

BAPTISM

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

SIGNIFICANCE, SUBJECTS, MODE, DIFFICULTIES,
AND OBJECTIONS.

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They searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts xvii. 11).

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A SEARCH THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES ON
THE SUBJECT OF BAPTISM.

BY

JOHN R. CALDWELL.

Editor of *The Witness*,

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Baptism

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES.

A SEARCH THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES ON THE
SUBJECT OF BAPTISM.

Introduction.

WHATEVER differences may have arisen among Christians as to the proper subjects for Baptism, or as to the mode of administering it, all sections of Christendom,* from Apostolic times, have recognised it to be a Divine institution and have administered the ordinance after some fashion.

In the following pages it is our intention to set forth as simply as possible from the Scriptures, first, its significance; secondly,

*With the exception of the "Friends," or perhaps some few others.

who are the proper subjects for it ; thirdly, the apostolic mode of administration ; and lastly, to consider certain prevalent difficulties and objections to those views for which we contend.

I.

The Significance of Baptism.

EVERY Divinely - instituted ordinance, whether the elaborate ritual of the Old Covenant, or the two simple appointments of the Lord under the New, points to the Lord Jesus Christ, and is intended to set forth some aspect of His Person, character, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory.

Not seeing this, many have regarded modern humanly - devised ordinances as similar in importance to the Mosaic ceremonial, and attend to the carrying of them out much in the same spirit as a religious Jew would attend to those under the law.

But such religious services, not being of God, can form no part of the worship in spirit and in truth, which alone is acceptable.

But baptism, being a Divine appointment, takes us at once to the Cross of Christ.

"I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Luke xii. 50).

This is the great reality of which baptism is but the figure, the substance of which baptism is the shadow.

From 1 Peter iii. 20-22 we learn that the passage of Noah and those that were with him in the ark through the waters of the flood was a like figure to baptism. That is to say, the waters of the flood *pre-figured* that which the waters of baptism commemorate; they both point to the great baptism of Calvary, where all the billows and waves of the judgment of God passed over Him in whom the believer passes from death to life. Psalm lxxxviii. 6, 7, 16:

"Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves. . . . Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; Thy terrors have cut me off."

Jonah ii. 3-5:

"For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas, and the floods compassed me about; all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight, yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head."

Again, in 1 Corinthians x. 2 the passage of the Red Sea is described as a baptism. But whilst the passage through the flood

expresses deliverance from a doomed world, the passage of the Red Sea sets forth deliverance from the power of the enemy and a new start under the guidance and leadership of the Mediator.

Although it is not stated in so many words, nevertheless it is perfectly clear that the passage of Jordan sets forth another aspect of the same truth.

It is not here deliverance from a doomed world, nor yet from a mighty enemy who had held them in bondage, but entrance into possession of the inheritance after wandering "in the wilderness of uncircumcised flesh." Joshua took twelve stones up out of the bed of the river of Jordan, where the feet of the priests had stood, and set them up on the Canaan side. "Jordan" means "the river of judgment," and the twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes, show forth the truth that the people of God are a risen people—"risen with Christ," and joint-heirs with Him of the heavenly inheritance.

But there were also twelve stones taken from Canaan soil and put down in the bed of the river, and it is significantly added, "and

they are there unto this day" (Josh. iv. 8, 9). Thus the people who, in God's reckoning, are "risen with Christ," are also reckoned by God to have been crucified, dead, and buried with Christ. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed." Rom. vi. 3, 4:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

There was no resurrection for the stones that were put down in the bed of the river of judgment, and there is no resurrection, thanks be to God! for that "old man which is corrupt," and which has been judged at the Cross of Christ.

"I have a baptism to be baptised with." How the dark shadow of Calvary hung over the path of the blessed Son of God! Again and again He spoke of it to His disciples as though it were ever before Him.

There "He suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust," "bare our sins in His own body on the tree," "was made sin for us." "re-

deemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Never can we understand what that baptism was to Him. But it has assured our passage through the judgment from death to life dry-shod. Not a drop of the wrath can reach the one who is in the ark; the enemy can never repossess himself of those who have passed through the sea.

All this is shadowed forth in baptism. See Colossians ii. 12 :

"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead."

Here it is plainly taught that the ordinance is a typical representation of the believer's burial and resurrection with Christ. We bury only those who are dead. It is those who are reckoned by God, and who, therefore, ought to reckon themselves to have died and been buried with Christ, who are baptised. It is the privilege of the believer thus to have put before him in this ordinance, beautiful in its simplicity, the position that grace has given Him in Christ the risen One.

As Israel were baptised unto Moses, so is the believer baptised unto Christ. Christ is

His Captain, His Leader, His Law-giver, His Mediator—all that Moses was to Israel, and infinitely more, Christ is to him. Now he is called, as risen from the dead, to walk in “newness of life.” Not the old Adam life over again, but a new life in the spirit and power of the risen Son of God.

In the Lord’s Supper it is the atoning work of the Lord Jesus that is specially set forth, and herein it corresponds with the truth foreshadowed in the *altar*. In baptism it is the truth of regeneration through the death and resurrection of Christ that is prominent, and herein it corresponds rather with what is typified in the *laver*.

