

CLASSICS
OF THE
RADICAL
REFORMATION

The Great Article Book

*A Hutterite Defense of
Doctrine and Practice*



The Great Article Book

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Title page from the Zuckenhammer codex (see p. x)

The Great Article Book

A Hutterite Defense of Doctrine and Practice

By Peter Walpot

*Translated and edited by
Emmy Barth Maendel*

Plough

This is a preview. Get the entire book [here](#).

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Dedicated to the memory of Else von Hollander (1885–1932)
who spent the final years of her life preserving Hutterite manuscripts
for future generations.

Classics of the Radical Reformation

Classics of the Radical Reformation is an English-language series of Anabaptist and Free Church documents translated and annotated under the direction of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, which is the research agency of the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and published by Plough Publishing House.

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Introduction

The current text is known as the Hutterites' "Great Article Book" and has been attributed to Peter Walpot, the man who served as Hutterian bishop from 1565 until his death in 1578. Its actual title is "A Lovely, Delightful Booklet Concerning Some of the Main Articles of Our Faith" (*Ein schön lustig Büchlein etliche Hauptartikel unseres Glaubens betreffend*). It was published by Robert Friedmann in its entirety in 1967,¹ who said about it:

There is no doubt that the Hutterites considered this book (about 300 leaves in manuscript) of equal rank with Peter Riedemann's great *Rechtschaft unseres Glaubens* of 1545. It was one of their main doctrinal statements, used both within the community and also as a source when dealing with the outside "world" in order to demonstrate the biblical correctness of their particular teachings.²

Leonard Gross devotes four pages to this text in his *Golden Years of the Hutterites*:³

This book-length document has both beauty and depth. Its beauty does not consist in a balanced polished prose, but rather in its mood, mirroring a brotherhood which both affirmed itself, and was not afraid to accost critically the whole world. Written in simple biblical language, it bears witness that Christianity is a way of life where mind and action relate integrally and where both are colored by the message and acts of Jesus and fulfilled in the spirit of Jesus, who lives on in the community gathered in his name.⁴

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Hutterites enjoyed relative freedom, and their communities in Moravia flourished. Under Walpot's direction, they built up a scriptorium of sorts, where the letters and songs of their martyrs and defenses of their beliefs were copied. Missionaries were regularly sent out to other regions of German-speaking Europe. They

walked into danger, and several were imprisoned and even executed. In order to provide them with answers, should they be interrogated regarding their faith, Walpot wrote a defense and provided arguments on five topics: baptism, the Lord's Supper, communal living, government and nonviolence, and marriage. These arguments were copied into small books which missionaries carried with them.⁵ Known as the "Small Article Book," this missionary version is significantly shorter than our present text. It was incorporated into the Hutterian *Chronicle* after the year 1547 as "The Five Articles that are the reason for the great controversy between us and the world."⁶

The oldest extant copy of *Ein schön lustig Büchlein* is preserved as codex Rkp. zv. 391 in the Lyzealbibliothek in Bratislava (henceforth called the "Zuckenhammer codex" as Friedmann labeled it⁷). The date 1583 and the name "Hanns Zuckenhammer" appear on the title page (see image on frontispiece), and Matthias Rauert points out that the copy was made by the professional scribe Hauptrecht Zapff, who was also the copyist for the Hutterian *Chronicle*.⁸ Zapff's initials "HZ" and the year 1583 are written into the initial "J" of "Jesus called his disciples" at the beginning of the



Detail of illuminated J from the Zuckenhammer codex

section on nonviolence and government, as well as in the initial "V" at the beginning of the section on marriage.

Hans Zuckenhammer is first mentioned in the Hutterian *Chronicle* in 1579 when he and another brother were arrested and imprisoned for several months in Salzburg.⁹ He was appointed as minister in 1580 and ordained in 1585¹⁰ – evidently, Zapff copied the text for him. Sadly, in 1597 he was excluded for acting independently and retorting in anger and contempt when admonished; however, he accepted discipline and was reaccepted as a brother before his death the following year.¹¹

Hauptrecht Zapff was both appointed and ordained as minister in 1594¹² – an unusual step and an indication of his character. During the

persecutions of 1620, he was among those who migrated from Moravia to Sabatisch (in then Hungary).¹³ He died in 1630 at the age of eighty-four; the *Chronicle* says of him:

He was a zealous worker for the Lord, a member of the church for about seventy years, and for nearly thirty-seven years a servant of the Gospel. He was also the elders' secretary for more than thirty years.¹⁴

Authorship

Peter Walpot died in 1578, while the oldest extant codex is dated 1583. Rauert suggests that, rather than having been authored by Walpot, this book was compiled after his death by Hans Zuckenhammer and Hauptrecht Zapff. Friedmann notes that passages in the section on Baptism are taken from Balthasar Hubmaier,¹⁵ and Rauert points out numerous passages that can be traced to the influence of Pilgram Marpeck. I have traced passages to several other Anabaptists. It seems clear that this is not the work of a single author; the voice, tone, and audience are constantly shifting. I suggest that this “Delightful Book” was a collaborative effort: pertinent arguments on the topics at hand were collected from various sources. In the words of Matthias Rauert, it was “a kind of index file consisting of a collection of excerpted notes.”¹⁶

Hutterite scribes seem to have combed through the arguments of their own theologians, the letters and trial accounts of their martyrs, as well as the writings of other Anabaptists who were not of their denomination. The topics of baptism and the Lord's Supper, in particular, were disputed by Reformers of all stripes. There were no copyright laws, and it was evidently common practice to borrow other people's words, so it is no longer possible to identify the original author of a given idea. In addition, the Hutterites' desire for humility and *Gelassenheit* – to be crushed as the grapes and ground as the wheat used in the wine and bread of the Lord's Supper – meant that an individual was not to stand out, and many wrote anonymously. (The first printed edition of Peter Riedemann's *Rechenschaft* did not give his name.)

In this “Delightful Book,” the collection of arguments was arranged to follow the Bible, from Genesis through the Old Testament (including

apocryphal books), the Gospels, Letters, and Revelation. Then counter-arguments of “the world” were given, with the Hutterites’ answers. At least in some cases, the arguments and answers were taken from actual interrogations and defenses of Hutterite prisoners. The section of counter-arguments is clearly delineated; a second set of numbers (omitted here) is added to the points, beginning again with (1), in addition to the numbers running consecutively from the beginning of the section. Toward the end of each main section are excerpts from early church writings supporting the Anabaptist position.

