

**THEOLOGICAL THESES  
ON THE SACRAMENTS OF THE GOSPEL, AND SPECIFICALLY  
ON BAPTISM.**

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Thesis I

The comparison of all sacraments according to the differences of the covenants, and the comparison of the sacraments of the Gospel with the Word, indeed have great utility, both for understanding the variety of those dispensations, which we have said contributes much to the illustration of Theology, and for perceiving the nature of Baptism and the Eucharist, which is clearly pertinent to fostering and increasing piety to the highest degree. And we think it is now evident to all from the previous disputations. For if someone rightly establishes a comparison between Baptism and the Eucharist, there can certainly be no doubt that great momentum and memorable significance will accrue from it to the knowledge of religion and the sense of true piety. Therefore, before we address the special consideration of each of these sacraments separately, we must say something about what they partly have in common and partly differ from each other.

II. They agree first in that they were instituted by God, as noted above, which they have in common with all other sacraments and indeed should have. But they were also instituted through the intervention of Christ, which distinguishes them far from other sacraments. Indeed, the natural covenant had no mediator except the nature of things, for reasons mentioned elsewhere. Therefore, the sacraments were instituted in it without the work of a mediator likewise. The legal covenant could not be reconciled without a mediator: therefore, its sacraments had to be instituted by his work. But since it was such that it was not necessary for its mediator to be God, (for no true atonement for sin, which alone introduced the necessity of a mediator in the reconciliation of the covenant, was made, and therefore no true redemption but only a typical one) its sacraments could have an institutor who was a mere man by the command of God. The evangelical covenant, however, because it had true atonement for sin and true redemption, could neither be contracted without a mediator who was God, nor could any sacraments confirm it that did not derive their origin from him.

III. Moreover, it was common between them that both seem to be taken from certain rites that the Jews had introduced into the custom of the Church. For they used to wash those who were converted from the superstitions and idolatry of the Gentiles to Judaism before admitting them into the covenant of Israel, and those who were teachers among them used to consecrate their disciples who gave themselves to their discipline with certain baptisms. The Eucharist was taken from their custom of distributing bread and wine among those sitting at the same table after the solemnity of the Passover lamb, commemorating the captivity of Egypt with set words. In this matter, Christ used his customary moderation. For he did not condemn those things which, although indifferent in their nature, had prevailed by long use, lest he seem to have taken the

occasion to stir up disturbances; rather, he accommodated those things to his institution, to which the minds of men were already accustomed, rather than introducing novelties or foreign practices that could disturb men's minds.

IV. It is not necessary to mention here that both sacraments are religious ceremonies, established not only in something non-corporeal but also visible, and have a double respect, one as a seal of the promises of the covenant and a pledge of God's goodwill towards us, the other as a part of divine worship which we must piously perform, and as a token of our profession. They have almost all things in common with the sacraments of other covenants. But they have the particular feature that both were intended to confirm us in our justification, which is wholly founded on the remission of sins, and to be instruments that efficiently promote our sanctification. From this it follows that both equally excite us to the hope of blessed immortality.

V. They also agree in that they all refer to the death and resurrection of Christ. As for Baptism, the matter is clear; it will become even clearer later. For immersion in water and emergence from it symbolize the death and resurrection of Christ. Regarding the Eucharist, the breaking of bread and the pouring of wine into the cup clearly refer to the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on the cross. The image of the resurrection is not as clear in that rite; but presenting bread and wine as a symbol of spiritual life and a pledge of immortality could not fail to include a tacit mention of the resurrection of Christ, without which no hope of either spiritual life or immortality could come to us.

VI. Nor is it a peculiar feature of them that, since they are intended to seal the promises of the same covenant, and the promises pertain to all who are included in the covenant, they must be common to all those. For the nature of the other sacraments is the same. It should not be passed over in silence that in both sacraments that sealing greatly agrees with the nature of the promises themselves. For as the promises are spiritual and primarily pertain to the soul, so the rites themselves, although corporeal (for that certainly could not be entirely avoided), are celebrated in such a way as to clearly indicate, even if it were not known from elsewhere, that something is being done that elevates the soul above the bounds of this life, as the elements are both thin and simple, and in their use, the body and what pertains to the body are of little account.

VII. However, there is a notable difference between them that almost everyone perceives. Namely, as we have noted elsewhere, sacraments are indeed given to no one except those who are considered to have fulfilled the condition that God requires of men in his covenant. And in that there is also agreement between these two ceremonies. But the fulfillment of the condition is considered in two ways: either at the moments when it is first performed, or in the time when it is preserved and continued. The nature of the evangelical condition is such that it cannot be performed without immediately introducing the one who performs it into communion with Christ and the fellowship of the Church, and hence without acquiring for him adoption by which he is numbered among the children of God. For to all who received Christ, this right was given, and this prerogative and dignity, that they should be made children of God. John 1. When it is preserved and continued, it does nothing else but retain those same prerogatives, so that we do

not lose them. Baptism was designed to seal all these things in us as they are first communicated: the Eucharist, however, to be a kind of pledge that what was already communicated in Baptism may remain in us and be retained until the end of life.

IX. Next, in Baptism, there is only one element; in the Eucharist, however, there are two. The reason for this institution must be sought from the matter itself. There are indeed two certain kinds of people whom God admits to the participation of the evangelical covenant; namely, adults and infants. And to each of these kinds, there is only one way of entering into the communion of that covenant and all things that depend on the covenant. For adults, it is faith, through which they embrace the promises of Christ; for infants, it is the condition of being born to believing parents who already belong to the body of the Church. Nor is the condition of birth required from adults, as long as they believe, nor is it required from infants that they believe, as long as they are born to those who profess to believe. Therefore, some are born by believing; others believe, so to speak, by being born; that is, they are considered as if they believe. Since therefore each one has one way of being born, and since Baptism is given to represent and seal that new birth, it was neither necessary nor suitable to the simplicity of the covenant itself that it should consist of multiple elements, which would make the symbol of a very simple thing multiple and variegated. But in the Eucharist, as we have said, the preservation of spiritual life was to be sealed by those things by which bodily life is preserved. Bodily life, however, requires not only food to be sustained, but also drink; not only drink but also food. For we are so constituted by nature that both are equally necessary for our sustenance. Therefore, it was fitting that both elements should be used for that purpose, so that we might not think that anything necessary for our spiritual life was lacking.

X. Thirdly, as in bodily life, so in that spiritual condition which we attain through faith, we are born only once. For no one who is born, as Nicodemus once said, returns to the mother's womb to be born again. Nor does anyone who has truly believed return to the state in which he was before he believed, so that he may be called back to faith again, either anew or repeatedly. But if someone has not truly believed, but being somewhat enlightened by the Spirit of God, has had some beginnings and attempts of faith, from which he has subsequently fallen away (which we have demonstrated elsewhere cannot truly happen to those who are truly faithful), he is considered completely dead, and it is impossible for him to be renewed to repentance. Hebrews 6. Therefore, it was fitting that Baptism should be administered only once to each person, lest if it were repeated frequently, it might be thought that the faith through which we are spiritually born could be completely extinguished in anyone. But to retain the bodily life once given to us, it is necessary that we drink and eat from time to time. Therefore, the symbol, by which the preservation of spiritual life is designated, had to be repeated from time to time, to signify that God supplies and provides us with what is necessary to sustain that life throughout the course of our lives until we are brought to that place where such supports will no longer be needed.

XI. Nor should it be omitted, in the fourth place, that the way of being born and of preserving life is very different. For we are born in such a way that, although we contribute nothing to our birth, our parents nevertheless labor and bring us into the light. For not all fetuses

are so strong that they can aid their mothers' efforts in childbirth by their own force. But we are not nourished except by some action of our own. For infants naturally seek the breast by instinct; older children, by judgment and reason, approach food to nourish themselves. If children are less capable of judgment and reason, they are nevertheless drawn to food by some pleasure and innate desire. Even when food is forcibly given to us when we abhor it, we are not unaware of its qualities through taste, which is not without some action of our own. As for spiritual life, adults are not introduced into the communion of the evangelical covenant without their knowledge. For they are introduced by faith. Faith is indeed an act of the intellect, combined with a very keen sense of itself, as the intellect itself is a very excellent faculty endowed with the keenest sense. Therefore, we can indeed speak in this way after Paul, who attributes it to the soul, due to the analogy that exists between the mind and the external senses, which makes it so that intelligence is also attributed to the external senses regarding their objects. But the children of believers are admitted to the participation of the evangelical covenant without any sense or knowledge of their condition. For it is not known by bodily sense. But their age and the imperfection of their organs prevent them from using intellect. And that is the reason why not only adults but also infants are rightly and lawfully baptized (which I intend to demonstrate in another disputation). For if they can be partakers of the thing itself without the knowledge of it, it would be absurd to consider them incapable of the symbol, which the thing itself far surpasses in dignity. But the Eucharist ought to be administered only to those in whom a rational appetite is aroused by the knowledge of such a thing, and who can taste how good and pleasant that Christ is, who offers himself to be enjoyed in that ceremony.

XII. Fifthly, bodily life is one thing, and the sense of life is another. For the sense of life is situated in actions and is connected with pleasure. For we understand from actions that we have faculties from which they proceed. From faculties, we recognize the being to whom they naturally belong. But sense creates pleasure. And the more excellent that being is, and the better and more perfectly it is understood, the more intense the pleasure arising from it must be. But life considered separately from actions is either entirely devoid of pleasure or feels it very slightly, and scarcely observable. Baptism is properly intended to testify that spiritual life has been granted to us. And although that life cannot be granted without certain faculties, so to speak, which will later be exercised in actions, yet those faculties or the actions that should proceed from them are scarcely taken into account. Therefore, it was constituted in a thing that is by itself not apt to generate a great sense of itself, or at least one that is connected with pleasure. But the Eucharist was designed to be a symbol not only of life but of the actions that flow from life. Since these actions are accompanied by incredible joy, which is said to surpass all mental comprehension and every ability of expression, the Eucharist was most wisely instituted in things that are usually suffused with a certain delight of the senses and exhilarate the spirits in a unique way.

XIII. Sixthly, because man is by nature a social animal, born for fellowship, and after being born and grown, he actually cultivates society. But between these two, there is this difference, that he cannot actually cultivate and exercise society except with many; but he can be

born to cultivate society even in the desert and solitude. The spiritual life which we attain by the evangelical covenant also enjoys fellowship. For we are not more inclined to political communion as humans than we are to religious and spiritual communion as believers. And from this difference arises between the two sacraments. For as far as it is possible, Baptism ought to be administered in the assembly of the Church. For when we are introduced into the Church by it, nothing is more fitting than that the Church should recognize the member it admits into itself. Also, because Baptism is a common token of Christianity, it is very fitting that it should be given in the presence of those who, by the same token, are distinguished from other men. Add to this that it is not proper for anyone to be baptized except with prayers. Those prayers ought to be poured out by many together so that the neophyte may be more devoted to God and God's goodwill towards him may be more effectively secured. In a word, by Baptism our adoption is sealed. What, therefore, is more fitting for its administration than that it should be done in the very family of God, in the presence of the brothers with whom we are to share and obtain the heavenly inheritance? Yet if place, time, and other such circumstances prohibit it, it can be administered outside the assembly of the Church, because it declares that the one to whom it is given is indeed born to cultivate fellowship: but actually and in practice to cultivate it, not at all. But in the Eucharist, the matter is different. For it is not rightly celebrated except by some multitude associated in the form of a Church, because it is a symbol not of the inclination to communion, but of communion actually exercised and celebrated. Therefore, it was called by the ancients a synaxis, an assembly, and other such names denoting the gathering of many into society and communion.

XIV. Finally, although the time of birth is not so determined that nature has not allowed itself some indulgence in this matter, it is nevertheless much more strictly defined than the time of taking food. For once the fruit has matured in the womb, any delay is troublesome for both the mother and the child. Either the child itself struggles to come out and troubles the mother with its efforts, or the mother longs to relieve herself of the burden and even desires to see and embrace her child brought into the light. But the provision of milk and the distribution of food and drink is much more free, so much so that sometimes nurses let children who are satiated with an excess of milk go hungry for a while to stimulate a languishing appetite. Thus, it is certainly not necessary either to baptize the one who believes immediately after he begins to believe or to wash the one born in the Church with that sacred rite immediately after he is born. Yet, it is not fitting for their state, nor for the Church that has as if given birth to them, or for charity or zeal, to let them be without this testimony of divine mercy for too long. But it depends on the prudence of the same Church to divide and set the times at which the Holy Communion is distributed to the faithful. In the primitive Church, while zeal burned fervently and the abundance of spiritual food did not produce satiety, the use of this Sacrament was very frequent and ought to have been. With the change in circumstances, it became necessary to excite and inflame that slackening ardor by the rarity of the thing. Now let us come to the special consideration of Baptism.

XV. Baptism was instituted to testify that we are introduced into communion with Christ as if with a seal imprinted on our bodies. We have said in previous Theses that we have no communion with Christ except as He is our Savior. Therefore, Baptism seals the promises of salvation in us and, as far as it can be done by an external rite, offers the very salvation to be obtained. Salvation, however, consists either in the destruction of sin or in the enjoyment of those things which, according to divine institution, follow the destruction of sin. Baptism assures us of the certain and undoubted hope of these, namely, heavenly life and the resurrection of the body. But just as these follow the abolition of sin, so Baptism does not seal them in us except consequently in some way. Its primary and more proper use consists in testifying that the destruction and abolition of sin by Christ are actually communicated to us. Sin is considered in a twofold respect: namely, as it renders us guilty before divine justice and as it infects all our faculties and actions with its corruption. Christ has destroyed it in both respects. Therefore, Baptism must represent and seal the destruction of sin in both respects.

XVI. Christ, I say, destroyed sin in those two respects, and He does not make anyone a partaker of His benefit without freeing him from sin, both as it creates guilt and as it is a vice. Therefore, Paul always proceeds from the doctrine of justification, which is nothing else but the abolition of guilt, to the doctrine of sanctification, which contains the correction of vice and the amendment of nature. And just as those two are naturally connected, so the divine Apostle declares them to be united in an indivisible bond in the faithful. Romans 5 and 6, Galatians 2, and elsewhere frequently. Indeed, Christ was sent into the world to restore the image of God in us. The image of God consists in the participation of holiness and the participation of blessedness. For God is by nature both holy and blessed. Therefore, the vice of sin is opposed to holiness; the guilt of sin is opposed to blessedness (for one who is guilty cannot help but eventually fall into extreme misery, and extreme misery and blessedness cannot coexist nor dwell in the same place). Christ would not restore that image in us unless it were complete in both parts, or He must impart both holiness and impunity to us. Moreover, if impunity were given without holiness, the highest physical good, which follows impunity, would be connected with moral evil. If holiness were given without impunity, the highest physical evil would be combined with moral good. Nature abhors both of these. Additionally, if impunity is considered by itself, it is indeed a very good thing in its own kind. But if it is compared with holiness, it falls far below it in dignity. Therefore, in that comparison, and in that benefit which Christ obtained for us, holiness seems to have the character of an end, while impunity has the character of a means: for we are justified that we may be sanctified. Therefore, to give impunity and deny holiness would be to apply a means without any end. Which does not befit the wisdom of God. Moreover, to intend to give holiness without impunity would be like aiming for an end without a necessary and inevitable means. This is no less absurd. Finally, to grant forgiveness of sins on the condition that one may continue to sin perpetually is not fitting for a just and wise administrator of affairs. Again, to turn from sin to true and perfect holiness and yet not obtain forgiveness for past sins seems harsh and contrary to the merciful nature of the Deity. Therefore, these two must be joined together in the bestowal of the benefit and in its representation and testimony.

