

On the Baptism of the Children of Adherents

Samuel Rutherford

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Being Chapter 12 of his

[A Peaceable and Temperate Plea for Paul's Presbytery in Scotland](#)

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Chapter 12

I. Whether or not some do teach with warrant that baptism should be administered only to infants born of at least one of the nearest parents, known to be a believer, and within the covenant?

II. Who are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper?

Not only these of the Separation, but also others whom we do most unwillingly oppose in this, hold that baptism is to be denied to infants whose nearest parents (one at least) are not known to be within the covenant. That our mind may be known in this, we propose these distinctions to be considered by the learned and godly reader:

1. There is an inherent holiness and there is a federal holiness, whereby some are holy by covenant (that is, have right to the means of salvation), which right Turks and pagans have not.
2. People or persons are two ways within the covenant:
 1. Truly, and by faith in Christ, and according to the election of grace.
 2. In profession, because the word of the covenant is preached to them as members of the visible church.
3. There is a holiness of the covenant, and a holiness of covenanters, and there is a holiness of the nation, flock and people, and a holiness of the single person.
4. There is a holiness of election in God's mind, and a real holiness real of the persons elected.
5. There is a federal or covenant holiness, *de jure* (by right), such as goes before baptism in the infants born in the visible church, and a holiness *de facto* [in fact], a formal covenant holiness after they are baptized.

I. Who Should be Baptized?

First Conclusion

All the infants born within the visible church, whatever be the wickedness of their nearest parents are to be received within the church by baptism.

1st Argument

If the children of wicked parents were circumcised, all without exception, notwithstanding the wickedness of their parents, then the children of these who are born in the visible church of Christians, are to receive that same seal in nature and substance of that same covenant of grace, which is baptism. But all the children of most wicked parents were circumcised without exception. Therefore, so are the children of Christians born in the visible church. The proposition cannot be denied by our brethren.

They say [admit] circumcision was given only to members of the visible church, to whom the doctrine of the covenant (Gen. 17:7,8) was preached, and these were professors only within the visible church of the Jews, as Mr. Best says.¹

And if children were to be circumcised because God said, 'I will be your God and the God of your seed,' then because this promise is made to Christians and to their seed in the New Testament (Acts 2:38), they should be baptized. Verse 38, 'be baptized every one of you,' etc. Verse 39, 'for the promise is made to you, and to your children.'

Whence it is clear, as these who were externally in covenant only were to be circumcised, so these, who are externally in covenant in the Christian church, are to be baptized.

I prove the assumption, that all the male children were to be baptized without exception:

¹ [Church's Plea](#), Argument 3 & 4, p. 61-62

1. From God's commandment (Gen. 17:10): 'every man-child amongst you shall be circumcised.' Verse 12, 'every man-child in your generation, he that is borne in the house, and bought with money of any stranger, that is not thy seed, the uncircumcised must be cut off from his people, he hath broken my covenant.' Here is no exception, but all must be circumcised.
2. Also many must be circumcised as these to whom the Lord gave the land for a possession were Abraham's seed according to the flesh. But the land was given to the most wicked of Abraham's seed (so Ch. 8:3).

That all the children of the wicked are circumcised is clear (Josh. 5), because Joshua at God's commandment circumcised the children of Israel (Josh 5:2-3,7) whose wicked parents the Lord had consumed because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord, unto whom the Lord swore that He would not show them the land which the Lord swore to their fathers. Of that generation the Lord said (Heb. 3:10), 'they do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways,' there was in them an evil heart, a hard heart, an unbelieving heart (Heb. 3:13,15,18), and yet God commanded Joshua to circumcise their children.

Therefore there was no more required of the circumcised but that they were Abraham's seed according to the flesh, and by that same reason, there is no more required of infants that they may be baptized but that they be born in the Christian church. For the Christian baptism, and the Jewish circumcision in substance are all one (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:11; Jer. 9:26; Jer. 4:4; 1 Pet. 3:21,22). This is so true, that circumcision is put for the nation of the Jews (Acts 11:2; Rom. 2:26,27; Gal. 2:7; Gal. 6:15), which speech could not stand if most part of the children of the Jews, for the parents wickedness, were to be uncircumcised.

Neither do we read in God's word that ever the children of wicked Jews were uncircumcised. And if their circumcision had been a profaning of the covenant, and a dishonoring and polluting of the holy things of God, the prophets who rebuked all the sins of that nation would not have passed in silence that which should have been a national sin in them.

And as God determines the quality of these that eat the Passover, that they be circumcised people, and so Jews, so does He determine the quality of these that are to be externally circumcised (Gen. 17): every male child.

Some answer that these circumcised infants (Josh. 5) were the infants of parents dead in the wilderness, and so they were not now under the care and tutorship of their parents, but under the care of others. And so they might be circumcised.

Answer: But the death of the parents did not change their church status. For they were still the children of wicked parents whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and that in God's wrath (Heb. 3).

