

On the Baptism of the Children of Adherents,
Part 2

Samuel Rutherford

1644

Being the

2nd Part, Chapter 4, Section 6, pp. 256-66

of

The Due Right of Presbyteries,

or, A Peaceable Plea for the Government of the Church of Scotland

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To read Rutherford's initial, foundational and longer treatise on this subject, see [On the Baptism of the Children of Adherents](#), from his *A Peaceable and Temperate Plea for Paul's Presbytery in Scotland*, chapter 12.

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Extended Outline

1st Objection: An excommunicated person is as a heathen, therefore their children are no more to be baptized than children of a heathen. 6

1. Persons barred from the Table are still church members, as are their kids
2. Excommunication implies the presbyterian doctrine of the visible communion of churches
3. If his profession of faith remains, then he is still a member of the church
4. One may be a member of a church without faith, which undermines Independency
5. If church membership is grounded upon real faith evidenced by a sincere profession of faith, then if the professor has not real faith, how can he be a member of the church?
6. How can an excommunicated person have the same status as a heathen if he has faith and is a member of the universal Church of the firstborn?
7. That the sacraments are given to the visible Church, as opposed to the invisible Church, has no warrant

2nd Objection: The child's right to baptism is through the father's right of communion with the church. If the father's standing is taken away, so is the child's. 10

1. The child's baptism is by right of his predecessor fathers also
2. Children are sanctified by the objective doctrine of faith professed by their father; Beza is quoted.

1. By the faith of their fathers. The sins of the nearest father do not remove the children from the Covenant, Ps. 106:6-8, 35-6, 44-5; Isa. 51:1-3; 63:10-11; Eze. 20:8-9. This same Covenant is extended to the gentile Church, Gal. 3:8; Heb. 8:8-10; Acts 2:39.
2. The children of the Jews that killed the prophets (Mt. 23:37) were externally in the Covenant. Joshua circumcised the sons of those who died in the wilderness. The sons of wicked Ahab, Jezebel and Jeroboam were circumcised. Israel should have ceased to be God's visible people if the children were cut out of the Covenant every time they did evil in the sight of the Lord.

Rutherford's Objections:

1. If infants have right to baptism by their father's saving faith, then:
 1. The infants of excommunicated persons with saving faith should be baptized
 2. Only the infants of the invisible Church should be baptized
 3. The infants of visible church members without saving faith have no right to be baptized
2. If infants have a right to baptism by their father's profession of faith, then:
 1. Hypocritical faith confers a right to their baptism, which undermines Independency
 2. Where there is no faith at all, God has put his seal upon a falsehood, which is contrary to Independency

Rutherford's Objection: If the children of the excommunicated are not in the Covenant, then they are no better off than the children of heathens. 16

Cotton's distinction: Apostates are closer to the means of salvation, but are more hardened than heathens

1. Infants that die in infancy, on your terms, are just as bad off as heathens
2. Infants of wicked parents in Israel were not excluded from circumcision; the same Covenant is extended to us (Gal. 3:8; Acts 2:38-9, etc.); the mercy of the Covenant is to a thousand generations (Ex. 20:6).

Mercy to a Thousand Generations (2nd Commandment)

17

3rd Objection: If God's mercy to a thousand generations extends baptism to the children of excommunicated persons, then it does equally so to heathens. This, though, speaks of God's thoughts of mercy and not of Covenant-communion based on past generations. 1 Cor. 7:14 is clear that children are baptized for the faith of their nearest father.

1. A thousand is indefinite and comparative, not literal. Ex. 20:6 speaks of the visible Church, not heathens. Cotton reduces the thousand generations to only the one generation of the nearest parent.
2. If Ex. 20:6 speaks only of God's thoughts of mercy by decree, then they are equally to the heathen, and no more.
3. 1 Cor. 7:14 speaks to a specific case of conscience for a believer married to a heathen, and says that if both were heathens the children would be unclean; but it does not address the question of the excommunicated, and it cannot be denied that excommunicates are very different than heathens.

