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ARTICLE I.

THE BENEFITS OF INFANT BAPTISM.

It is not our purpose, in this article, to show the warrant which the Church has for the practice of infant baptism; either by reproducing the arguments and proofs which her talent and learning have so abundantly furnished, or by the presumptuous attempt to bring forward new arguments. We propose the humbler but important task of considering the advantages of this practice, of answering the utilitarian question so often asked, *cui bono?*—asked with triumph and complacency by the polemic, and yet with honest doubt by some who seek to know the truth. We wish to look at the subject on its practical side. Let us premise, however, that the validity and obligation of this practice do not by any means turn upon the question of its advantages. No matter how many benefits we might show to arise from it, unless we believed that we have divine authority for it, we would not dare to continue it. We have no right to

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originate or to perpetuate religious ordinances even for the good they may do, however great. God has prescribed these in his inspired word, and it is presumptuous for us either to add to, or take away from their divinely appointed nature, number, form, or application. So, on the other hand, if we were unable to see any advantage arising from the application of baptism to the infants of believers, we would feel ourselves and would be bound by the word of God to continue it. As we have no right to make beneficial results a warrant, so we have no right to demand them as a condition for our observance of any law or institution of Heaven. Still, as the minds of many are biassed against infant baptism by their failure to see and appreciate its benefits; and as many, even in pædo-baptist churches, have very inadequate views of this point, which influence both their convictions and their conduct, there may be logical as well as practical worth in this discussion. A correct estimate of these benefits, and such a participation in them as is fully within the reach of the Church, would remove the prejudices which are so common, and which prevent many from appreciating the scriptural warrant for this practice.

Let us, in the outset, make two disclaimers, that we may run no risk of being misunderstood. First, we ascribe to this ordinance no necessary saving efficacy; either as securing pardon and eternal life without that change of heart which produces faith in Jesus Christ and repentance for sin, by what is called *sacramental grace*; or as securing that change of heart by what is called *baptismal regeneration*. We believe that many who have been lawfully baptized, both as adults and infants, may have been lost. As our Confession teaches, "Grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated." Secondly, we do not claim that parents who are unfaithful have any right to expect any benefit whatever, either as above described or any other that is truly spiritual. Baptism even to the children of such parents may involve blessings, but they do not come in the parental line. The general position on which this disclaimer rests is true with respect to all

the means of grace, all the ordinances and institutions of religion, and all the promises of God's word. All these imply that those who avail themselves of them do so in good faith, with sincerity and honesty, with faith in God, and with a full purpose to comply with the conditions annexed. To expect benefit in any other way from any observance, either human or divine, is both preposterous and presumptuous.

But we have to guard not only against the extreme of superstition and presumption, but also against the opposite extreme of placing too low an estimate upon the practical value of this ordinance of God. And doubtless the second extreme is a reaction against the first. Protestants are in danger of despising the sacraments of Christ, by placing them upon a level with human ceremonies as depending for their wholesome influence wholly upon their moral power; by ignoring that feature of them which consists in *sealing* the benefits of which they are visible signs; by overlooking the fact that they are attached to a divine *covenant*, in which God has distinctly and positively promised spiritual blessings to all who truly enter into covenant with him in the observance of these sacraments; and thus depriving them of all real efficacy. This is to make void the ordinance of God. The sacraments have indeed no intrinsic power to save, renew, or sanctify. Their power is all of God. Nevertheless, power does attach to them, because God does employ them as channels and means of saving grace, and does invite us to approach and seek him through them, and to expect in their due observance blessings which, ordinarily, he does not confer otherwise. Why shall we say that baptism has no efficacy whatever, because its benefits are not tied to the ordinance, and both invariably and exclusively associated with it; because they are not therefore in the hands of the administrator? Is there but one kind of efficacy, and but one method and condition of its operation? Baptism seals a divine covenant promising certain spiritual blessings; and when duly observed, those blessings, we contend, will be conferred. If this be not so, then we are at sea as to the meaning and value of a covenant, and do not understand the faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God.

We are now prepared to state what are the real benefits connected with the administration of Christian baptism to the infants of believers.

