

o How do the paedobaptists argue for infant baptism? We will consider the arguments of John Murray, in his small book “Christian Baptism,” which is widely regarded as a standard work by paedobaptist scholars.

I. Seven key arguments of a paedobaptist.

1. The import (meaning and importance) of baptism.

- Murray separates Christian baptism from the baptism of John the Baptist and of the Lord. The baptism of John the Baptist was preparatory to the baptism of the Lord (done through His apostles, Jn 4:1ff.). The baptism of the Lord is closely related to, but different, from the Christian baptism given in Mt 28:19-20, since the latter is done in the name of the Trinity. Murray declares that he disagrees with Calvin and others on this point. Calvin believed that John’s and the apostle’s baptisms were the same as the Great Commission’s.
- Murray denies that purification is the central import of Christian baptism. He contradicts himself later by saying in the summarising statement, “baptism signifies and seals union with Christ and cleansing from the pollution and guilt of sin.” He also claims that “baptism is the circumcision of the New Testament.”
- : Baptists believe that the NT antitype to OT circumcision is heart circumcision, i.e. regeneration not baptism directly (Col 2:11-12; Phil 3:3; Rom 2:28-29; Gal 6:15-16). Also, baptism is never called a “seal” of the New Covenant; rather regeneration by the Spirit is so called (Eph 1:13; 2 Cor 1:22).
- By claiming that John’s and Jesus’s baptisms were different from Christian baptism, Murray has removed the data of the Gospels from consideration concerning the meaning, subjects, and mode of Great Commission baptism.

2. The mode of baptism.

- By appealing to word studies in the Septuagint (the Greek OT), Murray claims that “baptizo” does not mean to immerse. This puts Murray at odds with Calvin who understands the word to mean immerse.

3. The church.

- There is an invisible aspect to the church, and there is a visible aspect. Murray admits that not everyone in the church visible is necessarily regenerate.
- According to Murray, there are two dangers to avoid. The first is to accept only an intellectual and historical faith as required for church membership. This can be avoided if church leaders make it plain to confessors that “only the regenerate can truly make the profession required.” (We would say that church leaders have to do more than this. They have to assess whether the profession of faith is credible.)
- The second danger is to accommodate the definition of the church to include as members the obviously unregenerate. This can be avoided by putting those who prove to be profane and not disciples outside the church.
- Murray recognises that the form of the church in the NT is different from that in the OT. However, there is a generic unity between the church in both dispensations, and the NT form is founded upon the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal 3:9, 14, 17; Rom 11:16-21; Eph 2:12-20).
- In summary, Murray argues for a NT church built upon a confession of Jesus Christ as evidence of regeneration. This is exactly the Baptist position. But he also allows for infant baptism by relating it to Abrahamic circumcision because of “generic unity.”

4. Infant baptism.

- Murray claims that the import of baptism must be the same for infants as for adults. In the Abrahamic Covenant, circumcision is more than an external privilege. It is the sign and seal of the covenant in its “deepest and richest significance.”
- Murray then asserts that this privilege continues in the NT period. There is no explicit revocation of this privilege, so infant baptism must continue. Also, there is positive evidence in favour of its continuance, and there is an expectation of expansion of NT blessings.
- The ground of infant baptism is not presumptive election or regeneration, but simply that God instituted this as the sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace. (We would ask, how has God instituted this? Is it by the inference that infant baptism is the continuation of circumcision?)
- What are the positive evidence for infant baptism?

- : (i) Jesus's attitude toward the children (Mt 18:1-6; 19:13-14; Lk 18:15-17).
- : (ii) The NT's instructions to children addresses them as saints (Eph 6:1, 4; Col 3:20-21).
- : (iii) The teaching of 1 Cor 7:14 regards children of believers as "holy."
- : (iv) The household baptisms (Acts 10:47-48; 11:14; 16:15, 33-34; 1 Cor 1:16) require that we presume there were infants who were baptised, although "we do not have an overt and proven instance of infant baptism."
- : (v) On Pentecost day, Peter included children in the blessing with their parents (Acts 2:38-39)

5. *Objections to infant baptism.* Murray next attempts to refute seven objections to infant baptism.

- (i) The first objection is that there is no express command or clear case of infant baptism in the NT. Murray argues that express command and clear example are not the only kind of evidence sufficient to establish a doctrine. He claims that the evidence for infant baptism falls into the category of "good and necessary inference."
- (ii) The second objection is that infants cannot make a profession of faith. Murray's argument is that it is uncertain a profession of faith was required in cases of household baptisms.
- (iii) The third objection is that it is difficult to discern if infants are regenerate. (We would say, it is impossible for infants to profess faith.) Murray argues that even adult baptism is not based on sure regeneration but upon a credible profession of faith.
- (iv) The fourth objection is that infants cannot understand the meaning of baptism. (Again, we would say, it is impossible for infants to profess faith.) Murray says that God's blessing and means of grace are not dependent upon the understanding of the recipient.
- (v) The fifth purported objection involves the failed lives of those baptised as infants. Murray says the same objection could be made against adult baptism.
- (vi) The sixth objection is that circumcision and baptism are different. One is given to males only, the other to males and females. Murray says that the meaning of circumcision and baptism is essentially the same, as Col 2:11-12 demonstrates. Further, the expansion of blessings expected in the NT explains the inclusion of males and females in infant baptism.
- (vii) The seventh objection is supposed to be the inconsistency of paedobaptists to admit infants to the Lord's table, while circumcised infants in the OT received the Passover. Murray claims that there is no evidence that circumcised infants took the Passover, and that the diet was unsuitable to infants. Murray does not adopt infant communion because baptism represents salvation and union with Christ whereas the Lord's supper signifies that which is consequent to salvation. In other words, the Lord's supper requires intelligent understanding because it is a remembrance, communion, and discerning of the body. (We would say that baptism also requires the intelligent remembrance of sin, of Christ crucified and risen, and of the need to walk in newness of life.)

6. *Whose children are to be baptised.*

- According to Murray, only those who are united to Christ and members of His body have a right to present their children for baptism. This is because the basis of infant baptism is the covenant of God with His people.
- Those who were baptised as adults and have professed faith in Christ can present their children for baptism. Those who were baptised as infants must make a public profession of faith before they can present their children for baptism.

7. *The efficacy of baptism.*

- To Murray, baptism is not the same as the grace which it signifies and seals, neither does it confer nor convey grace. Rather, baptism advertises the great truth of God's grace and guarantees the reality and security of that covenant grace. Therefore, it carries the same efficacy for adults and infants. (To us, such language is confusing. Why, and how, does baptism guarantee the reality and security of grace?)
- For adults, confidence in covenant grace is derived from baptism by faith.
- For children, God saves not in an individualistic, atomistic way, but "God deals savingly with men in their organic corporate relationships." The degree of assurance of grace is in proportion to the extent that parents are faithful to God's requirements in raising children. (To us, such language amounts to salvation that is dependant on the faith of the parents.)

= Murray states things that are obviously biblical, then adds things that are inferred by him.

= Murray relies much on "good and necessary inference," which breaches the Regulative Principle, and are contrary to consistently right hermeneutics (principles of interpretation).