I searched through both published and manuscript sources for ideas or actual sentences taken from another writer that were incorporated into the “Delightful Book.” Where I was able to identify phrases, paragraphs, or arguments to the writings of other Anabaptists, I set such passages off in {braces} with a note. <Angle brackets> are used in a few places where two notes are given. All other editorial additions and clarifications appear in [square brackets.] I also compared the text of this “Great Article Book” with the “Small Article Book” as published in the Hutterian *Chronicle*. (Although Friedmann assumes that the “Small Article Book” was excerpted from the larger work, it seems more likely that the “Great” was a later expansion and development of the “Small.”)

Baptism

The section on baptism illustrates from the Gospels that being baptized must be a conscious decision based on a personal faith. It means repentance and rebirth into a new life, and therefore is not indicated for children, who belong to Christ already.

The sixteenth-century Catholic hierarchy was notoriously corrupt, and the Hutterites assumed that those who baptized infants as well as their godparents, who were supposed to believe on behalf of the child, were living in sin. Infant baptism is called a *sudelbad* or “mud bath,” an abomination, and the *wüster Greuel* (“devastating sacrilege”) of Daniel 9:27.

The arguments expressed here are not original. Balthasar Hubmaier is referred to and quoted multiple times, as is Pilgram Marpeck (although without being named). In addition, writings of Paul Glock, Christoph

Freisleben, Leonard Schiemer, Peter Riedemann, Hans Arbeiter, Claus Felbinger, and Leonhard Dax are included.

See Appendix 1 for Hutterite baptism vows.

The Lord's Supper

Like the section on baptism, the section on the Lord's Supper is directed against the Catholic hierarchy and, as with baptism, the Hutterites' interpretation was similar to that of other Reformers and other Anabaptists. The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated as a memorial to Christ's suffering. Many Reformers argued about the actual presence of Jesus' flesh and blood in the bread and the wine. The language becomes crude at times, using vocabulary normally reserved for speaking of animals, when describing priests who devour Christ's corpse (*die sein Leichnam fressen*). There are echoes of Zwingli's arguments in his three articles on the Lord's Supper,¹⁷ although I have not been able to find direct quotations. In addition, Balthasar Hubmaier, Hans Langenmantel, and Paul Glock are quoted.

A comment by G. R. Potter, in his booklet *Huldrych Zwingli*, may help place the Hutterites' thought processes in context:

To the twentieth century, [discussions of the nature of the Eucharist] may seem irrelevant, an arid waste of intellectual activity, an attempt to solve the insoluble or an exercise in metaphysics out of the reach of ordinary mortals. The sixteenth century saw things quite differently. . . . For all believing Christians there was but one church, and eternal salvation was only for those within it. Truth was one, indeed God was perfect truth as, properly understood, were his words in the Bible. The duty of the Christians was to proclaim truth and eliminate error. . . . The soul, unlike the body, was immortal and its status in eternity was decided by a right faith while on earth. To be wrong was to be damned, and to avoid eternal damnation any sacrifice was worthwhile.¹⁸

Community

While most Anabaptist groups agreed on their understanding of baptism and the Lord's Supper, living in community and sharing all property set the Hutterites apart. This section is directed in part to "false brothers," fellow

Anabaptists who did not live in community. As well as quoting from Wolfgang Brandhuber and Leonhard Dax, it includes lines from a letter that Peter Walpot wrote to a group of Swiss Brethren in Modenbach in 1577.

It may be true that the practice of community began as a practical solution to assure that the limited means were shared with all,¹⁹ but it soon became a basic tenet for which Hutterites were ready to die: At the end of 1539, 150 Hutterian men were arrested in the community in Steinebrunn, Austria, and told that they could be released if they would dissolve their communities. They could still be devout if they broke into groups of five, six, or eight, they were told. Peter Riedemann wrote to the imprisoned men:

Dear brothers, we answer as we did before: they only want to destroy the community. But it is the Lord's work and we cannot and will not agree to their demands. However many the Lord in heaven brings together, be it many or few, we want to live together and not give in to human rules and regulations, or make such rules. Do not let anything shake you, dear brothers. They are trying to lead you astray.²⁰

A year later, bishop Hans Amon wrote:

Dear brothers, as far as how we are doing: We are still living in Moravia but we have heard that all those who remain in community will be driven out at Pentecost. We want to die, with God's help, rather than abandon community.²¹

The word *Gelassenheit*, translated as "detachment," denotes surrender (to God) as used by Meister Eckhart.²² According to Robert Friedmann: "The Hutterites made the term *Gelassenheit* their own in a more earthly sense: the relinquishing of one's worldly possessions, in other words, 'absolute personal poverty,' and subsequently the sharing of all earthly goods by the entire group. In fact, thus interpreted, *Gelassenheit* becomes a central teaching of the Hutterite brethren."²³

In Point 133, we catch a glimpse of the Hutterite communities of the time (a passage lifted from Leonhard Dax's interrogation):

They claim that one can read of a disciple in the town of Joppa by the

name of Tabitha, who was full of good works and acts of charity, while she lived.^a If she had had no money and other things of her own, she could not have given aid and alms to others.

Answer: This in no way affirms or supports private property, for Luke writes that after the teaching and preaching of the apostle Peter, none of the believers said of his possessions that they were his, but they had all things in common.^b And – God be praised! – there are still such women disciples and Christians in the fellowship of God who show themselves full of good deeds, acts of charity and community, with no possessions of their own. These they no longer have, since they have surrendered them to be shared and used in common. Now their daily work, industry, and profit are pure deeds of charity, and it is for their neighbor's sake that they exert themselves.

Nonviolence and Government

The section on government takes a position that seems surprising in an age familiar with protests and civil disobedience. The Hutterites did not consider it their place to speak out against injustice or cruelty on the part of the authorities. Government is ordained by God, and as such, should be respected. The secular government is under the law of the Old Testament and is entitled to use the sword to keep crime at bay.²⁴ However, Christ has given a new command: to love one's enemy and turn the other cheek. Christians should expect persecution and be ready to be killed.

In contrast to the government, Christians are given the keys of the ban, to exclude evil from the church and offer the evildoer a chance to repent. As Point 36 puts it:

Christ gives the apostles in his church the power of the keys, as he says to Peter: I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.^c The power of the keys, the Christian ban, removes from the church what is evil.^d The worldly sword removes completely from the earth. The Christian punishment is love, indeed, a brotherly reproof; the punishment of the sword is wrath and ruthlessness. After the ban of Christians, one can

a Acts 9:36

b Acts 2:44, 4:32

c Matt. 16:19

d 1 Cor. 5:5

repent; but after the sword or worldly justice, penitence and reform are forever cut off. The ministers of the keys are vessels of mercy; the ministers of the worldly sword are vessels of wrath.^e The power of the keys guards and upholds Christian community and bans greed and ownership. The power of the sword upholds greed and ownership.^f Those who wield it have their own land and people; hence, from time immemorial the power of the sword has been identified by the name “the worldly government.” That is why its office cannot be fitted into the unadulterated Christian church. For each walks its own way; the paths go in opposite directions and never meet.