XVII. This has been done most wisely and conveniently in Baptism, whether you consider the material of the element or the rite of administration. For as to the material, water is a thing, whether it is full of nitre, as it is said, or any other cleansing quality, most suitable for washing away the impurities of the body. For both respects of sin are commonly compared to bodily stains and blemishes in both common speech and in Scripture. For Scripture, when it exhorts to holiness by which the vice of sin is removed, says in Isaiah 1: "Wash, cleanse yourselves," followed by the interpretation, "Remove the evil of your deeds from my sight," and similar expressions are found elsewhere. When it promises the remission of sins, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," etc., there is nothing more frequent in both the Old and New Testament. Moreover, it has become customary among men that those who are acquitted by the judges before whom they were accused are said to be purged: and those who are holy and of upright life are called pure and uncontaminated. The reason for this is very easy to explain. For sin, as a vice, disfigures the natural beauty of the soul no less than any stain disfigures the body. For it is as abhorrent to its excellence as if someone were to scatter the whiteness of snow with ink mixed with blood. And as it creates guilt, it offends the mind of the just judge no less than that inherent filthiness alienates the eyes it encounters, not without some horror. Therefore, water was by far the most opportune and suitable for both respects.

XVIII. As for the rite, it must be considered first in itself; then in relation to both respects; finally, as it refers to the cause from which both effects flow. In itself, if considered, it is twofold. The one more usual in the primitive Church was performed by the immersion of people in water; and the emergence from it. The other, more frequent in our times, is done by the sprinkling or pouring of water on the head, from which it immediately flows. Some in former times used triple immersion and triple emergence in the former method of baptizing. If someone wanted to imitate this in the latter method, he would pour water on the head three times, at such intervals that it would dissipate three times as well.

XIX. That triple immersion was either instituted or practiced by the Apostles cannot be demonstrated from any passage in the New Testament. Therefore, it is either an indifferent thing that could be omitted, or rather should be omitted because it is supported neither by example nor by any suitable reason. For those who were led to introduce that rite into the Church by the reason that it referred to the three persons of the most blessed Trinity were mistaken. For we are indeed baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, because the doctrine of the Trinity was not perfectly and distinctly known until the times of the Gospel, and the declaration of our faith ought to have an open profession of that doctrine. Moreover, since before the coming of Christ, the person of the Father revealed Himself chiefly under the legal dispensation; in the coming of Christ, the Son clearly manifested Himself and took up the Church; but after Christ ascended into heaven, the Spirit descended from heaven to take over the administration of the Church, it was fitting for the wisdom of Christ, considering His departure and on the very brink of it, to deliver this formula of the Church's profession of faith, that it might recognize that triple dispensation and expect no new dispensation after the Spirit descended from heaven. But this could sufficiently be done by word. Since that doctrine pertains

to the promises of the Gospel only indirectly and consequently (for the Christian religion indeed cannot stand without it, but the evangelical formula is not "believe and you will be a partaker of the Trinity," but "believe and you will be saved"), and since sacraments were instituted to seal the promises, it is most fitting that they should wholly refer to them.

XX. We believe it to be true that the Apostles used those two previous rites of administering Baptism indifferently. For since it was sometimes necessary to baptize several thousand people in one day, it is unlikely that men occupied with the preaching of the Gospel could have managed such a large and laborious task. Nor was it necessary. Although the former method seems to have somewhat greater force and analogy for representing the effect and the cause of the effect, the latter still sufficiently accomplishes this. For the pouring of water corresponds to immersion in water, as it is so abundant that it covers the entire head: just as the dissipation of the water corresponds to emergence from the water. In adults who are standing, the head is so close to the body that when it is covered with water, the whole person seems to be immersed, and when the water dissipates from all sides, the whole person seems to be brought out of it. In infants, even if they are lying in cradles, the face and head represent the whole person so that what happens to that part is considered to happen to the whole body.

XXI. As for the effect, it consists, as we have said, in two things: namely, justification and sanctification. Now, before we are justified, we are submerged in the deep abyss of a curse, which immersion in water symbolizes. When we are justified, we are brought out of that abyss into a state where we no longer have anything to fear from the curse. The careful depiction of this is in the drawing out of the water. Before we are sanctified, the corruption of sin holds us so completely that it envelops us from head to foot and seems to hover over and surround us as if some whirlpool had swallowed us. When we are sanctified, we are called to light and a new kind of life, whose use the surrounding corruption had taken from us.

XXII. Nor is there less analogy in the representation of the cause. First, the death of Christ is the cause of our justification because He satisfied divine justice for us in it: and His resurrection, because it was made manifest in it that this satisfaction was perfect and that there was nothing more that God, as a judge and avenger of sin, could demand from our surety. For as long as penalties are still being exacted either from the guilty person or from the one who has substituted himself in place of the guilty, the punishment has not yet been fully measured, and there is something in the violated law that the punishment has not fulfilled. When either the guilty person or the surety has fully borne the punishment, it is discharged, and justice, being satisfied, rests and refrains from further punishment. Thus, with satisfaction fully rendered, it is just for the guilty person to be freed: and the release and liberation from punishment is an undoubted argument of fully rendered satisfaction. The express image of Christ's death is seen in that immersion: the resurrection in the drawing out of the water.

XXIII. The same death of Christ is also the cause of our sanctification in two ways. First, because it removed the impediment that stood in the way of God communicating Himself to us and opened the way to us for the Spirit who must follow and seal the adoption that Christ's death acquired for us. For the Apostle not only teaches that because we are sons, the Spirit of adoption



has been sent into our hearts, but also that Christ, because He became a curse, has so abolished the curse that was upon us that the blessing promised to Abraham might come to us, a part of which blessing is most notably found in the gift of the Spirit. Galatians 3. Secondly, because it set before our eyes a remarkable example to which our life ought to be conformed. For as Christ, when He suffered death, was deprived of the use of light, the functions of the senses, and all other operations of life, and thus broke off all commerce with the world so that He might no longer have anything in common with it, so we ought, if we desire to have true communion with Christ, to cease from all those works to which we were formerly addicted and to renounce the world, as if we were dead.

XXIV. The resurrection of Christ contributes equally in two ways to the same sanctification in us. First, as much as it contributed to the perfect and visible satisfaction of Christ in death, so also it contributed to the communication of the blessing of the Spirit of adoption and sanctification with us. Secondly, it completed in all its parts the example of our sanctification begun in death, so that nothing might be lacking for us to express our life according to His image. For as He, when He rose from the dead, entered into a new kind of life, entirely different from that natural life which He lived on earth before death, so we, if we have any communion with His resurrection, must rise to a new life that completely abhors that corrupt and sinful life to which we were devoted before our calling. And although our sanctification is one thing, and we cannot abstain from evil without doing good, nor do good without also abstaining from evil, because it is one thing to abstain from actions that are evil by nature and another to engage in actions that are good by nature, Scripture often describes our sanctification as consisting of two parts: as in those words, "Cease to do evil, learn to do good," in Isaiah, and similar places. Since, therefore, the death of Christ, in which He ceased from all action, much better fits with our sanctification, as it consists in abstinence from evil, than it does as it consists in good actions: while His resurrection has greater congruity with the same sanctification as it consists in good actions than it does as it consists in abstinence from evil, therefore Scripture most wisely composed those matters in this way.

XXV. Therefore, that rite of Baptism by immersion in water and emergence from it most significantly represented both. For immersion, because it takes away the use of light and all other things that are in the world, excellently symbolizes death: and emergence, because it restores the use of light and the functions and operations of the faculties, has the likeness of resurrection from the dead. Since Baptism was instituted for this purpose, not only to represent by likeness the death and resurrection of Christ but also to most effectively seal the communion we have with both, and since that communion consists of drawing from it both the grace of justification and sanctification, therefore both these things are attributed to Baptism, that is, that we are considered both justified and sanctified by it. For Paul confirmed that the Church is purified by the washing of water. Ephesians 5:26. And likewise, that we are saved by the washing of regeneration. Titus 3:5. Purification and salvation encompass both these things. Moreover, in Romans 6, Paul not only says that we all who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death, which includes justification, but he also assigns sanctification to the same

Baptism in the most magnificent words, which deserve to be commemorated here. "We have been buried with Him through Baptism into death; so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection," etc.

XXVI. Nor should it seem surprising that Scripture speaks in this way. For as for justification, because it is very common for the names of signs and the things they signify to be exchanged, and so that what belongs to the signs is attributed to the things and vice versa, and since Baptism is a sign instituted by God to seal that communion with the death of Christ from which justification arises, it was easy to attribute our justification to it by that way of speaking. Moreover, the sense of justification, which consists in peace and consolation of mind, can be rightly called justification itself. Baptism assures us of justification and therefore is naturally apt to generate that peace and consolation in our minds. As for sanctification, besides those sacramental phrases which may have some place here, Baptism has a singular efficacy in producing it. For, to say nothing of the fact that sanctification is largely created from consolation, and consolation arises from Baptism as a seal of justification, among other things not worth repeating, Baptism has a double incentive to true holiness. First, it is very inconvenient to have such clear examples of the mortification of the old man and the vivification of the new one before our eyes and yet not emulate them. Secondly, it is absurd and useless to receive in oneself the seal of communion with the death and resurrection of Christ and yet have no communion with either.

XXVII. From these explanations, many things necessarily follow that contribute greatly to the elucidation and confirmation of the doctrine of Baptism. First, the error of those who deny the power of Baptism both to justify and sanctify, unless restricted to the time when it is actually administered, is refuted. They would introduce another sacrament into religion, intended for the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism. For as regards justification, since Baptism confers it by sealing its promise, which is the nature of that sealing, the efficacy of Baptism in conferring justification must be the same. It certainly seals it, testifying that because we profess to have communion with the death and resurrection of Christ through faith, the fruit of both belongs to us. That fruit is primarily situated in justification. But as that profession includes a promise of perseverance in that faith, so the sealing also includes a tacit stipulation of that perseverance. If you do not persevere, the sealing is in vain, both for the present and the future: but if you do persevere in faith, the sealing does not only apply to the time when Baptism is actually administered but looks ahead, extending its power and efficacy to the end of life. Thus, just as you were once baptized in your life for the forgiveness of sins for the entire course of your life, provided you persevere in faith, so from that one Baptism once administered, when you recall it to memory, you can conceive a certain confidence that all your sins are forgiven, no less those that followed Baptism than those that preceded it.

XXVIII. As regards sanctification, since Baptism works it only objectively, and objective causes exercise their efficacy not only when present, as physical causes do, but also when absent, as moral causes do when we contemplate them in our mind and soul, nothing prevents us from

feeling the power of Baptism for sanctification even in old age, if it was received in early infancy. For we can recall to memory other things pertaining to the institution of Baptism and the other sacraments, which can ignite the love of God in us, especially those that were recently mentioned, concerning the example set before our eyes in the death of Christ and the uselessness of the sign when the thing signified by the sign is not held in esteem.

XXIX. Nor is the error of those less refuted who dare to communicate Baptism to inanimate things. Certainly, as we observed elsewhere, the Word is directed to those who, even if they do not believe in action, yet are capable of believing because they have faculties designated by nature for that purpose, unless hindered by the impediment of sin. Sacraments, however, are not conferred except on those who either have faith or at least present it, so that it cannot be proven by any certain arguments to be false. Therefore, what is not only folly and presumption but also a profanation of divine mysteries to communicate those sacred rites with things that neither have faith nor can have it due to their lack of sanctity, and with which there can be no communion with the death and resurrection of Christ? Some excuse that absurd superstition and downplay it as much as possible, considering it merely a consecration of those inanimate things for certain uses, whether sacred or common, not true Baptism. But common uses do not require consecration. Sacred uses of inanimate things, if any, neither require consecration under the evangelical covenant, which abhors such external and bodily ceremonies, nor, if they did require any consecration, would they admit the rite which God designated solely for sealing communion with Christ's death and resurrection.

XXX. Thirdly, the custom of those is refuted, whoever they may be, who have added many other rites to the element of water and the manner of administering it, which neither by divine institution nor by the imitation of the Apostles can pertain to Baptism. For their multitude is entirely alien to the nature of the Christian religion. It ought to be content with a few external ceremonies, and those very simple and easy to use, lest it should seem to draw from that burdensome and laborious dispensation of the Law. The reason and nature of those things are properly different from the institution of Baptism. For Baptism was established both to signify the washing away of our souls and to seal and bind the communion we have with the death and resurrection of Christ. But none of those things rejected by the Reformed Churches can serve either of those purposes in any way.

XXXI. And these things indeed seem clear. Two questions are somewhat more difficult to explain. One, whether the Baptism of those should be considered legitimate who overthrow the foundations of religion in other doctrines, but in those that pertain properly to the constitution of Baptism, although they have corrupted something, the corruption does not pertain to overthrowing or undermining the essence of the matter, as they say. The other, what should be thought of the Baptism of those who perhaps retain the foundations of religion in other doctrines but have renounced Christian doctrine in those on which Baptism properly relies. For in both cases, there seems to be great reason for doubt. In the first, because he who receives the sign of the covenant seems to swear allegiance to the whole covenant. Therefore, if the whole covenant is corrupted and overthrown from its foundations, how can the sign established to confirm it

stand? Or how can he swear to hold as Christian those doctrines that have been substituted for the true ones, when in that very oath he binds himself to a crime? In the second case likewise, if the corruption of the rest of the covenant does not destroy Baptism, as long as the doctrines on which it properly relies remain intact, when the rest of the covenant is whole and untouched, can the corruption of one or another doctrine directly pertaining to its constitution bring destruction to Baptism?

XXXII. And as regards the first question, since two kinds of people are baptized, namely, adults and infants, the condition of infants is by far more advantageous in this matter. For they neither bind themselves by any oath, nor if anything is rashly or wrongly sworn by those who offer them for Baptism, should it be imputed to them. It concerns them only that they receive such a Baptism and that the Baptism is a seal of such a covenant. We suppose that Baptism is whole, as it relies on whole doctrines and is unstained by deadly error. For the remaining corruptions introduced into it indeed dishonor its appearance and face, as it were, but they do not extinguish its nature or overthrow its institution. But the covenant itself, because it was not corrupted and contaminated by the infant, should not be considered here as corrupted, but as it agrees with its seal and is joined with it by divine institution. For it certainly does not suit the divine institution to be void in respect of those who have made it null by their own fault; not in respect of those who are not to blame in this matter. Therefore, if an infant, born of believers, is baptized by such heretics, his Baptism should be considered valid, and it should not be repeated.

XXXIII. Yet the matter does not seem sufficiently settled. For two things must be repeated from the above: one, that no sacraments are valid unless administered by those who are legitimately called to that office. The other, that no infants should be baptized unless they are considered part of the covenant. Now heretics do not seem to have a legitimate calling for that office; nor do the children of heretics seem to be included in the evangelical covenant: for heretics are not considered faithful. These must also be resolved.

