

A GENERAL HISTORY OF THE BAPTIST
DENOMINATION IN AMERICA, AND
OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

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A MINIATURE HISTORY OF BAPTISM

Baptism, as it was instituted by the great Christian Lawgiver, was a plain and significant rite. And for a long time, after corruptions in doctrine had crept into the church, baptism was maintained in its original simplicity and purity, and was free from that pompous round of ceremonies, with which it was afterwards encumbered.

Nothing is more evident, than that in the primitive ages of the church, professed believers were the only subjects of this sacred rite, and immersion or dipping was the only mode. But in process of time, baptism passed from visible believers, to catechumen minors, and from them to unconscious babes. And from immersion it was reduced to pouring, then to sprinkling, and now to any mode, which the inventive fancies of capricious candidates may devise, provided always, that some part of them be wet.

The limits of this review will not permit me to do anything more than merely to glance at the most prominent parts of this extensive subject, and relate some of the most remarkable circumstances which have attended the progress of baptism from its introduction to the present time.

The New Testament account of baptism demands our first attention; and there we find, that the first performer of this sacred rite, and who administered it to the great Messiah and to multitudes of repenting Jews, was JOHN THE BAPTIST.

This singular person is supposed to have been born in Hebron; he began preaching the doctrine of repentance in the wilderness of Judea, and soon multitudes, from all the region round about, flocked to the harbinger of the Messiah, and confessing their sins were baptized by him in Jordan and Enon.

But John's ministry was of short duration. By some means he was introduced to king Herod, whom he reprov'd for living in adultery with his brother Philip's wife. For this honest freedom John was cast into prison, where he was assassinated by the means of the guilty and enraged Herodias. [The Catholics have paid the most extravagant veneration to the memory of John the Baptist; and the most ridiculous fables are told respecting him. John himself lies all over the Catholic world. His head is in the city of Amiens, in France. That finger, with which he pointed to Christ, when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God," is at Florence: his others are at different places. The knights of St. John have his right hand, with which he baptized Jesus, enclosed in one of the richest and most elegant shrines; it is made of solid gold, and adorned with a profusion

of jewels. A piece of the stone, on which Jesus stood when he was baptized, is at Chiusi, in Sienna. And there is another at the Lateran at Rome. It is a fact, that of all the saints in paradise, St. John the Baptist bore the bell in the middle ages of the Catholic church. When no new baptisteries were wanted, old ones were enlarged with vestries, chapels, oratories, and adjoining houses. Then they were adorned with inscriptions, pictures, mosaic work, statues, bells, altars, plates, cups, vases, and all manner of utensils; John being depicted on every one. Next they were endowed with houses, lands, farms, and revenues of various kinds. Blessed John the Baptist was engraved on seals, public and private, cut in precious stones of all descriptions for rings and ornaments, exhibited on the crowns of princes, the altar cloths and other ornaments of churches, and chosen by towns, cities, and whole kingdoms as their patron. The multitude imbibed the delicious frenzy, and when the priest inquired at baptism, What is his name? not Jove: but John was the popular cry, and the baptismal hall resounded with John - John - John! To protestant gentlemen, who have not turned their attention to the history of this old-fashioned saint, it may, at first, appear improbable, but on examination it will be found very credible, that if a thesaurus of what relates to the subject were collected and published in one work, it would swell to the size of the Acta Sanctorum, which amount to sixty or seventy volumes in folio. Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 4, 93, 358, 359. It is presumed that no Baptist will be proud of the superstitious honors, which have been paid to their ancient brother, since it is evident, that all have overlooked that which made him the greatest born among women.]

For the purpose of performing his great work, John selected a number of baptismal stations. The first appears to have been at the river Jordan. Mr. Robinson supposes it was on its eastern bank, about four or five miles from its mouth, where it discharges itself into the lake Asphaltites, or the Dead Sea, and near the place where it was miraculously parted for the Israelites to pass over it, when they entered into the promised land. "About half a mile from the river, the remains, of a convent, dedicated to John the Baptist, are yet to be seen: for the Syrian monks availed themselves of the zeal of early pilgrims, who aspired to the honor of being baptized, where they supposed John baptized Jesus."

As much has been said to prove that John could no where in Judea find water of sufficient depth for immersion, it may be proper to give a brief description of the river Jordan, and also of Enon near to Salim.

Jordan is a considerable river in the ancient land of Israel, and ran from north to south, through almost the whole of that once delightful country. It rises from the lake Phiala, in the mountain called Anti-Libanus, and after running fifteen miles under ground, breaks out at Peneum. A little below Dan, the stream forms the lake Samachonites, anciently called Menon, which is about four miles over and seven miles long. Two miles after its leaving the lake, is a stone bridge of three arches, called "Jacob's Bridge," supposed to have been built before the days of Jacob. After leaving the lake Samachonites, it runs fifteen miles further, and forms the lake, or as it is sometimes called, the sea, of Tiberias, which is, in its broadest part, five miles in width, and in length eighteen; thence at its opposite end, it proceeds forward again, and after a course of sixty-five miles, some part of the way through a vast and horrid desert, the rest through a fertile region, it falls into the lake Asphaltites or the Dead Sea, where it is lost. [Morse's and Parish's Gazetteer; Robinson's History of Baptism.] Thus we see this little stream, this trifling brook, rises out of one lake, forms or passes through two others, and falls into a fourth. Morse and

Parish say it is generally four or five rods wide, and nine feet deep. Robinson says that this river, so far from wanting water, was subject to two sorts of floods, one periodical at harvest time, in which it resembled the Nile in Egypt, with which some suppose it had a subterranean communication. When this flood came down, the river rose many feet, and overflowed the lower banks, so that the lions, that lay in the thickets there, were roused up and fled. To this Jeremiah alludes: Behold, the king of Babylon shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan. The other swellings of Jordan were casual, and resembled those of all other rivers in uneven countries. [Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 11,12.]

On the banks of this noble river, John the Baptist fixed one of his baptismal stations, not merely for the purpose of supplying the company, and the horses, and camels, and mules, and asses, on which they rode, with drink, as is supposed by a late Pede-baptist writer [Dr. Reed], but for the conveniency of immersing the repenting candidates.

Another of John's baptismal stations was at Enon near to Salim. "This was at least fifty miles north of the river Jordan, from the place where John had begun to baptize. One of the apostles was said to be a native of Salim, and some think this was the city of which Melchisedec was king." It is not so easy to describe Enon as Jordan, for historians and geographers are not agreed respecting it. Some suppose that Enon was a deep spring, called the dove-spring, or, in the figurative language of the east, the dove's-eye; others think it signified the fountain of the sun; while others are of an opinion that it was either a natural spring, an artificial reservoir, or a cavernous temple of the sun, prepared by the Canaanites, the ancient idolatrous inhabitants of the land. Such are the variety of opinions about the meaning of the word Enon. But although some things are doubtful, yet one thing is certain, it was a place where there was much water. This was sufficient for John the Baptist, and it was immaterial to him, as it is to every other Baptist, whether water be found in an artificial reservoir, or in a receptacle formed by nature, provided that it be of sufficient depth for immersion, which, for most administrators, is about three feet, and from six to nine inches. The Greek, for much water, is *polla udata*; and these two little words have furnished matter for much learned criticism and many future quibbles. "Since sprinkling came in fashion," says Mr. Robinson, "criticism, unheard of in all former ages, hath endeavored to derive evidence for scarcity of water, from the Greek text of the Evangelist John, and to render *polla udata* not much water, but many waters, and then by an ingenious supposition, to infer that many waters signify not many waters collected into one, but waters parted into many little rills, which might all serve for sprinkling, but could not, anyone of them, be used for dipping: as if one man could possibly want many brooks for the purpose of sprinkling one person at a time. It is observable, that the rivers Euphrates at Babylon, Tiber at Rome, and Jordan in Palestine, are all described by *polla udata*. The thunder which agitates clouds, charged with floods, is called the voice of the Lord upon many waters; and the attachment, that no mortifications can annihilate, is a love, which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown. How it comes to pass that a mode of speaking, which on every other occasion signifies much, should in the case of baptism signify little, is a question easy to answer" [Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 14]. The scripture account of the baptism, which John administered, must impress the mind of every unprejudiced person, that professed believers were the subjects of his baptism, and that immersion was the only mode adopted by this ancient Baptist.

But notwithstanding the scripture account of John and his ministry is so plain, yet to serve the

purposes of infant baptism, all has been thrown into confusion, covered with mystery, and reduced to insignificance. Some have pretended to find infants among John's disciples; but this is an opinion so extravagant and absurd, that but few Pedo-baptist writers have advanced it.

Dr. Guyse supposed that John administered baptism by sprinkling. This opinion he expressed in the following manner: "It seems to me that the people stood in ranks near to, or just within, the edge of the river; and John, passing along before them, threw water upon their heads or faces, with his hands or with some proper instrument."

The name of this divine ought always to be mentioned with respect; but this exposition is truly ridiculous, and is sarcastically, but yet ingeniously, paraphrased in a poem attributed to the late Benjamin Francis.

"The Jews in Jordan were baptized,
Therefore ingenious John devis'd
A scoop or squirt, or some such thing,
With which some water he might fling
Upon the long extended rank
Of candidates, that lin'd the bank.
Be careful, John, some drops may fall
From your rare instrument on all;
But point your engine, ne'ertheless,
To those who do their sins confess.
Let no revilers in the crowd,
The holy sprinkling be allow'd"

We have seen, not long since, that John the Baptist has been most extravagantly extolled by the Roman Catholics; but it appears that many modern Pedo-baptists very lightly esteem both John and his ministry. They would fain make us believe that the baptism which he administered was not gospel baptism, but was merely a continuation of Jewish ablutions, and that the gospel dispensation did not commence until after his death. By this supposition, John is left in a forlorn condition, for he is neither a Jew nor christian, he is neither an Old Testament priest, nor a New Testament minister, but stands like the young ass-colt, where two ways met and is not permitted to go in either.

