized rejects his former faith and righteousness, and is guilty of sin and condemnation. Of all things such behavior is most horrible. As St. Paul, says, the Galatians have severed themselves from Christ [Gal. 5:4], even making Christ a servant of sin, when they circumcise themselves.*⁷¹ Thus, Luther believed that the rebaptizers represented salvation by works and were the same as the *Judaizers* of Paul's day—

It is the devil's masterpiece when he can get someone to compel the Christian to leave the righteousness of faith for a righteousness of works, as he forced the Galatians and Corinthians on to works though, as St Paul writes, they were doing well in their faith and running rightly in Christ [Gal. 5:7].⁷²

True, one should add faith to baptism. But we are not to base baptism on faith [believer's baptism]... Whoever allows himself to be baptized on the strength of his faith, is not only uncertain, but also an idolater who denies Christ. For he trusts in and builds on something of his own, namely, on a gift which he has from God, and not on God's Word alone...But on a baptism on the Word and command of God even when faith is not present is still a correct and certain baptism if it takes place as God commanded.⁷³

They [rebaptizers] are guilty also of blaspheming and denying the commandment and work of God...

Since then these baptizers are altogether unsure of themselves and reveal that they are lying, and thereby deny and blaspheme the ordinance of God...every devout Christian, convinced that they are misleading, uncertain, and perverted spirits, should avoid them at the

⁷¹ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 249.

⁷² Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 249.

⁷³ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 252.

peril of his soul's salvation. May Christ, our Lord, grant this and help us. Amen.⁷⁴

In sum, the Anabaptists are too frivolous and insolent...They attract a great many people by using great, high-sounding words of slander against baptism...The Jews do the same to this day. In order to keep their children in their faith they blaspheme Christ shamelessly, refer to him as "the hanged one" and confidently lie about him...

Since then, as far as I have been able to see and hear, the Anabaptists have no argument but high-sounding words of sacrilege, everyone ought properly to shun and avoid them as messengers of none other than the devil, sent out into the world to blaspheme the Word and ordinance of God so that people might not believe therein and be saved. For they are the birds who eat the seed sown by the wayside (Matt. 13 [:4]).⁷⁵

It seems strange, therefore, that the twelve "so-called" disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus were not damned when they submitted to rebaptism. Not only were they not damned, but they received the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues when Paul subsequently laid hands on them (Acts 19:4-7). There has never been a scriptural grounds to say that those who submit to *believer's rebaptism* are condemned for doing so.

Reason # 14: If we do not bring babies into the Body of Christ, our chances of persuading them as adults are statistically diminished to the extent that Christians will be reduced to an insignificant minority in the nations of the world.

Luther again makes the following comments:

It seems to me to be the result of God's special counsel and providence that we baptize infants in all of Christendom throughout the world and do not wait until they grow up and reach the age of discretion. If we were now to baptize them as grownups and older persons, I am certain that a tenth of them would not let themselves be baptized. Indeed, if it were up to us, we would surely long, long ago have become nothing but Turks [Moslems]. For those who were not baptized would not go to church and would despise all its doctrine and practice because the church seeks to make them holy, godly people. In fact, this is what they are doing now, although they have been baptized and claim to be Christians. .. If such an unbaptized multitude would gain the upper hand, what could the result be but a Turkish kingdom or heathenism?...

Indeed, I am willing to make a substantial wager that the devil, through the activity of the factious spirits and the Anabaptists [rebaptizers], has all this in mind so that he might put an end to infant baptism, and would want only adults to be baptized...⁷⁶

However, one of the qualifications for bishop on the island of Crete was the ability to persuade those in error (Titus 1:9-11). Those of the synagogue of the Libertines and Cyrenians and Alexandrians *were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he [Stephen] spake* (Acts 6:9, 10). Paul said, *knowing therefore the terror of the Lord,*

⁷⁴ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, pp. 260, 261.

⁷⁵ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, pp. 259, 260.

⁷⁶ *Luther's Works: Word And Sacrament, IV*, Martin E. Lehmann, Editor; Helmut T. Lehmann, General Editor (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), Vol. 38, p. 97.

we persuade men (II Cor. 5:11a). The writer of Hebrews speaks of OT saints as a *persuaded* people (Heb. 11:13). Jude exhorts us all to *earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints* (Jude 3b).