The first, most important, and that which virtually includes every other, is that in the due observance of this practice, such parents secure the fulfilment of God's promise in the salvation of their children. This may seem, thus stated, a startling proposition, and may need explanation. Our preliminary remarks, however, show that we do not mean that God will save such children, or any of them, without those spiritual qualifications which his word elsewhere demands, whether we suppose them to die in infancy or in maturity. If he saves at all, 'it is through Christ's atoning blood and the Spirit's renewal of the heart. The promise to save is the promise to regenerate, pardon, and sanctify. But further, we do not say that God will save, or that he promises to save all baptized children, even if their parents are sincere Christians, and do some or even many things to carry out their covenant engagements. This is what we mean: that those parents who heartily and truly dedicate their children to God in baptism, faithfully comply with the covenant in their training, and finally believe God's promise therein, do secure thereby the salvation of their souls. This is only a practical form of the doctrine of our Confession on this subject: "The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, *by the right use of this ordinance*, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and *conferred* by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time." Chap. xxviii. sec. 6. Without embarrassing this discussion by introducing the subject of election, we simply remark that we regard "the right use of this ordinance" by parents as consisting in that faith and fidelity of which we have just spoken; and that as God executes "the counsel of his own will" by the use of appropriate means, he saves the baptized children of his people through that "right use of this ordinance." Those parents who dedicate their offspring to God truly, in humble reliance on his covenant, and

prove that sincerity and faith by due care and diligence in their training, secure not merely the probability, but the certainty of the salvation of their children, "in God's appointed time." Certainty is the distinguishing attribute and advantage of a covenant. God enters into such a compact in order to assure his people that, in the due observance of the conditions upon their part, they may confidently expect the promised blessings.

We are aware that this explanation narrows down the application of our position, since such faith and fidelity are rare. But they have existed and do now exist in the Church of God. And we firmly believe they have secured, and will secure, in every case, the salvation of those children on whose behalf they are exercised. If we are faithful to the covenant, we may feel sure God will be. This alone constitutes the ground of absolute certainty. And yet our position does not utterly discourage those who exhibit only a less degree of this faith and fidelity. According to our faith, so will it be unto us. The more firmly a parent is enabled to believe God's promise, and the more earnest, constant, spiritual, and prayerful he is in his teachings, discipline, example, and general influence, the greater certainty will he attain of securing the covenanted blessing.

Will any complain that this advantage is worthless or insufficient, because thus limited and conditioned? If so, then they are demanding that God shall bestow the promised blessings of a mutual compact, while they refuse or fail to meet the obligations which that compact imposes upon them. If there are no such conditions, then God must grant his saving grace to the offspring of worldly, prayerless, unfaithful parents, and even of hypocrites, simply because they have been baptized. We might just as well expect him to bestow the blessings of the covenant without baptism at all, and thus adopt universalism at once. The observance of such conditions is required by the best interests of parents themselves, as well as by the universal law of the divine administration.

Again, it may be objected, that this view shows that there are no advantages peculiar to baptized children, since, after all, it makes their salvation turn upon the faithfulness of their parents.

We have two things to say in reply. First, the same objection, if it has force, applies equally to the use of all the sacraments, ordinances, and means of grace. Of what use is it to hear the gospel, if you do not believe and obey it? Of what use is prayer, if not accompanied with faith, repentance, and a good life? Of what use is the Sabbath, if it be not kept holy? Of what use is the Lord's Supper, if you do not therein discern, by faith, the Lord's body, sincerely remember him, and truly dedicate yourself to him? Yea, of what use is baptism to an adult, if he have not faith and a new heart, and be not true to his baptismal engagements? Who, then, shall say that since your formal dedication of your child to God in holy baptism, can do him no good in your failure to act in accordance with that solemn covenant transaction, therefore this practice has no benefit whatever attending it, and may be neglected? Secondly, this objection overlooks all the advantages pertaining to God's covenant, in compliance with which this parental faithfulness is required, and by which the success of that faithfulness is secured. All know that the utmost parents can do has no efficacy in itself. The efficacy is of God alone. What assurance have we, however, that God will ever exert his renewing power? Is it not his promise? But the particular promise to save the seed of his people is contained in his covenant, of which baptism is the seal. "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." This was the Abrahamic covenant, of which circumcision was the certifying seal, which was administered to infants eight days old, and yet promised spiritual blessings. It was to this covenant Peter evidently referred on the day of Pentecost when he said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children." As God required the Jew to bring up his circumcised children in the way of truth and godliness as the condition of becoming "their God," so does he require the Christian parent to bring up his baptized children in the nurture