XXXIV. And the former is resolved by a distinction. Namely, there are two kinds of people who are fundamentally in error in religion. Some were once in the Church but degenerated from it and followed their errors into sects. Others arose spontaneously, having never had any communion with the Catholic Church. Heretics of the former kind, although they have departed from the integrity of doctrine, if they have nevertheless retained the doctrine of Baptism, are to be considered as having likewise retained the calling for administering it, with which they were once endowed in the communion of the Church. For just as a calling is granted to no one except for the purpose of preaching doctrine and administering the sacraments (for every office is instituted for its functions, and the functions of the ecclesiastical office are set in those two things), so wherever doctrine and sacraments are preserved by divine providence outside the Church in sects, some proportion of the calling for those functions necessarily remains. For God did not will that they be preserved entirely in vain. They would certainly be in vain if they were administered by no one. Heretics of the latter kind are either rare or entirely nonexistent, who have not completely abolished the Christian religion, as much concerning the sacraments as the other doctrines on which religion is founded. Therefore, since they neither

have a calling preserved from communion with the Church nor one derived from the doctrine itself, which is not pure among them, whatever is done in that kind should be considered null and void.

XXXV. The latter is somewhat more difficult. For if children are judged by the condition of their immediate parents, heretics addicted to deadly errors are not faithful. If they are judged according to the condition of their remote parents, what valid reason can be given why they should follow the condition of those who are less their parents rather than those who are more so? Moreover, if we must interpret God's favor as fully and benignly as possible, where should the flow of that prerogative ultimately stop—in grandparents, great-grandparents, or even more remote ancestors? More relevant is that wherever some integrity of doctrine and sacraments is preserved, there must be some Church existing. For when doctrine, preaching, and the use of sacraments are certain marks of the Church, wherever they occur, there must be some Church existing, pure and entire more or less, according to the state of those things. Now there is no Church to which God's promises do not in some measure pertain. And the nature of the promises made to the Church is such that in every society of believers, even the condition of infants is such that they are considered part of the society, as an integral part, so to speak, and thus the promises of God are thought to pertain to them as well. Therefore, they are baptized with the command or consent of God in the hope that unless they degenerate from the covenant which Baptism seals after they grow up, they will enjoy its benefits: if not, they fall away from it. Therefore, if adults allow themselves to be corrupted by deadly errors, they have no salvation in Baptism. If they die before being corrupted, nothing prevents them from experiencing the power of the sacrament in salvation. Therefore, their Baptism is valid to that extent.

XXXVI. The matter is somewhat more difficult for adults. Therefore, Baptism and the rest of the religion to which the baptized person binds himself must be considered separately. Here we consider Baptism to be both founded on sound and true doctrines and administered by someone with some calling, and finally communicated to someone who professes to embrace those doctrines on which Baptism properly and closely relies. Therefore, we lack nothing in it. But the rest of the religion must be considered as consisting of two kinds of things. Some are good and established by divine institution; others are bad and come either from the ignorance and rashness of men or from the craft of Satan. Therefore, the oath by which the baptized person binds himself to observe the religion must be considered either in respect of the object or in respect of the mind and intention of the one who swears. In respect of the object, he binds himself to observe both good and bad things equally. But as for his disposition and intention, he considers all of them equally good and stemming from divine revelation. In this, he is greatly mistaken, and indeed he cannot excuse this error. For he ought to have diligently inquired into the objects of his faith; if he had done so, he could easily have distinguished them, setting aside the perverse inclinations of the human mind, as they are so discrepant and marked with such different characters of truth and falsehood. But this error neither vitiates Baptism considered separately in itself, for it deals with things that do not directly and immediately pertain to the constitution of Baptism, nor does it entirely take away the hope of obtaining the promise which

Baptism seals, provided he does not persist in it. For just as the faith which the catechumen professes includes a tacit promise not only of perseverance but also of renouncing any error that conflicts with saving truth, so the sealing of the promise by Baptism includes a tacit stipulation that he who professes to believe will not only persist but also, if he has imbibed any pernicious error, will expel it as it were, and apply himself to the diligent study of religion to explore the truth. Therefore, that oath is conceived under this hypothesis: Unless there is something wrong in that religion which he does not yet know sufficiently. That he does not yet know it sufficiently is almost tolerable because he has not yet been able to investigate everything thoroughly.

XXXVII. In deciding the other question, this should be particularly noted: as we said before, Baptism first includes an open declaration of the doctrine of the Trinity of persons in one Godhead, and secondly, it is instituted to seal in us communion with the death and resurrection of Christ. And although the former is said to be added by us only now, it is still inseparable from Christ's institution. For He expressly commanded that we be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Apart from Christ's institution, the thing, as they say, essential to the matter follows. For communion with the death of Christ includes satisfaction, satisfaction includes the divinity of the person making satisfaction, and the divinity of the person making satisfaction includes His distinction from the person to whom satisfaction is made. This matter strongly supports the doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, whoever rejects that doctrine is to be considered as rejecting Baptism itself, even if he seems to admit it in appearance.

XXXVIII. The latter point leads us even more strongly to the same conclusion. For the death and resurrection of Christ must be considered either in themselves or in the purpose for which they were ordained by God and Christ. If considered in themselves, no one can deny that if anyone were to deny that Christ either died or was raised from the dead, such a person could not be baptized in His name. Therefore, if there were any whose fury was such that they denied both that Christ died and that He rose again, yet wished to be baptized in His name, such Baptism would have to be considered entirely null. For whoever is baptized into Christ is baptized into His death, as we affirmed above from Paul. Therefore, if anyone were led from that fury to the discipline of Christ and baptized, which would be absolutely necessary, it would not be a repetition of Baptism; for there is no other; but a legitimate and unique use of that sacred rite.

XXXIX. If considered in relation to the purpose for which they were ordained, since that consists in the destruction of sin through satisfaction, whereby sin creates guilt, and through the obtaining of the Spirit of sanctification, whereby it is placed in vice, Baptism cannot exist without reference to those matters. For we certainly receive Baptism not only to testify that we believe Christ died and was raised from the dead, but also to testify that that death and resurrection of Christ pertain to us, in that through satisfaction it procured impunity for us, and that it likewise obtained the gift of sanctification for us. And this is evident both from the matter itself and from the testimony of Paul. First, from the matter itself. For certainly we have no communion with the death and resurrection of Christ unless they are referred to their purpose. Nor can that purpose be other than what we have mentioned. Nor is that communion sealed in us

by Baptism except with reference to that purpose. Secondly, from the testimony of Paul. For besides the words already cited twice, "We are baptized into Christ's death," there are these singular words: "We are buried with Him through Baptism into death." For when he had argued about justification in the preceding passages, and from that argument the objection arose, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" he resolved it in no other way than by teaching that those who have communion with Christ's death not only draw justification from it but also sanctification; and not only sanctification but also justification: because those two are inseparable benefits in communion with Christ's death; and it is evident from the same words of Paul that Baptism is designed to seal that communion in both respects. Therefore, we do not doubt to affirm that the Baptism of those who dare to remove satisfaction along with the doctrine of the Trinity from religion is null, even if they have not greatly contaminated the Christian religion in other respects.

XL. One issue remains that has exercised both the ancients and the more recent scholars: what should be thought of those about whom it is uncertain whether they were baptized or not. Learned men follow the authority of the Council of Carthage, which decreed that such people should be baptized. And rightly so. For in such cases, what is commonly said about other matters applies here: the judgment about things that do not exist or are not apparent should be the same. However, that decision requires some caution. For in such matters, which are not supported by any certain evidence in either direction, it is scarcely possible to prevent people from leaning more toward one opinion than another based on perhaps slight but still some causes, whatever they may be. Therefore, the utmost care in judgment is necessary, so that nothing is done to the scandal of the Church. For if the majority inclines rather to the opinion that the person in question was baptized, the offense of repeated Baptism must be avoided: if the contrary, the neglect of Baptism must be avoided. For no one can be harmed by lacking Baptism when it has occurred for the sake of ensuring common edification; nor can it be considered a fault to have been baptized twice if the same common edification depended on it. Therefore, the utmost care must always be taken that whatever is done in the Church is referred to the common good, especially to the glory of God, both privately and publicly by all. For to the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be praise, honor, glory, strength, and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

**THEOLOGICAL THESES ON PEDO-BAPTISM**  
**Under the presidency of Dr. MOSES AMYRALDUS**  
**Respondent: SAMUEL LANGLEY, Norman**

Thesis I

That universal dispensation, which is called the evangelical covenant, was instituted by God for the sake of humans, not angels, as is universally acknowledged. For it is a covenant of grace and redemption from sin, from which those angels who have remained in their integrity are exempt and therefore do not need such a covenant. It is evident from experience and the words of the Apostle, who denied that Christ assumed the nature of angels for this reason. Heb. 2.

Furthermore, since there are two kinds of humans, namely adults, who possess the power of deliberation and the use of reason, and infants, whose organ imperfection hinders the power of understanding, though scarcely anyone among Christians dares to deny that this dispensation pertains to both, it is nevertheless undeniable that there is a remarkable difference between adults and infants.

II. For it can be proved by many and evident arguments that the evangelical covenant pertains primarily and chiefly to adults and only secondarily and indirectly to infants. First, the nature of the other covenants of God, namely the natural and the legal, was such that they directly concerned adult humans and indirectly concerned infants and dependents. For that contract was made with a man who had acquired perfect bodily stature and the use of reason at the very creation when there was no infant in the world; this with adult Israelites, who themselves heard the proclamation of the law and with whom the mediator could deal, since there were indeed infants, but who were not at all involved in that matter. No reason can be given why the condition and nature of the evangelical covenant should not be the same.

III. Then, if we consider it in itself, both the duty required in it, and the promise that offers the reward, and the sealing of the promise, which is done by the sacraments, and finally the manner of notifying all these things which is employed by God, clearly demonstrate this very point. The duty, since it is based on faith. Faith cannot be performed by anyone who does not use their intellect. The promise, because it promises the forgiveness of sins, not only those inherent by nature and derived from parents to children but also and specifically those committed against the law, which can only be committed by adults. To say nothing of the Spirit of consolation and sanctification, which is contained in the same promise and only manifests in adults. The sealing of the promise, since it is done by things that have the nature of a sign. The nature and use of a sign are based on signifying, which has a clear relation to understanding. Finally, the manner in which these things are notified. For it is mainly done through preaching, which is directed only to those in whom the use of reason is active.

IV. Thirdly, the very nature of every properly called covenant seems to require this. For it is evident that every such pact consists of a reciprocal agreement, which must be voluntary on both sides. For we have previously observed that absolute covenants, which consist only of a promise, are called covenants only less properly. But a voluntary agreement cannot exist unless it proceeds from a person who uses their will, and therefore also understanding, without which there is no true will.

V. Moreover, it was fitting for the wisdom of God, when He wanted to establish a covenant with humans, to make it with those who are perfect rather than with those who have not yet attained their perfection. We understand perfection here not in the essential qualities from which a human is constituted. For in this way, an infant is perfect. Nor in the good habits from which a human is said to be morally perfect. For even adults, with whom the evangelical covenant is made, are not perfect in this way. But in a certain state of the person in which they can exercise those operations for which they are naturally destined, namely, to understand and



will. That perfection is certainly in adults, but not in infants, who are therefore rightly called imperfect and immature.

VI. Finally, the evangelical covenant has such power, as we have explained in previous disputations, that it establishes the closest and truly incomparable communion between Christ and those contained in the covenant. Now, although infants can have communion with Christ in that they share the hope of salvation which Christ has acquired for humans, as will be demonstrated more fully later (for they cannot certainly be admitted to the hope of redemption without being admitted in some way to the communion of Christ himself), no one can deny that this communion, whose bond on our part is faith, and on Christ's part is the communication of the comforting and sanctifying Spirit, is far nobler and more worthy. For by faith, Christ dwells in us through that image of Himself which He has impressed upon us by the word and sacraments, and which we grasp with our minds so that we are united with Him. By the Spirit, which He communicates to us, He so infuses Himself into us that we are said to be in Him and dwell in Him. Therefore, the communion between Christ and infants is almost the same as between the sun and the blind. They experience the life-giving power of that wonderful star, but they do not see the light, much less unite themselves with it through the act of vision. But between Christ and adult believers, the communion is like that between the sun and those who look upon it with their eyes. For its life-giving power not only influences them but also envelops their whole being, uniting them with it; which is not without admiration for such a thing, nor without a sense of some incredible pleasure.

VII. Nevertheless, although the roles of adults are more significant than those of infants in the evangelical covenant, no one who has even a moderate knowledge of these matters can deny that the evangelical covenant also pertains to infants. For first, since it is naturally arranged that in every legitimately constituted society, children, as long as they are not separated from their parents and still constitute one family with them, are considered part of their parents and of the same condition, at least in favorable matters, the most excellent society, which is constituted by the evangelical covenant and is called the Church, should not be inferior to all others in this respect. Therefore, if the privileges of believing parents, which are indeed very great, should be shared with their children as far as they can participate in them.

VIII. Furthermore, since God, the best and greatest, did not disdain to make covenants with humans almost in the manner of human agreements and to impose the name of a covenant, taken from mutual agreements between humans, on the arrangements of His will, it seems reasonable that He would want to establish His agreements as kindly as humans establish theirs. For it has never been heard that a covenant has been made between two people or princes in which the children of the contracting parties were not included, at least to enjoy it as long as the covenant itself would last. And certainly, the matter was no different. For the natural covenant was made with an adult man, but by the power of the covenant, he would generate children of the same condition with him if he had persisted in integrity. And the legal covenant, made with Israel, included the children of the Israelites. Even in covenants less properly called so, we see the same thing, as in the covenant made with Noah. For it undoubtedly included Noah's children,

and their descendants, and those who were to be born from them. Why, then, should the children of believers be excluded from the evangelical covenant unless there is something in its nature that does not agree with such kindness? Especially since God showed Himself to be good in the natural covenant, good and just in the legal covenant, but in the one Gospel, He revealed His mercy, which would remove the severity of legal justice and surpass the goodness of the natural covenant by infinite measures?

IX. Add that both the previous covenants had a typical relation to the Gospel: the natural covenant, from a certain divine wisdom, which, having foreseen the fall of man before the foundation of the world was laid, wonderfully outlined their restoration in the first creation of things. The legal covenant, from a singular institution of God's will likewise, who would never have made such a covenant with Israel if He had not intended it to serve the evangelical covenant. But that typical relationship would have been certainly incomplete and mutilated unless it had also foreshadowed that in the Gospel the condition of parents and children would be the same.

X. What we have shown by these arguments to be consistent, God Himself testifies to have been done. We have observed in previous theses that the covenant made with Abraham contained the beginnings and rudiments of a double covenant, namely the legal and the evangelical, both of which were to be perfected in their own time. Indeed, there can be no heretic so impudent as to dare to deny this. For the matter of the legal covenant is clear and indubitable. As for the evangelical, we have Paul as a witness and author, who called the sign of circumcision received by Abraham the seal of the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4). Now, no one can deny that this covenant was made not only with Abraham but also with his children and indeed with infants. For the words are clear: "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant," etc. Which is elsewhere repeated: "I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you." Circumcision indeed places this beyond all doubt since it had to be administered to infants on the eighth day after birth, lest anyone should doubt that the covenant pertained to those to whom the symbol and seal of the covenant pertained. Either we must admit that the rudiments of both covenants equally pertained to infants, or we must show what great difference there is between those two covenants that the infants of one could be participants while those of the other could not. And we indeed acknowledge that there is an immense difference between those two covenants. However, we deny and will demonstrate below why this difference does not prevent both covenants from pertaining to infants at that time.