This is why the Apostle Peter exhorts us to, *sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear* (I Pet. 3:15). It was Paul's manner to reason with the unconverted Jews *out of the Scriptures* (Acts 17:2b). In Corinth, Paul *reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks* (Acts 18:4). He did the same when he came to Ephesus (Acts 18:19). Paul, when on trial for his life, *reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come* to governor Felix (Acts 24:25a). He did the same with King Agrippa who said, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian* (Acts 26:28b).

Advocates of *believer's baptism* do not doubt the sufficiency of Scripture and the gospel to persuade men to believe, *for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God* (I Cor. 1:18). How can anyone say that we would all be Jews or Turks if we had not been placed into Christ by infant baptism? We believe that the gospel of Christ is *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek* (Rom. 1:16b). Paul wonders how anyone can call on the Lord if they do not believe; and how can they believe if they don't hear; and how can they hear without a preacher (Rom. 10:14). But how can they preach except they be sent (vs. 15)? All Christians have been sent to proclaim the gospel. Those who obey this call are those with *beautiful feet* in the sight of God (Rom. 10:15)—

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:4, 5).

Yes, Christ did send us to make believers and disciples in all nations (Mk. 16:15, 16; Matt. 28:18-20).

Reason # 15: The *infant baptism* position is often based upon a special divine illumination which its theological proponents possessed, and of which the proponents of the *believer's baptism* did not. Therefore, the latter lack the proper credentials to be ministers of the truth and interpreters of the Bible. This *divine illumination* defines itself as a direct, extra-biblical revelation enabling one to derive infant baptism from passages that do not even remotely discuss the subject of baptism. It is contradictory to define *illumination* thusly and still affirm the *Sole Authority of Scripture*. Let us look again at Luther's comments:

Satan does these things against us, in order to make our teaching seem contemptible, as if we could not have the right spirit or teaching because we had not been rightly baptized. But we know the tree by its fruits [Matt. 7:16f.]. For neither among the papists nor among these rebellious spirits do we find men who can handle and interpret Scripture as skillfully as do those on our side by the grace of God. This is not the least of the Spirit's gifts (I Cor. 12 [:10]).⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, pp. 249, 250.

Having made up their minds concerning their peculiar notions, they attempt to make the Scriptures agree with them by dragging passages in by the hair. But Christ has faithfully stood by our side up to this point and will continue to trod Satan under our foot.⁷⁸

It is proper for officials, judges, and those concerned with government to be certain of their right to suspect these infiltrators not only of false teaching, but also of violence and revolt, realizing that the devil occupies the driver's seat in these people. Through their lieutenants they should assemble their subjects and call attention to and warn against such villains. They should sternly command their people to inform on these intruders on peril of heavy penalty, and make clear their duties as subjects if they do not wish to be regarded as accomplices in murder and revolt, which is the devil's purpose. Like the church officials they should press the matter of the call, questioning the infiltrator or his host, as mentioned previously, whence do you come? Who sent you? And the host should be asked, who has bidden you to give this intruder lodging, or to listen to his clandestine preaching? How do you know that he is authorized to teach you or you to learn of him? Why have you not notified the parish pastor or us? Why do you slouch in dark corners and forsake the church where you were baptized, instructed, went to communion and where you belong, in the order of God? Why, secretly and without commission, do you start something new? Who has given you right to divide this parish and cause dissensions among us? Who has commanded you to despise your pastor, to judge and condemn him behind his back without a charge or a fair hearing? Since when are you a judge of your pastor, or for that matter, your own judge?⁷⁹

The illumination of God is not something that shines on the words of Scripture, but is the words of Scriptures itself—*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path* (Ps. 119:105). A theologian seeks to make his position untouchable when he claims that God has granted him a special interpretation of a passage that is beyond the actual words and refutes all challengers on the grounds of their lack of his *special illumination*.

The question is often asked of us, *do you believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture?* whereupon we answer spontaneously in the affirmative. *Plenary* means *full* and *verbal* means *words*. Therefore, the full message of God is in the words. We do not really believe this when we claim divine insight beyond the words. Paul knew that unbelievers had minds designed by a sovereign God to comprehend the light of His Word. How else could they *hold the truth in unrighteousness* (Rom. 1:18), and know God while glorifying Him not as God (Rom. 1:21)? Why else would Luke call the unbelieving Bereans noble for receiving the Word with *all readiness of mind* and for searching *the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*; and why does Luke conclude that, *therefore, many of them believed* (Acts 17:11b, 12a)? Why else could Paul say to lost Agrippa:

⁷⁸ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 262.

