

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, November 14. 1691.

We having receiv'd so many Questions about Infant-Baptism, that 'tis impossible to State 'em all, Verbatim; yet we'll do all our Querists Justice, as near as such a small Paper will permit, by Stating the summe of all such Questions as are of the same Nature together, which perhaps may be fully reduc'd to these following Ones:

Quest. 1. Whether (as is commonly Taught) Baptism is the Proper and Natural Antitype of Circumcision? if this be prov'd,

the great Pillar of Antipædobaptism falls to the ground, and with it the superstructure from which all such Consequences as have been deduc'd by Antipædobaptists, or Baptists, miscall'd by the Name of Anabaptists.

Ans. Not knowing the Customs of Nations, Linguisms, (if we may so say) or Expressions only peculiar to such and such Tongues, together with the Ignorance of the Radixes or Original Significations in Languages, are the great Obstacle of understanding Truth, and by consequence, the unhappy Introductions into many dangerous Heresies and Schisms in the Church. Perhaps these may be the great Cause of Disputes upon this present Subject, not to mention a Spirit of Contention. Our positive Answer to the Question, is, that in many Cases it will bear the Affirmative: Which we shall endeavour to prove from the following Considerations.

First, From the Customs amongst the Jews, in Profelyting the Gentiles into their Religion, so far indeed Circumcision was not properly a Type, but rather a Continuance of a Custom, that by St. John, our Saviour and his Apostles, had added unto it all that was necessary to make it a full, proper and pertinent Type of Baptism.

That Baptism was the Common Custom of initiating Profelytes amongst the Jews by whole Families, which had also their Sponsors as we now have, is so well known by all Baptists, (or Anabaptists) that they can't deny it: So that it was the likeliest way for 'em to find little opposition in the practice of it; for had St. John the Baptist, &c. undertook any New way of Profelyting the Jews into the Gospel, they had not only struggled with the Oppositions of a New Doctrine, but also of a New Practice, therefore it was that this Custom was continued, and had the superaddition of the full force of Baptism, viz. A Consecration or Seal of the Covenant. And this is further strengthened by several undeniable Texts in Scripture which Anabaptists themselves can never get clear of, and ask 'em the Exposition, they must either be silent, or give such a Paraphrase as we do — The Texts are these: First, In whom also ye were Circumcised with the Circumcision made without hands, in putting off the Body of the sins of the Flesh, by the Circumcision of Christ, HAVING BEEN BURYED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM — The next is — The Baptizing the Israelites in the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10. 2. According to St. Cyprian, *Matrem autem illud, &c.* That the Red Sea was that Sacrament of Baptism the Apostle declares, saying, I would not have you ignorant — and adds, *All these things are our Figures.* Cyprian. Ep. 69. Ed. Ox. — The last is, The saving of Noah and his Family in the Ark, &c. 1 Pet. 3. 21. We urge not these to prove any thing else but the Paralel between Circumcision and Baptism; or to speak more properly, the necessary continuance of the Old Manner amongst the Jews of continuing their way of Profelyting the Heathens, which by the way had no need to be expressly set down in what Method, what Persons, whether Infants or not, the Custom being so well known before hand. But here we meet with an Objection of Baptizing Females, because Females were not Circumcised, the impossibility of the Modus or Manner how, makes the Question foreign; but all were Baptiz'd, both Men, Women and Children, amongst the Heathens, before they were admitted into the Jewish Religion, which Answers the Objection — Besides we cou'd, if it

were not a little impertinent, tell our Querist that several Nations had and yet continue the Custom of Circumcizing the Nymphæ of their Females, both upon a Religious and Civil Account: Some will tell us that this Custom (and 'tis not very improbable) was derived from the Jews, it being well known that the Doctrine of the Trinity which Plato taught, was learn'd from the Rabbi's, and also that several Nations have several Jewish Customs amongst 'em, the Jews being dispersed through the whole World, and in some places in very considerable Numbers.