XI. Moreover, this was the understanding of the minds of all the faithful under the Old Testament. For after they had matured and began to seriously think about the means of obtaining salvation, they clearly perceived that the hope of salvation was not based on the observance of the legal covenant as it was legal. The Apostle proves this from the words of David in Psalm 32: "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven," etc. (Rom. 4). Not that they distinguished one covenant from the other as clearly as we do now. For that was reserved for the times of the Gospel. But they at least understood that neither was the hope of eternal beatitude to be expected

in the life they lived on earth, since death, due to sin, would eventually claim each one of them; nor was justification to be obtained by perfect observance of divine commands, since the conscience of sin accused them all. Therefore, they sought their happiness elsewhere and for another reason. When it was unavoidable that many would lose many children before they even left their cradles (as happened to David, as the sacred history testifies), what do we think their state of mind was when they buried their infant children? They certainly did not think that they had perished eternally. For such a thought would have thrown their souls into great anguish. And how is it that David, who was so grievously afflicted when the child born to him by Bathsheba was in danger of death, could so suddenly regain his composure after the child died, if he thought the child had fallen into eternal death? They believed, therefore, that their children were saved, which they could not have believed without also being persuaded that the covenant, which was saving (which we now call the evangelical), was instituted also for their sake, especially since the doctrine of original sin had always prevailed in the Jewish Church. If the faithful, under the obscure and imperfect revelation of grace, conceived such hope for their children out of God's mercy, what should we think of ours in such a clear and manifest display of saving grace?

XII. Moreover, Christ Himself approved and confirmed the mind of the faithful of the Old Testament with His authority. For when little children were brought to Him, so small that they could be carried in arms and called infants (who evidently lacked the use of reason), to lay His hands on them, bless them, and pray for them, the disciples forbade it, thinking it would be troublesome to Christ. He corrected their rashness, commanded that the little ones be brought to Him, and, after praying for them, pronounced that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Indeed, considering Christ's wisdom, goodness, and mercy, we must think that He prayed for their salvation before anything else. Would He have asked for bodily goods before having considered the eternal salvation of their souls? Certainly, He could not have done so without the assumption that His prayers would be pleasing and acceptable to God, which they would not have been if God had excluded those infants entirely from participation in the covenant of grace. And why would He have laid His hands on them, except to testify by this sign that they were among those for whom God's promises concerning saving grace were made valid?

XIII. Heretics turn to all sorts of interpretations to claim that "of such" refers not to infants in age but to those humble and childlike in manners. But since they themselves do not deny that infants can be partakers of salvation even if they lack faith and charity because God, who promised salvation under certain conditions, did not bind Himself so strictly that He could not save infants in an extraordinary way, what then do they fear so much that those who can be saved might also be said to belong to the kingdom of heaven? The kingdom of heaven, according to Jewish usage, was the state of the Church under the Messiah. And since that state pertains to two different times, one of the Church's warfare on earth, the other of glory and triumph in heaven, the kingdom of heaven in the Gospel is taken indiscriminately for both the future glory and the present condition of the faithful under the evangelical dispensation. Certainly, if it is taken in the former sense here, "of such" can only denote those who, having laid aside all arrogance and pride, emulate the modesty, humility, and docility of children. For the Gospel is

not intended for the proud minds of the Pharisees. If taken in the latter sense, nothing prevents it from signifying infants, especially since, according to the heretics themselves, they can obtain heavenly glory in some extraordinary way. We consider the opinion of those to be truer who think that, since the two times of the kingdom of heaven were not yet clearly distinguished, Christ, to accommodate Himself to the preconceived and obscure opinions of people, which He did not yet find expedient to explain more clearly, spoke in such a way as to encompass both matters in His words. For both are certainly true: those who are spiritually childlike are suited for the Christian religion, and infants themselves are capable of that glory which awaits us in heaven.

XIV. The Apostle, the incomparable disciple of the divine Master, removes all doubt from our minds in this matter. For he says that the children of believers are holy, and indeed that if one parent is an unbeliever, their unbelief cannot strip the children begotten by the other believing parent of that dignity. Moreover, since sanctity is twofold: one absolute, consisting of moral perfection, and the other relative, which is based on some external association, no one can seriously claim that infants are called holy based on that first and absolute sanctity. For sanctity consists either in the actions and operations of the faculties with which we are naturally endowed or in the habits that adorn and make those faculties apt for such operations. But infants cannot perform such actions, for their mental faculties are entirely hindered by the imperfection of their organs. As for habits, how can we know that they are infused into their faculties when they exhibit no actions consistent with their nature? Furthermore, just as such actions can only proceed from good habits requiring a certain constitution of the faculties, so it is almost inconceivable how a mind enwrapped in the imperfection of its organs, as it is in infants, can be capable of habits of wisdom, prudence, and other virtues in which moral, and therefore Christian, perfection consists. Relative sanctity of persons in the people of Israel was twofold: one common, according to which that whole people was set apart from all other nations to be in a covenant with God and was therefore called a holy nation, while the rest of the nations were profane. The other was more special, belonging to those who occupied some office in the divine service in the tabernacle, and therefore were called holy in a peculiar sense, as were all the vessels used for sacred purposes. The Apostle undoubtedly referred to either of these types of sanctity to signify that the children of believers are set apart by God to be, as it were, vessels destined for His service, or separated from the common condition of other infants to be part of the people in covenant with God. In either case, God's promises in some measure pertain to them. Let us now consider to what extent this goes.

XV. We have previously observed that the evangelical promises sealed by baptism primarily and directly concern the remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit of sanctification; the resurrection of the body and eternal life do not pertain to them except somewhat more remotely and consequently. For as no one actually obtains the remission of sins and the gift of sanctification without eventually also attaining those other goods, so no one is promised the former from which the latter depend, without also being promised these. And as Christ's death first acquired and first represented justification and sanctification for us, so baptism, which is

intended to seal the communion we have with Christ's death, is to be referred directly and primarily to those two things. Therefore, we must consider both of them to better judge the state and condition of infants.

XVI. Regarding the remission of actual sins, it does not pertain to our current argument except insofar as baptism, as we have said, looks beyond the immediate moment of its administration. For infants are not guilty of any actual sins. They are, however, deeply imbued and infected with original sin by nature, although heretics, who deny that baptism should be administered to them, likewise deny this, having thoroughly imbibed the Pelagian virus in their minds. We affirm here that it is very true and do not labor to demonstrate it further, for it has already been proven by necessary arguments elsewhere. Indeed, whatever sin it may be, whether actual or original, once divine justice has been satisfied, nothing prevents it from being forgiven unless the one to whom the forgiveness is offered rejects it. If accepted, since it is a gift that God has the right to give, it can be communicated. This is the nature of all gifts, that if they are given by one who has the right to give them, and acceptance is made, they are valid.

XVII. Since there are two kinds of sinners, namely adults and infants, whose conditions are vastly different, God has instituted a double means of accepting this gift. For adults, who are endowed with judgment and reason, He has willed that the gift be declared and offered to them so that they may either accept or reject it. To those who accept, He actually communicates it; to those who reject it, He does not give it, most deservedly, because they deem themselves unworthy. Acts 13. Whoever does not accept, by the very act of not accepting, rejects and refuses the gift. Since the acceptance of the gift consists in faith, no one endowed with reason and attentive, to whom the gift is presented, can fail to embrace it without being deemed to have rejected it. Not believing, if Christ is not presented to them, is not counted as a fault, for such ignorance consists in mere negation of faith, which in itself is neither a sin nor indicates any bad disposition of mind. But not believing when Christ is presented is culpable, for such ignorance consists in the privation of something that should be present in the mind, which itself is a sin and indicates a perverse disposition in the mind.

XVIII. Infants are in such a condition that if the gift is presented to them, they can neither embrace it with the mental act that is faith nor reject it through the culpable privation of faith. Therefore, there remains the ignorance that is merely negative, which might be doubted to prevent them from being partakers of the gift if it is offered to them, that is, if divine benevolence is destined for them. However, it certainly does not prevent it. First, because we have previously demonstrated that the covenant pertains to the children of the faithful, who can partake in what flows from it, why should they not be suitable for the remission of original sin? Secondly, the gift, when offered, is not refused except by the one who rejects it. An infant cannot be said to reject the gift of remission. Rejection is a mental act, which does not exist in infants. The same principle applies here as in other actions. If something capable of acting is applied to something fit to receive the action, and there is nothing in the receiver to resist the agent's efficacy, it is entirely logical that it is received by the recipient. The same holds true in moral matters as in physical ones. Likewise, among humans, if something is legitimately given to an

infant, even if it cannot actually receive it due to age, it is still considered its own and cannot be revoked unless the person, after growing up, actively nullifies the donation with an act of their will. Conversely, if something is given to an adult, it is not considered their own until they give their consent to the donation. In short, just as those who have never heard of Christ will not be condemned for not believing in Him, and nothing will harm them except that, having violated the law of nature, they did not turn to that divine grace by which they were invited to repentance, so it seems just and equitable that infants are not deprived of the gift because they did not actually embrace it. For lack of an object does not excuse ignorance more than a lack of faculty. Thus, those are said to lack the object who have never heard of Christ, just as those who cannot use their faculties due to age are in the same position as if they lacked faculties entirely.

XIX. The promise of the gift of the sanctifying Spirit must be considered in two ways: either as something to be bestowed in the future when the infant begins to use reason, or as something to be executed at the very time it is promised. In the former way, there can be no doubt that they are capable of the promise. For nothing prevents the Spirit of sanctification from being communicated to those whose faculties are free and developed from natural impediments. Nor does the present state of the infant prevent the promise that they will eventually be sanctified. For when the promise of remission, which includes justification, is made, nothing prevents the one who is justified from being promised sanctification. The same order of things is preserved in infants as in adults. Justification and sanctification are certainly promised to them at the same time in Christ: but by the order of nature, sanctification follows justification.

XX. In the latter way, there is a significant difference between infants and adults. For in adults, the promise of remission and justification, once accepted by the mental act called faith, is followed by the actual gift of sanctification, both immediately and necessarily. First, because God has promised it: and there is nothing in the subject to prevent what has been promised from being actually bestowed. Secondly, the actual gift of justification is followed by the sense of justification itself. The sense of remission and justification cannot but produce the love of God, who is the author of such a great good to us. The love of God and sanctification are the same. Finally, one who is adopted as an adult should be adorned with gifts that are consistent with that new condition. For one transferred into another family should adopt its morals and character. Therefore, Paul explicitly states that because the Galatians had been made sons of God by adoption, the Spirit of adoption was given to them by which they cried, "Abba, Father." Gal. 4. 4.

XXI. But in infants, there is neither the necessity nor the possibility of the immediate communication of the sanctifying Spirit after justification is granted. For first, no one can doubt that their faculties are in such a state that the Spirit cannot work in them as in adults. For the sanctification of adults, although it occurs through the expulsion of old and perverse habits and the infusion of new ones, does not happen without acts of the mind and will. It is absurd to think that an adult and vigilant person habitually loves God without ever having loved Him actually. Whatever we may assume about the infusion of habits into the minds of infants, it is clear that they have not exercised any such acts. Secondly, the sense of justification does not follow justification in them. For the sense cannot exist without joy, and joy arises from the knowledge

of the good we possess. There is no knowledge in infants. Finally, they are adopted into hope, both of future sanctification and of eternal inheritance. Just as if a wise man were to adopt a wailing infant in the cradle, he would defer instructing it in good morals and virtue until it was capable of discipline, so the wisest God, when He adopts infants, defers exercising the power of the sanctifying Spirit in them until the state of their faculties admits such operation. Thus, just as it was not necessary for them to have any faith, whether habitual or actual, to be justified, since they were born to those to whom the covenant pertains, so after they are justified, it is not absolutely necessary that they immediately obtain sanctification, whether habitual or actual. It suffices that God will faithfully bestow what He has promised in due time. Concerning the exultation of John the Baptist while still in the womb when the blessed Virgin Mary, carrying Christ in her womb, came to visit Elizabeth, his mother, it is extraordinary and miraculous, and proceeded from some cause that, although it produced a moral effect in Elizabeth's mind, operated more in the manner of physical causes than moral ones. It is not likely that any object appeared to John's mind that would incite such vigorous motion.

XXII. We do not deny that it can sometimes happen that God exerts some efficacy in infants, which is like a foreshadowing or anticipation of future sanctification. He instills in their minds a certain disposition and kindles sparks of virtues that later grow and develop into prominent virtues. However, this does not happen perpetually, nor, if it did, should it properly be referred to the operation of the sanctifying Spirit as such. For the Spirit sanctifies in no other way than by impressing upon and presenting the objects found in the cross and resurrection of Christ and in other parts of the Christian religion, which are offered to us through the preaching of the Gospel, and illuminating them in our minds, calling them to our remembrance, and shining its light upon them so that they descend from the mind to the affections and continuously strive against the vice inherent in our nature. However, that operation is more about correcting the temperament of the body, which indeed is done by an action more akin to physical causes than to those dealing with the moral impression or representation of objects. Concerning what the angel predicted about John the Baptist in Luke 1:15, that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, the greatest interpreters understand it as if it were said in some way filled, because even in his early childhood, while others were still almost infants, he had to show certain illustrious and quite unusual signs of God's grace towards him, which later became more and more evident. However, even if there were no hyperbole in those words, they could still be referred to the incomparable and truly heroic disposition of which we spoke earlier, which could only come from some virtue of the Holy Spirit, and differed greatly from that same Spirit's operation, which, after John grew up, both prompted and informed him in all kinds of most excellent virtues and actions. Whatever it was, it was rare and occurred in very few besides John.

XXIII. With these things established, it is not difficult to prove that the infants of the faithful can be rightly and legitimately baptized according to God's own institution. And since there are two aspects in baptism, as is commonly observed in all sacraments: one by which God's promises are sealed according to His institution, and the other by which we bind ourselves to the observance of the covenant by our own will, both aspects must be considered more carefully.

Concerning the first, since the matter itself, namely the remission of sins and the hope of sanctification, pertains to them, it does not seem doubtful at all that the symbol of the matter, of much lesser dignity, can also pertain to them. For whom God has mercifully willed to grant such a great thing as salvation, it is neither fitting nor worthy of the ministers of the Gospel to deny them the token of that salvation. And why do we reason this way? Besides the nature of the matter itself, which is clear by itself, we have the authority of the Apostle Peter. Acts 10:47. After seeing that the centurion first believed in Christ and then the Holy Spirit descended on him, he said, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" Relying on this argument, that it is not right to deny the external seal to those who are participants in a matter much greater and more excellent.

XXIV. Moreover, those who imitate God cannot err. He willed that infants be circumcised so that they would have the seal of the covenant made with Abraham. What then prevents them from being similarly sealed among us today, with a rite more suitable to the evangelical covenant? The objections of heretics, which attempt to undermine the force of this argument, are of no value. They claim that the nature of the legal covenant and the evangelical covenant is very different, which is true, but it does not pertain to the matter at hand. They should have observed what we said earlier, that in the covenant made with Abraham were the beginnings of both covenants, confirmed by the same sign, although more suited to the legal covenant. Therefore, infants had the seal of the righteousness of faith by divine institution, which is a sacrament different in matter from baptism but entirely one in form and purpose. It does not matter that infants cannot exercise the faith by which Abraham obtained that righteousness. Either the righteousness of faith is called so because it was revealed through the doctrine of faith, namely the Gospel, and thus infants, to whom the evangelical covenant pertains, can be participants in it; or if it is called the righteousness of faith because it is obtained by the act of the mind which is called faith, the Apostle spoke thus because the discourse was about Abraham, a grown man who actually believed. Just as the necessity of believing is incumbent on adults to be participants in the evangelical covenant, which does not prevent infants from being considered part of it by birthright, so the necessity of faith for adults to be baptized does not prevent infants from being legitimately baptized by the same birthright, even if they do not believe.