2nd Argument

If John Baptist (Matt 3:5) baptized Jerusalem, all Judea and all the regions round about (and that without any further examination of the aged) so they would confess their sins, and yet he called them a generation of vipers (and so the seed of murderers and evil doers, such as are vipers), and Christ said (Matt 18) that of their children (and such like) was the Kingdom of God, then the children of Pharisees and publicans and wicked persons are to be baptized, as their parents profess the doctrine of the covenant. But the former is true, *ergo* [therefore the conclusion follows].

3rd Argument

If Peter command every one of the Jews to be baptized by this argument, because the promise (says he) is made to you, and to your children, and to as many as the Lord shall call (Acts 2:38,39), then all are to be baptized to whom the promise of the covenant, and external calling by this covenant, is made. But the promise of the covenant is made

to the seed of the wicked within the visible church, therefore the seal of that promise is to be conferred upon them.

I prove the assumption:

When God said to Abraham, 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed,' by 'the seed of Abraham' He cannot mean the nearest of Abraham's seed only (to wit, the nearest sons). For so by that He should have been Abraham's God and Isaac's God only, and not Jacob's God and the God of the seed of Jacob: which is against the tenor of the covenant.

Now if God be the God of Abraham's seed far off and near down, to many generations, the wickedness of the nearest parents cannot break the covenant, as is clear. Eze. 20:18,19,22,36,37,42,43; Ps. 106:40,45,46; Rom. 3:3; Lev. 26:44,45 are spoken of the sons of wicked parents. And if these children stand in the covenant for God's name's sake, and God say expressly (Eze. 20:18-19) to the sons of wicked parents who grieved his Holy Spirit in the wilderness, 'walk in my statutes and walk not in the statutes of your fathers; I am the Lord your God': then they were in covenant notwithstanding the wickedness of their fathers. And therefore, by our brethren's argument, the seals of the covenant should be bestowed upon them.

4th Argument

If the Lord show mercy to the thousand generations of them who love Him and keep his commandments, then the wickedness of the nearest parents does not remove the mercy of the covenant from the children because the mercy extends to a thousand generations. But the former is said in the second commandment (Ex. 20:6), and therefore for the sins of their nearest parents they are not excluded from the mercy of the covenant. And therefore neither from the seals of that mercy.

If our brethren say, we have no assurance of faith that their thousand generations upward have been lovers of God and keepers of his commandments. So the children in faith cannot be baptized:

I answer:

First, by this argument you cannot deny baptism to them in faith.

Second, you have not certainty of faith, which must be grounded upon infallible verity [truth] that their nearest parents are believers. You have for that only the judgment of charity (as John Cameron says well²).

And this faith you have infallibly: that the sins of no one, or two, or four persons do interrupt the course of God's immutable covenant in the race of covenanters born in the visible Church (Rom. 3:3,4; Josh. 5:2,3,4; Lev. 26:41,42,43,44; Eze. 20:14,17,22).

5th Argument

The infallible promise of the covenant, 'I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed' [Gen. 17:17], which is made to us gentiles as well as to the Jews (Gal. 3:10-14), must make a difference between the seed of Christians and the seed of Turks and pagans (these are without the true Church of Christians). But if so, that the sins and wickedness of the nearest parents cut off their children from the mercy of the covenant and hinder God to be their God: then these infants are in no better case through the covenant made to their grandfathers and generations upward than the sons of Turks and pagans. For they are strangers to the covenant and have no right to the seals of the covenant no more than the children of Turks.

I prove that the proposition 'I will be thy God and the God of thy seed' extends the covenant to the seed of the faithful to many generations downward until it please the Lord to translate his Son's Kingdom and remove the candlestick from a people. Neither can the meaning be: 'I will be thy God and the God of thy seed, except the nearest parents of thy seed be unbelievers,' for that is contrary to the Scriptures above cited. Neither can they say that the children of unbelieving parents born within the Christian church have a right to the covenant and the seals thereof when they come to

² *Prelec. de Visib. Eccles.*

age and do believe and repent. For so the children of Turks, if they believe and repent, have that same right (as is clear, Isa. 56:6,7; Acts 10:34,35).

6th Argument

If God in the Covenant of Grace and Evangel will not have the son to bear the iniquity of the father except the son follow the evil ways of his parents, and so make the father's iniquity his own: then the children of wicked parents cannot be excluded from the covenant and the seals of the covenant for the sins and wickedness of their nearest parents. But the former is said (Eze. 18:19-20), 'the son shall not bear the iniquity of his father.' Now infants, as yet being free of actual sins, have not served themselves heirs to the iniquities of their fathers.

Neither can it be said (as some say), the children of Turks are not to be baptized because their parents are without the covenant, and yet these children being free of actual transgressions bear the iniquity of their fathers.

I answer:

God keeps a legal way with Turks and all that are without the church and the Covenant of Grace. And we suppose the child born of wicked parents to be in the case of election and so really within the covenant. And it is ordinary enough that chosen and redeemed infants be born of unbelieving parents. In that case, who can say that God lays their fathers' iniquities on them in spiritual and eternal punishments, such as are to be reputed without the covenant, and dying in that estate, to be damned forever?