Baptism declares that regeneration is no mere educative process. It is not a development of latent good in humanity. It is a positive execution of the old man and the creation of a new man. It is the Adam nature condemned and set aside, and a new nature, even that of Christ, begotten and implanted within.

It exhibits the separation of the believer from the world which abides under the wrath of God. He has passed out from it and is no more

of it. As "dead with Christ," his connection with it is severed; as "risen with Christ," his treasure, his inheritance, and all his vital interests are transferred to the heavenlies.

In baptism the believer is further shown his complete and special triumph over all the power of the enemy. By his death and resurrection the Lord Jesus spoiled principalities and powers—openly triumphed over them—and the believing one shares the victory of his Lord.

He is delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. i. 13). The believer may have little apprehension of these great truths as with joyful alacrity he keeps the ordinance, but it is his privilege to learn them, and to be powerfully influenced by them, and in this he is helped as he passes through the likeness of the death and resurrection of the Lord.

Little is it to be wondered at that Satan should seek to pervert an ordinance so pregnant with the vital truths of the Gospel, and so eminently practical in its bearing upon Christian life and experience.

II.

The Subjects of Baptism.

WE search the New Testament in vain for any instance of the baptism of infants. The original command was :

"Go ye, therefore, and teach [or make disciples of, R.V.] all nations, baptising them [clearly the disciples—not the nations] in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; teaching them [that is the disciples] to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

To this agrees Mark xvi. 15, 16 :

"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

The order here is that uniformly found throughout the New Testament, viz., first faith and then baptism.

The first recorded instance of the carrying out of this injunction is in Acts ii. 41 :

"Then they that gladly received His Word were baptised."

They were thus manifestly dissociated from the unbelieving nation which had rejected

and crucified the Messiah, and confessed their faith in the One who died for them and rose again.

Again, in Acts viii. 12 :

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women."

Why not here as in Matthew xiv. 21 :

"Five thousand men, beside women and children?"

Why no mention of the children? If children had been baptised, how is it possible to account for the omission?

We come next to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts viii. 36):

"What doth hinder me to be baptised? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest."

Thus the order is maintained uniformly—first faith, then baptism.

So also in the case of Saul. It was not until he had received sight, that Ananias, being assured by the Lord that he was "a chosen vessel," commanded that he should tarry no longer, but arise and be baptised (Acts xxii. 16).

We next come to the household of Cornelius :

"Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptised in the Name of the Lord " (Acts x. 46-48).

The gift of the Holy Spirit being the evidence of their faith, baptism follows. Some would contend that the baptism of the Holy Spirit being the great and essential thing, water baptism is of no consequence, and may be dispensed with. The Apostle Peter argued exactly the reverse. Who would dare to forbid water, seeing they had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Next we come to Lydia (Acts xvi. 14, 15):

"Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptised, and her household, she brought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there."

"Here, no doubt, were infants," say some. But Lydia was hundreds of miles from her home. She was travelling on business. We are not informed that she had a husband or children of her own. Even if she had a

young child, it is most unlikely that she would carry about with her on her commercial tours such an encumbrance. It appears from verse 40 that Lydia's household consisted of "brethren" who were "comforted." To build a doctrine upon so slender a foundation as the supposition that there were infants in Lydia's household is surely most unwarrantable.

The next instance is the household of the Philippian jailor. The Word of God was spoken by Paul and Silas to the jailor and to all that were in his house. He

"was baptised, he and all his, straightway . . . and he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

It is clear from this that, however young any who composed the household may have been, they were old enough to *hear* the Word of God, and to *believe* and to *rejoice*.

Sometimes "adult baptism" is spoken of as opposed to infant baptism; but it is by no means sure that all who were baptised were adults; children of very tender years have been known to be true believers, and as such were entitled to baptism. The age at which a believing child may be

baptised is a question that must remain to be decided in each case according to the spiritual discretion of parents, guardians, or pastors.

Next we have the account of the work at Corinth (Acts xviii.), where

“Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house, and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptised.”

The order here, as in all the other cases, is, faith first, and then baptism.

The only other instance of household baptism is that of Stephanas (1 Cor. i. 16).

“And I baptised also the household of Stephanas; besides, I know not whether I baptised any other.”

Of them it is afterward said that they were “the first-fruits of Achaia,” and that “they addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints” (1 Cor. xvi. 15). This is evidence conclusive that, whoever composed the household, they were not infants.

To Noah the Lord said, “Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark.” This is one notable instance of a household in which were eight persons, but no infants. Nor is

it at all singular or uncommon. We have ourselves known households where all were believers, and none were infants.

“Suffer little children to come unto Me,” &c.,

is adduced in support of infant baptism ; but there is no mention of baptism in the passage. Surely parents can bring their children to Christ in a better way than by subjecting them as unconscious infants to an ordinance that Scripture reserves to believers only as an intelligent act of obedience and confession of faith. Let the little ones by all means be brought to Him ; presented to Him in faith ; instructed in the knowledge of Him—as Scripture says, “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”—but we require a better warrant *for baptising them* than a text that has no bearing upon the subject whatever.

It is further argued that as the male children of the seed of Abraham were circumcised, and so brought into the commonwealth of Israel, so all the children of believing parents now ought to be baptised, the privileges under grace being larger than under

law. This argument proceeds upon a mistaken view of the relation that exists between the Old Covenant and the New. Under the Old, it was the children of Abraham according to the flesh, *i.e.*, by natural descent from him, who were owned as the people of Jehovah. All such were to be circumcised on the eighth day.