Christians are to be humble, to be like children, so it is impossible for them to take positions of rulership. They are not to judge, as Christ refused to judge.^g Like Jesus, Christians should be ready to suffer and be killed rather than kill others.

Marriage

By today’s standards, it seems cruel and unreasonable to demand that new converts leave their wife or husband if a spouse will not join them. But this is what the early Hutterites expected.

This section seems to have been written in response to criticism of cases where a Hutterite missionary traveled outside of Moravia and converted only one partner in a marriage. The convert was urged to leave his or her home and join the fellowship. It must be remembered that the Anabaptists were also ready to be imprisoned, tortured, and executed because of their faith. Theirs was an age of absolutes: baptism meant the salvation of their souls, and failure to follow the commands of Jesus meant damnation. Jesus spoke of the outer darkness where there is gnashing of teeth and said that those who made excuses would not taste of his banquet. As explained in Point 24:

They can scream, complain, accuse, and blaspheme as much as they like – who can do anything about it? We do not like it that one has to abandon his or her partner; we would much rather that the partner, and

e Rom. 9:16–18; Hos 13:11

f Acts 5:1; 1 Cor 5:1–13

g Luke 12:14; John 8:11

both together, could yield to the Lord and follow in faith. But since not everyone has faith, each should do what he recognizes and what is given to him and leave the other to his views. For on the last day, the wife will not be able to answer for or save her husband, nor the husband his wife. The ransom of a soul is so costly that it cannot be repaid but stands forever.^h Therefore, the believer should not be held back, let the world say what it will. . . . It is not our responsibility to comply with the world but to manifest God's holy work and further the salvation of men. We are not seeking any other gain. Neither are we doing it for the sake of wickedness or meanness; we have nothing but trouble to expect from it.

But we do not forbid a believer to stay with their unbelieving partner here in this country or where it is possible outside of or near the community, sometimes for many years or a long time, so long as we recognize that the believer does not grow weak or sick in soul. But if we notice that their situation is more a hindrance than a help, and we see sufficient reason, then we have to advise and suggest what is best so that he remains won. However, if he does not follow, we will not be guilty of neglect – since God has set us as shepherds and guards of his flock.ⁱ

See Appendix 2 for Hutterian marriage vows, including a promise to place faithfulness to Christ and the church above faithfulness to a marriage partner. Although not stated, this probably did not give them the freedom to marry again; in the Reformation era, a marriage was considered indissoluble.

Translation and Textual Comparisons

Since this text is recognized as a significant Hutterite document, it has long been Plough's intention to publish an English translation of the whole book. Kathleen Hasenberg (1906–2000) translated it in the 1950s, and her translation of the chapter on community was published in the *Menno-nite Quarterly Review*.²⁵ A translation of the full section on community is also included in Daniel Liechty's *Early Anabaptist Spirituality*.²⁶ More recently, Plough published the section on nonviolence and government as

^h Ps. 49:8

ⁱ Ezek. 3:17, 33:7, John 21:15

The Christian and the Sword.²⁷ Now, for the first time, we are able to offer a new translation of the entire text.

I based this translation on the Zuckenhammer codex.²⁸ Friedmann based his publication on a copy of a Berlin codex.²⁹ Hoping to establish authorship and an authoritative text, I compared the texts of seven codices.³⁰ Variances are minimal: a phrase omitted or added, a word misread, and sometimes paragraphs transposed. They do not change the essential meaning. In this translation I note only differences in wording between the Zuckenhammer codex and Friedmann's published edition.

Scripture citations are translated directly from the German and sometimes differ from published English translations. Anabaptists generally used the Froschauer Bible, a German translation produced in Zurich around 1530. It did not include verse numbers, but they have been added in square brackets in this edition.

A Delightful Little Book

Some of the main points of our Christian faith, wonderfully interpreted with divine witness. Also how the world has twisted them and lives and fights against them.

The Lord's war with Amalek will last from generation to generation, by a hand under God's protection (Exod. 17[:16]).

It is absurd and wrong that a doctor, a shoemaker, a weaver, or any other craftsman can defend his trade but a Christian is not allowed to give a reason for and explain his religion.

One body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above us all, through us all, and in us all (Eph. 4[:4–6]).



In Leib/ ein Geist/ ein hoff-
nung vnsers beruecks. Ein
HERR/ Ein Glaub/ Ein
Tauf/ Ein Gott vnd vat-
ter vnser aller/ der da ist
über vns all/ vnd durch
vns all/ vnd in vns alle.

Epheſern. iiii.



Jen. 32.
mat. 7.
Joh. 14.
Joh. 18.
Joh. 1.
2 Co. 6.
2 Joh. 1.
Gala. 1.
1 Co. 10.
Joh. 10.
mat. 7.
Ephe. 1.
Colo. 1.
Acto. 2.
4 Esd. 5.
Apoc. 5.
Acto. 4.
Phili. 2.
3.
Rom. 12.
15.
2 Cor. 13.

Es ist nur ein weg/ Ein war-
heit/ Ein liecht/ Ein lebent/
Ein leer Christy/ Ein Eua-
gelium. Ein Tisch des HER-
REN. Ein thür. Ein port-
ten. Ein biert. Ein haupt.
Ein meyster. Ein Christlich
firch. Ein gmeinschaft der heiligen. Ein volck auß allen
volckern. Ein hertz/ ein seel. Ein gleicher sint nach Christo.



Page from the Zuckenhammer Codex:
The list of Bible references that appear opposite

There is only one way (Matt. 7[:14])
One truth (John 14[:6])
One light
One life (John 1[:4])
One teaching of Christ (2 John 1[:9])
One gospel (Gal. 1[:7])
One table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10[:17])
One door (John 10[:9])
One gate (Matt. 7[:13])
One shepherd (1 Pet. 2[:25])
One head (Eph. 1[:22])
One master (Matt. 23[:10])
One Christian church (Acts 2[:41])
One fellowship of the saints
One people from many peoples (2 Esd. 1[:35–38])
One heart, one soul (Acts 4[:32])
One mind in Christ (Phil. 2[:5], 3[:15];
Rom. 12[:2], 15[:5]; 2 Cor. 13[:11])

Som waren Christlich
en Tauff/ wie in Christus
angehen/ vnd seine Apostel gebräu-
chet haben/ vnd wie der Kinds
tauff darwider ist. ¶

Hiñcto weise gestellt.