⁷⁹ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, pp. 385, 386.

For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest (Acts 26:26, 27)?

Why was the gift of tongues given as a sign to unbelieving Jews if unbelievers are unable to deduce anything of eternal value from them (I Cor. 14:21, 22)? Why is it that if the *unlearned* and *unbelievers* come into the church and hear the forthtelling of the Word of God, that they are convinced of all (I Cor. 14:24)? Are we attributing saving virtue to lost man by this line of reasoning? Not unless the Bible calls such mental comprehension a saving virtue, which it does not. Peter tells the redeemed to add virtue to their faith (II Pet. 1:5). Personal virtue requires works and obedience to law which, by definition, salvation by faith does not—

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works (Rom. 4:5, 6).

The ability of a lost soul to comprehend objective truth does not originate from him, but from the common grace of God upon all mankind. Were it not for God's sovereign common grace, lost man could never have drawn his first breath, learned to read, or planted a garden. Apart from God's sovereign grace (both common and effectual) man can do nothing.

Satan knows full well that God has designed the human mind to comprehend objective truth and subjectively internalize it. Satan knows that if he doesn't work hard to blind them that they will indeed see the light—

In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (II Cor. 4:4).

The gospel does not need *lit* because it is *light* (cf. Ps. 119:105).

Yes, lost people can read and diagram sentences and look up words, but if there is no extra-biblical divine illumination, how do we explain I Cor. 2:14, 15a?—

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things.

First of all, this passage describes natural man as being spiritually unreceptive to divine truth, but he is not an intellectual box of rocks. All messages directed to the lost in the NT presuppose their ability to comprehend what is being preached. Though natural man, by God's sovereign, common grace, can understand the message, it is spiritual discernment that receives it. Discernment is accepting rather than rejecting what you understand of spiritual things.

Secondly, the natural man cannot *know* these spiritual things. The word *know* does not refer to the intellect here but rather to experience. Spiritual knowledge cannot be experienced until one exercises the discernment to receive it (Jn. 1:12). When the virgin Mary said to the angel, *How shall this be, seeing I know not a man* (Lk. 1:34), what did she mean? She knew men (her father, uncle Zechariah, her espoused Joseph),

but she had never received a man into a personal experience that would result in pregnancy. When Jesus finally says, *I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity* (Matt. 7:22), there will be nothing about them that He will not omnisciently understand. What He will mean is that He had never received them into an experiential relationship with Himself.

What does Paul mean when he says that, *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God* (Rom. 3:11). If we qualify this statement with verse 10, we know that no one understands and seeks God in righteousness for, *there is none righteous, no, not one*. But Agrippa understood (Acts 26), the Bereans understood (Acts 17), the unbelievers who would wander into the Corinthian church would understand (I Cor. 14:24, 25), and the devil knows that if he doesn't blind them, they will understand (II Cor. 4:4). Jesus said to the lost: *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house*. Jesus said that Tyre and Sidon would have repented had they seen the objective works that He performed in Chorazin and Bethsaida (Matt. 11:21). Abraham told the rich man in hell that his five lost brothers could avoid coming there if they would hear Moses and the prophets (Lk. 16:28-31).

We understand Christ's parables because we have His personal interpretation recorded in the Scriptures. In His day He related His personal interpretation privately to the disciples so that the public would not understand. Had he relayed this information publicly, it could have been publicly understood—

And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand (Lk. 8:10).

The public did not hear that the *seed is the word of God*; or who they were that fell by the *way side*; or that the *fowls of the air* were the devil *taking the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved* (8:12). The public did not know that they on the rock are believers who fall away into temptation; and that those who fell *among thorns* are those who are *choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life*; or that the *good ground* is the believer that brings *forth fruit* (8:13-15). Now that we have Christ's parables plus His private interpretation in writing, the information is public and understandable, as the libraries of apostate seminaries will demonstrate.

This claim of special illumination, enabling one to confirm infant baptism from passages which do not even discuss the subject, is nothing short of a claim of apostolic inerrancy and direct revelation from God. We, on the other hand, declare the all sufficiency of God's Word as it is written.