The analogy now is, that those who are born again, who being believers are therefore children of God, who being Christ's are therefore Abraham's seed spiritually (see Gal. iii. 26-29)—these are entitled to be baptised, and to all the privileges of the household of faith.

“The flesh profiteth nothing.” The child of believing parents is “born after the flesh,” and is by nature a child of wrath. He must, therefore, sooner or later be “born again,” “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible—by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” All fleshly distinctions are done away in Christ as regards spiritual standing and blessing. The Jew has no precedence over the Greek, nor the male over the female. All are one in Christ Jesus.

The initial rite of God's earthly people in the flesh was circumcision. The initial ordinance of God's heavenly, born-again people is baptism. Such was the teaching and practice of the apostles.

The Roman Catholic, the Greek, the Lutheran, and the Anglican Churches all attach divine and saving efficacy to the ordinance of baptism. To this, Scripture, rightly understood, affords no support.

The Church of England Catechism has it thus: "Wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." The Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterian comes perilously near it: Baptism "doth signify and seal our engrafting into Christ." Thus in nearly all the Churches the efficacy of baptism is taught, and the children grow up in the belief that they are members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. What need, then, is there of being born again through belief of the Gospel? Could anything act more effectually as a quietus to the conscience or better lull the soul into a sense of false security?

There are happily in at least the Protestant Churches many "evangelicals" who with marvellous inconsistency subscribe to these doctrines, and yet make nothing of them, but preach the great doctrines of Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration fully and powerfully. Thus many are awakened, and born again, and made truly the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Souls under conviction of sin by the Holy Ghost find no comfort in the efficacy ascribed by their standards to baptism. They flee to Christ just the same as those who never underwent any such ordinance, and in Him alone, and not in ordinances, they find life and peace.

But for the most part Christendom has nothing to show in support of its claim to the title but the certificate of its baptism—christened flesh that grows up in the vast majority of cases in open defiance of God and His Word, of Christ and His Gospel, and yet retains the name and the form of Christianity, without the power.

And we cannot close this part of the subject without reference to the parable of the tares and the wheat. The sowing of the

tares was the enemy's work. The peculiarity of the "tare," or "darnel," was its similarity to the wheat. A peculiarly appropriate representation, not of the heathen or of the avowed infidel, but of those who are professedly Christian, but unregenerate. "The tares are the children of the Wicked One."

Could anything more effectually work this result than the Christianising of the flesh by baptism?

III.

**The Apostolic Mode of
Administration.**

AS already remarked, all divine ordinances are typical. When giving instructions to Moses as to the making of the Tabernacle and its vessels, again and again he was warned to make all things "according to the pattern showed him in the mount." (See Exodus xxv. 9-40, xxvi. 30, xxvii. 8.) In Hebrews ix. 23 we are informed that these were the "patterns of things in the heavens."

Likewise, in the construction of the Temple nothing was left to be devised by David or Solomon. The pattern of it was absolutely divine. (See 1 Chron. xxviii. 11, 12, 19.) To depart from the divine pattern would have been a serious offence against the Lord.

The sin of Ahaz culminated in his setting aside the altar of the Lord and substituting for it another, made according to the pattern of an idolatrous altar which he had seen at Damascus. He also removed the laver

from the brazen oxen that supported it. Human self-will and effrontery could go no further. The record of his sinful life closes here, but it is added, "They brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel" (2 Chron. xxviii. 27, also 2 Kings xvi. 10-17). Of no other king is it written, "that he transgressed sore against the Lord." Concerning the Passover, although for certain specified reasons it was allowable to keep it on the second month instead of the first, yet it is written, "According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it" (Numbers ix. 10-12).

Thus any departure from the divinely-appointed form in the observance of a typical ordinance is no light matter. The type is spoiled, and the teaching it is intended to convey is perverted. In all probability this had to do with the severity of the Lord's sentence upon Moses when he smote the rock instead of speaking to it. The rock had once been smitten—type of the smiting of Christ upon the cross, and this ought never to have been repeated.

Many make light of the mode of baptism,

but looked at as a divine ordinance of a typical nature, the question assumes a most serious aspect.

We have seen that baptism expresses the identification of the believer with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is therefore evident that the form of baptism must in some way represent this. Immersion in water answers to this simply and beautifully, whilst sprinkling bears no analogy to it whatever. This, apart from any other consideration, warrants us in concluding that immersion is the divine order.

"Baptise" is the equivalent in our English translations for the Greek word "*baptizo*." It is thus practically left untranslated, and so the exposure of the falsity of sprinkling as a mode of administering the ordinance was avoided, which would have been the inevitable result of rendering it into simple English, as any Greek lexicon gives it, and every Greek scholar is aware, "to dip or immerse."

Space forbids our giving many authorities on this point; but it may be well to refer to a very few.