The Jews sent priests and Levites to ask of him, Who art thou? And at another time they acknowledged they knew not whether his baptism was from heaven or of men. But notwithstanding all this the Pedo-baptists of the present day turn him over to the Jewish side. Such attempts are worthy the cause which requires their aid. Mark calls John's ministry, The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Pedo-baptists are at liberty to make their own expositions; but the Baptists are willing to believe that Mark's statement is correct. This novel notion of placing John under the law, leads to another absurdity respecting the baptism of the Savior. A few years since a pamphlet was published with this very singular title, "The Baptism of Jesus Christ not to be imitated by Christians!" The title of this piece is shocking to an obedient mind, and its contents are altogether frivolous and absurd. They go to make John a Jewish priest, and that when he baptized the Savior, he did it with a view to introduce him into

his priestly office. This singular work was published by two Pedit-baptist ministers, whose names were Fish and Crane. I know not why two learned divines should unite to publish a pamphlet, unless it were that its contents were so novel and strange, that neither was willing to take the responsibility of it alone. But they had no occasion for fear; anything that can afford the least relief to the tottering cause of infant baptism, will be sure to gain credit with its fearful advocates. The baptism of Jesus Christ not to be imitated by christians, and John consecrating Christ into the priestly office, were great discoveries; they were handed from one to another, and have gone an extensive round of Essayists and Pamphleteers.

These groundless propositions have been amply refuted by many Baptist writers, and particularly by Dr. Baldwin, in his late work on baptism. The substance of his arguments is as follows: Had Christ been about to be consecrated into the priestly office, John, with his garment of camel's hair, and a girdle of skin about his loins, was not the person to officiate on such an occasion; but it belonged to the sons of Aaron, with their priestly vestments -- And again, the consecration was to be at the door of the tabernacle, and not on the banks of Jordan -- And again, none but the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron could be admitted to the Jewish priesthood. But it is evident our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood (Hebrews 7:14) -- And, finally, Christ was a priest after the order of Melchisedec, and not after the order of Aaron. [Baldwin on Baptism, p. 300-303.]

These passages need no comment; they carry with them their own invincible testimony, that our Savior was not consecrated a Jewish priest, and that his baptism was not a Jewish ceremony, but a christian rite. The Baptists have derived peculiar consolation from being buried with their Lord in obedience to his command, and in imitation of his example. And they have never felt conscious of any great impiety or presumption in so doing, all that Messrs. Fish, and Crane, and Worcester, and others, have said notwithstanding. [Dr. Worcester, of Salem, in a late piece upon baptism, has the following interrogation: "Does not the idea, then, of following Christ into the water, which has unhappily so powerful an effect upon many minds, partake very much of the nature of delusion and superstition?" "Christ's baptism," saith he, was designed regularly to introduce him into his priestly office, according to the law of Moses, under which he commenced his ministry, and which it behooved him to fulfill." "There is no evidence that Christ was buried in the water; and even if he were, his baptism was of an import very different from that of the baptism, which he afterwards instituted for his followers. Are we to go into the water under the idea of following Christ into his priestly office? Ought we to call this delusion and superstition; or ought we to call it the height of impiety?"]

I have been longer on the history of John's baptism, than I should have been, were it not that so many are attempting to reason out of countenance this ancient and eminent character, and set at nought, or at least Judaize all his important ministrations. Had his name been John the Pedit-baptist, and had it been said that he sprinkled men, women, and children, in the synagogue and in the temple, from a bowl or bason, it is highly probable that thousands who are now seeking to invalidate his important offices, would have found him a place in the gospel dispensation, and considered him a very important character.

The whole account of baptism in the New Testament is plain and intelligible, and the state of this ordinance, during the lives of the apostles, is to be gathered mostly from the book of Acts,

written by Luke, the first ecclesiastical historian. It extends from the ascension of Christ to the residence of Paul at Rome, a space of more than thirty years. "In this book there are frequent narrations of the baptism of believers, as of Cornelius, the Ethiopian eunuch, and others, but not one infant appears in the whole history; yet, no doubt, some christians had married, and had young families within the thirty years between the ascension of Jesus and the settlement of Paul at Rome. There is no mention of any of the ceremonies, which modern christians have affixed to baptism: no consecration of water, no sprinkling, no use of oils and unguents, no sponsors, no kneeling in the water, no catechumen-state, no giving a name, no renunciation of any demon, none of the innumerable additional, which, under pretense of adorning, have obscured the glory of this heavenly institute. It belongs to those who practice such additions, to say how they came by them, and under what master they serve."

From writers of unquestionable authority, it is evident, that the primitive christians continued to baptize in rivers, pools, and baths, until about the middle of the 3rd century. Justin Martyr says, that they went with the catechumens to a place where there was water, and Tertullian adds, that the candidates for baptism made a profession of faith twice, once in the church, and then again when they came to the water, and it was quite indifferent whether it were the sea, or a pool, a lake, or a river, or a bath. Such are the accounts given by Justin Martyr in his Apology, and by Tertullian on baptism as quoted by Robinson.

The sacrament of baptism, says Mosheim, was administered in the first century, without the public assemblies, in places appointed and prepared for that purpose, and was performed by immersion of the whole body in the baptismal fount. [Ecclesiastical History, Philadelphia edition, vol. 1. p. 126.]

Had the professed disciples of Jesus Christ always maintained this plain and significant rite, according to its primitive form, the history of baptism would have been short, and an account of persons baptized, and the reasons and circumstances of their baptism would have composed it. But now the case is far different. The fancies, the passions, and interests of mankind, have so perverted this heavenly institute, that its history has become difficult and voluminous; and so greatly has it been varied, abused, and prostituted, that in different parts of its progress, you see no resemblance of its original form, except that some portion of the element of water is applied to animal beings in human shape. And since so large a portion of the christian world has received by inheritance a counterfeit baptism, which they will not give up, he, who would plead for that, which is apostolical and pure, must work his way against ten thousand opponents, all armed with different weapons of defense, some forcible and some futile, but none of them capable of producing the least conviction upon an enlightened and conscientious mind.

We must now leave the apostolical and primitive ages, for a wide wilderness of obscurity and error; and in going over it, we shall but just glance at the most remarkable occurrences, which present themselves to our view.

The history of baptism naturally divides itself into two branches; the one regards the subjects, and the other the mode. These two branches, we shall, for the most part, treat separately; but, in some cases, it will be proper to speak of them in connection.

The limits of this sketch are so short, and the incidents to be thrown together so numerous and varied, that the transitions must of necessity be frequent, and they may not always be the most easy; but I trust, that in the end, every unprejudiced reader will be convinced, that believers' baptism is an institution of Jesus Christ, and that infant sprinkling is an invention of men.

The subjects of baptism deserve first to be considered. We have already seen that believing men and women were the only persons baptized by John and the apostles of our Lord. From the Acts of the Apostles, from the Epistles, and from the book of Revelation, it appears that upwards of sixty churches were gathered by the apostles and primitive preachers. These churches were constituted of Jews, Proselytes, and Pagans; we have an account of many of their names, characters, and baptisms, but no mention is made of the baptism of infants, and on no occasion do infants appear.

A Roman Catholic does not hesitate to acknowledge, that infant baptism is a human tradition; but he can prove that it has been established by law that is sufficient for his purpose, and there is an end of the business with him. But most protestants are unwilling to make this honest confession. They persist that it is found in the Bible, and their attempts to prove it have cost them an almost infinite deal of labor, which, after all, is to no purpose.

Irenaeus is represented as saying, The church received a tradition from the apostles to administer baptism to little children or infants. Irenaeus lived in the second century; he is said to have been a disciple of Polycarp, and Polycarp was a disciple of John the Evangelist. This would seem to be getting within between one and two hundred years of the point. But Dr. John Gill challenged the whole literary world to produce such a passage from the writings of Irenaeus. It was afterwards acknowledged that Origen, of the third century, and not Irenaeus of the second, was the writer intended. [Backus' History, vol. 2. p, 238]

But it is generally supposed that Tertullian of Africa, in the third century, is the first writer who makes any mention of infant baptism, and he, (says Dr. Gill) opposed it. But his opposition is considered by Pedit-baptists as evidence in the case. If, say they, infant baptism was not then practiced, why did this father oppose it? But others make very different reflections on the subject. The catechumen state had arisen to some degree of maturity in the third century. Catechumens were those who were put into a class to be catechized and instructed into the first rudiments of christianity, and when they had acquired a certain degree of knowledge, or had been in a catechumen state a certain time, they were baptized. This method of making christians is supposed to have originated at Alexandria in Egypt, and from thence in process of time, spread over the christian world. Nothing of this catechumen state is found in the New Testament, and at what time it commenced, I have not been able to learn; but it was probably towards the close of the second, or in the beginning of the third century. It gained maturity in its progress, and continued a popular and prevalent establishment, so long as it was needful. Catechumens were generally persons in a state of minority; sometimes, however, those of mature age were enrolled among the children, and when christianity became a political engine, princes were added to the lists, and were catechized awhile before they were baptized. The catechumen state continued as long as minors were the subjects of baptism, but when it was found out by the skillful priests, that infants came into the world crying for baptism, and that they would be doomed to eternal perdition if they should die without it, the business of catechizing became not only useless, but

impracticable; godfathers and godmothers stood forward to answer all the questions which children used to answer for themselves; they took the whole responsibility of their faithfulness upon themselves, and promised what was never or seldom performed, either by the children or sponsors. The catechumen state being thus superseded by a more expeditious method of making christians, it dwindled away and fell into disuse.

It is easy to conceive, that among catechized children, some would be more forward than the rest, and of course would be prepared for baptism at an earlier age. A French Catholic writer observes, that he saw a little child in the country, who, at seven years of age, would promiscuously open the Greek Testament, and read and explain it with facility. "I heard," says he, "of two other infants, brother and sister, the one nine years of age, the other eleven or twelve, speak Greek and Latin perfectly well." A little superstition, of which there are numberless curious instances, added to such cases, handed baptism downwards from minors to babes. A monumental inscription in Italy informs the reader, that Joanna Baptista de Peruschis, daughter of Alexander de Peruschis, and Beatfix Gorzei, when she was only six months old, mostly, sweetly, and freely pronounced the name of Jesus every day before she sucked the breast, and mostly, devoutly adored the images of the saints. [Robinson's Hist. Baptism, p. 157, 158.]

It seems pretty clear, that forward children laid the foundation for infant baptism, but other and more powerful motives hastened its progress, as we shall presently show.

But to return: In Tertullian's time some had begun, or were about beginning to baptize infants, that is, minors, who could ask for baptism. When Tertullian was informed of this business, he wrote a book to oppose it, in which we find the following passage. "The condescension of God may confer his favors as he pleases; but our wishes may mislead ourselves and others. It is, therefore, most expedient to defer baptism, and to regulate the administration of it, according to the condition, the disposition, and the age of the person to be baptized; and especially in the case of little ones. [The word, here translated little ones, is, in the original parvulos, which we shall show presently, was used then for minors, who might be of every age under twenty-one.] What necessity is there to expose sponsors to danger? Death may incapacitate them for fulfilling their engagements; or bad dispositions may defeat all their endeavors. Indeed, the Lord saith, forbid them not to come unto me; and let them come while they are growing up, let them come and learn, and let them be instructed when they come, and when they understand christianity, let them profess themselves christians."