XXV. Moreover, even heretics do not deny that the legal covenant was a type of the evangelical covenant. Thus, as we inferred above, just as infants were included in the legal covenant, so they should not be excluded from the evangelical covenant. Similarly, we conclude that just as infants under the law were marked with the seal of the covenant, so under the Gospel they should be marked with the seal of the covenant. Otherwise, this type is incomplete and has nothing to fill it from that part in the antitype.

XXVI. What if we consider the legal covenant precisely in itself, even without the typological consideration? It will still provide us with an excellent argument for this matter. Namely, the legal covenant had promises that referred differently to infants and adults. For adults, they pertained primarily and could not be obtained except by fulfilling the legal condition, which was based on actions. For infants, they pertained indirectly because they were part of their



parents, even though they were entirely incapable of performing those actions. Just as the incapacity to perform those actions did not prevent the promises of the covenant from being sealed in infants by an external symbol because they were born into the covenant, so the incapacity to exercise faith should not prevent the evangelical promises from being confirmed in our children by an external symbol because they are born into the covenant. Nor does the difference in promises matter. For even if the legal promises pertain to this life, and the evangelical promises are spiritual and pertain to eternal and heavenly life, nevertheless, the nature of the legal promises did not make infants more capable of fulfilling the condition required of adults, nor does the nature of the evangelical promises make infants incapable of the sign, because they cannot fulfill the condition of faith required of adults. Either the sign should have been denied to them because they did not fulfill the condition of works, or it should not be denied to these infants, even if they do not fulfill the condition of faith.

XXVII. Whatever way we consider the covenant made with Abraham, whether as having the beginnings of both covenants, or as the legal covenant typologically foreshadowing the evangelical covenant, or finally as the legal covenant with promises entirely separate from the evangelical promises, and which can be considered separately and precisely, the nature of things demands that we state it is much more consistent with divine institution to baptize infants under the New Covenant than it was consistent to circumcise infants under the Old Covenant. And thus we will demonstrate.

XXVIII. Namely, to start from the last point, although God is bound by His promise once He has committed His faith, He nevertheless, in His remarkable condescension towards us, willed to add certain signs to His promises to make us more certain of their fulfillment. Moreover, signs make us more certain in this respect, that the more bonds we see binding God's faith, the more impossible we think it is for Him to change. Therefore, He wanted us to consider that sacraments have a certain power of recalling promises to memory, lest any forgetfulness or thought arise that might undermine the firmness of promises in His eternal mind. And He Himself is a witness to having followed this in the institution of the rainbow. "I will set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring a cloud over the earth, the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant." (Genesis 9:13-15) Therefore, since the nature of the legal covenant considered in itself is such that there is less doubt about the fulfillment of its promises if the condition is met than in the evangelical covenant, in which the power of sin and death had to be overcome, it was certainly more appropriate for the evangelical covenant to be confirmed by more things than the legal covenant. Therefore, if God considered it necessary to bind His faith with an external symbol in addition to promises when He promised to fulfill the legal promises to the Israelite infants, it was much more necessary for the same to be done in the evangelical covenant.

XXIX. The second point is no less evident and is almost founded on the same reasoning. For the nature of types is such that if they are considered in themselves, they present a suitable cause for their existence. But if they are compared with the things of which they are types, the causes by which the things themselves consist, and which correspond to the type, are much

clearer and more necessary. Thus, if you consider the legal covenant in itself, it had a mediator and certainly had to have one because the wills of the contracting parties seemed somewhat opposed to each other. For human nature abhorred the infinite multitude of commandments that God wanted to stipulate their performance. And God displayed an alienated attitude toward the people due to some physical and legal uncleanness for which He kept them from His presence. Therefore, a mediator was needed to reconcile and bring together these discordant wills. But in the evangelical covenant, the necessity for a mediator was even greater due to the double aspect of sin, one (namely, insofar as it was placed in vice) making humans enemies of God, and the other (namely, insofar as it creates guilt) completely alienating God from humans. Thus, compared to this, the other reasons that introduced a mediator in the legal covenant seem almost negligible. Therefore, when God considered that the promises of the legal covenant should be sanctioned in infants by an external symbol, whatever reasons moved Him to that decision, in the evangelical covenant, those reasons must have been greater and more compelling.

XXX. The first and most evident point is this: God indeed showed His mercy clearly to Abraham and his family, and it was great and memorable that its declaration to Abraham was continued through all generations until the time of Christ. However, if you compare those times with the evangelical times, the same mercy was revealed much more clearly in Christ and extended much more broadly, having been brought from one Israel to all peoples and propagated throughout the whole world. Therefore, to make all parts of His dispensation consistent and coherent, the grace of redemption, which was once extended to infants, should not be restricted to adults alone, and the seal of redemption, which was once given to infants, should now be communicated to them, with a more suitable administration and clearer and more illustrious signification.

XXXI. And indeed, it should be referred to what was said above by the Apostle about the sanctity of our children. For if the Apostle referred to that common sanctity by which the people of Israel were called a holy nation, to distinguish them from others who were excluded from the divine covenants, as much greater as the prerogative of being under the covenant of grace is than being under the covenant of the law, it is thus more fitting for our children to be marked by the sign of the evangelical covenant than for the children of Israel to be marked by the sign of the legal covenant. If he referred to the vessels that were to serve in the ministry of the Tabernacle, and if those vessels, though devoid of both sense and life, were consecrated by some external rite because they were not intended for common use, why should we not consecrate our children, endowed with life, sense, and intelligence, though they do not yet use them due to their age, as set apart and dedicated to God for His special use? For indeed, the vessels of the Tabernacle were not immediately used for sacred purposes when they were sanctified but were set aside for occasions and opportunities as they arose. Therefore, even if infants are not immediately used for divine worship due to their age's weakness, nothing prevents them from bearing some mark of their dedication until they understand for what purpose they have been set apart by God and to what end they were baptized according to His institution.

XXXII. And Christ set an example for us in this matter. For He not only prayed for the infants brought to Him but also laid His hands on them, a rite commonly practiced at that time. Indeed, hands were also laid on adults. This was a common practice among the Jews when a proselyte joined the covenant of Israel or when a disciple dedicated himself to the discipline of a famous teacher. This custom, like baptism, was introduced into the Christian Church. When used on adults, it required some prior act of understanding and will, by which they openly declared and promised that the matters designated by that rite were and would be dear to them in the future. Therefore, when Christ did not hesitate to use it on infants, did He not sufficiently signify that, although the state of adults and infants is vastly different, since in some the mind is fully developed and in others impeded, the same sign could be applied to both when it is certain that the matters signified by the sign pertain to both equally?

XXXIII. Nor should it seem strange or absurd in Christian religion that which is considered reasonable in the institutions of wise men. That solemn order of singular and extraordinary knighthood, whose symbol is either a shell-ornamented chain, a blue ribbon crossed with a hanging cross, or a gold chain with a fleece, is instituted such that it properly pertains to adults who understand the matter at hand and can solemnly bind themselves by an oath that they will never violate the laws of the institution. However, since the children of kings, by a special privilege and by birthright, are considered capable of the dignity that accompanies the order, they are decorated with that symbol in the cradle, and if deprived of it, they would be thought to suffer an almost inexorable injury. Why is this so? Certainly, when it is the symbol of a certain unusual dignity, it is considered that the dignity itself is equally granted to the one to whom the symbol is granted, and if the symbol is taken away, it is considered that the dignity itself is taken away. Therefore, since Christianity is a kind of spiritual knighthood combined with the highest dignity, and since our children obtain this by birthright, so that they are sons of God and educated in the hope of the kingdom of heaven, it is not permissible to deprive them of the token of that knighthood nor to deprive them of it, unless we wish to treat them unjustly. And thus concerning the first aspect of baptism,

XXXIV. The second aspect, according to which we ourselves receive baptism to testify that we are Christians, should cause us less trouble. For even if there were no use of baptism in infants, they should not be deprived of the benefit of the other aspect. For circumcision was once instituted for a double purpose: to seal the promises of the covenant on God's part and to swear to the covenant's laws on the part of humans. Both purposes were fulfilled in adults. In infants, only one purpose was fulfilled until they grew up. And this can be seen in the symbols of royal knighthood and the special sacred orders. Indeed, where there are two aspects of one matter so connected by nature that they cannot exist separately, if one is taken away, it follows that the other is also taken away. But when two functions in one matter are joined only by free institution, even if they are greatly consistent with each other, it depends on the will and discretion of the institutor to either join or separate them, as circumstances of persons, places, and times demand.

XXXV. Then the condition of our children, adults and infants, is vastly different. For adults, because they possess their own minds, if something is required of them, they themselves must respond and, if the occasion demands, promise and swear, especially if they are no longer under our authority and have separated from our family. But infants, because they do not yet use their own judgment and are considered part of us and governed by our reason, not theirs, if something is required of them, they are considered to respond when we respond. And this is evident in other matters, especially in the sacrament of fidelity. For the head of the household swears both for himself and for his children, not those who are adults and constitute their own family, but for those whom he still has at home under his own authority. And just as when the mind and tongue swear, the whole person is considered to have sworn because the mind holds the chief position in humans, from whose discretion the other parts of a person depend, so when the head of the household binds himself by an oath, all persons constituting the household are considered to have bound themselves because he rules in his household. Therefore, we certainly cannot approve the custom of those who, before administering baptism to an infant, ask him, "Do you believe?" To which the godparent responds, "I believe," as if the infant's voice were sent out from his mouth. For that solemn stipulation, as Peter says, pertains to the parent, not to the infant, and the response is considered to be the parent's, not the infant's. But that most beautiful institution is greatly suited to the holy rite, in which either the parents themselves or the godparents on behalf of the parents (for that is the proper role of godparents) promise that the infant will remain in the covenant. For it contains an illustrious proof of parental authority, but should not be extended beyond the diligence and care that a good and loving Christian parent must have in the education of their children.

XXXVI. And this can refute the stubbornness of those who deny that infants were baptized based on the passages where it is said that someone was baptized with their entire household, arguing that households could be without infants. Certainly, wherever there is a household, it is not necessarily without infants. But if baptism cannot be administered unless faith is present, the sacred writers should not have been so negligent or indifferent as to say that the whole household was baptized without stating that faith was present in the entire household. For when infants were circumcised among the Jews, and baptism took the place of circumcision, and there is no reason that can be given why infants were circumcised among the Jews which does not also more certainly and clearly show that baptism should be administered to infants among Christians, it would have been easy to fall into error on this matter if baptizing infants were an error. Thus the sacred writers speak in such a way that, whatever persons the households were composed of, whether adults or infants, there was no danger that anyone would think that baptism was administered to them illegitimately. For concerning adults, they either mention faith explicitly, as in Acts 16:34 and elsewhere, or leave it to be inferred that the whole economy of grace requires actual faith from adults if they are to have anything in common with it. As for infants, the matter was obvious and clear to all, that the condition of Christians should in no way be worse than that of Jews, and that the right and authority of parents over their children and for

their children should be such that as long as they live under their authority, especially when they are still infants, they are considered in the same position as their parents regarding religion.

XXXVII. It is equally clear that the children of unbelievers should not be baptized. For the evangelical covenant, as far as it is conditional, pertains to all people; for Christ is the redeemer of all, provided they believe. But as far as it is absolute, it pertains only to those who are actually faithful; for Christ is their redeemer alone, because only they believe. What is called the conditional covenant is so because its execution depends on the fulfillment of the condition, and when the condition is fulfilled, it becomes absolute. Now, as long as the covenant is conditional, the promises contained in the covenant do not actually pertain to those who have not fulfilled the condition. Therefore, we address them in no other way than by saying, "If you believe, you will be saved; if you do not believe, the wrath of God remains on you." Since baptism is instituted and given to seal God's promises in those to whom they actually pertain, no one among unbelievers is baptized who does not profess to actually believe and renounce unbelief. The promises actually pertain to infants only because they first pertained to their parents. Therefore, it follows that baptism should not be administered except to those born of the faithful.

XXXVIII. Nor should we be troubled by the fact that some who claim to be Christians lie about their faith and do not live it out, whose infants therefore seem not to be entitled to baptism. For as long as they are considered part of the Church, they are regarded as faithful. Since God has once declared that the children of the faithful are to be in the same position before Him as their parents, it would be absurd and contrary to this declaration of divine will to regard the parents as faithful and yet exclude their children from the covenant. If they fall away from the Church or are cast out for disgraceful conduct or for renouncing the purity of religion, and persist in that evil with invincible obstinacy, then, since they are no longer considered faithful, their children cannot retain that privilege.

XXXIX. A somewhat greater difficulty arises from the fact that we sometimes baptize the children of those who have given themselves to no religion and even the children of unbelievers if their parents do not object or if they come under our authority for any other reason. This seems to contradict the principles we have established. But the matter is not difficult to resolve. For when unbelieving parents do not refuse to have their children baptized and even brought up in the Christian religion (which is never done legitimately otherwise), they effectively abdicate their parental authority, no less than if they gave their children to others for adoption. And certainly, adoption in this case imitates nature no less than in other cases. If someone had several children in their household, some born to them and others adopted from elsewhere, no distinction should be made between them in this regard. And surely, if God did not exclude the slaves born in Abraham's house from His covenant but granted them the same privilege of circumcision because they were born in the patriarch's house, He certainly would not consider those unworthy of baptism whom Christians adopt as their own children. And although this adoption may not be valid for other legitimate acts, such as the right to inheritance or bearing the adoptive father's name and other such matters, it can still be valid for the act of granting them the right to be

children of God and for assuming responsibility for their education and training in piety. The same judgment applies to those whose parents are unknown, if there are those who request their baptism and promise to take responsibility for their instruction and care. For this is a kind of adoption that follows the same laws. Additionally, God seems to have a special concern for the salvation of those whom His providence has delivered from the society of unbelievers, as from a stormy and shipwrecked sea, into the safety of the Church. It is not right for our care to be lacking where God's fatherly concern is so evident.

XL. One issue remains that may cause difficulty. From what we have discussed so far, it is clear that the condition of birth among the children of the faithful is a condition that renders them no less actually participants in the divine promises than faith in adults, when truly practiced by them. Just as those who actually believe are rightfully baptized and, after being baptized, have an undoubted right to salvation, according to the saying, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved," so also those who are born to faithful parents are rightfully baptized, and after being baptized, can attain salvation, according to the saying, "All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death." Hence, just as those who believe and are baptized are considered members of Christ, so also those who are born in the Church and washed in baptism are considered members of Christ. Now, those who truly believe and are introduced into communion with Christ through faith, as His members, never fall away from it. This has been affirmed and demonstrated by us in the Theses on the Perseverance of Faith. Therefore, how is it that so many of those born and baptized in the Church fall away from it and are cast away from the hope of eternal salvation? For if those who are born as members of Christ's body can fall away, why not those who are grafted in by faith? Or if those grafted in by faith cannot fall away, how is it that those born into it are so often cut off?

XLI. We have previously observed that the communion between those who actually believe and Christ, and the communion between Christ and baptized infants, differs markedly. The latter is based solely on the potential for infants to become partakers of the salvation wrought by Christ; the former involves believers actively uniting themselves to Christ by an act of the mind, resulting in Christ imparting Himself entirely to them through the communication of His Spirit. Therefore, even if there were nothing else, it should not seem surprising that the communion formed by a single promise of salvation is more easily dissolved than the one closely bound by such a strong tie.