Dhannes des tauff

vro wort sin. Dis, vnd red,
et sie Johannes selbs, sagend:
Ich tauff mich mit wasser
zur buß. 2c. Die tauff

woort Christ; aber leuten also, Tauff sie
in dem Namen des vatters, Sone, vnd hail-
igen geists. 2c. — So wil uns vnderstend
in disem wortan ist, solil vnderstend ist auch
in beiden tauffen, des naums ist wol ein,
ander gleich. Vor Tauff Johannis hat
ganzet keiz auß Christum, der ist der ganz
tauff angangen, das er sin soll in Nam,
nu des vatters, Sone, vnd hailigen geists,

Baptism

True Christian baptism, as Christ instituted it and the apostles practiced it, and how infant baptism contradicts it, presented point by point.

These are John the Baptist's words, {spoken by John himself, who said: I baptize you with water for repentance, etc. (Matt. 3[:11]; Mark 1[:8]; Luke 3[:16]). But Christ's instructions for baptism are: Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28[:19]). There is as much difference between the two baptisms as there is in the words. The deed is certainly the same.}¹ John's baptism was valid up to Christ, when complete baptism began, which is to take place in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; there the soil was created out of which man is to be born.

Just as Adam was born of his mother, the earth, so we believers come and are fashioned as new creatures out of the water-bath in the Word (Eph. 5[:26]), which is the new earth. We are no longer of the earth but of baptism. Thus, we are separated from what is of Adam and earthly, and established again in the true, new, Christian and spiritual Paradise, his church. Those who accept baptism are to obey everything that Christ has commanded (Matt. 28[:20]), for in this way we remain in the will of God and on his path. But if we do not hold to it, we are like Adam was in Paradise when he ate of the apple. He was disobedient and did not keep God's command, so he was driven from Paradise into misery (Gen. 3[:1]). We will be driven from Paradise into hell where there will be no salvation anymore.

1.

Christ says: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given me. Therefore, go and teach all peoples and baptize them in the name of the Father, the

Son, and the Holy Spirit. They should observe all that I have commanded you (Matt. 28[:18–20]).

In this passage, the order of correct baptism is shown to us: it is established that teaching should precede baptism. For he says, “Teach all the peoples,” and then he says, “And baptize them,” and so on. Here we see that baptism is based on teaching. Therefore, it is called a water-bath in the Word [*das Wasserbad im Wort*] (Eph. 5[:26]), for those who are to be baptized must first be taught the mystery of baptism, the rules of faith, and what they must know and perform as Christians. They are to be taught what the mysteries entail and thus first learn to understand and believe what they will then receive in baptism. Faith without works is nothing (James 2[:14–26]), but if the works do not result from faith they are also nothing.

{To baptize means immersing or dipping into water, and baptism means being immersed or sprinkled with water;}² it is not the act but the understanding, content, and meaning of the act that counts. Baptism is denial and dying to the self (1 Cor. 6[:11]; Rom. 6[:4]), a yielding to God; it is like a signature or a marriage of the believers with Christ.

{Baptism is not and cannot be of benefit to anyone before he understands it, and no one can understand it unless he is first instructed and taught.}³ Therefore he says first: Teach, make disciples and followers or apprentices, and afterward, baptize those who have received instruction (Matt. 28[:19]), {who personally desire, personally know, personally believe, personally testify, and gladly accept it}.⁴ Otherwise, it is of no value. For how could the apostles have convinced the people to be baptized if they had not first taught them and given them instruction regarding baptism and to what end they should be or wanted to be baptized? Therefore, infant baptism is in every respect contrary to Christ. One cannot teach infants or preach the gospel to them; it would not be Christian but foolish. Neither are they able to keep what Christ has commanded them. For this reason, there is no ground whatsoever given here for baptizing infants.

2.

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16[:15–16]).

Here you see further that baptism is based on preaching and on faith. For again he tells his disciples first to preach. But to whom? {Not to wood, stone, or mountains, nor to uncomprehending beasts or ignorant children. Although they are all creatures – each in his own measure – Christ means none of these, nor that they are capable of understanding and accepting the teaching.}⁵ {If you preach to a child for a whole week, and he believes in Christ, you have won. If not, and you still baptize him, your baptism is no baptism but a curse before God.}⁶ Anyone who is to be baptized in accordance with Christ's command must first believe. For infants, that is impossible; hence, infant baptism cannot be brought forward and is not commanded. Nobody, be they ever so learned, can prove it from either the Old or the New Testament.

3.

Infants cannot believe – neither in God, Creator of heaven and earth, nor in Jesus Christ his Son, nor in the Holy Spirit. They know nothing of his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, or of eternal life and forgiveness of sins. They know nothing of God's testament, the gospel, baptism, the fellowship of saints, the final judgment, of the love of God or of neighbor, or of the will of God.

Anyone who can teach infants can baptize them. But if you cannot teach them, you cannot baptize them either. For baptism is a water-bath in the Word (Eph. 5[:26]). If you say that infants do not need [the Word] because of their youth, then they also have no need of baptism. For that reason, it never occurred to Christ or his apostles to baptize children or infants, to say nothing of commanding it. You can search until you die, and never find in the whole Bible that infants are to be baptized. But if God grants them life and they reach maturity and understanding, and they are taught the ways of the Lord, and take his yoke upon themselves, understand his will, and follow him, then they should be baptized if they

desire it. If they do not wish to commit themselves, and follow darkness instead of light, they must be left alone.

4.

Matthew and Mark write that one should first preach, then believe, and in third place baptize (Matt. 28[:19]; Mark 16[:15–16]), a sequence that the apostles kept. So it is a great abomination and wickedness on the part of those who baptize children against the definite ordinance instituted by God. They turn back to front and front to back, as the worldly-wise usually do, who always place the cart before the horse – as if they were wiser than God! For it is written: Who has instructed the Spirit of the Lord? Who is his counselor? Who taught him? With whom did he take counsel? Who gave him understanding and taught him in the ways of righteousness, instructed him in knowledge and caused him to know the path of understanding (Isa. 40[:13–14]; Rom. 11[:34])? Aren't they the ones who set their lips in heaven and say, "With our tongue we will prevail" (Ps. 12[:4])? Those who think to change times and the law, as the prophet Daniel says (Dan. 7[:25])?

5.