In the year 1700, Dr. Mather, one of the Massachusetts divines, complained that there were reports, that some of the Congregational churches received members on the strength of written relations of their religious experience, which had been dictated by their ministers. This was a strange thing in his day, and it would doubtless have shocked and grieved this good old man, if he could have foreseen that the churches of his order, would, in a short time after, get to receiving members, without any relations either written or verbal, and that some would hold that a minister who knew himself destitute of saving grace, might preach the gospel and administer its ordinances. [Backus' History, vol. 2. p. 26-33.]

So Tertullian had but just heard the report of the innovations which were about to be introduced in the Church of Christ. He had but some faint intimations of that flood of error, in regard to

baptism, which, in a few succeeding centuries, deluged the christian world.

But before we proceed, it may be proper to subjoin the testimony of two following Pedo-baptist writers. The first is a learned divine of Geneva, who succeeded the famous Episcopius in the professorship at Amsterdam, in the seventeenth century. This learned writer thus frankly acknowledges: "Pedo-baptism was unknown in the two first ages after Christ; in the third and fourth it was approved by a few; at length, in the fifth and following it began to obtain in divers places; and therefore this rite is indeed observed by us as an ancient custom, but not as an apostolic tradition." The other is Bishop Taylor, who calls infant baptism "a pretended apostolical tradition;" but further says, "that the tradition cannot be proved to be apostolical, we have very good evidence from antiquity" [Baldwin's Letters to Worcester, p. 167, 168]. These are honest and fair concessions, and if all Pedo-baptists would make the same, their cause would stand on as good a foundation as it now does, and they would save themselves much labor and care.

The account of Tertullian's opposing the baptism of little ones, who were capable of asking for it, but who, in his opinion, were not sufficiently enlightened to be admitted to the sacred rite, was in the beginning of the third century. About the middle of this century, that is, about forty years after the account of Tertullian, the people in Africa had got baptism down from catechized minors to new-born babes, and Fidus, a country bishop, wrote to Cyprian of Carthage, to know whether children might be baptized before they were eight days old, for by his Bible he could not tell; nor could Cyprian tell, without first consulting a council or association of bishops, which was about to be assembled. When the council met, which consisted of between sixty or seventy bishops, after some other business had been transacted, Fidus' question was brought before them. Fidus thought that infants ought to be baptized at eight days old, because the law of circumcision prescribed this time. "No," replied the council, "God denies grace to none; Jesus came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them, and we ought to do all we can to save our fellow creatures. Besides," added they, "God would be a respecter of persons if he denied to infants what he grants to adults. Did not the prophet Elisha lay upon a child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands? Now the spiritual sense of this is, that infants are equal to men; but if you refuse to baptize them, you destroy this equality, and are partial" [Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 197].

Some other questions were agitated respecting newborn infants, which might do well enough for African bishops to discuss, but which might be somewhat offensive to a modern ear.

The reader may here see, what kind of arguments were used at first to support infant baptism, and it must be acknowledged that they are about as good as ever have been discovered since.

We hear but little more about infant baptism, until the fifth century, that is, until the year 416, when it was decreed in the COUNCIL OF MELA, of which St. Austin [Augustine] was the principal director, "That whosoever denieth that infants newly born of their mothers are to be baptized, let him be accursed." ["An honest indication," says Robinson, "rises at the sound of this tyranny, and if a man were driven to the necessity of choosing one saint out of two candidates, it would not be Saint Austin, it would be Saint Balaam, the son of Bosor, who, indeed, loved the wages of unrighteousness, as many other saints have done, but with all his madness, had respect

enough for the Deity to say, How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?"]

This council is generally supposed to have been held at Mela, in Numidia, now in the kingdom of Algiers. According to others it was held in the island of Malta. Thirteen years after this council, this part of Africa was overrun by the Vandals, and the Catholics here were dispersed, and some of them fled into Europe, and carried with them infant-baptism, superstition, and intolerance.

As Africa has been frequently mentioned in the preceding narrative, it may be proper to observe what part of that dark quarter of the globe is intended. A person, acquainted with ecclesiastical history, will need no explanation, but others, into whose hands this work may fall, may desire one.

Africa, which is now generally in a deplorable state of ignorance, once contained a number of civilized kingdoms, famous for commerce and the liberal arts. Among these Carthage was probably the most distinguished. It was situated on the north of Africa, along the southern shore of the Mediterranean sea, where are now the Barbary States of Tunis, Algiers, and so on. Carthage once vied with Rome in power; but it was finally subdued by her, and reduced to a province. It was overrun by the Vandals in the fifth century, and by the Saracens in the seventh; and from that period, Mahometanism has been the established religion of the country. In this part of Africa, christianity was planted in early times, and here too it was early corrupted. Here, and not in Judea, infant baptism originated, as is evident to every candid investigator of historical facts. The limits of this sketch will not permit us to give a circumstantial account of the progress of the baptism of babes; but it is sufficient to observe, that it gained ground, at first, by slow degrees, so strongly did scripture and reason operate against it; but having enlisted on its side, the interested views of priests and princes, and the tender feelings of anxious mothers, who were taught to believe, that their babes would be doomed to the gulf of ruin, if they died without this renovating rite, then called the laver of regeneration; under these circumstances, infant-baptism began most rapidly to prevail, and in a few centuries overrun the whole catholic church.

We have seen that infant baptism arose in Africa, that the baptism of minors began to be practiced in the beginning of the third century, and that the baptism of newborn babes was determined under awful anathemas, by Saint Austin's council at Mela, in the fifth century. But its entrance into Europe is of a later date. The first ecclesiastical canon in Europe, for infant baptism, was framed at Girona in Spain in the sixth century, and the first imperial law to establish the practice, was made in the eighth century, by the Emperor Charlemagne. The council at Girona consisted of only seven obscure bishops, who met without authority, but who legislated with some effect, for people began to be concerned about the salvation of their children. This council framed ten rules of discipline. One was, "that catechumens should be baptized only at Easter and Pentecost, except in case of sickness; and another was, that in case infants were ill and would not suck their mother's milk, if they were offered, to baptize them, even though it were the day they were born." Charlemagne's law to establish infant baptism was almost three hundred years after this council. The practice was then generally prevalent, and this Emperor, for political purposes, obliged the Saxons, on pain of death, to be baptized themselves, and laid heavy fines on those who should neglect to have their children baptized within the year of their birth. [Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 269--282.]

Now priests had no further trouble to vindicate the cause of infant baptism, popes and princes had undertaken to manage the cause; it was established by laws civil and ecclesiastical, and if any dared to oppose it, fire and sword ended the dispute.

CAUSES FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF INFANT BAPTISM

It is now proper that we should go back to the time when infant baptism began to gain some ground, and consider the causes which hastened its progress.

About the time that catechumen minors began to be baptized, the words of Christ, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God," were misapplied to baptism. This erroneous exposition led to an undue reliance on this sacred rite, and many began to extol its efficacy, in the most absurd and extravagant manner; and represented it as a sure and sovereign antidote to all the moral maladies of depraved nature. It could wash away original sin, and place in a state of certain and everlasting salvation, all to whom it was applied; and more than all this, all who died without it, whether infants or adults, were sure of eternal misery. These errors were not all introduced at once; it took some time to bring them to perfection. But while they were gaining ground, there was another error considerably prevalent, which produced an inconvenient collision with the former. Some held to a doctrine similar to the Arminian notion of falling from grace, and many were afraid that they should relapse into sin after their baptism, and thereby lose all its salutary benefits. This led Constantine and many others to defer their baptism till near the close of life. And this again led into the practice of pouring and sprinkling in baptism, instead of immersion, the then universally prevalent mode. These people who had deferred their baptism, were often suddenly alarmed with the prospect of death. Sickness disabled them from 'going to the baptismal font, and misery was their portion if they died unbaptized, and in this painful dilemma, they made the best shift they could, and were sprinkled if they could not be immersed. But this inconvenience was of no long duration, for as soon as parents were made to believe that baptism was the laver of regeneration, they were careful that all their children should be washed in it, as soon as they were born, and their relapsing or rather continuing in sin was another affair.

We have now arrived at the period in which baptism was exalted to a most astonishing preeminence. Its efficacy was the constant theme of pulpit declaimers, and its praises were chanted by all who could sing. Laws were enacted, canons were made, and the most vigilant precautions were taken by popes and princes, and every order of ecclesiastics, by nurses and midwives, and every benevolent creature in christendom, that no human being, whether adult or infant, whether born or unborn, should depart to the world of spirits without this heavenly passport. Baptism, indeed, suffered violence, and the violent took it by force.

As this may seem a mere fanciful reverie, to those who have not studied this subject, I shall here quote verbatim, Mr. Robinson's account of the matter. The passage may be found in his History of Baptism, under the article "Aspersion," where the authorities are quoted.

"The absolute necessity of dipping in order to a valid baptism; and the indispensable necessity of baptism, in order to salvation, were two doctrines which clashed, and the collision kindled up a

sort of war, between the warm bosoms of parents who had children, and the cold reasonings of monks, who had few sympathies. The doctrine was cruel, and the feelings of humanity revolted against it. Power may give law; but it is more than power can do to make unnatural laws sit easy in the minds of men.

"The clergy felt the inconvenience of this state of things, for they were obliged to attend any woman in labour at a moment's warning, night or day, in any season, at the most remote parts of their parishes, without the power of demanding any fee, whenever a case of necessity required, and if they neglected their duty, they were severely punished.

"A great number of expedients were tried to remedy this evil; but for a long season nothing succeeded. There was a regular train of trials. At first, infants were baptized along with catechumens in public, by trine immersion, at two times in the year; when it was observed, that some died before the season for baptizing came, priests were empowered to baptize at any time, and in any place in case of sickness. When it was remarked that a priest was not always at hand, new canons empowered him to depute others to perform the ceremony, and midwives were licensed. It happened sometimes, while the midwife was baptizing a child not like to live many minutes, the mother was neglected and died. To prevent such accidents in future, it was decreed, that any body, licensed or unlicensed, a Jew or a degraded priest, a scullion or felon, might baptize. It fell out, sometimes, that a vessel large enough, or a quantity of water sufficient to dip an infant, could not be procured on a sudden; and while in the dead of the night, and perhaps in a severe frost, the assistants were running to borrow utensils, or to procure water, the ill-fated infant expired. In vain were laws made expressly to require pregnant women, to have every thing ready prepared, the laws of nature defied human control, the evil was incurable, and the anguish intolerable. Some infants died the moment they were born, others before, both unbaptized, and all for the comfort of the miserable mother, doomed like fiends to descend instantly to a place of torment."