The late Dean STANLEY, whose statements as an authority on Church history will not readily be called in question, wrote: "It was an entire submersion in the deep water, where for a moment the waves closed over the bather's head, and he emerges again as from a momentary grave. . . . This was the part of the ony on which the apostles laid so much stress." He further adds: "For the first thirteen centuries the almost universal practice of baptism was that of which we read in the New Testament, and *which is the very meaning of the word baptise*, that those who were baptised were plunged, submerged, immersed into the water. That practice is still continued in Eastern Churches, and the cold climate of Russia has not been found an obstacle to its continuance throughout that vast empire. Even in the Church of England it is still observed in theory;* but in practice it gave way since the beginning of

* The instruction in the Church of England Prayer-Book runs thus: "The priest shall take the child into his hands and . . . if they shall certify him that the child may well endure it, he shall dip it in the water discreetly and warily." In the baptism of such as are of riper years it says: "Then shall the priest dip him in the water or pour water upon him."

the seventeenth century. . . . It had, no doubt, the sanction of the apostles and of their Master; it had the sanction of the venerable Churches of the early ages, and of the sacred countries of the East. Baptism by sprinkling was rejected by the whole ancient Church as no baptism at all, except in the rare case of death-beds or extreme necessity. It (that is immersion) still has the sanction of the powerful religious community which numbers among its members such noble characters as John Bunyan, Robert Hall, and Havelock."

MOSHEIM, the great Church historian, says: "The sacrament of baptism was administered in the first century by an immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font."

CALVIN says: "The word baptise signifies to immerse, and the rite of immersion was practised by the ancient Church."

Dr. CHALMERS says: "The original meaning of the word baptism is immersion, *though we regard it as a point of indifference* whether the ordinance so named be performed in this way or by sprinkling."

To us it seems inexplicable that it should be a "point of indifference" how an ordinance so pregnant with significance is administered ; but still more serious is it to find the admitted innovation thus defended : " It is a striking example of the triumph of common-sense and convenience over the bondage of form and custom," though the same writer (Dean Stanley) acknowledges " the change from immersion to sprinkling has set aside the larger part of the apostolic language regarding baptism, and has altered the very meaning of the word."

Thus the divine ordinance is changed ; it is deprived of its significance, and the superiority of " common-sense " and " convenience " to the Word of God is boldly asserted.

Is it to be wondered at that the enemy of truth should take advantage of such a glaring inconsistency, and use it as a handle against all who profess to know no final appeal in things pertaining to God but the Scriptures.

The following instruction is issued by the Papal authorities : " When a Protestant offers you a pious book praising the Bible to the skies, and attacking at the same time

the truths of our faith and Christian practice, under the pretext that they do not find them in the Bible, *ask him to show you where he finds in the Bible that it is right to baptise little infants, which they do just the same as ourselves."*

Thus by letting go the plain teaching of the Scripture on this point, and substituting for it the tradition of men, the Word of God is "made of none effect," and the citadel of truth exposed to the enemy.

It is worthy of note that the Revised Version gives the correct rendering of 1 Cor. xii. 13, viz. : "For in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body." In all other passages where baptism is in question, whether "in water" or "in the Spirit," the Greek proposition "*en*" is used, the almost invariable rendering of which is "in." The Revisers have elsewhere followed in this the Authorised Version, giving in the text "with water" "and with the Spirit" (see Matt. iii. 11); but in every case the margin gives the proper rendering "in." Common honesty forbade the continuance of the traditional rendering without in some way calling attention to it.

In Acts viii. 38, 39 we read that Philip and the eunuch "went down into the water," and, again, "when they were come up out of the water." We do not know how words could more plainly describe baptism by immersion. Again, we read that "John was baptising in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there" (John iii. 23). What need for "much water" if sprinkling had been the mode adopted?

It is matter of history that the Westminster Assembly in 1643 discussed the question; 24 voted for immersion and 24 for sprinkling. The question was decided by the casting vote of the chairman, Dr. Lightfoot, and so the Church of Scotland, and all Presbyterians who own the Confession of Faith as their standard, are committed to a practice which has no support in Scripture.

We do not think it necessary to pursue this head of our subject further. It seems to us indisputable that baptism by immersion is the only scriptural way, and those who have intelligently submitted themselves to it can testify to the blessing realised in the keeping of this simple ordinance.

IV.

**Difficulties and Objections
Considered.**

TO the minds of not a few who are really in earnest to arrive at the truth about baptism, certain difficulties and objections are almost sure to arise. Some of those most frequently met with may now be considered.

I. Some say there is**NO COMMAND TO BE BAPTISED.**

It is only an instruction to the baptiser.

In reply, we would refer to the Lord's own words:

“He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved”
(Mark xvi. 16).

This by no means implies that baptism is essential to salvation, as some have tried to make out; for the way of salvation is many times stated without any reference to baptism, nevertheless the fact that the Lord so couples the ordinance with the faith even in

one instance shows that it is His will that baptism should follow believing. In Acts ii. 41 we read :

“ Then they that gladly received His Word were baptised.”

Surely no one will contend that they were baptised apart from their desire for it, or at least their consent ! Still less will anyone contend that in so allowing themselves to be immersed, they did it without being made aware that in this they were fulfilling the will of the Lord. It was an act of faith, or else it was sin, for “ whatsoever is not of faith is sin ” (Rom. xiv. 23). If it was not obedience to the expressed will of the Lord, then it was either subjection to man or it was self-will.

But again, in Acts x. 48 we find Peter

“ Commanded them to be baptised in the Name of the Lord.”