Quest. 2. What certain indubitable Grounds can we have for the Practice of Infant-Baptism?

Ans. From the Scripture: And First from the Order of the Words in the Commission, *μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, Disciple all Nations*; and then follows *βαπτίζοντες καὶ διδάσκοντες*; from the Order of which Words, 1. Infants are not Excluded from Baptism, as is generally believ'd by Anabaptists. 2. A Person may be Baptiz'd before he be Taught — For *μαθητεύσατε* signifies to Disciple all Nations, personally and subjectively, as we shall shew presently; being a general Word, it contains in it the two others that follow, viz. *βαπτίζοντες καὶ διδάσκοντες*, Baptizing and Teaching, it being the Imperative Mood, and the other two only Participles: So that the Commission of it is that, and the Mode of it these: But in the Mode, Baptizing 'em, precedes, Teaching 'em to observe, &c. Secondly, Children are capable of Profelytism, as may be observ'd from our Saviour's words, when he said, *Suffer little Children to come unto me*; the Original is *ἐλθεῖν πρὸς*, which is the same with *προσελθεῖν*, to Profelyte, which also Confirms the first Exposition of the Order of the Commission before recited — Besides, when we read of whole Families Baptiz'd, of the Covenant made to you and your Children, &c. of Childrens being of the Kingdom of Heaven, of being Holy, as being the Offspring of Profelyted or Believing Parents — Nay further, when we meet with Instances of Children that have been so very Young, some before they cou'd either goe or speak, that have had such strange Exits into another World, we may with all the Indignation imaginable explode that Uncharitable Position of Anabaptists, that say, *Children have no more right to Baptism, &c. than Unreasonable Creatures.* I my self have seen a Child about three Quarters Old, who when it was dying, grasp'd its Hands together, lift 'em up, look'd up it self, and with an Air of all the satisfaction that was possible for an antient Person, dy'd; another that smil'd dying; but to such as will meet with more such like Instances, I refer 'em to *The Doctrine of Infant Baptism, &c.* by Samuel Winter, D.D. Printed for John Crook at the Sign of the Ship in St. Pauls Church-yard; 'tis in Page 154, 155, &c. We would ask such Persons who deny Infants incapable of Baptism, because they can show no actual Sign of it, What they think of the Ruler's Daughter? Our Saviour bid him only Believe, and it should be done. 'Tis a great weakness to believe Children not Baptiz'd, from the Example of the Tylor: The Syriac, is, *Baptizatus est ipse, & filii domus ejus*; which compar'd with *Ver. 32. Et cum omnibus filiis domus sue*: Young and Old Men, Women and Children, are included in this Text; and 'tis Nonsense to urge from the consequent Text, That those which were Baptized, glorified and praised God, which Children could not do: It means all such as were capable of doing it: But at their rate, we shall have all the Children of Anabaptists starv'd; for 'tis said, *He that will not work, let him not eat*: But Children must do it, though not capable of working; or else not only the Race of Anabaptists, but of all Christians, nay, of the whole World, must soon be extirpated. From which we would ask, What Priviledge have the Children of Believing

living Parents above Unbelieving? If they say, None but the Prayers of such Parents, (for that they usually do,) we further ask, Whether the words, *Else were your Children Unclean, but now they are Holy*, does, if compar'd with the Context, relate to Offspring, or Prayer? For Prayer is a common Debt to all Persons.

But we might further prove this from the Universal Consent of the Churches in all Countreys; for as *Tertullian de Prescriptore Heret. c. 28. Ecquid veri simile*, &c. Had the Churches Erred, they wou'd have Varied, &c. But we find it not only in the Churches of Europe, but also that 'tis the Uniform Practice from the first Plantation of Christian Churches, and of such Colonies of the same Mother Church, as had Correspondence by their Bishops or Presbyters; and such as were of Original Plantations, or betwixt which 'tis more than probable there was no Communication, by reason of the vast distance and want of Intercourse betwixt the Countreys where they lived, as the *Abassin Church* in the further *Aethiopia*, and the *Indian Church* in *Conlan* and *Crangonar*, and about *Maliapar*, planted by *St. Thomas*, all which practice Infant-Baptism: See *Brerewood's Enquiries*.