John the Baptist also taught those whom he was to baptize (John 3[:28–30]; Mark 1[:4–7]; Luke 3[:3, 16]). He allowed no one to be baptized but those who testified that they believed their sins were forgiven. Because of his calling, he could not baptize infants. For he baptized the baptism of repentance, and he told the people to believe in the one who was coming after him, namely, in Christ – all of which children cannot do. Not only in John's baptism but also in Christ's, both the word and external symbol are given so that through them God may move hearts. When people hear the word and see the sign, they should be shaken and set straight by faith. Children cannot be baptized with either John's or Christ's baptism, because they cannot hear or believe the Word nor see the sign. For if John had not previously preached, he would have had to pour water for a long time before he prepared the way of the Lord (Luke 3[:4]). Recognition of sin – and not the pouring of water – drives people to Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14[:6]).

6.

{Christ himself, who is our role model, was not baptized until he was about thirty years old and ready to begin his work (Matt. 3[:13–16]; Mark 1[:9–11]; Luke 3[:21–23]; John 1[:33]). He was an example that we should not be baptized as children but rather when we have arrived at maturity and good understanding and can begin to do God's will.}⁷ Otherwise, it is worthless. Anyone who acts to the contrary despises the example of Christ.

7.

Infant baptism is simply monkey business. It is as if you sent a battalion of infants from their cribs to the emperor to serve as soldiers in his camp against the enemy. Or as if you presented a day-old or week-old baby to swear obedience and submission to the government. Yes, as if you commanded a baby to manage a civil business, make purchases, to sow and to harvest. This would be utterly ridiculous. Likewise, infant baptism is ridiculous, a mockery and disparagement of the true baptism of Christ. When a child {reaches the age of voluntary decision, the captain takes him and enlists him. Likewise, the captain and prince of faith (Matt. 2[:6]; Heb. 2[:10]), Jesus, wants those to be accepted, enlisted, and baptized who desire to fight with him against the world and the devil when they can make their own decisions.}⁸ *Idem*:⁹ those to whom one cannot entrust earthly matters cannot readily be entrusted with divine matters either.

8.

Christ says: Which of you who wants to build a tower does not sit down first and consider the cost, to see whether he has enough to finish it? Or what king plans to fight another king without first sitting down and thinking it over (Luke 14[:28, 31])?

When one surrenders oneself in baptism, one commits with Christ to fight against the devil, sin, death, and the world (Eph. 6[:12]) and to persist to the end (Heb. 3[:14]). Infant baptism becomes a counter-baptism [*widertauf*] against infants,¹⁰ and what is more, it is contrary to and against the command and Word of God. All those who practice and perform it are counter-baptizers [*widertäufer*]. For infants are incapable

of counting the cost beforehand (Luke 14[:18]) or considering what they are about to begin or what it will cost them to make a baptism or covenant with God (1 Pet. 3[:21]).

9.

The apostle Peter preached to the people. Their hearts were struck and they said: Dear brothers, what should we do? Peter instructed them: Repent and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For this is promised to you and your children and to all who are far off. Then those who gladly accepted his word were baptized (Acts 2[:37–41]).

Thus, the apostles always taught first and then baptized the believers and not the children. {Whoever baptizes first and then teaches shoots off his gun and then asks where the target is that he should aim at, or he seals an empty letter that is not yet written.}¹¹ “For you believers are a letter from Christ,” says Paul, “prepared by our service” (2 Cor. 3[:3]). Infants cannot be prepared by the service of the Word. Only after the letter is written does one come to have a seal put on it.

10.

Many of those who listened to the Word believed, and the number of men was about five thousand (Acts 4[:4]).

Children are not mentioned, for they do not listen to the Word and cannot believe. How can they believe when they have never experienced unbelief?

11.

{The apostle Philip preached Christ in Samaria. When they believed Philip’s preaching about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, men and women were baptized (Acts 8[:12]). Scripture does not mention any children, for it is not children’s work.}¹² If they had baptized children, they would have recorded them too {since they did not forget the children in less important matters, such as the children murdered by Herod (Matt. 2[:16]), the children who were fed (Matt. 14[:21], 15[:38]), the children who

praised God (Matt. 21[:15]), and the child John (Luke 1[:41]). *Idem*: Christ as an infant of eight days when he was circumcised (Luke 2[:21]), and the children who, with their parents, accompanied Paul (Acts 21[:5]).¹³

12.

{Philip preached the gospel of Jesus to the eunuch, a minister of Queen Candace of Ethiopia. When the eunuch requested baptism, the apostle first said to him: "If you believe with all your heart, you may" (Acts 8[:37]), which implied: "If you do not believe you cannot be." Then he baptized him. This is how it should still be, or it is not valid.¹⁴ And anyone who practices and upholds a different baptism, as those who baptize infants do, is stamped with the mark of the Babylonian beast, the whore on the seven-headed dragon, of whom the angel of God warns in Revelation with a loud cry: "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its sign on his forehead or on his hand, he will drink of the wine of the wrath of God. He will be tortured with fire and sulfur before the holy angels and before the Lamb" (Rev. 14[:9–10]).

13.

Ananias had to tell Saul-Paul what he was to do before he baptized him, and then he was baptized (Acts 9[:17–19]). Thus, those whom the Lord does not first strike down in their hearts by his Word, so that they are moved to believe and to ask what they are to do, like Paul did, cannot properly be baptized.

14.

Peter first preached and taught Cornelius and told him and all who were assembled with him to hear what God had commanded him, the Word, and what they were to do to be saved. While Peter was still preaching, {the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the Word and they spoke in tongues and magnified God. Then Peter commanded that they be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10[:34–48]). Children cannot listen to preaching, neither can they speak in tongues or magnify God. Hence, it is clear that no children were baptized}¹⁵ in Cornelius's house.

15.

Several men from Cyprus and Cyrene came to Antioch and spoke to the Greeks. They preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, and a large number believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11[:20–21]).

Here also there were no children, for infants and children cannot turn to the Lord. They all are already the Lord's in their measure. How could they turn to him, when they have never turned away from him?

16.

{A devout woman called Lydia, a seller of purple goods from the city of Thyatira, listened to Paul's words. The Lord opened her heart so that she gave heed to what was spoken by Paul, and she and her household were baptized (Acts 16[:14–15]).

Here too teaching comes first, faith second, and baptism third.}¹⁶ As the rule of Christ concerning baptism requires (and in no other way), those of her entire household who listened to Paul's words and gave heed to what he said – as she did – were baptized, and no children. God said to Noah: You and your house enter the ark (Gen. 7[:1, 13])! This does not mean that there were children in the ark but only he, his wife, his three sons, and their three wives (1 Pet. 3[:20]).

17.

{The jailor fell at the feet of Paul and Silas and said: Dear sirs, what shall I do to be saved? They said: Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your household will be saved. They spoke the Word of the Lord to him and all that were in his house. (One does not speak the Word of the Lord to children; they do not understand it.) And in that very hour he and his family were baptized, and he rejoiced with his entire household that he had become a believer in God (Acts 16[:29–33]).