Reason # 16: Those who forsake their Christian baptism for rebaptism as believers would have been more likely to have remained saved under the Pope in Catholicism. Luther said:

They take a severe stand against the pope, but they miss their mark and murder the more terribly the Christendom under the pope. For if they would permit baptism and the sacrament of the altar to stand as they are, Christians under the pope might yet escape with their souls and be saved, as has been the case hitherto. But now when the sacraments are

taken from them, they will most likely be lost, since even Christ himself is thereby taken away.⁸⁰

The Council of Trent was not only the Roman Catholic Church's response to the Reformation, but was also a response to Anabaptists who were practicing *believer's baptism*.⁸¹ In *The Canons and Dogmatic Decrees of the Council of Trent, A.D. 1563*, referring to the Seventh Session held March 3, 1547, *Decree on the Sacraments*, we read:

[Canon IX]--If any one saith, that, in the three sacraments, to wit, Baptism, Confirmation, and Order, there is not imprinted in the soul a character, that is, a certain spiritual and indelible sign, on account of which they can not be repeated: let him be anathema.⁸²

[On Baptism, Canon III]--If anyone saith, that in the Roman Church, which is the mother and mistress of all churches, there is not the true doctrine concerning the sacrament of baptism: let him be anathema.⁸³

[Canon V]--If any one saith, that baptism is free, that is, not necessary unto salvation: let him be anathema.⁸⁴

[Canon XIII]—If any one saith, that little children, for that they have not actual faith, are not, after having received baptism, to be reckoned amongst the faithful; and that for this cause, they are to be rebaptized when they have attained to years of discretion: or, that it is better that the baptism of such be omitted, than that, while not believing by their own act, they should be baptized in the faith alone of the Church: let him be anathema.⁸⁵

The Novationists were third century rebaptizers (perhaps the first anabaptists) whose doctrinal viewpoints continued through the Council of Trent.⁸⁶ During the Fourteenth Session, held November 25, 1551, Chapter one states:

And the Catholic Church with great reason repudiated and condemned as heretics the Novations, who of old obstinately denied that power of forgiving. Wherefore, this holy synod, approving of and receiving as most true this meaning of those words of our Lord, condemns the

⁸⁰ Ibid., *Luther*, Vol. 40, p. 233.

⁸¹ That the Acts of the Council of Trent still stands, was affirmed by Pope John XXIII in 1962 during his opening speech to the Vatican II Ecumenical Council when he said, "The salient point of this Council is not, therefore, a discussion of one article or another of the fundamental doctrine of the Church which has repeatedly been taught by the Fathers and by ancient and modern theologians, and which is presumed to be well known and familiar to all. For this a council was not necessary...as it still shines forth in the Acts of the Council of Trent and First Vatican Council..." *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott, S.J. and Joseph Gallagher, Editors (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 715.

⁸² *The Creeds of Christendom With a History and Critical Notes*, Philip Schaff, Editor; Revised by David S. Schaff (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), Vol. II *The Greek and Latin Creeds*, p. 121.

⁸³ Ibid., *Creeds*, Vol. II, p. 122.

⁸⁴ Ibid., *Creeds*, Vol. II, p. 123.

⁸⁵ Ibid., *Creeds*, Vol. II, pp. 124, 125.

⁸⁶ Novation flourished from 249-251 A.D. as a highly educated priest, theologian and writer. During the Decian persecution many believers lapsed and denied the faith. Novation demanded a correct profession of faith and rebaptism before he would readmit them to the church. For this, he was proclaimed a heretic and excommunicated by a Roman synod. He set up his own anabaptist church, which lasted to the eighth century. We will discuss Novation and his followers at length in the next chapter.

fanciful interpretations of those who, in opposition to the institution of this sacrament, falsely wrest those words to the power of preaching the Word of God, and of announcing the Gospel of Christ.⁸⁷

According to the preceding citations from Luther and Catholicism, one is expected to conclude that all advocates of *believer's baptism*, and therefore *rebaptism*, are hopelessly condemned to hell without remedy. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*:

*An anathema is different from excommunication for, according to Gratian, the latter excluded one only from the sacraments while anathema signified total separation from the faith.*⁸⁸

Most advocates of believer's baptism hold that it is an ordinance and not a sacrament. Ryrie distinguishes between the two concepts as follows:

The Council of Trent defined a sacrament as "something presented to the sense, which has the power, by divine institution, not only of signifying, but also of efficiently conveying grace."