Next, *Infant Baptism* is to be prov'd by *Antiquity*; we being able to demonstrate, That there never was any particular Congregation till above Years after Christ, when all Churches us'd *Infant Baptism*; as may be sufficiently prov'd in the First, Second, Third, and succeeding Centuries: Which shows that the word *All*, in Discipling all Nations, did and does comprehend *Infants*.—Perhaps these Three last Arguments may have more force in 'em to conclude what they design, than the first Thought will bear: We cou'd produce such undoubted Authorities, in every Age since Christ, as wou'd satisfy any thinking Man, but our Paper is too short.

Quest. 3. *Whether Infant Baptism is to be found in Scripture?*

Ans. Not expressly in the Letter, but from necessary and unavoidable Consequences, as we have already shewn; which is enough to all Dis-interested Persons: To such as are Prejudic'd, we wou'd put this Question, Whether the Doctrine of the Trinity is to be found in the Scriptures? They'll make the Inference that we have done about *Infant Baptism*; nay and will think every one a *Heretick* that believes it not sufficient.

Nor cou'd the *Anabaptists* themselves defend themselves against the *Quakers*; who, for the aforesaid Reason, have laid aside all Ordinances.—Suppose the *Quakers* shou'd ask us, Whether God made the World out of Pre-existent Matter, or no? Whether Jesus Christ was the Second Person in the Trinity? Whether our Saviour was born of the *Virgin Mary*? How we can Maintain the *Godhead of Christ*? Nay, almost, How we can Prove any of the Articles of our Christian Faith? We shou'd be at a loss to do it *verbatim*, but by necessary Consequence it may be done. At this rate, no Language but *Originals* signifie any thing in Doctrine, and *Gigno*, and to *Beget*, are two Sences, because two different Sounds and Letters; but we think such Conclusions so ridiculous, as to deserve the expence of no more time to confute 'em.

Quest. 4. *Why was not Christ Baptized before he was Thirty Years old?*

Ans. From the same Reason that the *Faylor*, the *Eunuch*, and *St. Peter's Converts*, were not; *viz.* There's no adhering to a Doctrine before it is Instituted; or, which is all one, that is not Preach'd, so as such and such Persons might hear it: *Infant Baptism* was as much before our Saviour's time, as amongst those of riper Years since, and that's Proof enough.

Quest. 5. *Why Sprinkling, and not Dipping?*

Ans. Our Church denies not the latter to any one that desires it, but looks upon't as a clear Representation of our Saviour's descending into the Grave, abiding there, and rising up again; according as the Apostle makes use of it, when he says *We are buried with him in Baptism*: But the Church has Power to dispense with Circumstantials, and the Manner of Acting, (though not the Act it self,) especially in cold Countries, &c. But in this there's no Essential Disagreement, therefore not worth the Dispute.

Quest. 6. *What think ye of those that are in Infancy?*

Ans. The Baptists are already satisfy'd about 'em, and we also hope very well of 'em, being assur'd of such are the Kingdom of Heaven?

Quest. 7. *If Children be Sav'd, whether Baptiz'd or not, what signifies Baptism?*

Ans. 'Tis the Badge of Christ, an Evident Note of Distinction from the Children of Infidels, and as we come to the Knowledge of spiritual things by sense, so 'tis an evidence of a greater Assurance of the Favour of God towards 'em, being visibly introduc'd into the Covenant of Grace.