and admonition of the Lord as the condition of his becoming their Saviour. There must be care and faithful effort. But they must be exercised in faith—faith in God's covenant—a faith which recognises our unworthiness of the blessing and the inefficacy of our efforts to secure it, and which relies on the gracious promise of God. Now, we contend that since this promise is contained in the covenant of which baptism is the appointed seal, the true and proper expression of our faith in that promise consists in the dedication of our children to God in the ordinance of baptism. We contend that doing thus, we lay claim, in the most legitimate and emphatic manner, to the fulfilment of that covenant. We do not, indeed, create an obligation on God's part to convert our children; but by thus entering into covenant with him, affixing to our children his appointed covenant seal, we do obtain a hold upon him not otherwise obtained. We urge a plea strong as his word, his throne, his immutable faithfulness. And we gain an argument in prayer, and a ground of hope as well as a stimulus to effort on behalf of our dedicated offspring. No Christian can fail to appreciate this advantage. When we tell you, therefore, that in offering your children to God in baptism, you enter into a covenant with him, in which he promises to bless your Christian efforts, weak and worthless in themselves, to the salvation of your children, we tell you of a benefit connected with this practice worth more than ten thousand worlds. We admit that many Christian parents are faithful in training their children, who yet do not have them baptized, and that such are often blessed in the conversion of their children. And yet no one can show that such efforts have not an assurance of success immeasurably greater, when connected with the application of the covenant seal. This is God's chosen way of honoring himself, and in both dispensations he has sought to lead his people into it. He would have us use all means, but not trust in them. He would teach us that all our blessings are of grace, and accordingly, as Paul teaches, both in Romans and Galatians, makes them the subjects of promise or covenant. He prefers, therefore, that our faith rest on his covenant rather than upon his mercy alone. The Church has

lost just in proportion as it has disregarded the doctrine of the covenants which underlie the whole plan of salvation and all God's relations to his people.

But to resume. We seem to have conceded an equal degree of faithfulness in the training of children in those who neglect and in those who observe the practice of infant baptism. But we admit this, not as a general, but only as an exceptional fact. Hence we notice as a second or rather secondary and subsidiary benefit of this practice, that it has a powerful influence in securing the required faithfulness by the parent. The very nature of baptism, and all that is involved in the act of having it administered to his children, must impress him with the importance and sacredness of his relations to them. We speak of the father as the head of the family and the leader in this act, but of course it is understood that the mother is associated with him in every part of this proceeding. Consider what it includes and signifies. God has intrusted these children to him as his own subjects, as immortal beings, as members of his visible Church, as destined for solemn responsibilities, and as candidates for immortality. The parent now recognises this trust and acknowledges that his children belong to God; he gives them up to him; solemnly dedicates them to him; and promises to bring them up for his service and glory. How fearfully solemn his position; how tremendous his responsibilities! He is now called on to act, not merely as a parent having a natural interest in his offspring, and led by parental affection to seek their highest good, but as God's agent in their training, and as their spiritual representative in their relations to God. He stands between these two parties, and acts for both in this important transaction. In an inferior, but still a significant sense, he is their mediator. Let no one be shocked by this use of such a sacred term. But when we consider all that is involved in the position of the parent, and all the offices he has to perform, we cannot fail to see a most striking analogy between his relations and offices to his children and those of our great Redeemer to his people. We write it with reverence. We refer to it only as an analogy, with due regard to the immense difference in dignity, authority, and excellence.

We use the comparison because it illustrates the true position of the parent, and shows that he is to seek the same great and blessed ends with Christ himself, viz., the enlightenment, purification, and salvation of the soul.

Thus: Is he not the prophet of God in the midst of his household, to instruct them in all divine truth, to receive from God and deliver to them his inspired word, the law, the ordinances, the revealed purposes, the promises, and the doctrines which he has given, and by repetition, explanation, and exhortation, to seek to imbue their minds with these holy and saving influences?

Is he not a priest, first to stand before his children as God's representative, then to present them as an offering to Jehovah, not indeed as an atonement, but in recognition of God's covenant claim to them as the lambs of the Redeemer's fold, and then to intercede for them, before his domestic altar and in his closet, pleading continually for their salvation, especially while they are incapable of praying for themselves?

And is he not likewise a king in his household, invested by God with authority over his children to guide, to govern, to restrain, to chastise, and, in all respects, to regulate their conduct? Does he not also act as their defender against all enemies?