Children cannot rejoice that they have become believers in God.}¹⁷ If you say, this person and his entire household were baptized, so there must have been children among them – that would mean that the children also broke bread. For it says they broke bread in each other's homes (Acts 2[:46]).

Idem: they broke bread when they were all assembled (Acts 2[:42], 20[:7]). And so, I have no doubt that if there were children in the homes, they, too, must have broken bread.¹⁸

18.

Paul and Silas came to Berea to the synagogue. They received the Word gladly and daily searched Scripture to see if it was so. Then many of them believed, and not a few Greek women of high standing (Acts 17[:10–12]).

Children and infants are not mentioned, for they baptized none.

19.

Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians who listened believed and were baptized (Acts 18[:8]).

If infants in their cradles came to faith in Jesus Christ through the words of Paul, then they are also included. But if they did not understand Paul and did not believe, they are excluded here. Children cannot believe or understand, so they were not baptized. This passage is not speaking about children.

20.

{In Ephesus Paul rebaptized in the name of the Lord Jesus twelve men, disciples of John, who had previously been baptized only with the baptism of John. For they said they had not received the Holy Spirit and had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit (Acts 19[:1–7]).

Now, if the baptism of John was not adequate even though it was from God, and [Paul] baptized them a second time properly, how much less adequate is infant baptism today. It is not from God but from the devil and invented and instituted by humans. Children or infants know even less about the Holy Spirit,} ¹⁹ have received it even less than the twelve, and have never understood that there is a Holy Spirit. Therefore, all believers who have been muddled²⁰ with infant baptism (which is not baptism) must be baptized a second time properly. Just as Paul was not a re-baptizer here, so much the less are the believers today.

21.

{Do you not know, says Paul the apostle, that all of us who have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we were buried with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too should walk in a new life (Rom. 6[:3-4]).}²¹

Therefore, {just as no living person is buried with the dead, so also no one who is still living in his sins and has not died to them can be buried with Christ in baptism.}²² Similarly, just as one who has died and been buried never appears or is seen in his home and in his work or business as he was previously, so one who is baptized should never live in his old activity or show himself or be seen there, but in a new life. Thus, one is baptized into Christ's death. Children cannot be baptized into Christ's death, neither can they be raised in a new life; they live according to their nature. Therefore, infant baptism is contrary to God and is merely a postponement of true baptism. Indeed, no greater seduction has come into the world since the birth of Christ than infant baptism. For by it they attach the precious name of Christ to wicked people. It gives them false hope, for they think they are Christians when they have in fact never taken the first step. Indeed, infant baptism is the cause of the desolation and the whole decline of the holy church. The church cannot be restored to its true rank and glory unless infant baptism is rejected and true baptism established and correctly practiced.

22.

No children were baptized among those of Stephanas's household who were baptized (1 Cor. 1[:16]). Paul makes this clear himself when, at the end [of his letter to the Corinthians], he remembers Stephanas again and says that the household of Stephanas appointed itself to the service of the saints (1 Cor. 16[:15]). Children or infants cannot even serve themselves, to say nothing of appointing themselves to the service of the saints. Therefore, no child is included here, and none was baptized.²³

23.

We are all baptized in one Spirit into one body, says Paul, whether we are Jews or Greeks, slaves or free; and are given to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor. 12[:13]).

Children cannot all be baptized into one body, as one sees when they are grown up: one is of the body of the Pope, another of Luther, a third of Zwingli, or as we should say, of the devil's body, with all godlessness and wickedness. For that reason, everything that is said here about baptism is not speaking about children. Children and infants are not given to drink of one Spirit with the believers. It is mature believers, or adults, who have understanding and knowledge of what is good and godly; children have no understanding of this at all. That is why the apostles did not baptize them. If it were *through water* that we were baptized into the body of Christ, we would not need to have any faith, and the apostle would be wrong to say we are all baptized *in one Spirit* into one body.²⁴

24.

As many of you as have been baptized have put on Christ, says Paul (Gal. 3[:27]).

{That is nothing other than, as Saint Peter says, that we are to arm and equip ourselves with the mind, spirit, and thought of Christ (1 Pet. 4[:1]) and follow him in the same manner in which he walked.}²⁵ Children cannot put on Christ and do not put him on even when they are muddled with infant baptism. For those who put on Christ lead a holy, blessed life after baptism and stride forward in the good. But [people of] the world, from the moment of their baptism as infants, grow continually worse and more ungodly day by day and increase in vices and abominations. Therefore [in this verse], Paul is not speaking about infant baptism but against it.

25.

Christ loved the church and cleansed it by the water-bath in the Word (Eph. 5[:25–26]).

“In the Word” does not mean that it was spoken but that it was believed. These words of Paul are precisely what Christ says: Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16[:15–16]). For it is Christ alone who cleanses us through faith (Acts 15[:9]). Children or infants have not

tarnished themselves with any kind of sin; they are a pure and innocent good creation of God. For original sin is inherited only in the knowledge of good and evil. Adam, our father, and Eve, our mother, inherited it when they ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, contrary to God's command (Rom. 5[:12–21]). Only after that is it reckoned as sin and not before. Therefore, the cleansing through the water-bath in the Word, that is, in the preaching of godly doctrine, is not speaking of children but of adults who understand and believe. For the true baptism of the water-bath in the Word takes place when the Word flows beside the water – yes, before the pouring – falling upon the heart and understanding.

26.

In Christ we are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the sinful body of the flesh. We were buried with him in baptism and raised with him by the faith that God works (Col. 2[:11–12]).

True {baptism is a narrow gate and entry into the holy Christian church. For it is impossible to get through it with the old sinful self of the old life. Before this gate, everything must be taken off and buried, so that in all of us the lure and will of the flesh, born in us from Adam, may be baptized, strangled, and put to death.} ²⁶ Yes, as the kernel of wheat must first die and be covered with earth if it is to germinate, mature, and bear fruit (John 12[:24]), so it is with us, in a spiritual act. Children cannot be buried with him through baptism; that is, their old self cannot be crucified, put to death, and buried so that their sinful bodies cease (Rom. 6[:6]). ²⁷ Neither can they rise with him by faith into a new life, for who has ever heard of anyone being born before he is conceived or resurrected before he has died? What should children do before they can leave anything undone, how can they believe before they know what faith is, or run before their legs and feet are sufficiently developed? Yes, children or infants know nothing about Christ, so how can they be raised with him by faith, which God has not yet effected in them, as little as the knowledge of good and evil. Where the reason is lacking, the symbol is mockery and an abomination before God.

27.

According to his great mercy he saves us through the bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3[:5]).