In the year 1751, a humane doctor of laws of Palermo, published at Milan, in the Italian tongue, a book of three hundred and twenty pages in quarto, dedicated to all the guardian angels, to direct priests and physicians how to secure the eternal salvation of infants by baptizing them when they could not be born. The surgical instrument and the process cannot be mentioned here, and the reader is come to a point in infant sprinkling, where English modesty compels him to retreat and retire, so that it is impossible to say anything more on lustrating infants by way of baptizing them. [Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 433]

The baptism of abortives was a very common practice, but this also is a subject too indelicate to be discussed.

It may be well for Dr. Osgood to read these accounts of infant baptism, before he again declaims against our "indecorous" mode of baptizing. We have now traced the baptism of babes to its highest pitch of frenzy, and also to its lowest point of corruption and debasement. In most protestant churches, and in many parts of the catholic church, it has been practiced in a more rational and becoming manner. But in every form it is all absurd and useless thing, and at its best estate it is altogether vanity. The baptism of a believer is an interesting thing, but the sprinkling of a new-born child, is an unanimated, insignificant affair.

It was customary in the early ages, as it is now with the Baptists, for ministers, previous to baptism, to preach on the subject, and address the candidates on the important business, in which they were about to engage; but where infant baptism prevails, this custom, for good reasons, is generally laid aside, for they who are the most interested in the matter, are, from their incapacity, precluded from participating in the transaction. It would be a curious sight for a Reverend Divine, to address infants in their mothers' or nurses' arms, on the subject of baptism; but such a thing, ludicrous as it might seem, would be just as rational, and scriptural, and useful, as it is to baptize them.

THE MODE OF BAPTISM

Baptism, as to the manner of its administration, has been subject to a great variety of changes, of which we shall now give a brief account. Baptism, beyond all doubt, was administered, in the apostolic age, by immersion. A cloud of witnesses bear testimony to this point, and place it beyond a doubt in the mind of every candid and unprejudiced man.

Ordinary baptism was universally performed by single or trine immersion for thirteen hundred years; from thence till after the reformation, it was generally performed by trine immersion.

Baptism was administered by pouring or sprinkling in cases of necessity all along from the third century to Calvin's time.

The first appearance of sprinkling for baptism was in the third century, in Africa, in favor of clinics or bedridden people. Baptism was now considered essential to salvation; the poor sick people, who could not go to the baptistery, but were in danger of destruction if they died unbaptized, made the best shift they could, and were sprinkled as they lay upon their beds. But the African Catholics reputed this no baptism, or at least a very imperfect one.

The first appearance of baptizing by pouring, was in the eighth century, when Pope Stephen III allowed the validity of such a baptism of infants in danger of death. His Infallible Holiness had been driven from Rome by Astulphus, king of the Lombards; he fled to France to implore the assistance of Pepin, who had lately been proclaimed king. During his residence in the monastery of St. Denis, some monks consulted his opinion on nineteen questions; one of which was: whether in case of necessity, occasioned by the illness of an infant, it were lawful to baptize by pouring water out of the hand or a cup on the infant. Stephen answered, if such a baptism were performed in such a case of necessity, in the name of the holy Trinity, it should be held valid. The learned James Basanage makes several very proper remarks on this canon: as that "although it is accounted the first law for sprinkling, yet it doth not forbid dipping; that it allows sprinkling only in case of imminent danger: that the authenticity of it is denied by some Catholics: that many laws were made after this time in Germany, France, and England, to compel dipping, and without any provision for cases of necessity: therefore that this law did not alter the mode of dipping in public baptisms: and that it was not till five hundred and fifty years after, that the Legislature, in a council at Ravenna, in the year thirteen hundred and eleven, declared dipping or sprinkling indifferent." The answer of Stephen is the true origin of private baptism and of sprinkling. [Robinson, p. 429, 430.]

Modern Pede-baptist writers have picked up historical scraps of these clinical and necessitous baptisms, and have endeavored to derive evidence from them of the universality of infant sprinkling. I say modern Pede-baptists, for Dr. Wall, who was a strenuous advocate for infant baptism, also warmly contended for immersion. He published his elaborate History of Infant Baptism in 1705. This work was answered by Dr. John Gale, a famous General Baptist, in a very learned work, entitled, Reflections, etc. Dr. Wall published a Defence of his History in 1720. He appears to have been half right and half wrong, and he was as strenuous for the wrong half as for the right. He warmly contends that infant baptism is of divine appointment, and he as warmly contends that infant sprinkling is a "scandalous thing." "Calvin, (saith he) was I think the first in the world, that drew up a liturgy that prescribed pouring water on the infant, absolutely, without saying any thing of dipping. It was (as Mr. Walker has shown) his admirers in England, who, in queen Elizabeth's time, brought pouring into ordinary use, which before was used only to weak children. But the succeeding Presbyterians in England, about 1644, when their reign began, went farther yet from the ancient way; and instead of pouring, brought into use, in many places, sprinkling; declaring, at the same time, against all use of fonts, baptisteries," etc.

"There has (saith he again) no novelty or alteration, that I know of, in the point of baptism, been brought into the church, but in the way and manner of administering it. The way that is now ordinarily used we cannot deny to have been a novelty, brought into this church (of England) by those that had learned it in Germany, or at Geneva. And they were not contented with following the example of pouring a quantity of water, which had there been introduced instead of immersion, but improved it, (if I may so abuse that word) from pouring to sprinkling, that it might have as little resemblance of the ancient way of baptizing as possible."

I cannot leave this ingenious author, before I select another passage.

"Another struggle [says he, whether the child shall be dipped or sprinkled] will be with the midwives and nurses, etc. These will use all the interest they have with the mothers, which is very great, to dissuade them from agreeing to the dipping of the child. I know no particular reason, unless it be this: A thing, which they value themselves and their skill much upon, is, the neat dressing of the child on the christening-day; the setting all the trimming, the pins, and the laces, in their right order. And if the child be brought in loose clothes, which may presently be taken off for the baptism, and put on again, this pride is lost: And this makes a reason. So little is the solemnity of the sacrament regarded by many, who mind nothing but the dress, and the eating and drinking" [Dr. Wall's Defence, p. 146, 147, 403].

Christians at first baptized in rivers and fords, and wherever water of sufficient depth could be found. About the middle of the third century baptisteries began to be built. They at first, like the manners and conditions of the people, were very simple, and were merely for use; but in the end they arose to as high degree of elegant superstition, as enthusiasm could invent.

By a baptistery, which must not be confounded with a modern font, is to be understood an octagon building, with a cupola roof, resembling a dome of a cathedral; adjacent to a church, but no part of it. All the middle part of this building was one large hall, capable of containing a great multitude of people, the sides were parted off, and divided into rooms, and, in some, rooms were

added without-side, in the fashion of cloisters. In the middle of the great hall was an octagon bath, which, strictly speaking, was the baptistery, and from which the whole building was denominated. This was called the pool, the pond, the place to swim in, besides a great number of other names of a figurative nature, taken from the religious benefits, which were supposed to be connected with baptism; such as the laver of regeneration, the luminary, and many more of the same parentage. Some had been natural rivulets before the buildings were erected over them, and the pool was contrived to retain water, sufficient for dipping, and to discharge the rest. Others were supplied by pipes, and the water was conveyed into one or more of the side rooms. Some of the surrounding rooms were vestries, others school rooms, both for the instruction of youth, and for transacting the affairs of the church; and councils have been held in the great halls of these buildings. It was necessary they should be capacious; for as baptism was administered only twice a year, the candidates were numerous, and the spectators more numerous than they. [Robinson's Hist. of Baptism, p. 59.] It may be proper here to give a brief description of a few of those splendid buildings which were erected for the purpose of performing baptism by immersion.

We will begin with the one attached to the splendid church of St. Sophia, of Constantinople, which church is now converted into a Mahometan mosque. The church of St. Sophia was built by Constantine, the first christian emperor.

Succeeding emperors amplified and adorned it. Justinian at an immense cost rebuilt it, and his artists, with elegance and magnificence, distributed variegated marbles of exquisite beauty, gold, silver, ivory, mosaic work, and endless ornaments, so as to produce the most agreeable and lasting effects on all beholders.

The baptistery was one of the appendages of this spacious palace, something in the style of a convocation room in a cathedral, it was very large, and councils have been held in it, and it was called the great Illuminatory. In the middle was the bath, in which baptism was administered; it was supplied by pipes, and there were outer rooms for all concerned in the baptism of immersion, the only baptism of the place. Everything in the church of St. Sophia goes to prove, that baptism was administered by trine immersion, and only to instructed persons; the canon laws, the officers, the established rituals, the Lent sermons of the prelates, and the baptism of the archbishops themselves. [Robinson, p. 63.] To the account of this baptistery, I will subjoin the following extracts from the discourses of Basil, archbishop of Caesarea, which may serve to show both how and for what purpose they baptized in the Greek established church, in the fourth century.

"It is necessary for the perfection of a christian life, that we should imitate Christ; not only such holy actions and dispositions, as lenity, modesty, and patience, which he exemplified in his life, but also his death, as Paul saith, I am a follower of Christ, I am conformable to his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. How can we be placed in a condition of likeness to his death? By being buried with him in baptism. What is the form of this burial, and what benefits flow from an imitation of it? First, the course of former life is stopped. No man can do this, unless he be born again, as the Lord hath said. Regeneration, as the word itself imports, is the beginning of a new life; therefore, he that begins a new life must put an end to his former life. Such a person resembles a man got to the end of a race, who, before he sets off again, turns about, pauses, and rests a little; so in a change of life it seems necessary, that a sort

of death should intervene, putting a period to the past, and giving a beginning to the future. How are we to go down with him into the grave? By imitating the burial of Christ in baptism; for the bodies of the saints are, in a sense, buried in water. For this reason the Apostle speaks figuratively of baptism, as a laying aside the works of the flesh; ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism. -- Two things are proposed in baptism; to put an end to a life of sin, lest it should issue in eternal death; and to animate the soul to a life of future sanctification. The water exhibits an image of death, receiving the body as into a sepulcher; the spirit renews the soul, and we rise from a death of sin into a newness of life. This is to be born from above of water and the Spirit; as if by the water we were put to death, and by the operation of the Spirit brought to life. -- If there be any benefit in the water, it is not from the water, but from the presence of the Spirit; for baptism doth not save us by putting away the filth of the flesh, but by the answer of a good conscience toward God" [Basil, Robinson's Hist. Baptism, p. 65, 66, 67].