4th Objection: The wickedness of the nearest parents does not void election, but a bastard was still cut off from the congregation (Heb. 11:32; Dt. 23:2). 21

1. We agree that baptism is not necessary for salvation. But if what you affirm is true, that membership is grounded on sincere faith, then you cannot baptize any adult, for if they do not have sincere faith, then you have sealed a falsehood, which you think is absurd.

5th Objection: A promise to educate a child is no warrant for baptism, except the child be adopted.

1. This would preclude the baptism of infants where the father is legitimately away on business.
2. Cotton's single allowance to have the child baptized on such a promise is contradictory to his other teachings.

On the Baptism of the Children of Adherents, Part 2

In this section¹ the reverend Author² disputes against the baptizing of infants of unbelieving (or excommunicated) nearest parents, of which I have spoken in my former treatise.³ Here I only vindicate our doctrine.

First the Author is pressed with this: the excommunicated persons indeed lack the free passage of life and virtue of the Spirit of Jesus till they be touched with repentance, yet they are not wholly cut off from the society of the faithful, because the seed of faith remains in them and that knits them in a bond of conjunction with Christ. The Author answers:

‘It is true, such excommunicated persons as are truly faithful remain in Covenant with God because the seed of faith remains in them; yet to the society of the faithful joined in a particular visible church, they are not knit [together to them], but are wholly cut off from their communion. For it is not the seed of faith, nor faith itself, that knits a man to this or that particular church, but a holy profession of the faith, which, when a man has violated it by a grievous sin and is delivered to Satan, he is now cut off from the body (not [remaining] as a dead, palsy-member), though he may remain a member of the invisible Church of the firstborn. Yet he has

¹ Cotton, John, *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England*, Chapter 4, Section 6, pp. 87-96. [This work was published in 1645 but had been available in manuscript form for a few years previously. Thus, Rutherford refuted it in print before it was published.]

² [John Cotton (1585-1652), one of the preeminent Independent ministers and theologians of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. See [Wiki](#) for more.]

³ [See Rutherford’s initial, foundational and larger treatise: [On the Baptism of the Children of Adherents, Part 1](#), from his *A Peaceable and Temperate Plea for Paul’s Presbytery in Scotland*, chapter 12, written two years before this in 1642.]

neither part, nor portion, nor fellowship in the particular visible church of Christ Jesus, but is as a heathen and a publican. Now sacraments are not given to the invisible Church, nor the members thereof as such, but to the visible particular churches of Jesus Christ. And therefore we dare no more baptize his child than the child of a heathen.'

I answer:

1. If faith remain in such an excommunicated person (as you grant), it must be seen in a profession. For, though for some particular scandal the man be excommunicated, yet he is not cut off (as we now suppose) for universal apostasy from the truth to gentilism or Judaism, for then he should be cursed with the greater excommunication (1 Cor. 16:22).⁴ And so though he be to the Church as a heathen in that [scandalous] act, yet he is not to the visible Church a heathen, but a brother and to be admonished as a brother (2 Thess. 3:15). And the Church is to use excommunication as a medicine with the intention to save his Spirit in the Day of the Lord (1 Cor. 5:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:20). An excommunicated apostate is not so.

Now if he retain faith to the Church's discerning [judgment], he retains the profession of faith, and insofar [as he has a profession of faith in the judgment of the Church, he] is in a visible membership with the Church in the Covenant. Therefore, for that professed faith (by our Brethren's grant), his child should be baptized and so he is not wholly cut off but is as a dead, palsy-member of the Church. And so he is a member, though is in a deliquie [fainting] and lethargy.