Who, then, can fully estimate the sacredness of this position and the importance of these offices? The mere thought ought to be enough to impress him most deeply with a sense of the awfulness of his functions as a Christian parent—functions which are the result not merely of the parental relation, or even of sanctified parental love, but of a covenant relation in which he has a conspicuous and responsible part. But when associated with the solemn administration of baptism to his children in his own name, in God's house, and by God's minister, by a public and formal ceremony, how much must this impression be enhanced! How must it arouse every feeling of his pious and parental heart, sanctify his natural affections, and turn the whole current of his domestic influence into a sacred channel! He must act now not simply as a parent, but as God's minister, and the divinely appointed priest to the church in his house, and guardian of the souls of his children. He is an under-shepherd to the lambs

which Jesus has intrusted to his hands and placed in the paternal bosom. It would be very strange if all this failed to exert a powerful influence in securing parental faithfulness. Facts, however, prove that it does not.

But further, the parent who presents his children for baptism takes upon himself solemn vows to discharge all these sacred functions to his now consecrated offspring, and to that God to whom he has thus formally surrendered them. He binds his own soul by an awful invocation of the divine name, and deliberate pledges of fidelity. Reckless and hard must that parent's heart be, if this does not deepen his impressions of responsibility; and false indeed must it be, if this fail to stimulate him to effort, to care, to diligence, and to prayerfulness in his great work! And every recurrence of this solemn scene in the sanctuary, though it be not the baptism of his own children, must revive and strengthen these impressions.

This leads us to notice a third advantage arising from this practice in connexion with its influence upon the Church and its officers. They, too, are parties in this covenant. These baptized children, born indeed in the Church, are now by this act formally recognised as within its pale. They are in the Church, not to enjoy all the privileges any more than to attempt all the duties belonging to adult membership, but to prepare for them. Their position is analogous to that of the minor in the State. They are entitled to the constant care, protection, instruction, training, and prayers of the Church, which becomes responsible for their spiritual welfare as far as that lies within its power. The injunction, "Feed my lambs," came from the same lips which uttered the command, "Feed my sheep," and was addressed to the same parties. If there be any difference, more care, exertion, prayer, and tender and solicitous affection, should be lavished upon the children than upon the adult members. Every possible means should be employed to train them for holy usefulness and final salvation. This, in fact, is the grand work of the Church. It should make wise and ample provision for these precious souls, not only by Sabbath-school instruction, which, though a most valuable auxiliary not to be dispensed

with, but faithfully sustained, has been made too generally a substitute for both parental and ecclesiastical instruction; but also by pastoral visitation, instruction, prayer, and watchfulness, in which the eldership ought fully and diligently to co-operate; by mild and gentle but faithful admonition; by constantly reminding these minor members of their real connexion with the Church, and the consequent obligations resting on them even now, and the higher obligations and privileges to which they are destined, and for which they should be preparing.

These duties have, indeed, a partial basis in the general obligation to do good to all within its reach. But they have a broader basis and a stronger claim in the covenant-relation recognised by baptism—a rite which seals their membership in God's house, and constitutes their visible and admitted title to all the Church can do for them in this relation. This truth should come with fresh power upon the conscience of the Church every time an infant receives the covenant seal. We do not say that the Church performs these duties faithfully. We admit great delinquency, neglect, and sin. But it is because in every thing which man touches, there is so much difference between duty and performance; between theory and practice; between inculcated and professed truth and truth lodged in deep conviction and issuing in right action. Still, we affirm that wherever in the Church, the doctrine and practice of infant baptism in its true import are maintained, there is a deeper sense of obligation to the children of the Church, and more earnest and faithful effort to train them for God and heaven. Others, indeed, engage in such efforts; but necessarily with lower views of this great duty, with less encouragement, and, we believe, generally with less success. Much of their actual interest, we have no doubt, is due to the collateral influence of pædo-baptist churches. We say this in no spirit of arrogance. We boast not of triumphs in controversy in the way of proselyting others to our denominational practices. We claim a nobler and far more valuable influence in the inculcation of higher views of the position of children in the kingdom of God, its importance, its sacredness, its responsibility. We believe that just in proportion as the

views which we advocate have obtained in any particular locality. so much the more attention has been given to the religious training of children, and so much the deeper impressions of parental obligation have prevailed, even amongst those who reject infant baptism. As an illustration of this, we have known one instance, at least, in which a Baptist minister of high standing, habitually dedicated his children to God, not indeed by baptism, but in a public and formal manner in God's house. The heart of the truly Christian parent is bound to respond to the great truths which underlie this practice. It is that response which we seek, both in our own and in other communions, by all we are now saying.