It seems clear that the homilies of archbishop Basil were addressed, not to pagans old or young, but to the children of christians, whom he calls the church. That the Greek church of those times did not force a profession of christianity upon their children, but conducted them to baptism by instruction and argument -- that baptism was administered by trine immersion -- and that, as the sermons of their bishops were intended to persuade, so the lessons for the day, read openly in the church, were intended to explain and enforce the subject of baptism. Nothing like this is to be found in the Lent sermons of modern times; and a translation of the Lent homilies of the ancient Greek bishops could not be read to any congregation of modern christians, without great absurdity, except to Baptist assemblies, and there they would be heard in raptures, for their singular propriety and beauty.

The baptistery pertaining to the church of St. John Lateran, at Rome, is thus described by Mr. Robinson: "A traveler, entering Rome by the gate Del Popolo, must go up the street Strada Felice, till he arrive at the church St. John Lateran. Turning in and passing along through the church, he must go out at the door behind the great choir, which lets him into a court surrounded with walls and buildings. On the left hand is a porch supported by two marble pillars, which leads into the octagon edifice, called the baptistery. On entering, he will observe that eight large polygonal pillars of porphyry support the roof, and there is a spacious walk all round between them and the wall. In the center of the floor under the cupola, is the baptistery, properly so called, lined with marble, with three steps down into it, and about five Roman palms, that is thirty-seven inches and a half deep; for the Roman palm is seven inches and a half English measure. Some antiquaries are of opinion that this baptistery was deeper formerly. Perhaps it might be, before the baptism of youths was practiced; but this, all things considered, is the most desirable of all depths for baptizing persons of a middle size; and in a bath, kept full as this was, by a constant supply of fresh water, the gauge was just, and any number might be baptized with ease and speed." [Robinson, p. 72, 73.]

Mr. Robinson has given similar descriptions of the baptisteries of Revenna, Venice, Florence, Novara, and Milan; but those which have been mentioned will give the reader an idea of the form and design of these baptismal structures, which were erected in the front of christian temples, to show that baptism was the entrance into the church.

I shall here insert an account of a baptism performed by the pope in the baptistery of St. John Lateran, about the eighth or ninth century.

"At nine in the morning the pontiff, attended by a great number of prelates and clergy, went to the sacristy, and after they had put on the proper habits, proceeded in silent order into the church. Then the lessons for the day were read, and several benedictions performed. When this part was finished, his holiness, with his attendants, proceeded to the baptistery, the choir singing all the way the forty-second psalm: 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God,' and so on. This ended at the porch of the first chapel, where his holiness sat down. Then the cardinals presented themselves before him, and one, in the name of the rest, prayed for his benediction, which was bestowed. This was repeated thrice, and immediately after the last, the pontiff added, 'Go ye and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' The cardinals having received their mission, withdrew immediately, and, mounting their horses, proceeded each to his own station to baptize. The pope went on to the baptismal hall, and after various lessons and psalms consecrated the baptismal water. Then while all were adjusting themselves in their proper places, his holiness retired into the adjoining chapel of St. John the Evangelist, attended by some acolothists, who took off his habits, put on him a pair of waxed drawers, and a surplice, and then returned to the baptistery. There three children were waiting, which was the number usually baptized by the pontiff. Silence was ordered. When the first was presented, he asked, 'What is his name?' The attendant answered 'John.' Then he proceeded thus: 'John, dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth?' 'I do believe.' 'Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was born and suffered death?' 'I do believe.' 'Dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the body and life eternal?' 'I do believe.' 'John, do you desire to be baptized?' 'I desire it.' 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father,' dipping him once, 'and of the Son,' dipping him a second time, 'and of the Holy Ghost,' dipping him a third time. The pontiff added, 'May you obtain eternal life!' John answered, 'Amen.' The same was then repeated to Peter and Mary, the other two. Attendants with napkins received the children, and retired to dress them. The attendants of his holiness threw a mantle over his surplice, and he retired. The rest of the catechumens were baptized by deacons, who in clean habits, and without shoes, went down into the water, and performed the ceremony as the pontiff had set them an example. After all was over and the children dressed, they waited on the pope in an adjacent room, where he confirmed them, and delivered to each crism and a white garment."

The part, relative to the habits of the pope, is taken from the twelfth ordinal in the collection of Father Mabillon, and it was written by a cardinal in the latter end of the twelfth century.

"That these ordinals were originally composed for the baptism of those of riper years, seems not to admit of a doubt, and that baptism was performed by immersion cannot be questioned, nor can any one hesitate to determine, that the candidates were the children of christians. The scrutiny; the service in part in the night; the command of silence; the change of deacons' habits; the wax or oil-skin drawers, breeches, or trousers for the pontiff; the interrogations and answers; the kneeling and praying of the candidates; the proper lessons for the days; the services for susceptors, parents, patrini, and matrini, who were uncles, aunts, relations, or assistants, and not

modern god-fathers performing sponsors; the addresses to the young folks; the total omission of charges to sponsors; all go to prove the point" [Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 78, 79, 80].

When the baptism of infants became an established custom, it was unnecessary for the administrators to go into the water, and they contrived cisterns which they called fonts, in which they dipped children without going into the water themselves. In the first baptisteries, both administrators and candidates, went down steps into the bath. In after ages the administrators went up steps to a platform, on which stood a small bath which they called a font, into which they plunged children without going into the water themselves. In modern practice the font remains, but a bason of water set into the font serves the purpose, because it is not now supposed necessary either that the administrator should go into the water, or that the candidate should be immersed.

Fonts were made of different materials, some of wood, some of stone, and at Canterbury, in England, there was one of silver, in which many of the English nobility were baptized. In these fonts infants were baptized naked, and accidents frequently happened while they were in the font, which were painful to the feelings of parents and spectators, and which a good Doctor of Massachusetts would doubtless consider altogether "indecorous." But the poor babes ought not to be blamed. [In consequence of an accident of this kind, the Emperor Constantine, in the eighth century, received from his enemies the nick-name of Copronimus, which signifies that he did that in the sacred font, which he ought not to have done. Many others received nick-names on the same account. Mosheim; Robinson.] But baptisteries and fonts are all become useless, since it has been found out, that for a priest to moisten his hand in a bason, and lay it gently on the child's face, or to scatter a few drops from his flexible fingers, will answer all the purposes of baptism.

To recapitulate what has been said on this subject, everything tends to prove, that baptism means dipping or immersion, and that it has been so understood and practiced in most ages of the christian church.

Baptisteries, baptismal fonts, going down into the baptistery, coming up out of it, dressing, undressing, napkins, vestments, and so on, all agree with this mode; and we may add collections of pictures, inscriptions, medals, coins, festivals, and histories of all kinds of the middle ages, have some connection, near or remote, with baptism by immersion. [Thomas Armitage, in the first volume of his History of the Baptists, has included graphics and descriptions of many ancient baptismal fonts. -- D.W. Cloud] Even punsters and writers of jest-books, have dipping in baptism for the object of their wit. In the history of the Byzantine theater, it is said that in the year two hundred and ninety seven, the players on a theater in a city in Asia, diverted the pagan spectators with a mock baptism. For this purpose they provided a large bathing tub, filled it with water, and plunged Gelasinus into it, to the no small diversion of the company.

The evidences in favor of immersion are so numerous that it is difficult, in this short sketch, to ascertain which are the most proper to select. We will, however, proceed next to the CONCESSIONS WHICH PEDO-BAPTISTS HAVE MADE ON THE SUBJECT, and begin with the Roman Catholics.

Learned men of that community differ, as may naturally be supposed, concerning the time when infant sprinkling was introduced; but none of their accurate writers pretend to say, the first christians did not baptize by dipping. On the contrary they laugh at such as affect either to render the word baptism sprinkling, or to give a high antiquity to the practice. It would be easy to adduce a great number of examples; but four shall suffice. The first is that learned and elegant antiquary, Paul Maria Paciandi. This great man published by authority at Rome, in the year 1755, dedicated to pope Benedict XIV a beautiful volume of christian antiquities. His holiness, being fond of antiquities, admitted him to his presence, and took pleasure in examining his compilations. In the fourth chapter of the second dissertation, he speaks of the two baptisteries at Ravenna, and finds fault with the artists for representing John the Baptist pouring water on the head of Jesus. "Nothing (exclaims he) can be more monstrous than these emblems! Was our Lord Christ baptized by aspersion? This is so far from being true, that nothing can be more opposite to truth, and it is to be attributed to the ignorance and rashness of workmen." The officers of the apostolical palace, and the other examiners of this work speak of it in terms of the highest approbation.

The second is that excellent judge, Dr. Joseph De Vicecomes, of Milan, whose book on the mass was examined and approved by the head of the college of St. Ambrose, by one officer of the inquisition, another of the Cardinal Archbishop, and a third of the Senate of Milan. In the sixth chapter of the fourth book, on the ceremonies of baptism, he says, "I will never cease to profess and teach, that only immersion in water, except in cases of necessity, is lawful baptism in the church. I will refute the false notion, that baptism was administered in the primitive church by pouring or sprinkling." He proceeds through the whole chapter to prove, and particularly refutes the objection, taken from the baptism of three thousand in one day by the apostles, by observing that it was a long summer day; that the words pronounced in baptism were as long in the mode of sprinkling, as in that of dipping; that dipping might be performed as quick as sprinkling; that many ceremonies now in use were not practiced then; and that even since several ceremonies had been added, many fathers at Easter and Whitsuntide had been known to baptize great numbers in a day by dipping. He remarks in another place, that some men were highly fitted for this service, as, for example, Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who, Paulinus affirms, (and he knew him well) had such spirits and strength, that he baptized as many persons in a day by immersion, as five ordinary men could do after his decease. [A man always dreaming of sprinkling, concludes that the apostles could nowhere in Jerusalem, find places for immersion. He can imagine there was an abundance of pitchers and basins; but to think of dipping places in this great city, is altogether improbable and absurd. But Dr. Gill has shown that Jerusalem was not so destitute of this refreshing element as many Pedito-baptists suppose. "In the city of Jerusalem, (says he) in private houses, they had their baths for purifications, by immersion, as in the case of menstruas, gonorrhoeas, and other defilements, by touching unclean persons and things, which were very frequent; so that a digger of cisterns, for such uses, and others, was a business in Jerusalem. And in the temple there was an apartment, called the dipping-place or room, where the high-priest dipped himself on the day of atonement. And besides these were ten lavers of brass, made by Solomon; and every laver held forty baths of water, and each was four cubits broad and long, sufficient for immersion of the whole body of a man. Add to this that there was the molten sea also for the priests to wash in, 2 Chronicles 4:6, which was done by immersion; on which one of the Jewish commentators has these words: "The sea was for the dipping of the priests; for in the midst of it they dipped themselves from their uncleanness; but in the Jerusalem Talmud, there is

an objection, is it not a vessel? as if it was said how can they dip in it, for is it not a vessel? and there is no dipping in vessels: R. Joshua ben Levi replied, a pipe of water was laid to it from the fountain of Etam, and the feet of the oxen, which were under the molten sea, were open at the pomegranates; so that it was as if it was from under the earth, and the waters came to it, and entered and ascended, by the way of the feet of the oxen, which were open beneath them and bored." And it may be observed, that there was also in Jerusalem the pool of Bethesda, into which persons went down at certain times, John 5:1, and the pool of Siloam, where persons bathed and dipped themselves, on certain occasions. So that there were conveniences enough for baptism by immersion in this place.] [Thomas Armitage, in A History of the Baptists, Vol. 1, "Pentecost and Saul," lists several other large pools in Jerusalem. --D.W. Cloud]