7th Argument

If the root be holy, so also are the branches (Rom. 11:16). Now this holiness cannot be meant of personal and inherent holiness, for it is not true in that sense. If the

fathers and forefathers be truly sanctified and are believers, then [it would follow] are the branches and children sanctified and believers. But the contrary we see in wicked Absalom born of holy David, and many others. Therefore, this holiness must be the holiness of the nation, not of persons. It must be a holiness because of their elected and chosen parents (the patriarchs, prophets, and the holy seed of the Jews), and so [it must be] the holiness federal, or the holiness of the covenant.

If then the Jews in Paul's time were holy by covenant (howbeit for the present the sons were branches broken off for unbelief), how much more then (seeing God has chosen the race and nation of the gentiles and is become a God to us and to our seed), that the seed [of those in the covenant] must be holy with a holiness of the chosen nation and an external holiness of the covenant, notwithstanding that the father and mother were as wicked as the Jews who slew the Lord of Glory.

8th Argument

If the special and only reason why baptism should be denied to the children of nearest parents who are unbelievers be weak and contrary to the Scriptures, then this opinion is contrary to Scripture also. But the former is true, therefore, so is the latter. For not only the special, but the only argument, is: because these children are without the covenant seeing their nearest parents are without the covenant. But this is most false in many ways:

1. God commands (as I showed before) that the children of most wicked parents (Josh. 5:1-9) should be circumcised. Therefore, God esteemed them within the covenant, notwithstanding their fathers' wickedness.
2. The Lord terms the children of those who slew their sons to Molech, and so offered them to devils, to be His sons (Eze. 16:20):

'Moreover thou hast taken My sons and My daughters, which thou hast born to Me, and these hast thou sacrificed to them to be devoured: is this of thy whoredoms a small matter.' Verse 21, 'That thou hast slain My children,' etc. So also Eze. 23:37.

If they be the Lord's sons (and born to the Lord), though their parents were bloody murderers and sacrificers to devils, then God esteemed these sons within the covenant. And who are we to exclude them out of God's covenant?

3. The sons of most wicked parents dying in their infancy may be saved. And of them God has his own chosen, as we see in many aged ones born of wicked parents. Therefore, the wickedness of the parents is a weak ground to say they are without the covenant, especially seeing as we affirm that God has his decrees of election and reprobation of infants (Rom. 9:11), no less than of the aged. The contrary whereof we know Arminians teach.

9th Argument

If external profession be sufficient (without a longer examination) to baptize the aged by the apostolic practice (as we see in Simon Magus, Acts 8:13, and in Ananias and Saphira, Acts 2:38-39,44-45, compared with Acts 5:1-2): then the profession of faith in the forefathers is enough for us to judge their forefathers within the covenant and consenters to the covenant. For when many thousands at once are said to enter into covenant with God (as is clear, Deut. 29:10-13; Josh. 24:24,25; 2 Chron. 15:9-12), they could not give any larger proofs or evidences of their faith of the covenant than a solemn assembling together and a verbal oath (or saying, 'Amen', or 'So be it,' as Deut. 27:14,17), after which they were reputed to be in the covenant, and so their seed also [were reputed to be] in the covenant.

Augustine's mind is that such infants are not to be excluded from baptism. So Bucan,³ Calvin,⁴ Walaeus,⁵ and the Professors of Leyden.⁶ Let us hear shortly what our brethren say on the contrary.

³ *Commentary*, in location, 47, Q. 33

⁴ *Institutes*

⁵ *Commentary on Baptism*, in location, p. 960,961

⁶ *Synopsis of Pure Theology*, Disputation 44, Thesis 49

Mr. Best⁷ and others object:⁸

Those only are to receive the seal of the covenant whose parents, at least one of them in external profession, are within the covenant. But infants born of wicked and profane parents are not born of parents in external profession within the covenant. Therefore, the infants of wicked parents are not to receive the seal of the covenant.

The proposition he proves from Gen. 17:10, 'This is my covenant... and every man-child amongst you shall be circumcised,' and Rom. 4:11, 'He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith.' The assumption, he and others, prove [this way]: because murderers, drunkards, swearers, and whose children we baptize, declare themselves not to be Christians (nor faithful, nor saints by their wicked life) and so not within the covenant. This argument also the Separatists use.⁹

Answer:

1. The major premise is false and is not proved from Gen. 17 or Rom. 4. For neither of these places speak of [one's] nearest parents (one at least of father and mother). The text bears no such thing, but the contrary. These are to receive the seal of the covenant whose forefathers are in external profession within the covenant. For God commands not Abraham only to circumcise his sons, but all parents descended of Abraham to circumcise their seed: the seed of Abraham carnally descended to all generations. And so the nearest parents only are not to be looked unto.

2. This argument does either proceed according to this meaning:

That these infants only are to receive the seal of the covenant: whose parents are within the covenant by an inward engrafting and union by true faith, besides the external professing thereof;

⁷ [Church's Plea](#), p. 52,53

⁸ Separatists, *Petition Positto*, p. 72

⁹ *Guide to Zion*, Pos. 5[?], p. 31

or

Then there is no other thing required but only external profession, that the church without sin may confer the seals.