By contrast, "ordinance" (though a synonym of sacrament in the dictionary) does not incorporate the idea of conveying grace but only the idea of a symbol.⁸⁹

Advocates of *believer's baptism* are quick to point out that John the Baptist only baptized believers (Matt. 3:2-6). But when Pharisees and Sadducees came to him for baptism, he turned them away until they showed proof that they had changed their minds about Christ (Matt. 3:7, 8). Jesus commanded that only the disciples were to be baptized (Matt. 28:19). Jesus commanded belief and then baptism (Mk. 16:16). On the Day of Pentecost, Peter told the Jews to repent and then to be baptized (Acts 2:37, 38). On that Day of Pentecost it was *they that gladly received his word that were baptized* (Acts 2:41). The Samaritans were baptized after they believed the preaching of Philip (Acts 8:12). Even Simon the sorcerer had to make a profession of faith before he could be baptized (Acts 8:13). The Ethiopian Eunuch asked Phillip: *what doth hinder me to be baptized?* (Acts 8:36b), to which Philip replied, *If thou believest...thou mayest*. The Apostle Paul was a believer before he was baptized (Acts 9:18; 26:19). The House of Cornelius believed before they were baptized (Acts 10:43-47).⁹⁰ Lydia was baptized after she believed (Acts 16:14, 15). Paul and Silas preached the Word to all that were in the Philippian jailer's house; they all believed and then Paul baptized them (Acts 16:31-33). Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, with his whole house, and many

⁸⁷ Ibid., *Creeds*, Vol. II, p. 141.

⁸⁸ *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia*, Rev. Peter M.J. Stravinskias, Ph.D., S.T.L., Editor (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Inc., 1991), p. 67. Some Catholic authorities say that anathemas were abolished after the Second Vatican Council but we have not found where the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent have been repealed. However, we can find many contemporary authorities who proclaim that the Church still stands by the documents of the Council of Trent.

⁸⁹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide To Understanding Biblical Truth* (USA, Canada, England: Victor Books, 1987), P. 421.

⁹⁰ No one in the book of Acts received the baptism of the Spirit into the Body of Christ until after belief. No one but believers had the gift of tongues, *And these signs shall follow them that believe...they shall speak with new tongues* (Mk. 16:17). The house of Cornelius spoke in tongues and received the baptism of the Spirit before water baptism (Acts 10: 45-48), c.f. Acts 11:15, 16 with 10: 44.

Corinthians, *hearing believed, and were baptized* (Acts 18:8). Paul said that John the Baptist would baptize only those who believed *on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus* (Acts 19:4b). The disciples of Jesus were baptized but not by Christ (Jn. 4:1, 2), therefore, they must have had John's baptism (c.f. Jn. 3:22, 23). Regardless, they were believers before they were baptized. The Apostle Paul had *begotten, espoused, and fathered* many believers in Corinth (I Cor. 4:15; II Cor. 11:2) without baptizing them (I Cor. 1:14). Throughout the Scriptures, the gospel is presented in terms of belief alone in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, or more simply, belief in Christ as the supplier of salvation (I Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 8:1; Jn. 3:15-18, 36; Acts 16:31).

It seems strange indeed to advocates of *believer's baptism* when Luther and Calvin insist that these *satanic, demonic, heretical, schismatics* are only imagining the Bible to teach the baptism of believers only and that they are dragging the Scriptures *by the hair* in order to find this doctrine when it is not actually there. The actuality is that the *believer's baptism* advocates cannot find any other baptism in the NT, except for those who were rebaptized because their faith was not in Jesus Christ at their first baptism (as with the so-called disciples of John in Acts 19:1-7).⁹¹ Not only in the NT, but the *believer's baptism* persuasion finds its position to be of greater antiquity in history than that of infant baptism. They are not moved by the fact that theirs has been the minority position because the terms *mainstream* and *fringe* have seldom been a factor in their search for the truth of this matter.