⁴ [Rutherford is distinguishing between lesser and greater excommunication, which Biblical distinction the Independents did not recognize. For simply a particular scandalous sin in a believer, the person may be barred from the Lord's Supper (lesser excommunication), but he would not normally be cast out of the Church (greater excommunication) without wholesale apostasy. Ignoring this Biblical distinction allowed the Independents to treat all excommunicated persons as being in the same category as heathens. Hence their children would not be baptized. If one recognizes the distinction, then the children of such church members barred from the Table would still be in the visible Church and should be baptized, contrary to heathen children.]

2. You say: 'to the faithful of a particular church the excommunicated person is wholly cut off.' What do you mean? If his sins be bound in heaven (as they are if he be justly excommunicated), is he not also cut off to all the visible churches on earth? And are not all the churches to repute him as a publican and a heathen? I believe they are, but you deny [the doctrine of the] visible communion of churches in this.⁵

3. You say: 'It is not the seed of faith that knits a man to a particular visible church, but a holy profession.' But in the excommunicated person, if the seed of faith remain (as you grant), this faith must be seen by you in a holy profession; else to you he has no seed of faith. And if his profession of faith remain entire, though it be violated in the particular obstinacy remaining in one scandal (for the which he is excommunicated), you have no reason to say that to the particular church he is wholly cut off, since his profession remains.

4. You say: 'It is not the seed of faith, nor faith itself, that knits a man to this or that particular visible church, but a holy profession of faith [does].' Then I say: one may be knit to a particular visible church and a true member thereof though he lack both the seed of faith and faith itself. I prove the connection: A man is a perfect and true member of a church though he lack that which does not knit him to the church. This is undeniable. But without the seed of faith, or faith itself (as you say), he is knit to the true Church; therefore, etc. But this is contrary to your doctrine, as you require that none must be admitted members of a visible church but those who are 'Christ's body, the habitation of God by the Spirit, the temples of the Holy Ghost, etc., and that not only by external profession but in some measure of sincerity and truth.'⁶ Now consider, my reverend Brethren, whether there be 'a measure of sincerity and truth' where there is neither the seed of faith,

⁵ [Cotton was an Independent and believed that churches only existed as local congregations, essentially denying the Biblical and presbyterian teaching of the greater visible Church.]

⁶ Ch. 3, section 3

nor faith itself? Surely by this you cast down and mar the constitution of your visible church⁷ when you exclude from the members thereof the seed of faith and faith itself, and you come to our hand and teach that the seed of faith and faith itself is accidental⁸ to a visible Church as visible, which we also teach. And so there is no 'measure of truth and sincerity' required to the essential constitution of a visible church.

5. But I would gladly learn how you contra-distinguish these two: 'faith,' and 'a holy profession of faith'? Do you imagine that there can be a holy profession knitting a man to the visible Church where there be neither the seed of faith, nor faith itself? It is Arminian holiness which is destitute of faith. But if you mean by 'a holy profession', a profession conceived to be holy (though it be not so indeed), then you do yet badly contra-divide a holy profession from faith. For before any can be knit as a member to the visible Church, you are to conceive him [according to Cotton] to be a saint, a believer, and so to have both the seed of faith and faith itself, though indeed he have neither of the two. And so faith is as well as holiness that which knits a man as a member to the visible Church [on Cotton's terms].

6. If 'he [the excommunicated person] remain a member of the universal Church of the firstborn', is he therefore [a member of the universal Church of the firstborn] as a heathen? And so that you 'dare no more receive him to the Supper, nor his seed to baptism'? Nor you dare receive a heathen and his seed to the seals of the

⁷ [The Independents' grounding of church membership was upon a holy and sincere profession of faith, reflecting actual saving faith in the church member. If such is the case, then, of course, there is no such things as 'dead, palsy, church members.' However Rutherford pushes them in their arguments to recognize that church membership is not grounded in actual saving faith or even a holy and sincere profession of faith, but upon an outwardly credible profession faith, though the person does not have not saving faith at all. This allows for 'dead, palsy, church members', and the legitimate baptizing of their children.]

⁸ [That is, not essential or necessary.]

Covenant? Is a heathen a member of the invisible Church of the firstborn?⁹ But the excommunicated person you presume is such a one.

