

John Spilsbury concerning Infants

John Spilsbury (1593 – c. 1668) was an English cobbler and Particular Baptist minister who set up a Calvinist Baptist church in London in 1638. Spilsbury was born in 1593 in London. He was a cobbler at Aldersgate. He was a member of a London Separatist church, which he left in 1633, because of his position on believer's baptism. In 1638, Spilsbury founded the first particular Baptist church in London. [From *Wikipedia*, March 13, 2023]

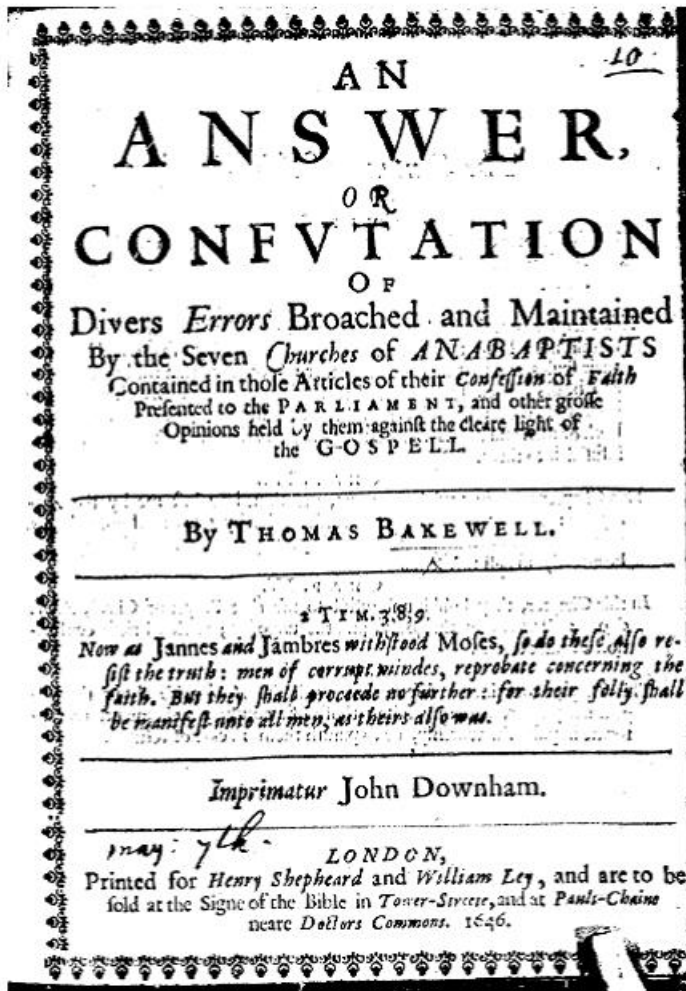
Let me note that the issue of Infant salvation as Bakewell stated was that infants did not have the knowledge of God in Christ, and then he tried to show perhaps some infants did. Spilsbury's position was that there is not enough stated in the Scriptures about those who died in infancy.

Let me ask this, how could Bakewell and others like him be so sure that infants have no knowledge of God in Christ when and if God calls them as He did Moses, who was a fair child as seen by his parents, and then Jeremiah, David's dead son, and later John the Baptist? Certainly John the Baptist had a very good understanding of God in Christ and leaped for joy at the sound of the gospel before he was born. So, our Sovereign God is just as capable of quickening an infant unto the knowledge of God in Christ as He is capable of quickening any adult.

The brethren of the First London Confession fellowship refused pass any judgment on the state of dying infants. However when the re-worded Presbyterian Confession and came forth from the Petty France Church, it spoke of "elect infants dying in infancy." Where did such a statement come from? It came from the Pedobaptist notion that those children who were not children of the covenant, that is the covenant made in infant baptism by the

parents, godfathers and godmothers, these children not of that covenant who would die as infants, they would be damned because they were not elect infants, that is children of the covenant as it was called.

See the next page please.