Did he utter this command as from himself, or was he only commanding that concerning which the Lord had made known His will ? Surely there can be no reasonable doubt that the apostle enjoined it upon them in accord-

ance with the Lord's own command in Mark xvi. 16 and Matthew xxviii. 19. We do not understand how any simple-minded believer could evade compliance with the Lord's expressed will on the ground that it was not a command.*

II. Some say it was

NOT INTENDED FOR THIS DISPENSATION, and back up the assertion by quoting Paul's words in 1 Cor. i. 17 :

"For Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel."

But although Paul was not specially commissioned to baptise, we nevertheless find that in some instances he did baptise (see 1 Cor. i. 14-16). In Acts xvi. we are not told whether it was Paul or Silas that baptised Lydia and the Philippian jailor ; but whoever did it, they saw to it that it was done. So in Acts xviii. 8 Crispus was baptised by Paul himself ; but

"Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptised,"

* Suppose I instruct one of my elder children to take one of the younger ones to school. How would it look for the younger one to refuse, and give as a reason that there was no command to him (the younger one) to go ?

not by Paul, but by Silas, or Timotheus, or others. The point is, they were not left unbaptised. It was an ordinance that required no apostolic or priestly authority to render it valid; indeed, Paul himself was probably baptised by one known only as

“A certain disciple named Ananias.”

Therefore, whilst Paul's gift fitted him for the higher work of ministering the Word and unfolding mysteries that had been kept secret from the foundation of the world, any of his helpers was competent to baptise those who believed, and so relieve the apostle.

His thankfulness that he had baptised so few of the Corinthians was no disparagement to the ordinance, but because of the carnal way in which they had been forming parties in the Church, saying, “I am of Paul,” &c. He did not thank God that so few of them had been baptised, but that he had baptised so few of them. So far as we can gather, they had all been baptised.

We judge, then, that the apostle's words afford no evidence that the ordinance was not for this dispensation, but rather the contrary.

But from a careful comparison of the following Scriptures it must be evident that the commission of the Lord (including baptism) is essentially one and the same in the four Gospels and in the Acts:

Matthew xxviii. 19:

"ALL NATIONS," in contrast to chap. x. 5: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles."

"TEACH," or "make disciples of."

"BAPTISING THEM." Could *only* apply to such as accepted the teaching of the apostles.

"TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE," &c. Could not apply to the nations as such, but to those who became learners, and as disciples of the Lord were baptised.

"I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS,"

"EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE AGE."

Mark xvi. 15:

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD . . . to every creature," agrees with 'all nations' (Matthew).
PREACH THE GOSPEL." The method by which they were to be taught or discipled.

"HE THAT BELIEVETH." The only way of becoming a disciple.

"AND IS BAPTISED." Following faith or discipleship—agreeing with Matthew.

"SHALL BE SAVED." Therefore, to be taught to observe, &c., as in Matthew.

"HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT," *i.e.*, does not become a disciple, therefore not eligible for baptism—baptism not mentioned here—"shall be *condemned*."

Verse 20—They fulfilled the commission, and the Lord fulfilled His promise. Exactly in correspondence with Matthew.

Luke xxiv. 47:

"REPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS." According to Mark, "the Gospel."

"AMONG ALL NATIONS," as in Matthew and Mark. (See above.)

Verse 49—"POWER FROM ON HIGH," in order to their being "witnesses of these things."

John xv. 26, 27:

"THE COMFORTER," "THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH," to enable them to be "witnesses of these things."

John xiv. 12:

"GREATER WORKS"—"Because I go to the Father;" corresponding with Mark xvi. 20.

Acts i. 8:

"WITNESSES," as in Luke xxiv. 49; John xv. 26, 27. Unto Me"—personal, special testimony during the period that Israel nationally is set aside.

"POWER FROM ON HIGH," corresponding to Matthew, "I am with you," and Mark xvi. 20, "The Lord working with them."

Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria (contrast to Matt. x. 5), "and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Exactly as in Matthew, Mark, Luke.

We conclude, then (*a*), that although the special form of the Gospel of the Grace of God, as revealed to and by the Apostle Paul, is not here given, yet it was the testi-

mony to Himself in this present age that the Lord had in view in the whole of the instructions given ;

(b) That the four Gospels and the Acts fully agree, and that, in such a way, as to include the Gospel as preached by Paul. Though Paul's Gospel was not then fully revealed, yet there was nothing in any of the Lord's words inconsistent with it ; on the contrary, room is left within the broad lines given by the Lord for the filling in of all the subsequent details as revealed to and preached by Paul ;

(c) That there is not a word in any of the Lord's utterances as to " the kingdom," but rather testimony to Him as the rejected One in the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven whilst He is at the right hand of God ;

(d) That the preaching of the Gospel, as recorded in the Acts, fulfils all the conditions of the Lord's commission, and affords a practical illustration or object-lesson for the rest of the dispensation.

We would observe that the great Gospel work of the last 1860 years, and especially of

the last 50 years, has been founded upon the Lord's own commission: His command and His promise, as given in these Scriptures, having been the motive and strength of the work. And, further, that although the testimony of this present age is the fulfilment of the Lord's commission, and has ever been so regarded by His faithful servants, it does not follow that the same commission may not have further fulfilment after the Church is removed and the Pauline testimony closed.