The third is Father Mabillon. He says, that although there is mention made in the life of S. Lindger of baptizing a little infant by pouring on holy water, yet it was contrary to an express canon of the ninth century; contrary to the canon given by Stephen, which allowed pouring only in cases of necessity; contrary to the general practice in France, where trine immersion was used; contrary to the practice of the Spaniards, who used single immersion; contrary to the opinion of Alwin, who contended for trine immersion; and contrary to the practice of many, who continued to dip till the fifteenth century. For all this he quotes his authorities.

The fourth is the celebrated Lewis Anthony Muratori. -- This perfect master of the subject, in the fourth volume of his antiquities of the middle ages of Italy, in the fifty-seventh dissertation, treats of the rites of the church of Milan, called the Ambrosian, from St. Ambrose, the first compiler of the ritual of that church. As usual, he confirms every word, by original, authentic papers. Speaking of baptism by trine immersion, which was the Ambrosian method, he says: "Observe the Ambrosian manner of baptizing. Now-a-days, the priests preserve a shadow of the ancient Ambrosian form of baptizing, for they do not baptize by pouring as the Romans do; but taking the infant in their arms, they dip the hinder part of his head three times in the baptismal water, in the form of a cross, which is a vestige yet remaining of the most ancient and universal practice of immersion" [Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 433, 434, 435].

A Catholic is not unwilling to acknowledge, that infant sprinkling is a human tradition; "he is not shocked to find that a ceremony is neither scriptural nor ancient, because an order of the council of Trent is as valid with him as an apostolical command."

All the authors, just quoted, believed in infant sprinkling, not because it was found in scripture, but because it had been established by law in the church of Rome. And when Protestant Pedo-baptists rail against their superstitious rites, they often retort upon them their own arguments, and expose the sandy foundation of infant baptism. A curious anecdote of this kind is related of a Roman Catholic priest, who was called by king Charles II to dispute with a Baptist minister by the name of Jeremiah Ives, whom the Catholic supposed to have been a church priest. The affair will be related at large in the History of the English Baptists.

A short time since, a pamphlet was published in Baltimore by the Roman Catholic College of St. Mary, against an attack from the Presbyterians on them, (for their unwritten traditions) to which the Catholics reply: "Presbyterians with Catholics admit the baptism of infants. Baptism by sprinkling, by effusion, etc. Let them find for all this, and for many other practices, any

foundation in scripture." Again, "It is then an unquestionable fact, that even for Presbyterians, tradition has preserved many unwritten dogmas and religious institutions" [Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine, vol. 3. p. 207].

A Catholic, by thus acknowledging that infant baptism is an unwritten tradition, saves himself an infinite deal of labor; but a Protestant, who will not give to such traditions, however solemnly established, the force of a scripture command, finds himself in an awkward situation, and is obliged to go in search of proof, which none ever did and never can find, until two or three more words are added to the Bible.

While Catholics and Presbyterians are contending about unwritten traditions, the Baptists look on as calm spectators, and rejoice, that for their practice, they have a "thus saith the Lord."

We will not, however, confine our attention to the concessions of Catholics. A HOST OF PROTESTANTS MIGHT BE PRODUCED, who have all conceded that the primary meaning of baptize, is to dip, to immerse, and so on; and that in this manner baptism was administered in the primitive church.

CALVIN, in his commentary on the passage in Acts 8:38, they went down into the water, thus remarks: "Here we see the rite used among the men of old time in baptism; for they put all the body into the water; now, the use is this, that the minister doth only sprinkle the body or the head." After several remarks upon the use of the ordinance, he adds, "It is certain that wee want nothing which maketh to the substance of baptisme. Wherefore the church did grant liberty to herself since the beginning, to change the rites somewhat excepting this substance. Some dipped them thrice, same but once; wherefore there is no cause why we should be so strait-laced in matters which are of no such weight; so that that external pompe doe no whit pollute the simple institution of Christ" [Baldwin's Letters to Dr. Worcester, p. 201].

DR. CAMPBELL, a late learned Scotch writer, in his Preliminary Discourses to the Translation of the Four Gospels, observes, that "in several modern languages we have, in what regards Jewish and Christian rites, generally followed the usage of the old Latin version, though the authors of that version have not been entirely uniform in their method. Some words they have transferred from the original into their language; others they have translated. But it would not always be easy to find their reason for making this difference. Thus the word *peritome* they have translated *circumcisio*, which exactly corresponds in etymology; but the word *baptisms* they have retained, changing only the letters from Greek to Roman. Yet the latter was just as susceptible into Latin as the former. *Immersio*, *tinctio*, answers as exactly in the one case as *circumcisio* in the other." He further adds, "We have deserted the Greek names where the Latins have deserted them. Hence we say *circumcision*, and not *peritomy*, and we do not say *immersion*, but *baptism*. Yet when the language furnishes us with materials for a version so exact and analogical, such a version conveys the sense more perspicuously than a foreign name. For this reason, I should think the word *immersion* (which though of Latin origin, is an English noun, regularly formed from the verb to immerse a better name than *baptism*, were we now at liberty to make a choice." The same writer thus translates the passage in Luke 12:50: "I have an IMMERSION to undergo, and how am I pained till it be accomplished."

MR. BOOTH, in his *Pedo-baptism examined*, has quoted eighty *Pedo-baptist* writers, who concede that the original meaning of the Greek verb *baptizo*, is to dip, to immerse, and so on.

The Baptists do not rely on these concessions, to establish their opinion of baptism; they have other reasons for believing that immersion is an apostolical rite; but they are produced to show, that *Pedo-baptists* were more candid and consistent in former times, than they are in general at the present day. One would think that these concessions must have some effect upon the minds of those, who, in any measure, lay themselves open to conviction. Sure I am, that if one respectable Baptist writer should concede half so much in favor of pouring or sprinkling, as Calvin has in favor of immersion, it would be instantly taken for proof, and trumpeted from Dan to Beersheba against them.

But it is an indisputable fact that no Baptist writer, and their number is considerably great, and some of them have been very learned, their enemies being judges, has ever had the least misgiving on the subject, or in any way conceded, that any thing short of a total dipping, plunging, or immersion of the body in water, can be valid baptism.

But few of the Baptists pretend to understand Greek; some, however, do undoubtedly understand it, as well as do their adversaries, and have gone laboriously into the investigation of the meaning of the terms *bapto*, *baptizo*, *baptiama*, and so on, not so much to establish their own opinions, as to refute the skeptical evasions and unsound criticisms of their opponents. [That learned Baptist, Dr. John Gale, has taken much pains in this matter. He hath traced the original word in profane writers, and hath proved by a great variety of examples, that with the Greeks, *bapto* signified to dip, *baptai dyers*, *baphis a dye house*, *bapsis dying by dipping*, *bammata dying drugs*, *baphi kee the art of dying*, *dibaphos, double-dyed*, *baptisterion a dying-vat*, etc. In these senses were *bapto* and its derivatives understood before they were selected to describe a christian institute. --Gale's *Reflections upon Wall's History of Infant Baptism*, Letter III. Mohammed, in the *Alcoran*, calls baptism *sebgatallah*, that is, divine dying, or the tinging of God, from *sebgah dying* and *dallah God*. A celebrated orientalist says, Mohammed made use of this compound term for baptism, because, in his time, christians administered baptism as *dyers tinge*, by immersion, and not as now (in the west) by aspersion. *Robinson's Hist. of Baptism*, p. 7.]

"The meaning of doubtful words is best fixed by ascertaining the facts which they are intended to represent; " and when we read that they were baptized in Jordan, buried in baptism, went down into the water before baptism, and came up out of it after; I say, when the Baptists read these and many similar passages, no man, woman, or child, among them, has, or can have, any doubt of the meaning of the word baptize. And if *Pedo-baptists* will still spend their time in hammering Abraham's covenant and the Greek prepositions, *eis* and *en*, and *ek*, and *apo*, to prove that *baptizo* may mean to sprinkle or pour, they are welcome to all the pleasure and fruits of their labor.

The Greeks have always understood baptism to mean immersion. The Greek christians according to Dr. Wall, are more numerous than Roman Catholics, [*Defence*, etc. p. 148.] which, if I mistake not, are estimated at a hundred millions or more; The Greek religion, according to Robinson, is professed through a considerable part of Greece, the Grecian isles, Wallachia, Moldavia, Egypt, Nubia, Lybia, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Lyria, Cilicia, and Palestine, the Russian

empire in Europe, greater part of Siberia in Asia, Astracan, Casan, Georgia, and White Russia in Poland. [Ecclesiastical Researches, p. 93.] Besides the established Greek church, which is governed by the four patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, there are many communities of Greek christians, called oriental churches, which never were of any hierarchy, but have always retained their original freedom. These churches are dispersed all over Syria, Arabia, Egypt, Persia, Nubia, Ethiopia, India, Tartary, and other eastern countries. The most considerable of them are the Nestorians, the Armenians, the Georgians, and so on.

Now it is an indisputable fact, acknowledged by all historians, that all these millions of Greeks, ever have, and now do, administer baptism by immersion. They generally baptize infants, but they do it by dipping not only in the warm climes of Arabia and Lybia, but in the frozen regions of Russia and Siberia. [It is said by an English historian, that St Petersburg, they sometimes baptize their children in a river or canal, by cutting a hole through the ice, upon which he observes, "I have heard that a priest, in immersing a child, (for baptism is performed by the immersion of the whole body) let it slip, through inattention, into the water. The child was drowned; but the holy man suffered no consternation. "Give me another," said he, with the utmost composure, "for the Lord hath taken that to himself." The Empress, however, having other uses for her subjects, and not desiring that the Lord should have any more in that way, at least, gave orders, that all children, to be baptized in a hole in the river, should henceforth be let down in a basket." Baldwin's Baptism of Believers, 2d edit. p. 100.] This circumstance outweighs ten thousand criticisms upon Abraham's covenant, Greek prepositions, the little sprinkling brooks of Palestine, and the baptism of the three thousand.