If the former be said it will follow that God speaks (Gen. 17) only to Abraham and his sons by faith (according to the promise) and only to believers.

But God speaks to all Abraham's sons according to the flesh:

Because [otherwise] God should speak an untruth: that He were a God by real union of faith to all that are commanded to be circumcised. For He commanded thousands to be circumcised to whom He was not a God by real union of faith.

Therefore these words must import that nothing is more required for the church to confer the seal of the covenant without sin, but that the children be descended of parents professing the truth and faith, though the parents (indeed, as concerning any real union of faith) be plain strangers to the covenant [inwardly], and are members of the church only as an arm of wood is a member of the body. Which being true, as it must be said, the assumption [of the Separatists] is weak and sick.

For the question is: what is it to be externally within the covenant?

It is not to see all known sins, to be a chosen people, a people taught of God [inwardly], as this argument would say.

1. For then God would not have commanded Joshua (Josh. 5) to circumcise all Israel because their fathers were externally within the covenant.

2. For their fathers were a generation of unbelievers who knew not God, who tempted Him, grieved his holy Spirit in the wilderness, and professed themselves by their murmuring never to be truly within the covenant [inwardly].

Then to profess the doctrine of the covenant is but to be born Jews, avow the Lord in external profession and swear a covenant with Him (Deut. 29), [even] when the heart is blinded and hardened (Deut. 29:4). And so by this it is clear that Joshua had commandment of God to give the seal of the covenant to their children, who [the parents] were as openly wicked against the Lord, as murderers, drunkards, swearers, etc.

3. This argument [of the Separatists on p. 12] will prove that circumcision could lawfully be given to none but the children of parents within the covenant, that is, professedly known to be faithful, holy, and separated from the profane world in the judgment of charity. This has no warrant of the Word. For:

1. The children of the most wicked were circumcised (Josh. 5:2 [see also verses 6-7]). We desire to know whom God forbade to be circumcised that were carnally descended of Abraham? Or show us example or precept thereof in the Word.

2. What God required in the parents, whose infants the church might lawfully and without sin circumcise, was that they were born Jews. O, says Mr. Best, they were behooved [required] to be members of the church, whose infants might lawfully be circumcised. I answer: that is *ignotum per ignotius* [unknown per the unknown]. Show me one person being a born Jew whose child the Lord forbid to circumcise?

3. What is it to be a member of the Jewish Church? Is it to be a visible saint and taught of God [inwardly]? I [admit this to be] true: that was required indeed to make men acceptable before God. But to make one a visible member of the visible Jewish church, nothing was required but to be a born Jew, profess God's truth, and keep from external ceremonial pollutions. I mean: to be a member of the visible church, [is] to keep external and church communion with the rest of God's people.

Secondly, they object [to the 9th Argument on p. 11]:¹⁰

Not only must they be in profession within the covenant, but also members of some visible church and particular congregation. That is, that they be within the church. For we have nothing to do to judge them that are without (1 Cor. 5:12).

And this Mr. Best proves by the order required in God's church, putting a difference between church communion and Christian communion. A man may be a just, peaceable, quiet man, and so meet [fit by qualifications] to be a citizen in a city, but he has not right to the privileges of the burgh, until he come to them by due order. So must a man not only be a Christian before his child be baptized, but also a member of a visible church.

Answer:

1. This objection proceeds from a great mistake: as if church communion with a particular independent congregation were more, and a better and nearer, ground, of baptizing, than Christian communion, which we judge to be false. Because:

The catholic church is by order of nature, and first and more principally, the body, spouse, and redeemed flock of Christ, than any particular independent congregation that is but a part or member of the catholic church.

¹⁰ Best, [Church's Plea](#), p. 60-61, Argument 1

And therefore the covenant, promises of grace, the power of the keys, and the seals of the covenant belong first and principally to the catholic church and to these that are in Christian communion with her before they belong to this or that visible part of the catholic church.

And so all ecclesiastic power of the keys must be first and more principally in the catholic church than in a particular congregation, as a reasonable soul by order of nature is in man, before it be [logically] in Peter, Thomas or John.

2. I believe these [persons] are within [the covenant], that are professors of the true faith, [though] suppose they be not members of the church of Corinth or of any settled church. It is enough if they be within the covenant. And these are without only who are infidels and pagans, not professing the true and sound faith (as the apostle means, 1 Cor. 5:12).

Baptism is a privilege of the [catholic] church, not a privilege of such a particular independent church. The distinction between Christian communion and church communion in this point is needless and fruitless. For none are to be refused of baptism whose parents profess the faith and Christian communion, though they by God's providence may be cast into a country where they are not and cannot be (without due examination) members of a settled church.

As one may hear the word and join in public prayer with any true church he comes unto, and so having Christian communion with a true church, he has church communion by that same [warrant] also.

