

of God. The same thing is still more clearly declared in John 1, 33: and I new him not; *but he that sent me to baptize with water &c.* These words put it beyond all doubt, that John's baptism was a rite enjoined by God himself, by which men might be prepared for Christ and disposed to receive him. A proper baptism before John is, therefore, out of the question. Had it not been something extraordinary, John would not have been named *the baptist (the dipper,)* which name no one received before or after him. Had it not been regarded as a special appointment of God, (which also Christ confirms in the place, where he asks the people, What went ye out for to see?) then such crowds would not have flocked to him, nor would the Pharisees particularly have come, who indeed had no doubt as to this command of God, but only doubted why John should make use of this special sign, since he would not acknowledge himself to be either Christ, or Elias, or *that* prophet whom they expected before the Messiah, and who, according to prophecy was to call the Jewish people, at the appearing of the Messiah, to a moral purification. The word (*to dip*) was already known, but not the thing which John signified by the act. If his baptism had not been commanded by God, Christ would not have submitted to it; had it been a ceremony, arbitrarily adopted by John, our Saviour would not have ratified it as the will of his heavenly father, for he says: I am come to do the will of my Father who is in heaven. As he observed the passover, because it was ordered of God; so he was baptized by John, because it was the will of his Father, and that in more respects than one.

2. *For whom is baptism instituted?* For adults, never for children; for the adults of all times, and not merely of those of the time then present. *Schleiermacher* (2 B. d. Dogmatik, p. 540) rightly observes: "baptism is

then perfect and right, when it is performed under the same condition, with the same spiritual antecedents and the same influence, as in the case of the first persons who were baptized out of religious communities, which were not christian." Accordingly infant-baptism must be out of the question, if the Christian church will remain true to the gospel. Neither the baptism of John nor that of Christ was intended to be administered to new born children. The children of Christians are formed, *by nature*, just the same as Jews and Heathens; the *formula concordia* says with truth: Christiani non nascuntur, sed fiunt.* They need the new birth, as much as Jews and Heathens; but as infants, they are not susceptible of it. Every one, even the child of Christians, is by descent simply a *natural man*. Many believe that baptism as a sign of the new birth is not necessary for the offspring of Christians, because they are supposed to have pure hearts from youth up; but that it merely serves to consecrate them to Christianity. Our children do not by nature possess pure hearts, as all families and schools prove. Infant baptism is also called the holy act of initiation, and is regarded by some as the beginning of a rational Christian education. It is supposed to indicate, what men ought to become. All such notions would certainly not have been broached, if men had adhered firmly to the Scriptures.

THE CORE OF THE GOSPEL

What a happy thing it is, that the gospel comes into so little compass? Often have I felt this when visiting the sick and the dying. When I have found the mind incapable of vigorous, expansive, or continuous thought, oh how thankful have I been that the gospel is so short and

* Men are not born Christians, but become such. — *Trans.*