7. What warrant have you for this doctrine that 'the sacraments are not given to the invisible Church as it is such, but to the visible'? Certainly: that God ordains the sacraments to the believers as believers, because they are within the Covenant and their interest [legal right] is in the Covenant, is the only true right of interest to the seals of the Covenant. Profession does but declare who believe and who do not believe, and consequently who have a right to the seals of the Covenant and who do not. But profession does not make a right, but declares who has a right.

The Author subjoins: 'Christ gives no due right of baptism to the child except by the father's right unto the Covenant and communion of the church. So, by taking away the right from the father unto the Covenant and communion of the church, he takes away the children's right also. The personal sin of the parent in this case [in being excommunicated] is not a mere private personal sin, but the sin of a public person of his family. For as the profession of his faith at his being received into the church was as the profession of a public person (they receiving him and his children, who could make no profession but by his mouth unto the church), so his violation of his profession by a scandalous crime was as a public violation thereof for himself and his seed, who stand or fall before the church in his name and his person.'

Answer:

1. It is true, Christ gives a right to baptism for the child by the father's right, [though] I distinguish that [proposition]: [that it is] by the nearest father only, I deny; [if it is] by the right of fathers in general, [this is] true. Then it will follow

⁹ [The answer to these rhetorical questions is no.]

[from this latter premise] that no infant is to be debarred from baptism because of the sins of his nearest parents. For if these who were descended many generations afterward from Abraham and David, were within the Covenant, and so had a right to circumcision because of the Covenant made with Abraham and David, then the nearest father's sin is not the cause of taking away from the child the right to the Covenant and right to the communion of the Church.¹⁰

2. I much doubt if the child has a right to the seals of the Covenant because of the faith of the father, and so I deny that he loses his right to the seals of the Covenant because of the father's scandalous crime (which is a violation of the Covenant). I do reverence grave and learned divines who speak so: Oecolampadius,¹¹ and Zwingli¹² say that infants are sanctified by their parents' faith. But I conceive that they take the word 'faith' objectively for the doctrine of faith professed by the father, and not subjectively.¹³ But I think that great divine Beza says well, that:

'No man is saved by another man's faith; nor can the parents' faith be imputed to the children (which is no less absurd); nor to say that one man lives by the soul and life of another man and that he is wise by the wisdom of another man.'¹⁴

How then are infants within the Covenant because of their parents? I answer:

¹⁰ [Rutherford is saying that the children derive their right to baptism directly from God's original covenant with their forefathers, as the promise included the children naturally descended from Abraham and David, and thus the children's right of being in the Covenant (and to baptism) is not grounded in their nearest parents' church-status.]

¹¹ Oecolampadius, *Epistle*

¹² Zwingli, Book 2, pp. 301-2

¹³ [That is, the father's own personal, real faith.]

¹⁴ Theodore Beza, *Quaest. et Resp.*, lib. 126, "*Nequaquam tamen facile dixerim, quempiam aliena fide servari, nequis hoc periinde accipiat, ac si dixerim, parentum fidem imputari infantibus, quasi aliena side credentibus; quod quidem non minus falsum et absurdum fuerit, quam si dixerim, quempiam posse aliena anima vivere, aut alterius sapientia sapere.*"

1. For the faith of their fathers (that is, for the Covenant of their fathers) they have a right to baptism, for 'I will be your God and the God of your seed,' (Gal. 3:8) comprehends all the believing gentiles. And for this cause the children of Papists and excommunicated protestants, which are born within our visible [protestant] Church, are baptized, if their forefathers have been found in the faith. And I think the reason is [rightly] given by Dr. Morton, who says:

'The children of all Papists, Anabaptists or other heretics, are to be distinguished from the children of Turks and pagans because the parents of Papists and Anabaptists have once been dedicated to Christ in baptism, and the child only has interest [a legal right] in that part of the Covenant which is sound and catholic, while the parents themselves stand guilty of heresy, which by their own proper and actual consent, they have added unto the Church.'¹⁵