Quest. 8. *Whether Children have Faith or no, since Faith and Repentance are pre-requisite to Baptism?*

Ans. We have already shew'd, that according to the Words of the Commission, *Baptizing* goes before *Teaching*, therefore there is not such a pre-requisiteness as some dream of, see *Acts 9*. Our Saviour was *Born King of the Jews*. But admit Faith as pre-requisite to Baptism, We cou'd Answer that Children have Faith *potentia* tho' not in *actu visibili*; as an Artist, when he is indispos'd or asleep is potentially an Artist, tho' not actually — But our Saviour is full to the purpose, *Matth. 18. 3, 4, 5*, compared with *Matth. 9. 36. Whosoever shall receive one such little Child in my Name, receiveth me, but whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that BELIEVE IN ME, it were better that a Millstone were hanged about his Neck, and he cast into the midst of the Sea* — If God be pleas'd to irradiate or shine upon the Souls of Children in Heaven, and they do behold the Face of God, as our Saviour says, then it follows that they have Faith in Heaven, and why not on Earth? To behold the Face of God is an Act of Faith, see *Heb. 11. 27*. But sometimes we have visible Effects of the Faith of Children, witness those famous Instances of some little Children in *New-England*, related by Reverend Mr. Elliot, in his Book entituled *Tears of Repentance*. The Relations are these:

This Spring, in the beginning of the year-1652. the Lord was pleas'd to afflict sundry of our praying Indians with that grievous Disease of the Bloody-flux; whereof some with great torments in their bowels dyed; amongst which two little Children of the Age of two years and upward, under three when they dyed, and at that time both in one House, being taken with that Disease: The first of these Children in the extremity of its torments, lay crying to God in these words, God and Jesus Christ, God and Jesus Christ, help me! and when they gave it any thing to eat, it would greedily take it, (as is usual at the approach of Death) but first it would cry to God, Oh God and Jesus Christ, bless it! and then it would take it; and in this manner it lay calling upon God and Jesus Christ until it dyed. The Father of the Child told me the Story, with great wonderment at the Grace of God, in teaching his Child so to call upon God. The Name of the Father is *Nishohkou*.

Three or four dayes after, another Child in the same house, sick of the same Disease, was (by a divine hand doubtless) sensible of the approach of Death, (an unusual thing at that Age) and called to its Father, and said, I am going to God, several times repeating it, I am going to God. The Mother (as other Mothers use to do) had made for the Child a little Basket, a little Spoon, and a little Tray; these things the Child was wont to be greatly delighted withall, (as all Children will) therefore in the Extremity of Torments they set those things before it, a little to divert the mind and cheer the spirit; but now the Child takes the Basket and puts it away, and said, I will leave my Basket behind me, for I am going to God, I will leave my Spoon and Tray behind me, (putting them away) for I am going to God, and with these kind of Expressions the same Night finished its course, and dyed. The Father of this Child is named *Robin Speen*, in whose Confession he maketh mention of this Child that dyed in Faith. When he related this story to me, he said he could not tell whether the Sorrow for the Death of his Child, or his Joy for its Faith were the greater.

After all, We cou'd give Accounts of such Ring-leaders amongst *Anabaptists*, that when they have come to dye, have been particularly cast down about their patronizing this Doctrine, as *Manon, Stock, Bocold, Balbasar*, &c. and 'tis Observable that in those Ages wherein *Infant-Baptism* was oppos'd, it was by such as were grossly Erroneous in other things, but our business is not to Vex or Calumniate Persons, but to convince all gain-sayers of the Truth of things, and hinder if possible some Persons from doing as much as in 'em lyes to keep their own Children out of the Covenant, 'tis an uncommon Cruelty, if thoroughly consider'd of.

We have just now at the going of our Paper into the Press, receiv'd another Letter from (one as We believe) a Teacher of the *Anabaptists*, We have not room here to make further Remarks; but if he pleases to send his Objections, if he is not satisfied in any thing, he shall have 'em Answer'd; and We'll be very just in publishing the utmost strength of what he or any body else can offer against us.

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