III. Some object: "I have been a believer for many years ;

BAPTISM IS AN INITIAL ORDINANCE;

it is therefore out of place that I should be baptised now."

Many godly persons seeing the truth concerning baptism have been hindered by this consideration.

If baptism be an initial ordinance, much more so was circumcision, which the child eight days old was to be subjected to (Gen. xvii. 12, Phil. iii. 5). This had been neglected all the forty years of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness (Josh. v. 5). Many

of them must have been 20 to 40 years of age when they entered Canaan, but no such plea is advanced as its being "an initial ordinance," and therefore out of place in an adult.

In Acts xix. 1 we read of "certain disciples" at Ephesus who had no doubt been believers in the Lord Jesus as the true Messiah for some time. They had been disciples of John, and had been baptised with John's baptism, but were evidently ignorant of the great truths concerning the glorifying of the Lord Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit.

The fact of their having been baptised by John is ignored, and they are rebaptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. No question is raised on the score of their having been baptised already, or of their having been believers for years. The fact of any command of the Lord having been overlooked or neglected through ignorance, is no warrant for continuing to neglect it when once it is known. The divine principle is, "When he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty" (Lev. v. 3). "He that loveth Me keepeth

My words." Surely the words that came from the lips of the risen Lord concerning this ordinance are worthy of being kept, pondered, and obeyed.

IV. It is contended by some that, according to 1 Cor. vii. 14,

THE CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS ARE HOLY,
AND THAT THEREFORE THEY ARE
ENTITLED TO BAPTISM.

But in what sense are they holy? For in whatever sense they are "holy," the unbelieving (heathen) husband or wife is "holy" also, and if the argument holds good they also should be baptised. We find a somewhat analogous use of the word in 1 Tim. iv. 5. Meats that under the Mosaic law were declared unclean and defiling, are no longer to be so regarded; they are "sanctified" by the Word of God and prayer. That is to say, they are set apart thus for the use of the believer, and he may partake of them with a good conscience.

So is it in 1 Cor. vii. Under the old dispensation, when the men of Israel married strange wives, that is, wives not of the seed

of Abraham, they were obliged, in pursuance of the will of God, to put them away, and also the children that were born of them. (See Ezra x. 2, 3.) The question with the Corinthian believers was, If a husband or a wife become a Christian, does this involve separation from the unbelieving husband or wife? And also does it involve separation from children sons and daughters who are not yet converted? No, says the apostle; the marriage yoke is recognised by God as indissoluble on any such ground.

The unbelieving partner is sanctified by the believing one relatively, so that it is not defiling to remain together or to retain the children in the family and seek to "gain" them for God. And it is added, "Else were your children unclean." Not the children of those parents one of whom is a heathen, but the children of all the Corinthian saints, for they are all "by nature the children of wrath, even as others," until they are "born again." The passage, therefore, instead of teaching a "sanctification" that entitles to baptism, teaches the very opposite, for it emphasises the uncleanness by nature of all,

even the children of believing parents. To found household baptism on this passage necessarily involves more than is intended, viz., the baptising of the unbelieving husbands and wives of Christians.

V. Upon the fact that baptism in the Name of the three Persons of the Godhead is not mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, some have built a theory that

THE LORD'S OWN COMMAND WAS HELD
IN ABEYANCE WITH A VIEW TO
A FUTURE DISPENSATION,

and that Christian baptism ought to be in the Name of the Lord Jesus only.

As regards the observance of the Lord's Supper, we have the command of the Lord Himself, "This do in remembrance of Me." Have we, then, no command at all applicable to this present dispensation as to baptism? Did the Apostles during the period covered by the Acts not proceed upon the Lord's own command as recorded in Matthew xxviii. 19 and Mark xvi. 16? Or had they some other command, of which no record is left us, upon which they founded the new formula? It

appears to us most reasonable to conclude that they simply acted upon the Lord's command. There is no evidence that the recorded words in the Acts constitute in any instance a formula. On the contrary, the words differ in each case. We have, "in the Name of Jesus Christ" (Acts ii. 38), "in the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts viii. 16), "In the Name of the Lord" (Acts x. 48). Also, the prepositions used are various; "*Epi*" ii. 38, "*Eis*" viii. 16, "*En*" x. 48. It is the character of the baptism that is thus brought out. It is in His Name, as being by His authority (Acts x. 48); it is unto (*Eis*) Him as Leader and Lord, even as the children of Israel were baptised (*Eis*) unto Moses (Acts viii. 16); and it is upon (*Epi*) His Name, that is as the ground of their confession in the face of the national rejection of Him as the Christ (Acts ii. 38).

Those who say that the Lord's command in Matthew xxviii. 19 does not apply now, would hardly go on to say that the subsequent words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age," do not apply now; yet surely the whole passage applies

to the period during which the Lord is absent in person, but invested with all authority at the right hand of the Father, and present in and with His servants by His Holy Spirit.

In Acts xix. 2, 3 we think a side-light is thrown upon this point. The question of the apostle, upon finding that they were ignorant of the descent of the Holy Spirit, is, "Unto what, then, were ye baptised?" Their reply explained the position. In John's baptism no mention was made of the Holy Spirit as being then given, but as a gift to be bestowed afterward by the Mightier One who was to succeed John. If they had been baptised as those in Acts ii. 38, they would not only have heard of the gift of the Spirit, but would have received Him. The Lord's own command involved this.