And I think the Scripture says here with us that the nearest parents be not the only conveyers and propagators of federal holiness to their posterity:

'They were mingled with the heathen and learned their works, and they served their idols... Nevertheless, He regarded their affliction and He remembered for them his covenant.' (Ps. 106:35-36,44-45)¹⁶

What Covenant? His Covenant made with Abraham; and yet their nearest fathers had sinned:

¹⁵ Dr. Morton, *Appeal*, Book 4, ch. 6, section 1, p. 464. [Dr. Morton and Rutherford are saying that the Roman Catholic Church and the Anabaptists are in some sense a valid Church (though they are heretical), and hence their children have a right to baptism, which legitimately distinguishes their children from heathen children who have no right to baptism.]

¹⁶ [Rutherford is arguing here and below that though the Israelite parents left off God in their scandalous sins, yet their children still were in Covenant with God, and God remembered them for his Covenant's sake.]

'We have sinned and our fathers... Our fathers understood not your wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of your mercies but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless He saved them for his Name's sake.' (Ps. 106:6-8)

His 'Name' was the glory of the Covenant [He] made with Abraham, by which his Name and truth was engaged [obligated] by promise:

'But they rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit. Therefore He was turned to be their enemy and He fought against them. Then He remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is He that led them and brought them out of the Red Sea?' (Isa. 63:10-11)

So also Isa. 51:1-3,¹⁷ and most evidently Eze. 20:8-9:

'They rebelled against me... but I wrought for my Name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen among whom they were, in whose sight I made Myself known unto them in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.'

Now this Name is to be expounded as his Covenant which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt (Jer. 31:32), which Covenant is extended unto the Christian Church (Heb. 8:8-10). Now if God gave a right (I mean a federal right) unto the sons of the Jews to temporal deliverance and the means of grace for the Covenant made with Abraham, though their nearest parents rebelled against the Lord, that same Covenant in all the privileges thereof yet

¹⁷ "Hearken to Me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord: look unto the Rock whence you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence you are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places, and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord: joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."

endures, yea, and is made to all the gentiles (Gal. 3:8; Heb. 8:8-10). For, it is the national covenant made with the whole race, not with the sons upon the condition of the nearest parents' faith, as was made clear after Christ's ascension unto heaven: 'For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.' (Acts 2:39) Now, it is clear that their fathers killed the prophets (Matt 23:30-35); they were a wicked generation under [the guilt of] blood (v. 37).

2. It is clear that these persons, by an external and federal Church profession, had an ecclesiastical right to the Covenant, to whom the external calling of the preached Gospel does belong. As he [the apostle] says 'the promise' (of the Covenant) 'is made to as many as the Lord our God shall call,' so the called nation (though the nearest parents have killed the prophets and rejected the calling of God, Matt 23:33-34,37), is the nation which has an external and Church-right to the promises and Covenant. And as 'concerning the Gospel they are enemies for your sake, but as touching the election they are beloved for the fathers' sake.' (Rom. 11:28) Now, their [the Jews'] nearest fathers maliciously opposed the Gospel. Therefore it must be for the election of the holy nation, in which respect the nation of the Jews was a holy seed and a holy root (Rom. 11:16), and the children were also the holy branches: [they were] holy with the holiness of the Covenant.

Joshua had no reason to circumcise the people at Gilgal for the holiness of their nearest parents (whose carcasses fell in the wilderness), yet he circumcised them to take away the reproach of his people. Now this reproach was their uncircumcision in the flesh, even the reproach of the Philistines (so Goliath is

called an uncircumcised Philistine) and of all the nations without the Covenant of God.¹⁸

Yea, by this [premise of Cotton's] there was no reason to circumcise the sons of Ahab and Jezebel, whose nearest parents were slaves to idolatry and who were bloody persecutors of the prophets. Nor was there reason to circumcise Jeroboam's son (in whom there was some good), for both his father and mother were wicked apostates. And very often (by this doctrine) should the people of the Jews have left off being the visible Church; and so the promise of the Covenant should have failed in the line from Abraham to David and from David to Christ, even so oft as the nearest parents 'did evil in the sight of the Lord.' And many times should God have 'cast off his people whom He foreknew,' contrary to that which Paul says (Rom. 11:1-3).