Clement of Alexandria supposedly died about A.D. 220. He had been the head of the Catechetical School at Alexandria at the close of the second century. In his work called *The Instructor* he writes: *And since knowledge springs up with illumination, shedding its beams around the mind, the moment we hear, we who were untaught become disciples...For instruction leads to faith, and faith with baptism is trained by the Holy Spirit.*⁹²

Tertullian flourished from about 196 through 212 A.D. and began writing in Carthage, North Africa towards the end of the second century. In his work *Against Praxeas*, in which he affirms the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, he claims to be a defender of the *rule of faith that has come down to us from the beginning of the gospel even before any of the older heretics.*⁹³ Concerning baptism, he said that: *preaching is the prior thing, baptizing the posterior.*⁹⁴ Concerning candidates for baptism he said: *the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children.*⁹⁵ Regarding preparation for baptism he writes:

They who are about to enter baptism ought to pray with repeated prayers, fasts, and bendings of the knee, and vigils all the night through, and with the confession of all bygone sins, that they may

⁹¹ We will discuss this passage as an example of anabaptism in chapter nine of this present work.

⁹² Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* [chapter 5] in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Fathers of the Second Century*, Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D., Editors (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), Vol. II, p.217.

⁹³ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* [chapter 2] *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Latin Christianity: its Founder Tertullian* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), Vol. III, p. 597.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Tertullian, *On Baptism* [chapter 14] *Ante-nicene Fathers*, Vol. III, p. 676.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Tertullian, *On Baptism* [chapter 19] Vol. III, p. 678.

express the meaning even of the baptism of John: "They were baptized," saith (the Scripture), "confessing their own sins."⁹⁶

Tertullian understood John's baptism to be from God but he denied that it was celestial. Using the words of John the Baptist:

"He who is from the earth speaketh concerning the earth; He who comes from the realms above is above all" and again, by saying that he "baptized" in repentance only, but One would shortly come who would baptize in the spirit and fire.⁹⁷

His point is that baptism is earthly and does not remit sins. He insists that *repentance is*

antecedent, remission subsequent—

But if repentance is a thing human, its baptism must necessarily be of the same nature: else, if it had been celestial, it would have given both the Holy spirit and remission of sins. But none either pardons sins or freely grants the Spirit save God only.⁹⁸

Tertullian is a unique example of one who advocated believer's baptism yet still believed that baptism was necessary to salvation (c.f. discussion in chapter seven).

At the Seventh Council of Carthage under Cyprian, one Felix of Bussacene said: *In the matter of receiving heretics without the baptism of the Church, let no one prefer custom to reason and truth, because reason and truth always exclude custom.*⁹⁹ And *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, written at least as early as the first half of the second century, states: *But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whatever others can; but thou shalt order the baptized to fast one or two days before.*¹⁰⁰ In the Pseudo-Clementine literature, purporting to be authored by Clement of Rome, there is a work called *Recognitions of Clement*. In the chapter entitled *Baptism must be preceded by Fasting* it states:

When Niceta had spoken thus, our mother fell down at Peter's feet, entreating and beseeching him that both herself and her hostess might be baptized without delay...But she must fast at least one day first, and so be baptized; and this because I have heard from her a certain declaration, by which her faith has been made manifest to me, and which has given evidence of her belief; otherwise she must have been

⁹⁶ Ibid., Tertullian, *On Baptism* [chapter 20] Vol. III, pp. 678, 679.

⁹⁷ Ibid., Tertullian, *On Baptism* [chapter 10] Vol. III, p. 674.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Tertullian, *On Baptism* [chapter 10] Vol. III, p. 674. Note also his work *The Chaplet, or De Corona* on p. 94: "To deal with this matter briefly, I shall begin with baptism. When we are going to enter the water, but a little before, in the presence of the congregation and under the hand of the president, we solemnly profess that we disown the devil, and his pomp, and his angels." Again, we must remind ourselves that Tertullian makes baptism essential to salvation on other pages of his writings, Vol. 3, pp. 672, 674, 675.

⁹⁹ Cyprian, *The Seventh Council of Carthage: Concerning the Baptism of Heretics, The Judgment Of Eighty-Seven Bishops On The Baptism Of Heretics In Ante-Nicene Fathers: Fathers of the Third Century*, Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D., Editors (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), Vol. 5, p. 571.