XLII. However, although communion with Christ is more closely united by faith than by birth, neither those who believe and are baptized nor the infants of the faithful who are baptized can be called true and living members of Christ except under the condition of perseverance. For the saying, "If you believe, you will be saved," tacitly includes, "and if you persevere," without which faith does not make us members of Christ in such a way that we cannot fall away from salvation. Scripture teaches this extensively, both in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in Christ's letters to the seven churches, and elsewhere. Similarly, the saying, "If anyone is born in the Church and baptized in it, they will attain salvation," implicitly includes, "if they remain in that state and do not do anything as an adult that would remove them from the body of Christ." Thus, these two

are similar in that neither those who believe and are baptized nor those born and baptized in the Church are true members of Christ except insofar as they are presumed to persevere. If some indeed persevere, as surely some do, while others fall away, the reason for this must be sought elsewhere. It can certainly be better sought from the fact that those who believe do so by the power of election, while those who are born and baptized in the Church do so by a different dispensation, distinct from election.

XLIII. Those who believe, believe by the power of election. Indeed, "those He foreknew, He also predestined; those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified" (Romans 8). This purpose has so aptly connected all these parts or causes of our salvation, so firmly intertwined and implicated them, that the golden chain can neither be broken nor dissolved. But the condition of others is different. They are indeed born in the Church by God's singular benefit, but not by the power of that election. There is one purpose by which God chose some from the rest of humanity to grant them faith and to infallibly lead them to salvation through faith. There is another part of divine providence by which it has been determined from eternity that these rather than those should be born of faithful parents in the Church. In that election, if anyone from the truly faithful were to fall away, God would fail in His purpose and deviate from His plan. For He has decreed to lead all the elect to salvation. In this dispensation of divine providence, if anyone proves themselves unworthy of God's promises and justification, there is nothing in that which dishonors God's immutable decrees. For He has not determined to infallibly lead all who are born in the Church to salvation. He had this one thing in mind, to grant them a singular benefit, which, if not abused, they might attain salvation. Nor should it horrify us that those who were in some way members of Christ can become members of the devil. Indeed, it would be horrifying to affirm or think that those members of Christ who have felt the power of His Spirit, which seems to animate the entire Church, could fall into the power of the devil. But those members of Christ who derived nothing else from their communion with Him but the hope of remission of sins, which was not inherent in their minds but was only externally offered and sealed, with the condition that they would do nothing as adults to corrupt that hope, could be cut off from the communion of the Church and come into the power of the devil, as sometimes happens (this is indeed known from too frequent experience), and there is no reason why we should fear to think or affirm this.

XLIV. So then, someone might ask, what is the divine principle of election with respect to those born in the Church? For the condition of those who have come from outside and joined the Church through faith, both in the past and presently, is clear. They are certainly elected. But concerning infants, it is not equally clear. Indeed, some of the infants born in the Church grow up, and some die before they reach the age of reason. And of those who grow up, some believe, and some do not. Now, from this distinction, it is clear what should be concluded about their election. Those who did not believe received this one benefit from God, that the Church bore them, but they abandoned their mother. Those who believed were chosen by God, not only to be born of the Church but also to learn from it to acknowledge the heavenly Father for salvation. And just as their condition, on which their salvation depended, consisted of two acts: one, that

they were born in the Church, and the other, that they needed to grow up to believe and persevere in faith, they obtained one from the providence of God, which was common to all other children of the faithful, and the other from that purpose which is peculiar and proper to the elect alone.

XLV. As for those who die before reaching the age of reason, some are baptized, and some are not. Regarding those who are baptized, we do not doubt that they belong, not to the election of those to whom God decreed to grant faith, for they certainly did not believe, but to that decree of God by which He certainly determined to save some. For when God clearly and plainly testified to them in baptism that He remits original sin for Christ's sake, from which necessarily arises the hope of salvation that no one can take from them unless they, after growing up, cast it away by their unbelief, they did not grow up nor did they reject that hope by any unbelief, so it is necessary that they should enjoy its fruit. The fate of the others who were not baptized is perhaps more obscure, whether any election has been made concerning them or not. And since Scripture has said nothing clearly or even obscurely about this, if we were to pronounce anything definitively, we would fear that someone might rightfully blame our presumption. Just as with adults who profess faith and die in that profession, it is better to make no distinction and to judge everyone's condition based on the nature of the dispensation, which offers salvation to all who believe; so with infants who die prematurely before baptism from the bosom of faithful parents, it is also better to make no distinction and to judge the fate of all based on the nature of the dispensation, which has always promised that the hope of salvation would be common to both faithful parents and their children. Such things are more abstruse and deeply hidden in the secret judgments of God, and it is neither safe to investigate nor possible to discover them. To God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who has clearly revealed in Scripture whatever was necessary for our salvation, be honor, praise, and glory for all eternity. Amen.

## **THESES THEOLOGICE**

### **DE NECESSITATE BAPTISMI**

**Presided over by Dr. MOSES AMTRALDUS.**

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#### **Thesis I**

Although the nature of Baptism is well and sufficiently understood, as explained in our previous Theses, it cannot be unclear what should be determined about its necessity. However, since this matter is highly memorable and not of a single kind, we have judged that a full treatment of this sacrament will not be complete unless we dedicate this disputation to the decision of this controversy.

II. The question is twofold. Of the things pertaining to salvation, some are commanded by God because they are absolutely necessary, and others are necessary because God has commanded them. The former are usually called necessary by the necessity of the means because



it is impossible to obtain salvation without them. Such is faith in adults. The latter are called necessary by the necessity of precept because all their force and necessity depend on the authority of the one commanding. Therefore, the pontiffs contend that Baptism is necessary in the former manner, while some Anabaptists deny that it is necessary in the latter manner. We must refute the errors of both groups.

III. To begin with the Anabaptists, since it has been established in the previous Theses that all sacraments so properly named have a dual purpose: one by which God instituted these rites to seal the promises of His covenants to those within the covenants, and another by which the covenant members testify their piety towards God through their use of them. Sacraments certainly cannot be omitted and neglected without despising God's institutions pertinent to human salvation and neglecting a part of the worship due to Him; neither of which can be done without crime.

IV. If Baptism succeeded circumcision, as we have demonstrated, and no one under the legal dispensation could disregard circumcision without binding themselves with an inexcusable crime, it is just to consider the contempt of Baptism to be connected with a very grave sin. Indeed, the contempt of Baptism is more pernicious than that of circumcision because Baptism is easier to administer and seals much clearer promises, and because the omission of circumcision diminished the worship of God, which was then situated in many bodily things, but did not make it so memorable as to render the rest of its parts very conspicuous. However, neglecting Baptism reduces the bodily worship of God under the Gospel dispensation to the very few.

V. But because they acknowledge that circumcision was altogether necessary because God most strictly commanded it, but deny that Baptism was strictly commanded, we must examine those passages of the New Testament by which they can be refuted, so it becomes clear by what right they are condemned by the Church in this matter. The first and most illustrious passage is Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." To these words, they boldly make two objections: one, that Christ did not speak here of water baptism; the other, that even if He spoke of water baptism, it does not follow that all are bound by this command to receive Baptism.

VI. They do not blush to confirm the first objection with these reasons. First, if those words are understood of water baptism, Christ no less sent the apostles to baptize than to preach. But Paul denies that he was sent to baptize and affirms that his office was solely to preach. 1 Corinthians 1:17. Then, if Christ commanded to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and if this had been done by Him, the apostles would have certainly obeyed. But it is known that they baptized only in the name of Jesus Christ, not in the name of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. If you ask them what, then, did Christ mean when He commanded the apostles to baptize, they respond that the words "baptize" and "baptism" are sometimes metonymically diverted from their original meaning to other things, such as when Christ said He was to be baptized with a baptism, referring to the many sufferings He was to undergo: Mark 10:38-39 and Luke 12:50. And when Apollos is said to have known only the baptism of John, meaning his doctrine, Acts 18:25. They also refer to Acts 19:3, where some are

said to have been baptized into John's baptism, which they think can only be understood as accepting his doctrine. All these interpretations are certainly absurd.

VII. For John's baptism indeed denotes the whole dispensation that pertained to John's office. But it would never have been called baptism if John had not been accustomed to baptize all those who enrolled themselves as his disciples, as is clear from the Gospel. To be baptized into John's baptism is not said ineptly, although John's baptism denotes the entire dispensation consisting of the teaching of the doctrine and the administration of baptism. This means nothing else but that those about whom it is spoken received baptism to testify that they embraced the dispensation of which John was a minister and which he used to celebrate and seal with that external rite of baptizing. Therefore, in those passages, John's baptism indeed encompasses doctrine but does not exclude the rite itself. No one who is not exceedingly shameless would dare deny this if they read these passages in Luke a little more attentively. "Paul said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They said, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance'" etc. If these do not plainly signify the administration of the rite itself, there is no reason why we should not confess that they are clear as day.

VIII. As for Christ's words, they are clear unless we voluntarily obscure them. The sons of Zebedee ask Him to sit one at His right hand and the other at His left in His kingdom. He rebukes their inappropriate and ambitious request by asking if they think they can be equal to Him, saying, "Can you drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" for it was then the custom to give honored guests a cup of choice wine and to have them washed diligently if they were dirty with sweat or dust. And in this context, to be baptized is taken properly, not indeed for the reception of a sacred rite but for common washing done with water. What follows in the same context, "Jesus said, 'You will drink the cup that I drink, and you will be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized,'" is said by way of an allusion, which is common in Christ's responses. Nothing is more frequent with Him than to seize the occasion presented by the matter at hand to teach and to frame His words according to the occasion: see John 4:10, 34, and John 6:7, 29, 32, and elsewhere frequently. Therefore, heretics foolishly try to demonstrate from this passage that baptism is sometimes taken for the perpetual suffering of evils. For there Christ is not speaking of baptism as a sacred rite, nor in the earlier words is He referring to the suffering of evils, but to signify honorable and benevolent treatment. Neither do the later words prove that baptism sometimes denotes suffering of evils any more than water signifies Christ's grace, or food signifies doing God's will, or the work of God signifies faith from the cited passages. It is absurd to establish phrases from things said once by way of allusion and on a particular occasion, as if they were common and ordinary for other matters.

IX. Let us now come to the reasons. The first is certainly absurd. Indeed, in both preaching and baptizing, there are two aspects: one is the act itself, whether of preaching or baptizing; the other is the care that the act is performed when necessary, along with the authority and power to procure that act. Concerning care and authority, Christ equally entrusted this authority to the apostles and enjoined them to ensure that both the Gentiles were taught the Gospel and, being taught, were baptized, and they could not neglect either without failing in their

duty. Concerning the act itself, the necessity of baptizing did not rest upon them as it did upon preaching. For preaching requires excellent gifts of knowledge and eloquence, with which they were miraculously endowed by God, and it was proper for them to perform the duty of preaching the Gospel, which they could not neglect without sin. Therefore, the Apostle testifies that this necessity was imposed on him. But baptizing is something that anyone can do without difficulty. Therefore, the apostles could refrain from it and delegate it to others because they needed to devote their efforts to more useful and demanding matters.

X. For this reason, Paul denies that he was sent to baptize, but to preach the Gospel. This should be understood as a comparative statement and concerning the action itself, not the procurement of the matter by the authority of his office. Comparatively, I say. For the Apostle certainly does not deny that he baptized some, such as Crispus and Gaius, the household of Stephanas, and perhaps others he did not remember. He certainly would not have done this if he had not been called to it. But such is the force of comparisons, that in them, given the excellence of one thing, the other is regarded as nothing. Thus, the same Paul denies in 1 Corinthians 9:9 that God cares about oxen, referring primarily to the ministers of the Gospel; likewise, in 2 Corinthians 3:10, he denies that the ministry of Moses was glorious compared to the glory that shines in the ministry of the Gospel. Concerning the action itself as well. When he saw that he was equipped by God with gifts that had incomparable use in preaching the Gospel, he did not think he should waste time on a matter that many others could administer as easily as, or even more easily than, he could, and therefore he delegated it to them. When many needed to be baptized, it was an activity that required more time than the Apostle could afford to spend, especially since people were then entirely immersed in water.

XI. Moreover, some try to argue that the authority and the responsibility to baptize were not equally entrusted to the apostles as were the authority and the responsibility to preach and teach. If those who baptized in Corinth had done so with the authority of the Apostle, they argue, it would have been no less suspicious that Paul was trying to acquire disciples for himself by having them baptized in his name than if he had baptized them himself. This is futile. For everyone knows that, concerning the matter itself, which is regarded as one of dignity, much importance is attached to the person by whom it is done. In the Roman Church, who does not consider it more honorable to be baptized by a bishop, metropolitan, or cardinal than by a presbyter, who may be a lowly person compared to those dignitaries? In Corinth, the situation was different; but the excellence of virtues, the pinnacle of apostleship, and the opinion of his knowledge and eloquence were held in such admiration that nothing surpassed them. Therefore, it was both modest and wise for the Apostle to avoid any occasion for ambition. Furthermore, when the Apostle preached the Gospel, he did not do it alone; he had companions in that task. So when he left those he had first instructed and brought to faith in Christ to be baptized by others, he claimed nothing special for himself in this regard, and baptism was administered to them by the common authority and counsel of all. If he had baptized, he could not have avoided the suspicion that he was seeking something particular for himself. In a word, as among the Jews from whom the practice of baptism originated and was introduced into the Christian Church,

almost everyone who baptized would recruit disciples for himself and establish a school in which he held the place of a teacher, so the Apostle feared that anyone would think he was attempting the same. Since the Christian Church is one school in which Christ is the only teacher, and all others are ministers of Christ, he refrained from baptizing wherever it could give the slightest occasion for suspicion.

XII. The second argument is no more valid. When Christ said, "baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," He meant primarily that those whom you teach and bring to My Gospel through your preaching, baptize them in such a way that you show you are teaching the doctrine of the Trinity, not yet clearly declared, and that they profess to embrace the same doctrine. From this, it is evident that baptism is much better and more fittingly administered if those words are pronounced, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." However, it does not follow from this that baptism administered in the name of Christ alone, that is, in which only Christ is named, is not legitimate, provided that the doctrine of the Trinity is first announced by the preacher and accepted by the catechumen. Indeed, those words, as written in Greek, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," have great emphasis. For that phrase in the accusative case seems to indicate that baptism is administered in such a way that the one receiving it professes to commit himself to the discipline of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As with Paul, those baptized are said to be "into Moses" because they embraced the dispensation of which Moses was the mediator. The articles may not be idle; as "the Father" who had revealed Himself more distinctly than before, and "the Son" who had made Himself visible to the eyes of mortals, and "the Holy Spirit" whom Christ had soon expressly promised would be present to govern the Church. By these three, one God, baptism solemnly consecrated those whom the apostles had instructed in the knowledge of the Gospel. This can certainly be done rightly and legitimately even if those three names are not used in the act of baptizing itself. Therefore, if for some reason the apostles sometimes named only Christ in that rite, although it is not clear that they did, it does not follow that they violated Christ's institution or that Christ's institution of water baptism is not concerned. If we must defend the apostles and those who baptized by their authority, always pronouncing those three names, it is easy to respond that either the other two names were included by synecdoche in the phrase "in the name of Christ" in their writings or that it was so recorded by some scribes, not to exclude the names of the Father and the Holy Spirit but to oppose Christ's baptism to that of John. This is clearly done in Acts 19:3-5. Thus, the first objection of the heretics is refuted.