To these [arguments] I add: if the infants of the Christian Church only have a right to baptism through the faith of their nearest parents, then this is to be conceived either as true and saving faith in the nearest parents, or only faith in profession. If you say the former, then:

1. The seed of the excommunicated parents in whom is [true and saving] faith (or the seed thereof), is to be baptized; but the contrary of this you affirm.
2. The seed and infants of no parents but only those that are members of the invisible Church of the firstborn are to be baptized. Yet the contrary of this you teach when you say: 'The sacraments are not given to the invisible Church and the members thereof, but to the particular visible churches.'

¹⁸ [That is, it is a reproach to be sinful flesh and not to be in Covenant with God.]

3. The infants of the unbelieving parents (though they be members of the visible Church and of the Covenant) have no right to baptism, though they be the elect of God and are born within the visible Church. This is astonishing to us. Now it is known that hypocrites and unbelieving parents often have such a luster of green and fair-like professions that they go for visible members of the Church, so that their children are by Christ's warrant and right baptized.

I come to the other [latter] point: if only the faith of nearest parents that is true in profession and show before men gives right for their infants to be sealed with the seals of the Covenant, then:

1. Apparent and hypocritical faith confers a true right to the seals for infants and it is not required that the members of the visible Church be 'the called of God, the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, not only in external profession, but also in some measure of sincerity and truth,' as the Author says.¹⁹

2. God has warranted his Church to put his seal upon a falsehood and to confer the seals upon infants for the external profession of faith where there is no faith at all. This your writers think is inconvenient and absurd.

Also it is objected by us [against the Brethren,] that, [in their way,] excommunicated children, by this doctrine, are in no better case than the children of Turks and infidels.

The Author answers: 'We willingly make a difference: excommunicated persons are nearer to helps and the means of salvation and conversion than Turks, as excommunication itself is a means that the spirit may be saved (1 Cor. 5:5). And Turks

¹⁹ *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England*, Ch. 3, Section 3, pp. 61-4

are nearer [to the means of salvation] than apostates who turn enemies to the truth; for it is better never to have known the way of truth than to turn back. But in this they [apostates and Turks] are the same: all of them are as heathens (Matt 18); and therefore neither parents nor children have a right to the seals.'

Answer:

1. This is not an answer. For the infants of excommunicated persons, though they be the seed of ancestors (such as grandfathers) who were true believers, yet as infants and dying in infancy, they are no less without the Covenant and excluded by you from the seals thereof than the infants of Turks.²⁰
2. The infants of nearest parents in the Jewish Church, though [the parents were] wicked, were not excluded from circumcision. Yet in the case of infants of profane heathens, they were not circumcised. And the same covenant made to the Jews and their seed is made to us and to our seed (Gal. 3:8; Heb. 8:9-10; Rom. 11:27-28; Acts 2:38-39). We also affirm that the Lord extends the mercy of the Covenant to a thousand generations (Ex. 20:6, 2nd Commandment), and therefore the line of the Covenant-mercy is not broken off for the unbelief of the nearest parents.

Our Author answers:

'If the extension of God's mercy to a thousand generations be a sufficient ground to extend baptism to the children of excommunicated persons by the right of their ancestors, it may suffice as well to the children of Turks, infidels and apostates. For it is not above sixty-six generations from Noah to Christ (as is plain in the

²⁰ [Cotton is saying that the children of excommunicated parents are better off than Turks because they are closer to the means of grace. Rutherford responds arguing that infants which die in infancy are not able to use the means of grace and therefore are no better off than Turks. Yet, in Rutherford's eyes, such children are much better off.]

genealogy, Luke 3:13) and there have not passed as many more generations from Christ's time to the Turks and infidels of the present age. And all will not amount to the sum of two hundred generations.