Children are not reborn; therefore, no baptism is indicated for them. Christian baptism is called the bath of rebirth because it belongs only to those who have been reborn through the Word of truth. Neither are children renewed by the Holy Spirit; children remain children until they reach an accountable age – unless the cursing and blasphemy as soon as infant baptizers are able to talk is a renewal of the Holy Spirit. Infant baptism is not a bath of rebirth but a futile baby's bath.

28.

At the time of Noah when the ark was being equipped in which a few – that is, eight souls – were preserved through the water or flood (which is a symbol, a figure, or counter-image of baptism, as Peter says) (1 Pet. 3[:20])

there was no child in the ark. Therefore, they are not to be baptized; there is no sign or command to baptize them. And just as no one entered the ark unless he first believed, on the strength of this symbol no one should be baptized in water unless he first confesses and acknowledges his faith. And just as the world was condemned through those who entered the ark (Heb. 11[:7]), so also through baptism, as through the water, the world is still condemned, but God's children are preserved. For by baptism one enters the fellowship and church of God as the true ark in which the obedient are preserved by the Word.

29.

Baptism is not the removal of filth from the body, says Peter, but a sure testimony of a good conscience with God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3[:21]).

Children become neither purer nor better by being baptized. As the water in which Pilate washed his hands after he gave Christ over to be crucified (Matt. 27[:24]) could not cleanse him of sin, nor could the water in which the Pharisees washed when they returned from the marketplace

(Mark 7[:4]),²⁸ neither can infant baptism wash away sin before God (or original sin, as they say) from those who claim it to be Christian baptism. Indeed, those who hold that they make Christians and blot out sin with water baptism put themselves in Christ's place and are contra-Christians. So infant baptism is worthless. {Children know nothing of the testimony of a good conscience with God.}²⁹ And because the apostle says here that baptism is a covenant or testimony of a good conscience with God, the hope and heart of all infant baptizers are rejected. Because they have not accepted the love of truth that they might be saved, God has sent them strong delusions to make them believe lies, so that all may be judged who did not believe the truth (2 Thess. 2[:10–12]).

30.

{Paul the apostle says to the Ephesians that there is only one faith and one baptism: that of those who believe and understand (Eph. 4[:5]).

Not one letter about infant baptism can be found in all holy Scripture.}³⁰ Hence, it was introduced by the devil and the antichrist. Those who place their salvation on the water push Christ, the Redeemer and Atoner of innocent little children, out of the center.

31.

If infant baptism had originally been intended and if it were pleasing to God or beneficial for salvation, it would not only be expressed in clear words in Scripture, but it would also have been commanded, recommended, and instructed like the other commandments. For there are many Scriptures on water baptism. One of them would mention infants if it had been instituted for them.

32.

I urge you by the mercy of God to give your bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, and pleasing to God, as your reasonable divine service (Rom. 12[:1]).

Children or infants cannot give their bodies as a sacrifice to God. So the baptism of infants is a dead, unholy, and unreasonable divine service.

33.

Christ says every tree shall be recognized by its fruit (Matt. 7[:16]).

Because infant baptism has so clearly brought forth ample bad fruit for such a long time, it is sufficiently clear that it is a gruesome thorn bush and a false antichristian teaching and counsel. Furthermore, if infant baptism were of God and Christ, why does one never sense a new Christian life in children after they have been baptized or later when they have grown up and are of age? Such an ungodly world has grown out of it. Yes, truly, if people in Sodom and Gomorrah were good Christians and evangelical, then these are also good Christians and evangelical today; all of this grows from the evil tree of infant baptism.

Infant baptism, which claims to be Christian and evangelical, can be compared to a horde of prostitutes who boast of being holy and persuade a simple woman to give her little daughter to them to raise in piety; they simply want to take the child while she is still underage and without understanding so that when she comes to understanding she will have to stay with them whether she wants to or not. In the same way, the great prostitute, the Roman Church, baptizes children before they themselves want, desire, or understand it. Later, when they find out as adults that they have been baptized, they consider themselves Christian. They rarely reflect further on this matter, but usually they leave it as it is and do not consider any other [baptism].

In order that their church, which would otherwise go into decline, might become large and its members increase, they have persuaded nearly the whole world under the name of Christ that they must baptize their children and raise them in this way. Thereby the whole world has become one Christendom as far as you can see, yes, filled with false Christians. They have won the game with the world according to the devil's will and pleasure. He has undermined the true baptism of Christ, rescinded and disposed of it, and now Satan resists it powerfully. He sets himself against it with all his power, with lies and treachery, hanging and drowning, beheading and burning, because he knows that as soon as true baptism is established again, he and all his following will never again be taken for a church of God. He would be cast out, his hood and fool's cap removed,

and he would be revealed for who he is. However, you vile abomination, you must fall; you will not be able to endure! The Lord, whose name is Sabaoth, has drawn his sword and you shall not be able to stand before him, as Jannes and Jambres were unable to get very far, however hard they tried (2 Tim. 3[:8–9]; Exod.7[:10–12]). It will be the same for these hangmen, doctors, and preachers of devotional tracts.³¹

Arguments

34.

{Those who baptize infants repeat and cite the command of Christ: Go and teach all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you (Matt. 28[:19–20]). This is a command, they say, to baptize all people; children are also people, therefore we should baptize children, if we want, and teach them later, if we want.

Answer: Because we should teach the people first and then baptize them on their confession of faith, and because children are also people, then according to their own words we would have to first teach them and then baptize them on their faith. At some point they will have to admit that the apostles taught the ancients and, after instruction, baptized them upon their confessed faith (Acts 2[:41], 8[:12], 10[:34–48], 16[:32–33]). This is still the case and should not be otherwise. For this is the rule the apostles took from the words of Christ: “Teach all peoples, baptizing them” (Matt. 28[:19]). If children are included in the word “people,” all the other regulations should be observed with them too³² – the ban, exclusion, admission, brotherly reproof, breaking bread, and much more that should also be held to among the people. But certainly, as other Christian ordinances and practices cannot be applied to them, neither can they be baptized. It would be foolish and wrong to carry an infant from his cradle before the fellowship to pronounce the ban or excommunication upon him; it is also foolish and wrong to baptize him because he understands the one just as little as the other.

The prophet Isaiah foretold that the mountain of the Lord will be established in the last time and all people will hurry to it (Isa. 2[:2–3]).

This does not mean that infants are among the people who will hurry to the mountain or urge each other to do so.