VI. Referring to Romans vi. 4, the question has been asked,

HOW DOES BURIAL INTO DEATH APPLY
IN REFERENCE TO THE FATHER
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Such a question shows a confounding of the

authority for baptism and the result of it with that which baptism symbolises. Baptism never can or did signify anything else than death, burial, and resurrection. But it is through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus that those who believe are brought into new relationships never before revealed. Baptism "*in the Name of the Father*" expresses the nearness of the relationship into which the believer is brought, even as a son, to cry, "Abba, Father." "*In the Name of the Son*" involves the efficacy of that glorious work accomplished for us on the Cross, and all the glory of that union with Him which gives its peculiar character to our calling and standing as "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." "*In the Name of the Holy Spirit*" involves all that wherein as indweller He leads, teaches, comforts, guides, unites in one as members of the Body of Christ, revealing Him to us.

The triune Name reminds us of the Aaronic blessing upon Israel: "Jehovah bless thee and keep thee; Jehovah make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; Jehovah lift up His countenance upon thee,

and give thee peace" (Numb. vi. 25-27); and then it is added, "And they shall put My Name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." Even thus is it in baptism; it is a seal to them that the Father will keep them, that the Son will be gracious unto them, and that the Holy Spirit will give them peace.

VII. Some assert that

"BAPTISM CAME IN THE ROOM OF
CIRCUMCISION."

It is admitted that both are initial rites: the one for the seed of Abraham according to the flesh upon the child being eight days old; the other upon becoming not only "Abraham's seed," but "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26-29).

Those who had been circumcised in the flesh were nevertheless also baptised, and when certain of the Jews sought to impose circumcision upon the Gentile converts the controversy was settled by asserting that salvation, whether of Gentile or Jew, was by grace alone through faith, and not in any way connected with ordinances. How easy

it would have been, then, to show that "baptism came in the room of circumcision," and that having been baptised, there was no need for them to be circumcised, if that had been true!

But Scripture teaches very differently as to circumcision, viz, that every believer has been circumcised without hands in the circumcision of Christ, *i.e.*, not the rite of circumcision to which He, in common with all the male children of Israel, was subjected in His infancy, but His cutting off at the Cross, "the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (see Col. ii. 11). And the practical power of the Cross, even death to the flesh known experimentally, is that inward circumcision of which the outward was a figure, "circumcision of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter: whose praise is not of men but of God" (Rom. ii. 29).

The Old Covenant carnal ordinance of circumcision is not superseded by a new ordinance, but being one of the shadows of the past, it is superseded by the great spiritual reality to which it pointed forward.

It may nevertheless be admitted that there is some analogy between the two ordinances of the New Covenant, viz., Baptism and the Lord's Supper and the two leading ordinances of the Old Covenant, viz., Circumcision and the Passover, and the analogy is most significant. As already shown, *all* ordinances point to the Cross of Christ. Circumcision shows the putting to death of the flesh ; Baptism shows the burial of that which has already been put to death. The Passover shows the shedding of the blood of atonement, the Lord's Supper shows the death to have taken place before, and the blessedness of feasting with the Risen One on the results of His accomplished redemption.

VIII. In some minds difficulty attaches to such passages as Acts ii. 38, because

IT APPEARS TO CONNECT THE REMISSION
OF SINS AND THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT
WITH SUBMISSION TO THE
ORDINANCE.

But the difficulty disappears when the distinction is seen in the ways of God when dealing with Jews and with Gentiles.

A Jew of old was not only a sinner by nature, dead and guilty before God, he was also one of the chosen people—one of the commonwealth of Israel—and as such invested with many privileges. The nation as such was held guilty of, and charged with the murder of their Messiah. Hence faith in Him had to be accompanied by the outward confession in baptism of that Name which, as a nation, they had despised and rejected.

No such special form of guilt attached to the Gentile, and we believe this accounts for baptism, in the one case, being UNTO THE REMISSION OF SINS and the gift of the Spirit; and, in the other case, being administered subsequently to forgiveness and the bestowment of the Spirit.

Compare Acts ii. 38 with Acts x. 43-48. So with Saul of Tarsus; being a Jew, he is told to arise and “be baptised, and wash away his sins:” thus dissociating himself completely from the guilt of the nation.

Still, as a matter of fact, even in Acts ii., it was only those who by faith “gladly received the Word” that were baptised. There could

at that time have been no possible motive for desiring to be baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus, but a previous faith in Him as the risen Son of God.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, whereby all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, are constituted one Body in Christ is the common heritage of all who are His. It is in the Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xii. 13) that this truth is clearly set forth: "In one Spirit were we all baptised into one Body" (R.V.). It is not a privilege attained by some and vainly sought after by others. The Corinthian Church was by no means composed of model believers; on the contrary, it was the most faulty of all the Churches addressed by the Apostle. Yet he makes no exception or qualification. If in Christ, then they were so by the baptism of the Spirit, and thereby members one of another.