The true meaning [though,] is that God out of his abundant and rich mercy may and does extend thoughts of redeeming and converting mercy and grace unto a thousand generations. But He never allows his Church any warrant to receive unto their Covenant and communion the children of godly parents who lived a thousand years ago, much less a thousand generations. Nay, rather, the text, 1 Cor. 7:14, is plain that the holiness of the children depends upon the next immediate parents, that is, upon such faith as denominates them believers (in opposition to pagans and infidels). And that holiness of the children is called federal [holiness], which receives them unto the Covenant and the seals thereof.²¹

Answer:

1. We stand not on the number of a thousand precisely, nor does the holy Ghost intend that; for as it is usual in Scripture, a definite number is put for an indefinite (1 Sam 1:8; Rev. 1:4; Ps. 12:6; Prov. 24:16,25; Isa. 4:1; Cant. 5:10; 1 Cor. 14:19; Deut. 33:17; Ps. 3:6; Mic. 6:7): Wrath follows the Ammonite and Moabite to the tenth generation (Deut. 23:2-3) and the Edomite and Egyptian, though cursed, enters into the congregation of the Lord in the third generation (v. 7-8). The Lord here walks in a latitude so that the mercy of the Covenant is extended to more generations beyond than the anger of God to the generation of the wicked; a thousand compared to four.

²¹ *Answers to the 32 Questions sent from Old England to New England*

Nor does the Author's consequent inference stand good, that: [if Rutherford's premise were true] then we had right and warrant to baptize the children of Turks, pagans and Indians (as for one single apostate, I account him as one single excommunicated Christian in this point), for, the Lord's comparison of proportion holds in generations of the same kind and is restricted to the generations within the visible Church. [The Lord] 'shows mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep my commandments,' which professed love must be extended to a nation that is federally holy.

Now, Turks and Indians are neither lovers of God, nor are they such in profession through federal holiness. And it [Ex. 20:6] is most pregnant against such persons as confine and imprison the mercy of the Covenant towards poor infants to their next immediate parents.

By the Author's interpretation, the thousand generations to which God extends mercy, is confined to one [generation of the nearest parent]. Because if the wicked two (the father and mother) be violators of the Covenant, though nine hundred foregoing generations have been lovers of God, yet the Covenant mercy is interrupted to the innocent infants (in this [instance and regard they are] innocent) and they are translated over to the class and roll of the children of Turks and pagans under the curse and wrath of God for hundreds of generations. The Lord in this [verse] has a respect to that people whom He brought out of the Land of Egypt, in whom He fulfilled this promise of showing mercy to many generations though their nearest parents were grievous of his holy Spirit and rebels against Him. For Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's sake, [the Lord] cannot be so narrow and pinched in mercy to their posterity as to reduce a thousand generations to one [generation], as this Author would have Him to do.

2. It is a hungry [meager] extension of mercy (as the Author expounds it) to [make this verse speak only of] God extending thoughts [to the Jews] of redeeming and

converting to a thousand generations, which [thoughts] He [also] has to Turks. For these thoughts of redeeming are from the free and absolute decree of election to glory, but [on the contrary] this [verse] is an express promise of extending the mercy of the Covenant to a thousand generations, and is such as the Lord cannot contravene by the necessity of his veracity and faithfulness to his Covenant.