¹⁰⁰ *The Teaching Of The Twelve Apostles in Ante-Nicene Fathers: Fathers down to A.D. 325*, Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D., Editors (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Company, 1975), Vol. VII, p. 379.5

instructed and taught many days before she could have been baptized.¹⁰¹

Philip Schaff introduces us to the life and work of St. John Chrysostom as *The greatest pulpit orator and commentator of the Greek Church*. Schaff divides his life into five periods the first of which is: *His youth and training till his conversion and baptism, A. D. 347-370*. He was born in 347 at Antioch, the capital of Syria, where the church of Antioch had sent out the first Gentile mission and where the disciples were first called Christians. He had a very godly Christian mother, Anthusa, whom Schaff describes as *among the most pious mothers of the fourth century*¹⁰²—

Anthusa gained general esteem by her exemplary life. The famous advocate of heathenism, Libanius, on hearing of her consistency and devotion, felt constrained to exclaim: "Bless me! What wonderful women there are among the Christians."¹⁰³

Chrysostom was not converted from cultural heathenism, because his heathen father died in his infancy, and his mother dedicated herself to planting *in his soul the germs of piety, which afterwards bore the richest fruits for himself and the church. By her admonitions and teachings of the Bible, he was secured against the seductions of heathenism.*¹⁰⁴ Why then did she postpone his baptism till the age of maturity? If she was so respected by the church, why hadn't she brought her son as an infant to be baptized? Schaff says:

Even Christian parents, as the father and mother of Gregory Nazianzen, the mother of Chrysostom, and the mother of Augustin, put off the baptism of their offspring.

This is not to be associated with the superstitious heresy of putting off baptism till the end of life, thinking that sins after baptism cannot be covered by baptism—

e.g. The Emperor Constantine who favored Christianity as early as 312, and convened the Council of Nicea in 325, who postponed baptism till 337, shortly before his death. The orthodox Emperor Theodosius the Great was not baptized till the first year of his reign (380), when attacked by a serious illness.¹⁰⁵

Chrysostom often rebukes this superstition, but he never renounced his own baptism. Schaff says: *His baptism was, as in the case of St. Augustin, the turning point in his life, an entire renunciation of this world and dedication to the service of Christ.*¹⁰⁶

Augustine was born Nov. 13, 354, of Christian parents, but he did not receive baptism from Ambrose in Milan until Easter Sunday of the year 387.¹⁰⁷ St. Jerome (c.

¹⁰¹ Pseudo Clementine, *Recognitions of Clement in Ante-Nicene Fathers: Down to A.D. 325*, Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D., Editors (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), Vol. VIII, p. 164.

¹⁰² Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., *Prolegomena: The Life and Work of St. John Chrysostom*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Philip Schaff, Editor (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), Vol. IX, p. 5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity*, Vol. IX, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity*, Vol. IX, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity*, Vol. IX, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity*, Vol. IX, p. 6.

347-420), author of the Vulgate Translation of the Bible into Latin, was not baptized in infancy, even though his father, Eusebius and his mother were Catholic Christians.¹⁰⁸

The reader should not see this chapter as an attack on all who are baptized as infants. Our concern is with the belief that infant baptism regenerates and saves one's soul. There are innumerable parents throughout Christendom who had their infants baptized as a public commitment on their part to live for the day that this child would profess faith in the gospel of Christ's grace and become born again. There are many in the

Reformed tradition who practice infant baptism with this in view. And even though there may still be disagreements over the candidates and mode of Christian baptism, their gospel is one of grace alone (without works), by faith alone in the finished work of Christ on the cross (not in the water).¹⁰⁹ Just as there were thousands of circumcised infants in the OT who never embraced the grace of God as adults, but instead trusted their circumcision to save their souls, so also there are many who were baptized as infants who never grew to embrace the saving grace of Christ. Their only testimony is something like, *I know I'm going to heaven; that was settled when my parents had me baptized as an infant.*

In the following chapter we will discuss the history of the *baptismal regeneration* position and offer cross-examining questions from Scripture, in order that the reader may acquire his own conclusions.

¹⁰⁷ Philip Schaff, *Prolegomena: St Augustin's Life and Work in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Phillip Schaff D.D., LL.D., Editor (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), Vol. I, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Prolegomena to Jerome in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. & Henry Wace, D.D., Editors (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), Vol. VI, p. xvi.

¹⁰⁹ From an historical perspective, these truly Christian parents should consider the fact that the *dedication* rather than the *regeneration* view of infant baptism is relatively new. Almost every argument for infant baptism in ancient and medieval church history is an argument for baptismal regeneration.