Mr. Robinson has made a very good use of this circumstance in his Ecclesiastical Researches, under the head "Greek Church," pages 91 and 92, which I will here transcribe in his own forcible words.

"The state of baptism in the Greek church is an article of more consequence than it may at first appear. If pity for the wretched be a generous passion, who can help indulging it when he sees an illiterate Baptist hang his head daunted and dismayed by the unfair criticism of a learned teacher, who tells him the word baptize is Greek, and signifies pouring as well as dipping? Great men love sometimes to trifle. The inference which these translators draw from their own version, is not exactly logical; for I prove, says a Vossius, going to baptize an infant, that the word baptize signifies to pour as well as to dip. In virtue of this, what does he? He takes the infant and neither pours nor dips, but sprinkles, and then lifts up his voice and says to a congregation of English peasants, the Greek will bear me out. Verily, this is not fair!

"Suppose an honest Baptist peasant should stand up and say to such a man, 'Sir, I have understood that Jesus lived and died in the east; that four of his disciples wrote his history in the Greek language; that his apostles preached in Greek to the inhabitants of Greece, and that the Greeks heard, believed and were baptized; every nation understands its own language best, and no doubt the Greeks understand Greek better than we do; now I have been informed, set me right if I be wrong, that from the first preaching of the apostles to this day, the Greeks have always understood, that to baptize was to dip; and, so far are they from thinking that to baptize is to pour or to sprinkle, I have been told they baptize by dipping three times. I do not understand Greek, but I think the Greeks themselves do. If, therefore, I were not to dip for other reasons; and if I

were obliged to determine my practice, by the sense of the single word baptism; and if I were driven to the necessity of trusting somebody, my reason would command me to take that sense from the natives of Greece, rather than from you a foreigner.' That this honest man would suppose a true fact is beyond all contradiction. -- In determining the precise meaning of a Greek word, used to signify a Greek ceremony, what possible chance hath a session of lexicographers against whole empires of native Greeks? Let the illiterate then enjoy themselves, and recollect when they baptize by dipping, they understand Greek exactly as the Greeks themselves understand it.

"Greatly as the Greeks were divided in speculative opinions, and numerous as the congregations were, which dissented from the church, it is remarkable, and may serve to confirm the meaning of the word baptize, that there is not the shadow of a dispute, in all their history, in favor of sprinkling. Because they were Greeks, they all thought that to baptize was to baptize, that is, to dip was to dip. They all baptized, and rebaptized; the established church, as was observed before, by order of council, for speculative reasons, and the dissenters for moral reasons."

["Since my arrival in this country, I was once in the company of a gentleman, whose vernacular tongue was the Greek. One of the company asked him the meaning of the word baptizo, he said it meant baptizo, what else could it mean? After asking more particularly, he signified, that it meant immersion." Dr. Staughton's account of the India Mission, p. 209.]

Nothing of the kind staggers the charity of the Baptists so much, as for a learned man, with all these historical evidences before his eyes, to tell his hearers, and publish to the world, that nothing definite can be determined respecting the meaning of the Greek word baptizo. And many are tempted to think that they do but half believe their own assertions, but that they make them merely to gain time, or to bewilder the minds of inquirers. "If, (says Robinson) there be a word in the New Testament, of a determinate meaning, it is the word baptism. Yet by a course of sophistry, it shall be first made synonymous with washing, and then washing shall be proved synonymous with sprinkling, and then sprinkling shall be called baptism. Thus the book, intended to instruct, shall be taught to perplex; the book in the world the most determinate shall be rendered the most vague; the book, the credit of which is absolutely ruined if it admit of double meanings, shall of all others be rendered the most mysterious book in the world, saying every thing, and of course narrating and proving nothing."

MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES NEARLY OR REMOTELY CONNECTED WITH BAPTISM.

Baptism is one of the most curious and complicated subjects of ecclesiastical history. Among men who stepped off the ground of scripture, and laid another foundation, it was variable as the wind, and in every province practiced for a different reason. At Alexandria, inserted into rules of academical education; at Jerusalem, administered to promiscuous catechumens; in the deserts of Egypt, united to monastical tuition; in Cappadocia, applied as an amulet to entitle the dying to heaven; at Constantinople, accommodated to the intrigues of the court; in all places, given to children extraordinarily inspired and in the end it was employed by an African monk, to wash away original sin.

According to Cardinal Bellarmine, the Roman Catholics have no less than two and twenty

ceremonies at baptism. Twelve are preparatory to it, five are at the administration of it, and the remaining are after it. Others, it is said, make many more. These twenty-two are all stated in their order by Mr. Robinson, but we have not room to do it here. The principal ones, however, are the Scrutiny, Exsufflation, by which devils are expelled, Insufflation, by which the Spirit of God is communicated, Consecration of the water, the Chrismal Unction, the Lighted Taper, and the Milk and Honey. [Everything pertaining to baptism was marked with pomp and extravagance, and the preparations for a christening day, among the nobility, were as great as they are now for a public dinner in a populous town. The following is a bill of fare of a dinner at Tynningham, the house of the Right Hon. the Earl of Haddington, on Thursday the 21st of August 1679, when his Lordship's son was baptized: Food Amount Fresh beef 6 pieces Mutton 16 do. Veal 4 dozen Legs of Venison 3 Geese 6 Pigs 4 Old Turkeys 2 Young do 8 Salmon 4 Tongues and Udders 12 Ducks 14 Roasted fowls 6 Boiled fowls 9 Chickens roasted 30 do. stewed 12 do. frickaseed 8 do. in pottage 10 Lamb 2 sides Wild Fowl 22 Pigeons baked, roasted, and stewed 182 Hares roasted 10 do. frickaseed 6 Hams 3 A puncheon of Claret, etc. No one will think it strange, after reading this account, that Dr. Wall accused many in this day, of regarding nothing at a christening but the dress, and the eating and drinking. In Venice, the meanest plebeian hath at least three god-fathers, the wealthy have twenty, and sometimes a hundred.]

Many of these ceremonies, which now appear altogether absurd and unmeaning, may be traced to a rational origin. We will mention only two, the lighted taper, and the milk and honey. What use is a lighted taper to an infant eight days old? Yet President Brisson hath proved by undeniable evidence, from ancient and allowed authorities, that in the middle ages, when baptism was administered by dipping only at Easter and Whitsuntide, the number of catechumens being very great, the administrators began to baptize in the night, or at least long before break of day, and so many flambeaus were lighted up for public convenience, that the darkness was turned into day. Could any thing be more natural than for some of the attendants to give a taper to a person coming up out of the water, or to walk before him and light him? It served at once to distinguish him in the crowd for freedom of passage, and to light him from the baptistery to the dressing room.

After these baptized persons had retired from the baptistery to the dressing room, it was very common to refresh themselves with milk and honey. Many other of these ceremonies may be explained in a similar manner, but some originated in the capricious fancies of superstitious people, and others go to show the invisible and salutary benefits of the baptismal rite, which Catholics have magnified to a most extravagant degree. What can be more shocking and irrational, than to suppose that in a world inhabited by eight or nine hundred millions of rational beings, the eternal destiny of any should depend on the precarious application of a few drops of water to their faces, soon after they were born? Yet thousands and millions have professed to believe this monstrous doctrine, and if an ill-fated infant was likely to expire, before water could be obtained, the priest or midwife would baptize it with wine. [Some in Upper Saxony, a little before the Reformation, practiced baptism upon sickly new-born infants With only using the baptismal form of words, without the application of water in any form whatever. There is an account of a Jew, who suddenly turned christian where there was no water, and at the point of death, was baptized with sand. Some of the Irish, in the twelfth century, baptized their children by plunging them into milk, and were superstitious enough to imagine, that every part so plunged became invulnerable. Robinson; Baldwin. How long must the Baptists be accused of holding,

that baptism is a saving ordinance and essential to salvation, when they expressly and uniformly declare, that none but christians are entitled to it, and that it is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but is the answer of a good conscience towards God?]

We will not accuse the Protestants of holding an opinion so shockingly absurd, but still, all Pedo-baptists, however evangelical, do attach to the baptism of a child, certain invisible benefits, which, as may well be supposed, no person yet could ever discover; and some, even of the Independents, have accused the hard-hearted Baptists of holding "an infant damning doctrine -- and of maintaining with an audacious cruelty, a principle, which evidently excluded dear infants from the kingdom of God -- and would send them by swarms into hell -- and strike darts of anguish into the hearts of both parents and children." [Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 476.]

The liturgy of the Church of England defines baptism to be regeneration, and the funeral service is refused to such infants as die unbaptized. [The following anecdote is related by Dr. Baldwin, in his Letters to Rev. Samuel Worcester, in a note, p. 183: "A few years since, I was called to attend the funeral of an infant in this town, in a family, which, I was informed, belonged to the Episcopal church. I asked where the Rev. Dr. was? and was answered he was out of town. Where is the Rev. Mr.? It was said, he was engaged. At length the gentleman of the house told me plainly, "The child was not baptized !" To this I replied, that I had the happiness to believe the child was gone equally as safe, as though it had been baptized."] The meaning of the term Infant has been a matter of much dispute, in baptismal controversies. Pedo-baptist writers have generally gone upon the supposition, that it always means a babe. But Mr. Robinson has produced numerous and undeniable proofs, that in ancient ecclesiastical history, the words pais, brephos, brephullion, puer, puerulus, infans, infantulus, and so on, were used indiscriminately for minors. Out of the multitude of examples, which that ingenious author has produced, I shall select the following:

"THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF ADALD, A LITTLE INFANT OF LUCCA.

"In the name of God -- in the twenty-first year of the reign of our Lord Charles, by the grace of God, king of the Franks and Lombards -- I, Adald, the little infant son of Waltper, being sick and in danger of death, considering in myself the mercy of Almighty God, for the redemption of my soul, and according to a statute of king Liutprand, of holy memory, offer to God, and to the church of blessed St. Martin -- my house -- out housesgardens -- lands -- vineyards -- olive yards -- woodsunderwoods -- meadows -- pastures, cultivated and uncultivated -- and all my effects, moveable and immovable -- and also my house at and also all other rights, whatsoever and wheresoever -- I offer as aforesaid, and confirm by this deed, which Ghislebert wrote at my request. Done at Lucca, in the year of Christ, seven hundred and ninety four."