For baptism is not like burgess freedom in a city. A man may be a free citizen in one town or city and not be a free citizen to have right to the privileges of all other cities. But he who is Christ's free-man in one church has Christian freedom and right to communion thereby in all churches, and may have church communion in all

true churches. But he that is a free burgesse [member] in one city, is not free in all.

Thirdly, they object [to the 9th Argument on p. 11]:

If baptism be given to all promiscuously, then the church shall not be the house of God to receive only God's family, but a common inn to receive all clean and unclean. So Best citing Cartwright.¹¹

Baptism is to be administered (say the Separatists¹²) only to the seed of the faithful, because such only are accounted to the Lord for a generation, which He begets and receives in his church to declare his righteousness in Christ (Ps. 22:30-31; Rom. 4:11; 11:16; Matt 10:13,16).

Answer:

1. Cartwright in that place¹³ is only against the baptizing of infants of excommunicated parents who are cast out of the church. But as the church is a house, so there are in the house of baptized ones both clean and unclean. Neither are they all barnes [children] of the house who are within the house. The profession of cleanness, holiness, and of the faith of Christ, makes it a house different from the society of pagans and infidels.
2. Whereas Mr. Best urges that none should be baptized but members of the visible church, he makes all [to be] baptized members of the church. How then must they be all visible saints, clean persons and holy? For baptism makes not the thousandth part that are baptized to be visible saints.
3. This generation begotten of the Lord and received into the church to declare his righteousness (Ps. 22), is not such only as are to be baptized. For that generation (Ps. 22:30) is a seed that serves

¹¹ 16, p. 64

¹² 3 petit., 10 pos., at 2, reason 3

¹³ [Cartwright Against Whytgift](#), p. 172

the Lord and (v. 31) declares his righteousness: all infants whether of faithful or unfaithful parents [in the church] do alike service to God, and alike declare his righteousness. That is to say, infants of whatever kind [outside the church] can do no service to God.

If their meaning be that the circumcised infants of faithful parents shall serve God and declare his righteousness when they come to age:

First, this text says not that they are the seed of the faithful only that shall serve God. For the seed of the faithful, such as Ammon, Absalom, and David's seed, often refuse to serve God and declare his righteousness. And the seed and children of wicked parents, as Hezekiah the son of wicked Ahaz, and Josiah the son of wicked Amon, do often serve God and declare his righteousness.

So they cite scriptures that by no force of reason do speak for them, as Rom. 4:11 and Rom. 11:16, which say nothing but that 'if the root be holy' with the holiness federal and of the external profession, then so are the branches. But the place speaks nothing of true inherent holiness: for then all holy parents should have holy and visible saints coming out of their loins, which is against scripture and experience.

Fourthly, they object [to the 9th argument on p. 11]:¹⁴

By this our divines lose their best argument against Anabaptists: namely, that children of Christians are to be baptized by that same warrant that infants under the Law were circumcised. But none was circumcised but a member of the visible church under the Law. Now this you gainsay, who would have all clean and unclean baptized; and so you leave your pattern.

Answer:

¹⁴ Best, 16, p. 56

We leave our pattern in no sort. For all were circumcised that were born of circumcised parents within the church of the Jews. So all are to be baptized that are born of Christians and baptized parents professing the faith.

But, say they: drunkards, murderers, sorcerers, swearers, and ignorant atheists, both fathers and mothers, whose children you baptize, do not profess the faith, for in works they deny and bely their profession.

Answer:

1. Then you will have the children of none to be baptized but those whose parents are sound and sincere professors in the judgment of charity. But so Joshua failed who circumcised the children of all professing themselves to be Abraham's sons carnally, though Joshua knew and was an eye witness that their fathers did deny and bely their profession. And John baptized the seed of all (Matt 3) that professed the faith of the Messiah, although he knew them to be a generation of vipers.

They often require that one of the parents be a believer or else the child cannot be clean, nor lawfully baptized. They repose on that place (1 Cor. 7:14):

'For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else' (that is, if both were unbelievers) 'were your children unclean' (that is not within the covenant) 'but now are they holy.'

And they allege Theodore Beza and David Pareus for this.

Answer: But they mistake the word 'unbelieving.' For by 'unbelieving' in that place (as the Professors of Leyden do well observe¹⁵) is meant infidel gentiles that are without the church and profess not Christ [not unbelievers within the visible church], as is clear from the text.

For where the husband that believed was married on a pagan wife or a Jew, he thought (being converted to the Christian faith) he was behooved to sunder with his pagan wife. And the wife converted to the Christian faith married to a heathen and pagan husband, thought she was behooved to divorce, and that the marriage could not be sanctified.

The apostle answers this case of conscience. Suppose the father be a pagan. If the mother be a believer, that is, a professor of Christianity (for a believer is here opposed to a pagan), yet the children are holy by the mother's or father's profession of Christianity.

Hence the argument is strong for us. Profession of Christianity (as opposed to paganism) makes the children clean and holy before God by the holiness of the covenant. Therefore, infants born of parents professing the Christian religion are to be baptized.