But they were also "made to drink into one Spirit." And herein lies the difference between one and another. All believers have been baptised into one Body—all have in some measure drunk—but all have not been filled. Some drink but little, and have

little of the joy and comfort of the Spirit ; others drink till they are filled with joy and power. " Be ye filled with the Spirit " is as plain a command as " Be not drunk [filled] with wine " (Eph. v. 18).

Three questions arise :

" *What doth hinder ?* " (Acts viii. 36).

" *Can any man forbid ?* " (Acts x. 47).

" *Why tarriest thou ?* " (Acts xxii. 16).

Sometimes there are hindrances to be overcome. God is able to make a plain path for those who desire to do His will.

Sometimes a parent forbids, and the child pauses and waits upon God, and it is a matter of common experience that in due time the parent withdraws the prohibition. The waiting time is not lost, and the willing heart is meantime accepted of the Lord.

Sometimes there is a needless tarrying, a putting off, without any sufficient reason. Let any who thus delay give heed to the words of the Psalmist : " I made *haste*, and *delayed not* to keep Thy commandments " (Psa. cxix. 60).

" IN KEEPING OF HIS COMMANDMENTS
THERE IS GREAT REWARD."

v.

Baptism and Fellowship.

“MUST a Christian be *scripturally* baptised before he can be permitted to sit at the Lord’s Table?”

To many of God’s people the question of “Scriptural Baptism” presents no difficulty whatever. They have been thoroughly grounded in the truth that it is *believers* who are to be baptised, and that baptism is an *immersion*. One would think that a careful reading of the Acts of the Apostles should leave no doubt on the mind of anyone who seeks light on the subject. Nevertheless we have to face the obvious fact that, owing to life-long environment amid defective teaching, many believers are not clear as to baptism. Yea, there are devoted children of God, adorned with the beauties of Christ, who do not see baptism as we see it. We believe they are as willing to bow to the will of God as we are; and perhaps they have suffered more for Christ than not

a few of us who can claim to have been scripturally baptised. Are we to refuse them their place at the Table of their Lord and ours because they cannot bow to an ordinance which they do not see to be the will of God? I remember an aged brother who desired fellowship, while at the same time explaining that although ready to submit to the will of God, he was not prepared to be immersed, as he believed he had been baptised when an infant. The meeting gave the old man the right-hand of fellowship. We believed he had "the willing mind" (2 Cor. viii. 12), and that God had received him (Rom. xiv. 3). We felt we had no Scripture to exclude him from his birth-right place at the Table. I think this simple example cannot fail to show how mischievous and unscriptural it would be to reject one whom God has received, and whose only offence is that he cannot see eye-to-eye with us on baptism.

It may be contended that baptism was strictly commanded and practised in apostolic times. True, but there were many other things strictly commanded and prac-

tised in those times. Why select *one* of those commandments and make it a virtual test of fellowship? Scripture says we are to owe no man anything (Rom. xiii. 8). That is as clearly a commandment as baptism. Why, therefore, should not the "debt question" be made a test of fellowship? Are those who contend for baptismal fellowship prepared for this? If so, they must be prepared for far more "tests" than one or two. In short, if you go outside the list of sins which Scripture specifies as excluding from the fellowship of saints, you must be prepared for quite a catalogue of questions on which the applicant for fellowship must be clear before you can receive him.

To make everything hinge on the observance of an outward rite must of necessity operate as an instrument of oppression. If we believe a brother to be eating of the spiritual bread, and drinking the wine of heavenly communion—if he is sitting at the table of *fellowship with God*—how can we refuse him his place at the table of *fellowship with us*? To those who reject God's

children who are not "scripturally baptised" it must surely be a solemn question: "What if our God were to act on the same principle?" What if *He* were to refuse them fellowship? Consider how many devoted children of God would thus be kept outside the veil until they were scripturally baptised! How vain for us to attempt to bind on earth that which is not bound in heaven, and to shut out those whom God shuts in with Himself!

Those who are against the reception of believers who have not received scriptural baptism, one and all ignore the fact that, owing to false teaching, those who are not immersed do nevertheless believe that they have fulfilled the Lord's requirement. And so generally has this erroneous view of baptism been received and held, that the possibility of its being wrong never occurs to many who truly love the Lord, and according to their light seek to please Him. Even when the question is raised they are often unwilling to face it, not that they would willingly disobey the Lord, but simply because they do not think it possible that so

many good and true Christians can be in error.

The question, then, is not one of obedience or disobedience, but one of *intelligence*, and this is proved by the acknowledged fact that very many who hold to infant sprinkling are not only believers, but godly, devoted persons, serving the Lord in much humility, with blessing on their work and joy in their souls.

It is not generally disputed that baptism was the initial act of the believer, and therefore preceded the fellowship of the Lord's Table. The difficulty is really the misapprehension as to what is baptism. Whilst giving our mind thus, it will be evident from the foregoing papers on the subject that we do not underrate the value of the ordinance, or treat lightly the perversion of it so prevalent. But as a matter of experience, those who have been received whilst holding to infant sprinkling have in nearly every case become ere long exercised as to the ordinance, and have sought to be immersed as believers. The obstacle was not an insubject will, but a lack of intelligence

on the subject. The question resolves itself into this: Are such believers to be kept in the outside place until they are instructed in the truth as to baptism and obey it, or are they to be received because they belong to Christ and taught the way of the Lord more perfectly afterwards? The latter, we believe, is pleasing to the Lord.

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