

**THE SCRIPTURAL AND
HISTORICAL
ARGUMENTS FOR INFANT
BAPTISM EXAMINED**

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The Scriptural and Historical Arguments for Infant Baptism Examined by J. Torrey Smith

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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN shall Christians see eye to eye? When shall the watchmen of Zion lift up their voices together? Such are the breathings of all true hearts as they look around upon the present divided state of Christendom, and listen to the discordant voices that murmur on every side.

It may be that the strongest, as well as the most susceptible minds, unite in deploring the existence of controversy among Christians. There is abundant reason to deplore it. Yet while any sincere Christians mistake their Master's will, and live in disobedience to his commands—while any of “the leaders of God's people cause them to err”—however unconsciously or unwillingly—there is a solemn and imperative necessity for controversy. And none can deny that such is the case still on the subject of Christian Baptism,

after all that has been written upon it for the last two or three centuries. And even if Baptists were to hold their peace, such are the different views and conflicting practices of Pedobaptists, that controversy would still roll its stormy clouds among them for years to come. So long, for example, as the gorgeous antique error of "baptismal regeneration" is maintained by the Greek and Roman, and in fact by all National Protestant Churches—that is to say, by full *nine-tenths* of nominal Christendom—can there be peace? Or, could there be, unless it were the peace of the grave? "And it came to pass when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?"—2 Kings, ix. 22.

But we turn from this "outer court of the temple," which, according to prophecy, is for the time "given up to the Gentiles," and look into the sanctuary of Evangelical Christendom. May not Peace dwell here in blessed harmony with Truth? Here, where the "glory of the Lord" is already gleaming from "within the veil" upon the eyes of the earnest worshippers, must not all darkness and discord disappear? Would to God that it were so! How sad to find divisions even

here! An eloquent writer upon this very subject* has said, "Instead of pouring their united strength upon the territories of darkness, what are Christians doing? They are frustrating the Gospel by dissensions among themselves."

If this be so—if the divisions of Christians are, to a lamentable degree, "frustrating the Gospel"—how keenly ought all parties to question themselves. *For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.* Is it not true that "the religion of multitudes is not attachment to Christ, nor to truth, but to family and Church?" Can such a religion save them? However pleasing to parents, flattering to pastors and teachers, and agreeable to themselves, is it not essentially unsound—the growth of a subtle but ruinous delusion—like that which said of old, *we have Abraham for our father?* Shall evangelical Christians then foster it? Shall they plant and nourish in the souls of their children the very root on which it anciently grew, is now growing, and must ever grow? Shall the very tenderness of parental love betray its objects into deep delusion, by confounding the Abrahamic Covenant of Circumcision with the Abrahamic Covenant of Christ?

* Rev. Richard Fuller, D. D., of Baltimore, in his recent book on "Baptism and the Terms of Communion," 1850.

These two covenants—so essentially distinct—so constantly distinguished, and so clearly contrasted in the Scriptures—shall they be still counted one and the same—not only by carnal Jews and carnal Churchmen, but by spiritual Christians who believe and know the solemn necessity of the new birth unto righteousness? In the language of the Psalmist we would say with deep emotion, “O Lord, *how long?*”

To a prayerful reader of the Bible, it is sometimes difficult to believe that such confusion of facts, and consequent delusion can really exist among intelligent Christians. Let such read the following instance, copied from the *Presbyterian*—a valuable paper published in this city. It is introduced as an “instructive extract,” from the Diary of the Rev. John Macdonald, of Calcutta.

“November 24.—This day in the kind providence of God, have I been permitted and enabled to dedicate my little offspring to my covenant God in baptism; and for this I give thanks. O what a privilege is it! I trust I have had communion with the Lord in this deed, if ever I had it. Many encouragements have I felt, and no misgivings as to infant baptism in its faithful form. Yea, I praise God for such an ordinance. I know that he did of old receive them into his covenant by seal. I know also that infants are capable of enjoying the blessings of the covenant of grace—that the want of faith in those who are incapable of faith is just as applicable to salvation as to baptism, and therefore constitutes no argument against it. I believe that the

seal of the covenant will be just as valid to the child when it afterwards believes, as if baptized when adult—that it is a great privilege to have it externally united to the Church, and for a parent to say, ‘This, my child, has been solemnly and publicly given to God—it is federally holy.’ I believe that the Commission of Christ included the children of believers, and that the Apostles baptized such; and I know that the holiest of men in all ages have had communion with their God in this ordinance. But why enlarge? O my Lord, I bless thee for saving me from falling into the cold and forbidding doctrines of antipedobaptism! O give me grace to improve thine ordinance!’

We truly agree with our brethren of the *Presbyterian*, that this is an “instructive extract.” It instructs us how fervently every pious father, (Baptist or Pedobaptist,) loves his children, and devoutly gives them up to God for their sanctification and salvation. It instructs us how in every such act of parental devotion, however frequently repeated, he enjoys communion with God, and feels it to be an unutterable privilege, secured to him by the Covenant of grace in Christ. And it instructs us also, how mournfully parental love, as well as “a zeal of God,” may go astray, because its ardor is “not according to knowledge.” The particular act with which he associates his dearest feelings for his child, is “*infant baptism in its faithful form.*” Now, *what* is this? It is language nowhere found in Scripture. And yet