For this troubled many converted, that they were married to heathens and were bondmen to them, and were in such and such callings as they thought were inconsistent with the

¹⁵ Walleus, *Synopsis of Pure Theology*, 16th Disputation, 44th Thesis, 49

Christian religion (as is clear from 1 Cor. 7:14-16,20-24).

And Beza on that place¹⁶ says that it was never heard in the ancient church that every infidel child was to be baptized. And Pareus says,¹⁷ the children of Christian parents are holy before baptism by a covenant and external holiness, *jure* (by God's right), being born of Christian parents; and after baptism they are holy, *de facto*, formally and actually. So say Melancthon¹⁸ and Keckerman.¹⁹

But I fear that these who will have none baptized but the children of believing parents aim at this: that the faith of the father is imputed to the children (which indeed reverend Beza does maintain²⁰). Or something worse: that infants are not to be baptized at all, seeing they oppose the places that we cite for the lawfulness of baptizing infants.

The authors of *Presbyterial Government Examined* call the baptizing of children an untimous [untimely] anticipation.²¹ Our brethren's mind is that the infants of both parents known to be unbelievers are not to be baptized until they come to age and can give proof that they are within the covenant of grace. What Anabaptists think here is known [who deny infant baptism].

¹⁶ [On 1 Cor. 7](#)

¹⁷ [Commentary on 1 Cor. 7](#)

¹⁸ [Commentary](#) in location, p. 383

¹⁹ [Systema S.S. Theologiae](#), 3., p. 453

²⁰ [Colleg. Monpelg.](#), p. 98

²¹ [Presbyterial Government Examined](#), 1641

Some say that Boniface IV, in the year 606, began the baptism of infants. Mr. Best says this too, nakedly.²² I believe Augustine, Cyprian, Origen, Cyril, Nazianzen, Ambrose, and many other fathers, affirm that the church has received the baptism of infants from the apostles. What? Does he not believe that it is most evidently in scripture? And has he no better warrant than the fathers?

Fourthly, Mr. Best objects [to the 9th argument on p. 11]:

If there be no precept nor example for baptizing of infants begotten of both parents unbelieving, then there is no promise of blessing made unto it. But the first is true, therefore the second.

Answer: We ask, with what faith and by what precept or example was ever circumcision in the whole Old Testament denied to any male child of the most wicked Jews? And by what precept and example is baptism denied to any infant in the New Testament for his parents' wickedness (the fathers professing the Christian faith)? Yea, seeing baptism is denied to infants upon a suspicion that their parents are destitute of faith and not within the covenant. Now this suspicion is not faith, nor grounded upon any word of God or certainty of faith. For whether another man believe or believe not, it is not faith, nor known by faith's certainty to me, but by the judgment of charity.

Fifthly, they object [to Argument 9 on p. 11]:

If all promiscuously be baptized, then God's name is taken in vain and the holy sacrament is greatly abused (Mal. 1:12; Heb. 10:29).

²² [Church's Plea](#), arg. 5, p. 63

Answer: This is to accuse God, as if He had not found sufficient ways out to save his own name from blasphemy.

Nor can our brethren by their doctrine save his name from dishonor, nor the sacrament from profanation:

Because multitudes of infants born of believing parents are reprobates, and yet God has commanded to baptize them, who, being reprobates, must be without the covenant. And so the covenant is profaned.

And many infants of wicked parents are chosen and are within the covenant. Yet are we are forbidden by our brethren to give them the seals of the covenant until they come to age, which [seals] also should be given to them. And this needs force by their doctrine that Christ has commanded a certain way of dishonoring his name (which is blasphemy).

For we have not such a clear way to know whether infants be clean or unclean, as the priest had to know the polluted bread and the polluted sacrifices (Mal. 1:7,12, as he cites). For what infants are within the covenant indeed and chosen of God, and what not: we neither know, nor is it requisite that we know further than that which we are to know, that they are born within the visible church.

Sixthly, they say [to Argument 9 on p. 11]:²³

The church of God is defiled (Hag. 2:14,15; Eze. 44:7) if all infants promiscuously be baptized: for then the people, and every work of their hand and their offering, is unclean. So Mr. Best.

Answer: We deny that children born within the visible church are an unclean offering to the Lord and that the baptizing of them pollutes the nation (and all the worship of the nation), as they would gather from

²³ Best, [Church's Plea](#), p. 63

Haggai. For being born of the holy nation, they are holy with a federal and national holiness, Rom. 11:16. If the root be holy so are the branches.

Even our brethren baptize children of parents who are hypocrites and unbelievers, and so the uncircumcised in heart come into the sanctuary. Yea, Peter in baptizing Simon Magus, and Ananias and Saphira, brought in the uncircumcised in heart and strangers to God's covenant, as Best alleges [shouldn't be done] from Eze. 44[:7,9] (borrowing such abused testimonies of God's word from Separatists, as they borrowed them from Anabaptists).