XIII. The second objection is explained as follows: firstly, even if the apostles had to baptize all those they brought to faith in Christ, it was not necessary for all who heard the Gospel from the apostles to receive baptism offered by them or to request and demand it if the apostles neglected to offer it. Secondly, even if all are required to receive it, this necessity should be understood to apply only to those in the same condition as those whom the apostles converted to Christ by their preaching. For those people were born and raised either in paganism or Judaism, both of which were completely alien to the Christian religion. But they argue that the situation is

quite different for those born in the Church who have worshipped Christ from their earliest years and throughout their lives. Both of these excuses are vain and can be easily refuted to prevent heretics from escaping.

XIV. The first excuse displays either remarkable impudence or at least complacency. For if we consider the phrase itself, just as when Christ commands the apostles to teach, it cannot be optional for those being taught to learn or not to learn, so when He commands them to baptize, it cannot be optional for those professing to have learned to be baptized or not to be baptized. The same necessity is imposed in both cases. If we consider the matter, since Christ wanted it to be necessary for the apostles to baptize, it was certainly either because He wanted to seal His promises to believers or because He demanded from believers that they testify to their faith and Christian identity. If the former is true, as it certainly is very true, can anyone reject the pledges of divine benevolence and the tokens of Gospel promises without crime? If the latter applies, can anyone equally without crime refuse to receive the symbol of Christianity when it is offered or fail to testify to their faith with that external rite, as demanded by Christ's command? In one word, just as Christ commanded the apostles to baptize, the apostles commanded believers to be baptized. They certainly could not obey Christ's command otherwise. Therefore, it was a sin for the apostles to reject Christ's command, and it must be a sin for believers not to follow the apostles' commands. For the apostles' word should carry as much weight with us as Christ's word did with them. Since the kingdom was disposed by God into Christ's hands, so He disposed it into the hands of the apostles. Luke 22:29.

XV. That other evasion rests on a very false hypothesis: namely, that Baptism is nothing more than an external rite by which we testify that we are Christians. Indeed, it certainly has that use, but it is neither the only nor the principal one. It is much more significant in sealing the truth of divine promises. But let it be granted that its sole purpose is to declare that we embrace the religion of Christ. Surely those who are baptized are either adults or infants. And adults were either previously Jews, Turks, pagans, or heretics of the kind we mentioned in previous theses, who should not be considered Christians because they undermine the very foundations of Christian doctrine, on which Baptism itself closely rests. All these, even according to the adversaries' hypothesis, are bound to receive the sacrament of Baptism. For they are in the same condition as those whom the apostles strove to convert to Christ. As for infants, if considered in their nature, since they are conceived in sin and born corrupt, they must be regarded as alienated from Christ. Therefore, when they are called to the hope of salvation, why should not they or their parents and sponsors in their place testify that they embrace that hope? But this error regarding infants arises from another much more pernicious error. Since pestilent men acknowledge no original sin, they do not think infants can be born either outside of Christ or subject to divine wrath. But we, who by God's benefit are better instructed and hold that all humans are thoroughly imbued with a deadly defect by nature, therefore consider it necessary that they be brought to Christ by the singular grace of God. The sign and symbol of that translation is Baptism, rightly and according to Christ's institution administered.

XVI. In Mark, these words are found: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." If anyone denies that "and is baptized" refers to water Baptism, they must be shameless. Although indeed there was someone with such a hard face who insisted that here by Baptism repentance is meant. By the faith of God and men! Is there such confidence in themselves or contempt for others in people that they think they can persuade anyone who is not insane of this? But in the Complutensian edition, it is written, "ὁ πιζεύας καὶ ὁ βαπτισθεὶς," not "ὁ πιζεύας καὶ καταλιπείς." What then? Should one Complutensian manuscript prevail over all others, the best manuscripts, and the most emended editions? Or if it must prevail, could not that article and the repeated word be redundant here, as in many other places? Or is there another place where "Baptism" signifies being led to repentance for sins?

XVII. As for what those impure men bring up from two passages of Paul; one from Ephesians 5:26 where it says, "Christ cleansed the Church with the washing of water by the word"; the other from Titus 3:5 where it is written, "God saved us through the washing of regeneration"; as if the Apostle meant nothing else in those passages except regeneration, which is the same as repentance, they reveal their inexcusable negligence, to say the least. For what is clearer than the Apostle referring to water Baptism, to which he attributes the power of saving and cleansing us, representing the true cause by which salvation and cleansing come to us? And who does not see in the former passage that Paul added "by the word" to the washing of water, because when two external instruments, the word and the sacraments, are used for our cleansing, he feared that anyone might attribute too much to water, as if it could accomplish this without the word? Or who does not notice in the latter passage that Baptism is called "washing" because those who believed in Christ and signified their faith by Baptism, since they moved from the state of corrupt nature to a new state, were said to be born again? To the Hebrews indeed, chapter 10, verse 19, these words are found: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." In these, we do not deny that repentance is signified by washing with pure water. But one must be blind not to see the allusion here to legal ceremonies in which the use of washings was daily and that the matter is opposed to the type, and the name of the type is applied to the matter signified by the type. But in those words of Christ, what is similar that compares the matter with the type? What is the reason or foundation for the allusion? And if "Baptism" signifies repentance, why did Christ not say in the following words, "he who repents will be saved," since according to these men, repentance is as necessary for salvation as faith?

XVIII. Driven from this exception, they turn to another. They first say that Christ's discourse, which He then had with the apostles, should not be extended to all subsequent ages, as shown by what follows: "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons," etc. So just as those signs ceased, so also the necessity of baptizing ceased. Secondly, they say those words pertain to those whom the apostles brought to the Gospel by

preaching from adversarial religions, not to those who have always professed the name of Christ. But the former argument is certainly absurd and inappropriate. For if we can conclude that the necessity of Baptism, which was valid at that time, has ceased because such signs are no longer seen, why not also deny the necessity of believing for our times? For those words, "he who believes," can be as easily restricted to those times as the other matters. These men, who place so much confidence in their own cleverness, should have noticed that the gifts granted to the nascent Church were of a double nature; namely miraculous and non-miraculous: or ordinary and extraordinary. Those gifts, because they were joined together at that time, were not expedient to remind them that miraculous gifts would not be very long-lasting compared to ordinary ones, and Christ promised them in the same manner, and the apostles spoke of them in the same manner after Christ. Thus, Paul, writing to the Galatians, affirms that the Spirit was granted to them through the Gospel, not through the law: the Spirit, I say, both miraculous gifts and the ordinary, which is accustomed in the Church and ought to endure until the end of the world. For chapters three and four, concerning the distribution of the Spirit, are coherent. But what distinction interceded between them, and how differently they were commanded or promised, the events themselves have taught. Therefore, either these disputants should teach us what Baptism has in common with miracles or confess that its use in the Church was to be perpetually necessary.

XIX. But the place where this necessity is most evident is where Christ connects two things: faith and Baptism. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that just as He promises salvation to both jointly, He also commands and enjoins both jointly. For He does not promise salvation to these things except as a reward for the duty performed. Therefore, the duty consists of those two parts. Hence, either both are necessary by the necessity of means, or both by the necessity of precept, or one has both necessities combined, and the other has only the necessity of precept. But the necessity of means is removed from Baptism by those against whom we now dispute. No one denies that faith is necessary by the necessity of means. But here that necessity is not indicated properly and is known more from the nature of the thing than from Christ's words. Therefore, both are established as necessary by the necessity of precept, to which, with respect to faith, the necessity of means is added by the nature of the thing, which by the same nature is removed from Baptism.

XX. If we add to these words of Christ the perpetual practice and custom of the apostles, nothing could be easier than to conclude that they believed Baptism to be necessary according to Christ's command and that they wanted to obey this command most religiously. After that excellent sermon Peter delivered in Acts 2, when the Jews were moved and troubled in their minds and diligently asked what they should do, he said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." This was immediately done by them, so much so that four thousand people were baptized that day. The matter was certainly laborious, and the apostles would not have compelled themselves or others to do it unless it was necessary. Philip, in the same book, chapter 8, as soon as he converted the Samaritans by his preaching, baptized them, both men and women, and along with them Simon, because he feigned belief. He also baptized the Ethiopian eunuch of Queen Candace, who asked for Baptism (so it is easy to

conjecture that he was taught by Philip among other things about the necessity of Baptism), and Philip did not think it should be postponed but administered the rite on the very road where they met. Ananias, in the same book, chapter 9, as soon as he was convinced of Paul's faith and repentance, baptized him, not by any particular command, but by the common custom of the Church, as is clear to the reader. Peter commanded Cornelius, along with his household, to be baptized without any delay after he professed his faith, in Acts 10, and he did not fear the silent thoughts of the Jews who marveled that gifts were granted to the Gentiles as well. For in matters that are not necessary, one is free and unrestrained, and sometimes it is even expedient to use some discretion. But in matters that Christ has commanded, there should be no delay in obedience. Paul, in the same book, chapter 16, had Lydia and her household baptized, and also the jailer at Philippi, along with all his household. Likewise, in chapter 18, he baptized Crispus and all the Corinthians who believed in the same manner; and in chapter 19, those who had already been baptized with John's baptism, following the authority of great men, wanted them to be baptized with the rite instituted by Christ so that nothing would be lacking for their full initiation into Christianity. Therefore, it is certainly surprising that anyone would doubt this matter.

XXI. Nor should it trouble us that in Acts 4:4, 5:14, 6:7, 9:14, and elsewhere, many are said to have been converted to Christ without any mention of their Baptism in those places. For a thing that was commonly done and never omitted, there was no need to always mention it. The divine historian had sufficiently often mentioned it and in such illustrious examples that no sane person should doubt that it was similarly practiced in all cases. And as it is with the obstinacy of heretics, if Luke had mentioned that all those he recorded as converted were also baptized, they would argue that many others converted by the apostles, whose history is not touched on in Acts, were perhaps not baptized. For once they have crossed the lines of modesty, there is no end to their impudence, no limit to their contentiousness. Surely it is unbearable that they deny Apollo was baptized just because it is not explicitly mentioned? Either he was content with John's Baptism, which he certainly received, or if it was fitting that he be additionally washed with Evangelical Baptism, it is not doubtful that it was done when Aquila and Priscilla took him and explained to him the way of the Lord more accurately (Acts 18:24).

XXII. Nor, indeed, if the Baptism of all Christians at that time was not universal, would the arguments the Apostle draws from it to cultivate unity and concord of minds be sufficiently worthy of such a wise man. Writing to the Ephesians, he says, "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all," etc. How do these things not coherently and connectedly hold together if many in the Church of that time were not baptized? Or how would they be poorly compared to the building up of the Church of later times if Baptism was either not used at all or scarcely used? For if only those adults converted from the superstition of the Gentiles, Turks, or Jews to Christianity need to be baptized, how many Christians are there for whom an argument taken from the usefulness of Baptism could have any impact on promoting concord? Those words which have remarkable emphasis in 1 Corinthians



12:13: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit," how diluted and irrelevant are they to the matter the Apostle addresses if very few or not all are baptized?

XXIII. These men indeed go mad and deny that these passages deal with water Baptism. What then? Does not that last phrase, "have all been made to drink into one Spirit," clearly allude to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, in which all the faithful partake of the same cup? Why then should the words "we were all baptized into one body by one Spirit" not clearly allude to Baptism, which all Christians commonly undergo? What is clearer than that the Apostle wanted to use the practice and purpose of both evangelical sacraments to exhort the faithful to maintain the unity whose internal bond is the Spirit, and these two sacred ceremonies are the external symbol, which should be a strong incentive for all the faithful to that communion? And in that passage to the Ephesians, "one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one Baptism," if Baptism does not signify that sacred rite used in the Church but either repentance and sanctity of mind or something else of that kind, what prevents us from understanding "faith" as the sacrament of confirmation, "Lord" as the emperor, or "Spirit" as the air we breathe? Surely they must consider the Holy Scripture a joke who dare to contrive such things and impose them on Christians without shame.

XXIV. Their shamelessness is certainly no less in proposing arguments by which they try to support their error. They say that John baptized with water, but Christ baptizes with the Holy Spirit, from which it appears that it is proper for Christians not to be baptized with water but with the Holy Spirit. As if, therefore, because when a comparison is made between John and Christ, by John himself in Luke 3:16 and by Christ Himself in Acts 1:5, to show the excellence of one over the other, it is denied that John supplies the Spirit, which Christ is proclaimed to grant, it is also denied that Christ baptizes with water or wants Christians to be baptized with water? Those who so scrupulously examine others' arguments, what do they think is the force of this argument: John did not baptize with the Spirit; Christ baptizes with the Spirit; therefore, Christ did not baptize with water, nor did He want Christians to be baptized with water? Surely both mean: John baptized with water; Christ also baptized with water. In this matter, they seem to be somewhat equal. But the great difference lies in this: that besides water, John, a mere man, provided nothing; but Christ accompanied Baptism with water with the Holy Spirit, a far superior Baptism.

XXV. They think the clearest testimony is that Paul denies he was sent to baptize but to preach the Gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17). But we have already examined that passage above. There Baptism is taken for the act of baptizing itself, not for the authority connected with the care that depends on the office. Nor does it follow that because Paul comparatively denies that the duty of baptizing was imposed on him, he would have done it if he had spoken without comparison.

XXVI. Thirdly, they consider it most noteworthy that Paul, writing to the Galatians, says, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ," as if this indicated that in the churches of Galatia there were some who were baptized, but not all; otherwise, he would have said, "not many of you," but "all of you." In this, they reveal their ignorance and

inexcusable negligence. From lexicons, they could have understood that "as many" does not always have an exclusive force. For "all years," "all hours," and "all days" are used by good Greek authors for every year, every hour, and every day, with none excepted. So much so that the Latins imitated this: as in the verse of Horace, "Not if you please inexorable Pluto with three hundred bulls every day, O friend," etc. For "every day" does not mean some days pass and others do not. Nor does Paul mean in 1 Timothy 6, where he says, "who are under the yoke," that some servants are under the yoke and others are free. And if these acute men used their intellect as they should, they would have noticed, as learned men have observed, that here the Apostle refers to a custom that seemed to prevail in the Church at that time of putting on new clothes after emerging from the water of Baptism, but which was not so common that everyone, without exception, used it. So this is what he meant. It is possible that although all who were baptized in Christ did not put on new clothes, yet they were all baptized. Many either did not want to or could not change clothes. Nor is it necessary. But all who were baptized in Christ have put on Christ: that is, they professed to have put Him on. For Baptism always and inseparably involves this profession. Therefore, all distinctions among Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, males and females are now abolished among you. You are all one in Christ Jesus.

XXVII. The fourth pillar of their error is drawn from Hebrews 6, where the Apostle, enumerating the rudiments of Christian doctrine, makes no mention of water Baptism. For if we read as is commonly done, "doctrine of baptisms," it speaks of the doctrine of baptisms, not of Baptism itself. But if we read, as they claim to have observed in some manuscripts, "doctrine of washings, of laying on of hands," both John's and the apostles' Baptisms should be understood, not as administered with water, otherwise, we would need two Baptisms, but as they symbolized the remission of sins. Thus, they reason. But firstly, the reading that separates "washings" from "baptisms" is absurd. For since "washing" is a general term, what would it specifically signify in that place? Secondly, even if we read it separately and understood both Baptisms, why should we not think it refers to water Baptism? For certainly, that double Baptism was not necessary after the Gospel was openly preached. But since John's Baptism had not yet entirely ceased, as is evident from the Acts of the Apostles, those who received John's Baptism were re-baptized when they became Christians, so the reason for repeated Baptism had to be given, lest anyone be offended. If they were not re-baptized, it also had to be explained why, lest Baptism seem neglected. One would be offensive unless taught that the distinction between the two Baptisms was so significant that they could not be considered the same; the other would cause scandal unless it was declared that the distinction was not of such importance as to prevent them from being considered one and the same Baptism. And the same reasoning applies, even if we read those words together, which the adversaries themselves admit should be done. Otherwise, if there is no mention of John's Baptism here, the Apostle either said "washings," not "washing," because he opposed the one Christian Baptism to the many Jewish baptisms, as he used "sufferings" for "suffering" in 2 Corinthians 1:5, as some esteemed men have preferred; or he used the plural to indicate one thing to augment its importance, as some other learned men think; or he referred to the two rites of administering Baptism, immersion in water and pouring water on the head; or if

there is something else of this kind that we cannot now conjecture. Whatever it is, and whether it is about Baptism, and whether the Apostle mentions it among the foundations of Christian religion and discipline, he would never have omitted Baptism if it were a matter so light that it could be despised without any guilt.