3. The place 1 Cor. 7 is corrupted [by Cotton] contrary to the apostle's intent, which is to resolve a case of conscience: whether a believing wife married to a pagan husband, or a believing husband married to a pagan wife, should divorce and separate because the seed would seem by God's Law to be unclean (Ezra 9:2). Paul answers: if one be holy and profess the faith, then the seed is holy (1 Cor. 7:14). Whereas, if both father and mother were pagans and heathens, then the seed should be unholy and void of federal holiness; then were the children unclean. But the consequence [of Cotton] is frivolous: if both be pagans (heathens and unbelievers; for so the Author does well expound the unbelieving husband) then the seed is unclean and void of federal holiness. But it follows not therefore, that if both the Christian parents be excommunicated, scandalous and wicked, and are not members of a visible parish church, then the children are unclean, void of all federal holiness, and have no right to the seals of the covenant. We deny this connection, for there be great odds between the children of Turks and the children of excommunicated and scandalous parents.

[Cotton says:] The children of Turks and heathens are not to be baptized. But the children of excommunicated persons are as Turks and heathens. Therefore, the children of excommunicated persons are not to be baptized.

[Answer:]

1. The syllogism is vicious in its form.
2. It fails in its matter: for children of excommunicated persons, because

of the Covenant made with their ancestors, are in Covenant with God; and the children of Turks are not so.

The Author adds: 'The wickedness of the parents does not prejudice the election, redemption or the faith of the child. Jephthah, a bastard, is reckoned in the catalogue of believers (Heb. 11:32); yet a bastard was not admitted to come unto the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation (Deut. 23:2).

Answer: It is true that the lack of baptism is no hazard to the salvation of the child, nor do we urge that the infants of excommunicated persons should be baptized because we think that baptism is necessary (*necessitate medii* [a necessary instrument], as Papists do) [to salvation]. But neither we nor Papists, nor any except Anabaptists and the late Belgic Arminians and Socinians (as Episcopius,²² Henricus Slatius,²³ Somnerus,²⁴ and Socinus²⁵) deny baptism to be necessary in respect of God's commandment. And indeed, if you urge the constitution of a visible church to be not only by external profession, but also in some measure by sincerity and truth (as you consider members to be [inwardly] called of God and [actual] saints), as you do expressly say in this treatise,²⁶ we see not how you can hold that infants can be baptized at all when they come to age and can give tokens to the church of their faith and conversion to God. For if they believe not, you put God's seal upon a blank, which you think is absurd.

²² Episcopius, *Disp. Priv.*, 29, coller. 1, "Ritum fuisse tantum temporarium ex nullo praecepto Iesu Christi usurpatum."

²³ Henricus Slatius, *Declar. Aper.*, p. 53

²⁴ Somnerus, *Tract. de Baptis.*

²⁵ Socinus, *De Baptis.*, ch. 5, par. 53,55,57

²⁶ *The Way of the Churches of Christ in New England*, ch. 3, section 3, pp. 61-4

In the closing of this section the Author reasons against God-fathers, which are to us of a civil use and are no part in baptism. He alleges that he knows 'not any ground at all that allows a faithful man liberty to entitle another man's child to baptism only upon the pretense of a promise to have an eye to his education, unless the child be either born in his house or resigned to him and to be brought up in his house as his own.'

I Answer:

1. The infants of believing fathers (absent in other lands upon their lawful callings) are by this held from the seal of the Covenant, as if they were the children of pagans, for no fault in the parents.²⁷

2. A promise of education in the Christian faith is here made [by Cotton] a sufficient ground for baptizing an infant [if the infant is born in his house and/or is brought up by him]. Whereas always before, the Author contended for a holy profession of faith in both (or at the least in one) of the nearest parents. But we know that a friend may undertake the Christian education of the child of an excommunicated person, who is to you [Cotton] as the child of a pagan. We think upon such a promise [of Christian education that] you could not [rightfully] baptize the child of a Turk. Therefore, excommunicated persons and Turks are not alike, as you say [they are].

The End

²⁷ [Rutherford is saying that if the father is away on business for a prolonged period for a legitimate reason in another land, another man could legitimately bring forth his child for baptism. The child has a right to it, and who brings the child forth is of no matter in this regard. To deny the child baptism for no fault in the parents would be wrong.]