For we preach and invite in the Gospel all the uncircumcised in heart and all the wicked to come and hear and partake of the holy things of the Gospel and receive the promises thereof with faith. And when many come to this heavenly banquet without their wedding garment (Matt 22:12,13; 2 Cor. 2:16; Mat. 21:43,44), it follows not that because they profane the holy things of God that therefore ministers who baptize the infants of hypocrites and profane persons are accessory to the profaning of the holy things of God and that we bring in the polluted in heart to the sanctuary of God. It is one thing whom ministers should receive as members of the sanctuary and church, and another thing who should come in, and what sort of persons they are obliged to be who come to be members.

To say that ministers should receive none into the church but those that are circumcised in heart, and clean and holy, and clothed with the wedding garment of faith, is more than our brethren can prove. Nay, we are to invite to the wedding good and bad, chosen and unchosen (Matt 22:9). As many as you find, bid to the wedding. But that all that come to be received members of the invisible church are obliged to be circumcised in heart, and holy, and clothed with the wedding garment, else they profane the sanctuary and holy things of God, is most true.

But we desire that our brethren would prove this: that the porters that held out the uncircumcised and the strangers out of the sanctuary [in Eze. 44:7-9], were types of the ministers and church of the New Testament who should receive none to be church members, and invite none to the wedding of the Gospel, but such as have their wedding garment, are

circumcised in heart, and are clean and holy, else they profane and defile the Church of God (as Mr. Best says). We believe this latter to be an untruth. And yet the strength of this argument [of Best] does hang upon this:

They are obliged to be such who enter into the church, else they defile the sanctuary. Therefore, the church and ministers of the New Testament are obliged to invite none to any church communion or receive them into a church fellowship, but only the circumcised in heart.

We utterly deny this consequence. It is one thing what sort of persons they ought to be that should be members of the church (doubtless they should be believers), and it is another thing whom the church should receive in (these should be professors).

Seventhly, Mr. Best reasons thus [to Argument 9 on p. 11]:

The minister is made a covenant breaker (Mal. 2:8) who baptized the child of profane parents. And why? Because he offers the blind for a sacrifice to God.

Answer:

1. What if the parents be esteemed believers and are but hypocrites indeed, as is too ordinary. There is then a blind sacrifice offered to God, and that by God's commandment.
2. It follows no way that the minister is accessory to this sacrifice. Suppose it were blind, as none can judge that but God. But the minister does what his Master commands him: to preach unto all and baptize all that are born within the visible church. The sacrifice may be blind by their doctrine and ours also, but that it is a sacrifice [known to be] blind to the minister, and he a priest to offer that blind sacrifice, is not hence concluded.

Eighthly, Mr. Best says [to Argument 9 on p. 11]:

Divine wrath is kindled for the profanation of holy things.

Answer: That this is the ministers' or church's profanation of holy things is not proved. It is not wrath procured by the ministers, or those who receive them into the church, but wrath procured by the unworthy incomers.

Ninthly, Separatists reason thus [to the 9th Argument on p. 11]:²⁴

If all be baptized promiscuously, unbelievers and profane, together with their children, then they shall be counted in that state to be Abraham's seed and heirs of the promise, and so to be Christ's (contrary to Gal. 3:7,29 with Gen. 15:6 and 17:7).

Answer:

1. A promiscuous baptizing of all we deny, as it [such a phrase] may import a baptizing of the infants of Turks, or of Papists, who avow they will bring up the child baptized in the Roman faith. In which case, it would seem, baptism should be denied, as the learned Antonius Walaeus thinks.²⁵
2. There is a double counting on God's seed:
 1. One according to Election. And so only the elect are counted in the seed, as is clear, as Paul expounds (Rom. 9; Gen. 15). This counting in the seed is not well counted to be common to all circumcised. Separatists do ordinarily miscount and abuse Scriptures, not caring what they cite, so that the margin swell with citations.
 2. There is an ecclesiastical and conditional counting, whereby all baptized are in the judgment of charity

²⁴ Petit. Pos., 10

²⁵ *Commentary* in location

counted Abraham's heirs, but with the condition that they have Abraham's faith and be internally in Abraham's covenant. And so they are counted in the seed, and all baptized.

Hence the Separatists' other two arguments do not conclude:

1. For they infer: if all must be baptized, then unbelievers have a like interest with believers in the seals and privileges of the Church and must be counted in that same body and state with believers.

[Answer:] For to the external privileges and visible body of the church, all professors (for they are not to be reputed unbelievers) have alike interest; but to the inward favors and graces sealed in the sacraments, and in the true and mystical body of Christ, they have not all alike interest who are baptized.

2. Separatists do ignorantly and uncharitably in this dispute take the children of the nearest parents that are profane, wicked and unbelieving, and unclean infants [outside of the visible church], all for one.

[Answer:] For because their fathers' many generations upward were within the covenant, therefore are such children in external profession within the covenant, as the Lord did show favor to his people for Abraham and David's sake many years after they were dead, when their nearest parents were wicked and profane (Ps. 106:45,46; Ps. 105:41,42; Eze. 20:22, and 36:21,22).