This Will was witnessed by five infants, viz. Gumpert, Asprand, Pascal, Ghisprand, Erminari, four of whom were then presbyters. [[It was very customary, at this time, to introduce boys into holy orders for purpose of securing them a future living, and of laying an early foundation for promotion.] The truth of the case, says Mr. Robinson, is, circumstances must determine the ages of those, who were anciently called infants. The various words, translated infant, taken singly, crumble away in the hands of an investigator: they may signify a new-born babe, or a little boy of seven, of a great boy of fourteen years, or a young man turned of twenty; and in support of

this proposition, he has produced evidences in abundance from manuscripts, books, inscriptions, and laws.]

In the year three hundred and seventy-four, the church of Milan assembled to elect a bishop instead of Auxentius, lately deceased. They were divided into two violent parties, the one Arian, the other Trinitarian. Disputes ran so high that the city was in an uproar, and Ambrose the Governor, who was only a catechumen, and therefore had no vote, went thither to keep the peace. No sooner had he, by a conciliatory address, quieted the tumult, than to his great surprise, the whole assembly shouted, "Let Ambrose be bishop! Let Ambrose be bishop!" and he soon found himself unanimously elected. And the first person who exclaimed, "Let Ambrose be bishop!" was an infant, that is, a church member who was under age.

Origen is quoted to prove infant baptism; but Origen's infants were capable of repentance and martyrdom; and infants are said to have nominated kings, erected churches, composed hymns, and so on. [Robinson's History of Baptism, p. 157.]

The passage in Acts, "the promise is unto you and your children," has been much disputed. On this passage, many Pedo-baptists build half their superstructure. But it is evident the term children there is applied to posterity, without any regard to their age. We read of the children of Israel -- the children of Benjamin -- the children of promise -- the children of God -- the children of light -- and so on. Infant baptism may as well be proved from either of these passages, as from the one in Acts.

A zealous Pedo-baptist lately asserted, that he could prove infant baptism from this passage, "Ephraim is a cake unturned." And cardinal Bellarmine contended that he could prove the pope's supremacy from the first chapter of Genesis. And truly one may be done as easily as the other.

Dr. Wall observes that all national churches practice infant baptism. "Very true, (says Mr. Robinson) infant baptism, as it was intended, created national churches, and gives them continuance, as it gave them being. Let what will be said in praise of such churches, it can never be affirmed that they were either formed or continued by the free consent of their members. It was for this reason the learned Dr. Gill called infant baptism the main ground and pillar of popery, and a great number of Baptists are of the same opinion. Time only can discover what the fate of this singular ceremony will be. If a judgment of the future may be formed by the past, infant baptism, like infant monachism, will fall into total disuse, and for the same reasons. It was formerly a practice, both in France and England, but most in England, to make monks and nuns of infants of seven, five, two, and even one year old; but this is now every where disused."

"Baptism (says this same writer--Dr. Robinson--in another place) arose pure in the east: it rolled westward, diminished in luster, often beclouded with mists, and sometimes under a total eclipse; at length it escaped the eye, and was lost among attenuated particles, shades, non-entities, and monsters; then it took a contrary direction, and probably in time it will emerge from every depression, and shine in its original simplicity and excellence."

PROSELYTE BAPTISM demands a few words of attention. Many Pedo-baptist writers have depended much upon it to help them to evidence, which the Bible does not furnish; and Dr. Wall

finds his main argument in favor of infant baptism on the practice. But after all that has been said about proselyte baptism, it remains a very doubtful affair, and Pedo-baptist writers are much divided among themselves respecting it. Dr. John Owen calls the opinion, that christian baptism came from the Jews, an opinion destitute of all probability.

That the Jews had frequent ablutions or washings, no one ever denied, but the washing of proselytes, which is improperly called baptism, is not found in the law of Moses, nor in the writings of Philo, or Josephus, but was evidently introduced after the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. "It is remarkable (says Robinson) of this controversy, that they, who most earnestly take the affirmative, are of all men the least interested; for could a christian rite be taken off the ground of immediate divine appointment, and placed on that of human traditions, christianity would lose much of its glory; least of all are they interested in it, who intend to establish a law to sprinkle the infants of christians, upon proving, that the Jews had a custom of dipping men and women when they renounced Paganism. In this hopeless affair, could the fact be demonstrated, no advance would be made in the argument; for it would be easy to prove, that if it were by tradition, Jewish traditions neither have, nor ought to have, any force with christians: and that if it were even an institute of Moses, the ceremonies of Moses were abolished in form by an authority, which no christian will oppose."

I have now gone through with narrating all the incidents, which the limits of this sketch will permit me to insert, and shall recapitulate the whole in the words of the author I have so often named. Protestants have discovered great genius in inventing arguments for the support of infant baptism, and to some Baptists they seem to reason in this manner: It is written, God made a covenant with Abraham and his family: therefore, though it is not written, we ought to believe he makes a covenant with every christian and his family. God settled on Abraham and his family a large landed estate: therefore, he gives every christian and his family the benefits of the christian religion. God commanded Abraham and his family to circumcise their children: therefore, all professors of christianity ought, without a command, not to circumcise but to baptize their children. Jesus said, "suffer little children to come unto me:" therefore, infants who cannot come ought to be carried, not to Jesus, but to a minister, not to be healed, but to be baptized. Paul advised married believers at Corinth not to divorce their unbelieving yoke-fellows, lest they should stain the reputation of their children, with the scandal of illegitimacy: therefore, children, legitimate and illegitimate, ought to be baptized. A man of thirty years of age says he believes the gospel: therefore, his neighbor's infant of eight days ought to be baptized, as if he believed the gospel. And finally, the scripture does not mention infant baptism; but it is, notwithstanding, full of proof that infants were and ought to be baptized.

Really, the Baptists ought to be forgiven for not having a taste for this kind of logic; yea, they ought to be applauded for preferring argument before sophistry.

St. Austin and his company were the first who attacked believer's baptism at law; but Zuinglius and Calvin are said to be the first, who invented the method of proving infant baptism from Abraham's covenant. The dispute between Baptists and Pedo-baptists has long been maintained, and still it remains unsettled. Every thing which slander could utter has been cast upon the Baptists, and every cruelty, which malicious ingenuity could devise, has been practiced against them. Thousands of them have been slain, and thousands more have been dispersed into obscure

corners and caves of the earth. But still they remain, and are rapidly advancing in numbers and strength. As a body, like others, they have been much divided on many other points, but in the article of baptism they have been uniform and unshakingly fixed. They have never persecuted, although they have had it in their power to do so. **BUT THEY HAVE REASONED AND REMONSTRATED, AND AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM THEY HAVE URGED THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIONS:**

First. It is not in our Lord's commission; and what is not in a commission, must, of necessity, be out of it.

Second. It is no where found in the Bible; and, therefore, it cannot be a Bible institution.

Third. They deny that infants derive any benefit from baptism, and thousands of them have had the opportunity of knowing; but on the contrary affirm, that a great injury is done them by it, because they grow up in a prejudice, that they are christians, and, therefore, never examine what christianity is.

Fourth. Every person ought to be left free to choose his own religion; but infant baptism imposes a religion upon its subjects, before they know it, and they often have much trouble to get rid of it, when they become capable of refusing the evil and choosing the good.

For these and many other reasons, the Baptists without the least misgiving, reject infant baptism; and if saint Austin, and a thousand other saints beside, have said that it was an apostolical tradition, it does not in the least affect their belief, so long as they find that saint Luke, saint Paul, and saint Peter, have no where mentioned it, but have laid down principles, which go entirely to exclude it. They do not wonder that many saints have asserted what none ever proved, but they wonder that some of them have not interpolated scripture to serve their hypothesis.

The Baptists are accused by their opponents of having an assurance peculiar to themselves. This accusation they are not unwilling to admit. Their peculiar assurance arises from the clear and peculiar evidence with which their sentiments are supported. This assurance has been called presumption, and those who persisted in it, in former days, were denounced obstinate heretics, and doomed to suffer fire and sword in this world, and eternal perdition in the world to come. But a gracious Providence has now delivered us from the force of these terrible arguments.

While Pedo-baptists send inquirers to their pamphlets and doctors, the Baptists send them to the Bible, and they cannot but exult that their sentiments are there so plainly expressed. And what emboldens them, and disgusts their opponents is, that every man, woman, and child has the leading passages by heart, on which their sentiments are founded, and can, at once, produce arguments, which the greatest doctors cannot answer without much time, nor then without much sophistry.

It is a very unlucky circumstance, that infant baptism is no where mentioned in the Bible, and I pity the person, who, with a tender conscience, sets out, to find it there; for, sure I am, he will have a hard and fruitless task, and if he finally succeeds, it must be by subverting his own understanding.

The study of infant baptism is the most perplexing study in the world, as many, who are now Baptists, know by experience. And the reason is, it perverts the order of scripture. But in the study of believer's baptism every thing is plain and easy.

Infant baptism is supported by a long string of texts from the Old Testament and New, none of which mention the thing, and none of which refer to such a practice, any more than Hagar's going out into the wilderness of Beersheba, leading her sulky son Ishmael, and carrying with her a loaf of bread and a bottle of water. In this passage we find a child and water, and these are not found in many of the passages brought to support infant baptism.

As to all the shocking consequences which follow from Baptist principles, we have only to say, they are drawn by Pede-baptists, and not by us. And since three-fourths of the terraqueous globe is covered with water, we never expect to find any difficulty in procuring a full supply of this element.

The substance of this sketch has been selected from Robinson's incomparable history of baptism, to which I have often referred; and many sentiments and sentences, for which no formal credit has been given, have been taken from that laborious and invaluable work. There are but few copies of it in this country. It is a quarto volume of between six and seven hundred pages, with very copious Latin notes. This work will bear to be abridged; and by omitting the notes and some other articles, it might be reduced to an octavo volume of four or five hundred pages, without leaving out any of the important matter which relates to baptism. In making out the above sketch, which has been selected from every part of it, I have been obliged to study it with considerable attention, and have conceived the design of undertaking to abridge it, after I have had a little respite from my present labor. [Many articles which are largely and learnedly discussed by Mr. Robinson, have not been referred to in the preceding sketch; as baptism connected with Monachism - with social obligations - with Human Creeds - with Judaism - with Chivalry - with Sacerdotal Habits - and with Witchcraft; The baptism of Bells, Tropical Baptism, the Christening of Fleets, and so on.]