XXVIII. The last testimony is taken from 1 Peter 3, where because Peter seems to diminish the dignity of Baptism (for he removes its saving power), they think it is clear that Baptism is not necessary for everyone, for the Apostle would not have diminished the dignity of a necessary thing. What a great argument! On the contrary, because the Apostle thought it necessary not to diminish the dignity of Baptism, for he did not think about it, but to cut off any occasion for error, it is a great argument that at that time Baptism was held in the highest regard and considered of singular virtue for salvation and in its own way necessary. For if everyone thought it a free and unbound matter, what danger was there that anyone might think salvation depended on its mere reception? But let the passage be read, and it will be clear that Baptism at that time was neglected by no one who wanted to be considered and be a Christian. "In the ark, a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—Baptism," etc. First, if Baptism is of almost no use in religion, what did Peter mean by saying that we are saved by it? For he added those words parenthetically to prevent anyone from sticking to that external rite while neglecting the sincere promise of faith and repentance, by which we are saved, that is, answered the solemn vow. But those words are too magnificent to be wisely applied to a matter either useless or in no way necessary. Secondly, what does it mean that just as those in the ark were saved by water, now Baptism saves us? As the ark, while it rained, seemed submerged and buried, and those in it; but when the rain ceased, it emerged and floated to salvation: so when those who received Baptism either immersed themselves in water or had water poured on them, they were thought to have perished; but being lifted out of it, they obtained new life and seemed to have been saved. Therefore, since the former was a type of the latter, just as it was universal, so also must this be considered universal. Thus, Peter considered Baptism as if it were universal water over the whole world into which all Christians, that is, we all, are first dipped and then emerge from, to seal and testify to our communion with the death and resurrection of Christ. But Peter mentioned "into the ark" because the emergence, which represents it, is rather the image of the salvation that we recall having obtained.

XXIX. The reasons added to those testimonies by heretics carry no weight. They claim that the whole discipline of Christ is spiritual and concerns the inner man: therefore, no external and bodily rite should be prescribed to the Church unless it is shown in the clearest words and which cannot be resisted. But we have demonstrated that Baptism was prescribed by Christ in the clearest words, which only those resist who willingly close their eyes to the truth. They also claim that it cannot be demonstrated from the New Testament that anyone who was brought up and educated in the Christian religion and did not live under another discipline was baptized. But neither can the contrary be demonstrated from Scripture. What kind of reasoning is that, from a negative testimony? They finally claim that the apostles themselves were never baptized with

Christ's Baptism; at least it is not clear from Scripture. But neither is the contrary clear, and the same reason can refute it. However, let us consider this a little more diligently.

XXX. It is certain that some of the apostles received John's baptism: it is uncertain that all did, nor does it seem likely to be true. For it is known from the Gospel of John (1:37, 41) that Andrew was one of John's disciples. I do not think anyone would dare to assert the same about the others. Therefore, they must have been baptized by Christ when they were called; or it was not necessary for them to be baptized at all. If we defended the latter, we would not fear being driven from that position by heretics. For we do not hold that baptism is absolutely necessary. We only contend that it is necessary because it is commanded. So if we derive that command only from those words explained above, "Teach all nations, baptizing them," etc., the apostles indeed had to baptize all who believed, but it was not absolutely necessary for them to be baptized themselves according to that command. Therefore, Paul had to be baptized, although an apostle, because the command to receive baptism applied to him. The rest did not have to, because their command was to baptize, not to be baptized. But there is no need to resort to that. Since they baptized by Christ's command long before, John 4:1-2, why should we not think that they were baptized by Christ Himself, or that Christ commanded them to baptize one another? But indeed it is not explicitly mentioned in Scripture. What then? Nor is it explicitly mentioned that they baptized by Christ's command before His death. Should we therefore think there was no command from Christ in that matter? Therefore, since there is no reason why what was done by them at Christ's command should not be done among themselves, it is both true and likely that it was used equally among them as among others.

XXXI. Now let us move to the other part of our discussion. This is easier to handle because the Catholics use far fewer testimonies and reasons to defend their opinion. They say that baptism is not only necessary because Christ commanded it, so that it cannot be neglected without grave sin, but also so necessary that whoever lacks it, through no neglect or fault of their own, is still deprived of salvation because they lack baptism. And for this, they bring forward a single passage from Scripture, the very famous one from John 3: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Since these words are often cited with great emphasis and yet do not help their case at all, they must be examined a little more carefully by us.

XXXII. And first, it is very important to know what is meant by the kingdom of God. As we have noted elsewhere, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven refer to the state of the Church under the Messiah: since there are two parts to it, one that pertains to the time when the Church is militant on earth, and the other that pertains to the time destined for triumph. The adversaries think that this passage signifies the latter when it is much more reasonable to understand the former. The timid Nicodemus, who did not dare to approach Christ except at night, thought he had done his duty excellently by calling Him a teacher sent from God, whose great works certainly showed that God was with Him. If he had spoken these things openly among the Jews, he would not have dared to utter them, lest he incur their hatred. Therefore, Christ, to both reproach him for his fear and diminish others' admiration for him because such a

great man did not dare openly profess Christ's name, said that this should seem strange to no one. For indeed, the great works that He did daily astonished many, among whom was Nicodemus. But such is the power of human nature's corruption that no miracles can change it. Anything that suddenly moves the human mind with its marvel vanishes as quickly, and those emotions that drive us astray prevail, preventing us from embracing Christ's doctrine. Therefore, the Gospel can do nothing unless among those whom a new birth has so renewed that they put on new affections and new sensibilities of the mind. The kingdom of God, then, is the Gospel, into which there was no need to say that one could not enter without being baptized. But it was most appropriate to Christ's teaching to affirm that no one could embrace the Gospel and openly profess it unless God had remade him as if he were born anew.

XXXIII. But come, let us refer the kingdom of God to the time when we will enjoy salvation in heaven. Certainly, Christ could not have mentioned baptism then unless He intended to rebuke Nicodemus for not daring to openly profess himself a disciple, which could only be done by receiving baptism. For what wisdom did it become Christ to mention baptism abruptly, with no occasion inviting it? But if Jesus Christ was referring to that, what else can be derived from His words except that those who are like Nicodemus, who refuse to publicly acknowledge and confess Christ out of fear and do not dare to receive the symbols of Christianity, are excluded from the hope of salvation that awaits us in heaven? This, indeed, is very true and is far removed from the doctrine of those who contend that baptism is necessary as a means of salvation.

XXXIV. But however we interpret the kingdom of God, there is no trace of baptism in this passage. Christ here, whatever the occasion, shows that the Christian religion and the salvation offered in it are such great matters that they cannot be grasped or obtained by someone who remains in a natural state, as we all are before being regenerated by God. Furthermore, that natural state is everywhere called flesh in Scripture, and nothing is more frequent in the New Testament. And to avoid drawing examples from afar, they are found in the same place in verse six. Therefore, Christ denies that carnal men, that is, those in a natural state, are capable of such a great matter and affirms that only those who are elevated from a natural state to a supernatural one are fit for it. That supernatural state is called spirit, as opposed to flesh, because the Spirit is the author of that condition. Now, in that flesh, what prevents us from entering the kingdom of God is sin, and sin, as it is foul by nature, is compared to filth. Therefore, the Spirit by whose power we are reborn is attributed the ability to cleanse filth and purify our souls. For this reason, we are said to be born of water and the Spirit, that is, as learned men have noted, of a spirit as it were watery, and which possesses the same power to cleanse our souls as water does to wash away bodily filth. This is a metaphor. Examples of this figure have already been observed by others in Acts 17:25, Genesis 16:16, Colossians 2:8, and elsewhere. Christ used this figure more willingly because, when God promised two things in the Old Testament regarding the manifestation of the Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom of heaven: a great abundance of water, as in Ezekiel 36:25, and a great abundance of the Spirit, as in Isaiah 44:3, Joel 2:28, which refer to the same thing, He combined these in His words in such a way that He first

mentioned water, then the Spirit, because what was signified by water was explained by the Spirit.

XXXV. To that passage, which Bellarmine alone produced from Scripture, he adds a reason derived from the fundamentals of our doctrine. For he says, "This opinion, which holds that baptism is not necessary as a means of salvation, is based on the belief that the children of the faithful are born pure, not from original sin but from the guilt of original sin. Therefore, even if they are not baptized, they attain salvation because they are not guilty of any other sin." This foundation, he says, can be easily overturned. Very well, let us see what instruments he uses to achieve this. He says, therefore, first, that Jacob and Esau were the sons of a godly father. Nevertheless, God loved Jacob and hated Esau before they had done anything good or evil. Therefore, the children of the saints are not born holy. What subtlety of Chrysippus! First, since God loved Jacob from the womb, he must have been born holy in that holiness which consists in immunity from guilt. For God would certainly not have loved him whom He had destined for eternal death. As for Esau, if those words personally refer to him, "Esau I hated," they certainly pertain to the doctrine of election and reprobation, as the Apostle does in Romans 9. But election and reprobation, as is evident from that chapter, concern the granting or denial of faith. And faith is neither granted nor denied except to adults. Therefore, because God decreed not to grant faith to Esau after he matured, does the adversary conclude that Esau, when born, was of the same condition as those to whom original sin is not imputed if they die in that state? Certainly, our position, as explained in previous theses, is that the children of the faithful have a notable prerogative above others; but the nature of that prerogative is such that if they die in infancy, they can attain salvation; if they grow up, they can fall from that prerogative through unbelief. Therefore, Esau fell from that prerogative if he did not believe: if he did not believe, it resulted from his hard heart, which God did not soften.

XXXVI. Secondly, he says that David, born to faithful parents, was nevertheless conceived in iniquity, as he himself confesses in Psalm 51. Absolutely, for if he had not been conceived in iniquity, he would not have needed the remission of original sin, which we say is peculiar to the children of the faithful. But this does not prevent that iniquity from being forgiven to him by God's grace. Also, the Apostle says that we are by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3), which very clearly signifies guilt. Indeed, if we were not naturally guilty, we would not need remission either. But what prevents someone who is by nature a child of wrath from obtaining liberation from wrath through God's mercy? The learned man failed in his acumen when he did not distinguish nature from birth and thought that we cannot be born holy because we are by nature children of wrath. We are by nature children of wrath because our nature has been corrupted by original sin from birth. We are born holy because the guilt arising from that sin is graciously forgiven by God.

XXXVII. Thirdly, he finally says that the passages of the Apostle Paul concerning original sin are general, such as Romans 5:12 ("in whom all have sinned") and 2 Corinthians 5:14 ("Christ died for all; therefore, all died"). It is worthwhile to observe the subtlety of this great man. He says, "These passages cannot be explained as referring to the vice of nature but

not to guilt; otherwise, no one would have guilt." Excellent. Nor do we deny that the children of the faithful are naturally guilty; we only say that their guilt is forgiven. He then says, "It cannot be said that the children of the faithful contract original sin but are immediately forgiven before they are born." Why so? "Because," he says, "if the children of the faithful begin to be holy at the same moment they begin to be the children of the faithful. But they begin to be the children of the faithful at the same moment they begin to exist. Therefore, they never have original sin." I indeed wonder that a clever man so inconsiderately confused the moments of the nature of things with the moments of time. For in time, indeed, those two things occur simultaneously: being conceived and born as sinners from the common lot of humanity, and being conceived and born from the prerogative of the children of the faithful free from the guilt of sin. But by nature, the former precedes, and the latter follows. Therefore, there is nothing absurd in the notion that someone who is a sinner as a human being, by the grace of God, as a child of faithful parents, receives remission of sin.

XXXVIII. Relying only on these two arguments, the Cardinal dared to assert the necessity of baptism, which he himself subsequently overturns. For he says that martyrdom is rightly called and is a kind of baptism, which supplies the place of ordinary baptism if it is lacking. He attributes the same to perfect conversion and repentance, at least in necessity. That necessity is when someone lacks baptism, not out of contempt, but because they are prevented from using it by some necessity that is not their fault and which they cannot overcome, even if they most ardently desire to do so. This is indeed the same as our opinion. For what else is it than to say that baptism is necessary by the necessity of the precept, but not as a means? For what he confuses and invents about the nature and efficacy of martyrdom, conversion, and repentance, unrelated to religion, does not pertain to this matter. It suffices for us that there are cases and necessities where people, even if they greatly desire it, cannot be baptized. When this happens, it happens without the loss of salvation, provided that faith and true repentance are present. This is based on the principle that things done or not done involuntarily are not imputed to us. The same fairness he applies to explaining the matter of adults, he should have applied when dealing with infants. For if infants are not baptized, they are considered to suffer involuntarily, being deprived of a great good either by the fault and negligence of others or by some unavoidable accident.

XXXIX. Certainly, every bodily action is of such a nature that if considered in itself and apart from God's command and the internal disposition of the mind, it is indifferent by its nature; nor is there anything so holy in the celebration of the sacraments which, when considered as a bodily action, is not used in other human activities. For we eat and drink daily outside of the sacrament, and we often wash for health and enjoyment. Therefore, anything of that nature is of no effect for sealing, procuring, or in any way achieving salvation except by divine precept or institution. Therefore, where God's command and institution prevail, the necessity and efficacy of the matter also prevail; where they cease, the matter returns to its nature and becomes indifferent and void of effect. Certainly, no one says that such precepts or institutions apply to those who either entirely, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of them, or are unable to obey them despite their earnest desire due to utterly insuperable obstacles.

XL. Nor did God Himself think otherwise. For, as explained elsewhere, circumcision had the same efficacy among the Jews as baptism has among Christians, yet God did not want infants to be circumcised except on the eighth day. Infants needed to be somewhat strengthened before that wound was inflicted upon them. But how many infants do we suppose died within eight days whose salvation God would have neglected in no way? They were therefore preserved by the force of that promise, "I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you." For what Bellarmine says, that promise did not pertain literally to the remission of sins but to peculiar protection, governance, and earthly happiness, is futile. For it has been explained and demonstrated elsewhere by us that the covenant made with Abraham pertained not only to the legal covenant but also to the evangelical covenant and had the rudiments of both, which were equally confirmed by circumcision.

XLI. Therefore, to sum up this dispute: since there are two main pitfalls in this argument, one from those who consider baptism necessary both by the necessity of means and by the necessity of precept, and the other from those who deny both necessities, we, by God's grace, hold the course of truth and avoid all danger by adhering to the middle way. We assert that this sacrament is so necessary that it cannot be neglected without grave sin, which renders one unworthy of the salvation it is meant to seal, yet it can be absent without the loss of salvation if one is involuntarily and without fault deprived of it. To God, who has so wisely and mercifully ordered all things pertaining to our salvation, be honor, praise, and glory forever and ever. Amen.