After the 1646 edition of the London Confession, several Pedobaptists attacked it. Thomas Bakewell, a Presbyterian, was one. The first chapter contains a dialog between Bakewell and John Spilsbury. The remainder contained many wild and false slanders which were commonly charged

against the Anabaptists and didn't relate to the Confession or John Spilsbury's remarks.

Spilsbury and Bakewell's main issue was the doctrine and order of the gospel church. The Baptists of that era held that God would bring all His elect out of Babylon, false religions, and establish them in gospel faith, order, worship and works. The Kingdom of Christ was a visible Kingdom, not an invisible kingdom, which was the Church of Christ in which the saints walked in the visible ordinances of the New Covenant. This was the Baptist position of the visible profession of the gospel system of Jesus Christ. Certainly they understood the secret workings of God among the elect in which some would not become visible such as infants dying in infancy. Their main position was the visible order of Jesus Christ as a fruit of the everlasting Covenant of Grace. This would involve infants and their need to receive baptism and become members of the visible church or children of the covenant so that in case they died they would be recognized as "elect infants."

The Baptist doctrine of the Church outraged the Pedobaptists. Later John Bunyan accused the Baptists (he was not a Baptist except in the mode and subject of baptism) as holding to a visible, universal church made up only of themselves. He was correct.

Baptist writers maintained that there was only one Mount Zion, the sum total of all the visible, gospel churches making up the one Mt. Zion as the members of the gospel church made up one gospel church. I Corinthians 12:13 was regarded as water baptism administered by the Spirit's gift, a minister of the New Covenant. Baptism and church membership are separate acts even though baptism is the gate to church membership and the ordinances.

In the 1600s the Baptist writers felt that I Corinthians 12:13 referred to water baptism into the Particular or Gospel church. None of the Closed

Communion Particular Baptists of that era believed in the invisible church made by an invisible Holy Spirit baptism.

I Corinthians 12:13 is water baptism administered by one of the spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift is a minister gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel. He was commissioned by the gospel church for the work of the ministry either to the world as a begetting minister or settled in the church as a feeding minister. This ministerial distinction was very important. See for example John Clark's Confession of Faith and Samuel Richardson's Divine Consolations and also his The Saint's Delight.

Bakewell states:

In their next article they believe that all who know God and Christ shall have eternal life, but vengeance shall be rendered on all that know not God and Christ: but here I doubt they exclude all infants that die in their infancy from salvation, because they are not capable of such knowledge of God and Christ. You answer saying you know not what is this knowledge, neither hath the Scripture revealed any such that were saved. But was not Jereboam's child saved, when the Lord Himself saith that there was some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel, I Kings 14:15? And did David rejoice that his child was damned, and did he desire to go to hell to his child and rejoice in believing it, 2 Sam. 12:23? And why should not infants that die be saved, when as they may be sanctified, which is eternal life began already? And they may be sanctified as well as Jeremiah and John the Baptist, Jer. 1:5; Luke 1:15. Then, are you a teacher and know not these things?

Taken from page 3 of our edition:

AN ANSWER or CONFUTATION

of

Divers Errors Broached and Maintained

By the Seven Churches of ANABAPTISTS
contained in those Articles of their Confession of

Faith;

Thomas Bakewell

London,

1646

But you say you will not judge them, when as you make it an article of your faith to believe that none shall be saved without this knowledge of God in Christ, which infants are not capable of; yet they may have the seeds of grace in them wrought by the Spirit of God; neither can this be denied, when as they are sanctified by the Spirit of God. *Again if I should believe this article, I fear I should condemn many of God's people, which have the faith of adherence, but not the faith of evidence: for many that live a holy life, may want a clear evidence that God is reconciled to them in Christ, therefore I dare not give my faith to believe this article.*

The First London Confession brethren felt that dying infants and their state belong under the Secret things that belong unto the Lord, and that believers making a profession of faith belonged unto that section of revealed truths that belonged unto us and our children.

De 29:29 The secret *things belong* unto the LORD our God: but those *things which are revealed belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.