We are persuaded that it is not the theoretical and controversial, but the spiritual and practical view of this subject which makes the truest and best impression. Fidelity on the part of the Church to her baptized children would end all dispute, and eventually bring the whole Christian world to the adoption of this practice. Even as it is, the benefit of infant baptism is amply shown by facts. It has exerted a powerful influence. It has elevated the views, touched the consciences, strengthened the faith, encouraged the hopes, and enlarged the efforts of the Church on behalf of the young. But whatever may be done outside of our own Church by the circulation of the truth on this subject, we feel sure that it would do more than any other one thing to save our own children, now in so much peril, and to extend the borders of our Zion. We need more instruction as a Church in regard to the practical aspects of this subject, and greater efforts should be made by our ministers to arouse the hearts of our people until they shall feel and endeavor to discharge this paramount duty, from the neglect of which we are now suffering sadly.

We cannot close even this partial enumeration of the benefits of infant baptism without referring to its direct influence upon the baptized child himself. This of course is not felt at the time of administration. We freely admit that this ordinance cannot exert any spiritual influence upon the ignorant and unconscious babe. He can be benefited then only through the faith and

prayers of the parent; just as the child of Jewish parents, circumcised at only eight days of age, when presented in true faith. Such faith always secures God's blessing. But this whole discussion shows that the benefits of this practice do not depend upon the knowledge or feelings of the child at the time of its administration, nor are they to be expected in the absence of all faithfulness on the part of the parent. The influence to which we now refer is that which is felt when the child arrives at years of discretion, under the teachings of the Church and of his parents. If allowed to grow up in spiritual ignorance, without religious culture, without restraint, and under the impression that he is an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, of course we can expect no good results from his mere baptism. But let both the Church and the parents teach him his true position, remind him of the obligations of his baptism, which bind him as well as them, assure him that he has been solemnly set apart from worldly and sinful ends for God's holy service, that he really belongs to God's Church, and can never annul the obligations which have been assumed for him; let them instruct him faithfully in divine things, teach him the truths signified and the vows implied by his baptism, endeavor by earnest efforts to persuade him to assume these vows, seek to restrain him from vice and evil companionship, and by all means, and constantly, cling to him as a member of Christ's kingdom; let this course be pursued, and we venture the assertion that no one will then have occasion to doubt the utility, much less to affirm the evil tendency of this practice. The fact must be admitted that both the Church and parents are greatly at fault as to all this. The children of Zion are too often treated as strangers. Their sacred relation is ignored. Their birth-right is denied them. Many are careful to affix the seal, but as careless to secure the inheritance for their consecrated children. It is time the Church were more practical in her views of this subject, and had ceased to end her efforts with the mere ceremony of baptism, or with mere early training. We must treat this minor membership more as a reality. This will silence cavils. This will wipe off the stigma so often affixed to us, unjustly, it is true, but having some prac-

tical ground in our unfaithfulness. Above all, this will secure from a faithful God, for ourselves and our children, the priceless blessings of that covenant whose sacred seal we have had applied to us and to them.

ARTICLE II.

THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE AS A TRAINING OF
THE MIND.

The question, which, at the present day, most of all divides opinion among the friends of liberal education, is the relative amount of time and the scope which ought to be assigned, in our schools and colleges, to the study of the languages. In this country especially, where a readier hearing is given to every demand for what is practical, and men approve by preference what is promptly available for profit in life and learning, the advance of a more materialistic theory of education seems to threaten an ascendancy which is alarming to those who hold to the old and long undisputed belief, that the study of language, but especially of the so-called classic languages, provides the best and most varied forms of excitement and practice for the opening and strengthening mind. The present writer belongs to this class; and desires in the observations which follow, to offer a sincere, if inconsiderable, contribution to the defence of this discipline.

We propose to confine our view to one single aspect of the subject; for a general defence of the "humanities," did it seem otherwise more called for than it does, could hardly be embraced within our present limits, nor would it necessarily contain the argument which in our opinion should now be principally opposed to the most serious objections urged against the study of lan-