Idem: the law will proceed from Zion, and the Word of God from Jerusalem, and attract many people. They will beat their swords into hoes and their lances into pruning hooks and knives (Isa. 2[:3–4]). Is this speaking of children and infants? Oh no, only of believers. The apostle Paul also writes: All of God’s creation is good and not to be despised if it is received with thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4[:4]). But he is speaking only of things that were created for food; he is not speaking of and does not mean serpents, snakes, or worms. Likewise, here he does not mean by “all people” that infants in their cradles, who neither understand nor believe, should be taught.

35.

Some claim that the words, “Teach all peoples, baptizing them” (Matt. 28[:19]), mean teaching them by pouring water over them or that while one is teaching one should always be pouring water and baptizing. But one would need several barrels³³ of water per person if one should baptize while teaching. Their infant baptism is therefore humbug and a hoax.

36.

They also claim that it says: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16[:15–16]). Hence, children must also be baptized if they are to be saved.

Answer: Preaching first and believing the message excludes the possibility that children are meant. If somebody says two people have gone to the church to be married and will celebrate a wedding, we know well that they are not children. It is the same here: He who believes, is baptized. Anyone who baptizes a child, thinking it will otherwise be damned, denies innocent children Christ’s atonement, reconciliation, and redemption. They rob Christ of honor and ascribe it to the water. When he says, “He who does not believe will be damned,” it is very clear that it is not baptism without faith but faith alone that saves if it is sealed with baptism. For where there is no faith, baptism is of no avail. He who does not believe will be damned – even if he is baptized a hundred times. No

water baptism is needed for hell, just as God refused the rich man a single drop of water (Luke 16[:25]). And the verse, “He who does not believe will be damned” can by no means be applied to children, who cannot believe. For Christ promises them the kingdom of God (Matt. 19[:14]; Mark 10[:15]; Luke 18[:16]) regardless of faith, regardless of preaching, regardless of the symbol of [membership in] the church, and regardless of baptism. Therefore, those who condemn infants who are not baptized defy God’s judgment. They mislead and pervert the Word of God. What a shameless, wicked, lying sacrilege!³⁴

37.

They say: The city of Jerusalem and all Judea and all the areas along the Jordan came out to John the Baptist and were baptized by him and confessed their sins (Matt. 3[:5–6]; Mark 1[:5]).

Answer: {If children also went out and understood the baptism of repentance and penitence and confessed their sins, then they were also baptized. But if not, they were not baptized. Children have not committed actual sin and therefore do not need baptism of repentance or forgiveness and reform. If one wants to insist that all [Judea] was baptized, then not only the people but also the land would have to have been baptized – but of course, only the people were baptized. And it also does not mean that he baptized all the people who were in Judea, but those who confessed their sins and wished to be baptized. For in Luke it is written that the Pharisees and scribes despised the counsel of God against them (just as they do today) and were not baptized by him (Luke 7[:30]).}³⁵ {If you say it can be assumed that there were children among them, we answer then it must also be assumed that Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod went out too and were baptized. But it is not a matter of imagining or assuming; it is a matter of knowing God’s Scripture.}³⁶

38.

{They quote Mark saying: John was in the desert baptizing and preaching the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1[:4]). Here, baptism is mentioned before teaching and preaching. Therefore, one can baptize infants if one teaches faith later on.

Answer: All the words about baptism found anywhere contradict that. For even John's commission was to teach and preach, as he himself says: I am a crying voice (John 1[:23]). So the evangelist does not mean to say that John baptized anyone before he taught them when he mentions baptizing before teaching. He is saying that after baptizing them, he did not stop teaching but continued instructing them in order to prepare the way of the Lord. This is as it should still be – to first teach those being baptized to observe all things that God commands (Matt. 28[:19]) and to live according to his will, which they have accepted and which was initially proclaimed to them, not to turn away from the holy commandment that was given them, for it would be better for them never to have learned the way of truth than to turn back, like dogs to their vomit and the washed sow to the mud (2 Pet. 2[:21–22]). The apostles taught after baptizing as well as before. Otherwise, there would be no need of a preacher after baptism. Mark's words show that it is to be interpreted thus and not as stated above. He says: John was in the desert, baptizing and teaching (Mark 1[:4]). From this, if one wanted to take it literally, it would mean that he baptized and taught in the desert. But that is not what he did, as can be seen in Luke's words, where he says: The command of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the desert, and he went into all the regions along the Jordan and preached the baptism of repentance (Luke 3[:2–3]). Thus, it is clear how Mark is to be interpreted. But he remained in the desert until he was to come before the children of Israel.} ³⁷ They simply want to argue with Christ and complain in order to preserve their infant baptism and overthrow Christ's true baptism. They force Scripture according to their view instead of directing their views according to Scripture. That is why the question has become so confused and perverted, sealing the eyes of the uncomprehending.

In the case of heathen monks and nuns, it would be wrong to force someone into cowls and profession without first explaining the obedience of the order, before they understand it and consent to it. And Christ is supposed to be pleased with what is done with uncomprehending children!

39.

They say: Christ says that whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like this child will never enter it (Mark 10[:15]; Matt. 18[:3.]).

Answer: But he does not mean that we should do what children do, riding hobbyhorses and things like that, or that we are to become children in physical body. If he did, God would not have done well in letting us grow so big. Rather, what he is teaching us by the example of children is humility, detachment, and lowliness, and that no one should seek to be the greatest over others. For it also says, on the other hand, we should not be like children, or the kingdom will be closed to us (Eph. 4[:14]; 1 Cor. 14[:20]). Christ says: In truth, if you have faith like a mustard seed (Luke 17[:6]; Matt. 17[:20]). He does not mean that the mustard seed has faith or that we must become like it.

40.

The infant baptizers claim that Christ says: Let the little children come to me and do not stop them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (Matt. 19[:14]; Mark 10[:14]; Luke 18[:16]). They suppose that infant baptism is Christ. But how can infant baptism correspond to Christ when Christ knows nothing of such infant baptism? This would mean that the devastating sacrilege and Pharisee were Christ, that casting a spell were blessing, and that startling the poor creatures with cold water was cradling them in one's arms. Yes, anyone who baptizes a child and says he is standing in God's stead, without doing his Lord's command, does indeed stand in God's stead, though not like Christ, but like a devastating sacrilege. If "come" means baptize, it is a new interpretation, and {on that basis he must also have baptized the donkey, for he said it should be brought to him (Matt. 21[:7])}.³⁸ He must also have baptized the two blind men who were sitting beside the road crying, "Have mercy on us," for he said, "Bring them here" (Matt. 20[:30]). By calling him, he must also have baptized the blind man whom he called to him (Mark 10[:49]). Yes, if everything that was brought to Christ were to have been baptized, {it would indeed have turned into a rare game: they would have had to baptize the stone jars (John 2[:7-8]); the tax coin (Matt. 22[:19]); and

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