II. Who Should be Admitted to the Lord's Table?

Second Conclusion

These only are to be admitted to the Supper of the Lord, whom in charity we judge, can and do try and examine themselves, rightly discern the Lord's body, and who in faith can enunciate the Lord's death unto his second coming again.

And therefore children, infants, ignorants, scandalously flagitious persons, and mad [mentally insane] persons are to be debarred. But that none should be church members of Christ's visible body but such as we can and dare admit to the Lord's Supper, is most false. For we put a manifest difference between those that are admitted into Christ's visible body as ordinary hearers of the word (such as are ignorants, and many unconverted professors) and the excommunicated, who are admitted to be ordinary hearers of the word but are not to be admitted to the Supper of the Lord. For so we should profane the holy things of God and be accessory to the profaning of the Lord's body and precious blood.

Here a doubt arises: seeing Christ crucified is the substance and object of faith in the word preached as well as in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and in no sort are ministers to be accessory to the profaning of the holy things of God or of casting pearls before swine (Matt 7:6; Matt 15:26; Heb. 10:2; Hag. 2:14,15; Num. 5:2,3 and Lev. 19:22), how do we admit the ignorant and unbelievers, yea the excommunicated (Matt 22:9; 2 Thess. 3:15), to the holy things of the Gospel preached, which we know they shall, and do, profane? For to them the word is the savor of death unto death (2 Cor. 2:16) and Christ is a rock of offence, and a stumbling stone, a gin and a snare (Isa. 8:14; 1 Pet. 2:8), and yet we are accessory to their profaning of the Lord's Table if we admit such to the Table.

Answer: There are great odds betwixt a possible and necessary means of salvation profaned, and a means of salvation not necessary nor possible to reach its end for the which it is ordained.

If these of the Separation would distinguish this as God's Word does, they should not so stumble about the constitution of a visible church. For the word preached is the necessary and possible means of conversion to the most flagitious and wicked hearers. And howbeit they profane the word, promises, and despise Christ and his covenant in the word preached, yet ministers in receiving such into church communion are not accessary to the profaning of God's holy things, because they are under a necessity of offering Christ preached, as the only ordinary, necessary, and possible means of salvation. Therefore we admit them to the hearing and believing of the word, *per se* [in principle], and kindly; but to the stumbling at the word by accident, by their abuse, comes from themselves. But the Lord's Supper being a seal of our nourishment and spiritual growth in Christ, it presupposes faith, the begun life of God and the new birth, and so to those who are openly flagitious and known unbelievers, it is neither a necessary means of salvation nor yet a possible means:

Not necessary: for meat and drink and these elements cannot nourish those who have no life of God in them at all: as bread and wine are not means at all to a dead man, investment in the husband's lands and a dowry is no means necessary at all to an unmarried virgin remaining unmarried.

Also until the communicant believe in Christ it is not a possible seal: for it can seal nothing to one that is not capable of nourishment, seeing the unbeliever by no possibility can be sealed up in a growing communion with Christ. And this Supper is not a formal means of conversion, but a formal means of the further growth and nourishment of these who are already converted.

And therefore when ministers are necessary to admit to the Lord's Table these whom they know are unbelievers, they have there a kindly influence in the profaning of the holy things of God, in giving a means of salvation to these to whom it is neither necessary nor possible. But in admittance of members of the church to be ordinary hearers of the word, their influence is not kindly, and their cooperation is only accidental. The sin is in the abusers of the Word only, which [Word] is a means both necessary and possible, and the fault is not in the ministers.

For this cause are we to be more strict in admitting to the Lord's Supper, then in receiving of church members to baptism, and the hearing of the Word.

But as we are to take care that the holy things of God be not profaned in this sacrament [the Lord's Supper], so also that none be debarred by the under-stewards and servants whom the Master of the house has admitted:

1. None are to be excluded from the Table, but such as are under the church censures, except the impediments be natural (not moral), such as age and distraction.
2. That none are reputed incapable, but such as are *juridice* [juridically] and in the church court under two or three witnesses convicted. For why should the church punishments be inflicted blindly, such as is debarring from the Lord's Table? Therefore the minister has no power of the keys himself alone, without the eldership, to debar any; for then he himself uses the keys by censuring, Pope-like, without the Church.
3. The grossly ignorant are to be censured by the church, and debarred.

But it may perhaps be here said [as an objection] that I make no evidence of conversion being required to go before, as seen [visibly] to the church, before they dare admit to the Lord's Table, but such as may be [found] in hypocrites.

Answer: And so did the apostolic church. I doubt not but the Apostles did (Acts 2:46,47) admit Ananias and Saphira to the Lord's Table, and so did Paul esteem of Demas, and would once have admitted Hymeneus, Alexander and others. This is clear (1 John 2:19), 'If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.' Then they remained for a space communicators with the true church in the word of the covenant and seals.

We are against Separatists who will have the number of aged persons that are members of the church and the number of those who are to be admitted to the sacrament [of the Lord's Table] equal. We think multitudes are members of the visible church, and must be hearers as known unbelievers, who are not to be admitted to the sacrament [of the Lord's Table].

The End