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Scriptures, with a plea for mutually
"forbearing one another in love"

by

F. C. JENNINGS

Partly given as an address at Plainfield, N. J.
June 12, 1924

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MANY have asked me to give the scriptural basis for my convictions as to water baptism, and in the hope of bringing the conflicting "views" of brethren somewhat nearer together at least, and looking to the good mercy of the Lord to further that desire, *and for nothing else*, I have complied.

Nor may a personal word of introduction be out of place; for the experience of one is often of service to others. I was made to repeat, in my early days, from the Church of England catechism: "In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." Can you not understand how, when the light of God broke into my soul, I repudiated with loathing what, in the accepted meaning of the terms, was so utterly subversive of the teaching of Scripture as to new birth? Little was I attracted to *any* teaching on baptism that would embrace children at all—was rather repelled by it, and if I now hold anything of that kind, it is *in spite of* rather than *because of* the errors of tradition.

Deep, I assure you, were the soul-exercises through which I passed, and for some time my leanings were strongly toward what is known as "believer's baptism;"

but before I could carry out those leanings, another line of truth, of which I had been ignorant, came to me and prevented it. For in those days (1877) there were several young men who were distressed at the difference on this subject, whilst we all were quite sure that the Scriptures were fully sufficient to give us all the light needed, and that they could not give two opposing answers to our inquiries. In this assurance we met at one another's houses to cry to the Lord together, and to search the Scriptures, taking counsel together on what they taught us. These meetings led me far on the road to my present convictions which I desire to communicate to you, or rather, to put before you.

But before doing so, let me ask three things of you:

1.—Never to let differences on these points sever you from, or weaken your love to, and confidence in, beloved brethren who may not share your convictions: Satan has used it much for that purpose. Before saying another word I would ask your promise as to this by raising your hands. Thank you.

2.—Do not, I beg of you, think that you "know it all," and that nothing can possibly be said on this theme that can give YOU any light: we shall never learn, if we think we have no need.

3.—Most of you have heard "the clapper strike one side of the bell" only, so now for a little listen, with as little prejudice as you can, to the sound as it hits the other; or, in scriptural phrase, "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

And to this I would add, that so anxious have many of us been lest our enemy should come in among us and awaken strife on this subject, that, whilst those who

take an opposite position have been outspoken, we have kept almost absolute silence as to it—a silence which appears to have had a rather bad effect in some quarters, where it has been taken for granted as being due to having *nothing to say!* Well, let us see if that was the reason for the silence, and let us go along together as far as we possibly can.

First then, we are surely of one mind as to the soul-destroying errors of baptismal-regeneration, as it is termed. Our hands are close-locked together here, I am sure. Nor shall we loosen that clasp, I trust, in saying that water-baptism will never take to heaven. Nay, more, that the ordinance is not linked in Scripture with Heaven at all; but with the *earth and its government*. To this we shall recur later. Further, that it is not an act of obedience on the part of the baptized. Ah, do I feel a loosening of the hand-grip? Perhaps—for it is constantly asserted in some quarters that those who are immersed since making a profession of salvation, have “obeyed the Lord in baptism,” while others, like myself, who have been baptized to His name in infancy, and who dare not treat this Name as of no account and repeat the rite, of course remain, by implication, *disobedient* to the Lord in that respect. As long as that mistake is held, is it any wonder that they press it in season and out? Who would compromise or be silent as to “disobedience to the Lord?” How can the slightest respect be accorded, or confidence be given to those walking in “disobedience?”

It is a serious charge to make; and even when accompanied by mollifying expressions, not easy to bear; nor should it be made without being clearly supported from Scripture. But far from that, there is not one single

letter of Scripture that, when fairly considered with its context, justifies it. On the contrary, it *obscures* the truth of obedience that is *really* connected with baptism.

For there was but one commission to baptize given by our Lord; and in it, the full responsibility is placed upon the baptizers—not the baptized (Matt. 28). It is they who have to be obedient to that commission, whilst as to the baptized, it is a privilege admitting them to a position on the earth in which they are pledged to a *life of obedience*, as we shall see as we go on; but does that belittle its importance? Is it easier to live a whole life of obedience than to carry out an ordinance in one minute? Nor are the details attending the giving of that commission valueless in helping us to discern the significance of the ordinance.

First, note that it is only recorded in what we may call “the Gospel of the King,” Matthew. In this, too, note carefully that the Lord Jesus is not, when He gives it, in heaven, but still stands *on the earth*; and further, on a “mountain where He had appointed His disciples” to meet Him. Perhaps you think that there is no significance to be attached to such details. If so, I cannot agree with you. How often is the Lord’s change of position of deep significance. When He goes to the seaside, *that* has its voice; and when He goes into the house, of that we are not told aimlessly, as I could show were that my theme (Matt. 13: 1, 36). So we note that there are three mountains referred to in Matthew, and they all throw their light on one another—all speaking the same truth.

1.—That *on which* the Sermon was preached, in which the KING announced the *principles* of His KINGDOM. Matt. 5-7.

2.—The “Holy Mount” of Transfiguration, where, in a symbolic scene, He as KING appeared in His KINGDOM. Matt. 17.

3.—This mount from which He, as KING, sends out His messengers, to bring all the nations *into* His KINGDOM. Matt. 28.

You see that the mountain always speaks (as we should naturally expect it to do, since it *dominates* the surrounding lower country) of domination, or *government*. So our Lord, having purchased the earth with His precious blood, and before ascending to Heaven, takes His stand on the *Mount*, and sends forth His messengers to announce His claims, and to bring the Gentiles or nations to accept Him as their true Lord, even though, for the time, the earth is left to Satan, and his throne is still in it (Rev. 2: 13).

But His Kingdom is not a Kingdom of *power* yet, but of *truth*, and so, His subjects must be—not soldiers—but “*disciples*,” or “*learners*” of truth; and they are made such, or disciplined,* first by baptizing and then by teaching; and these, I take it, are the “keys of the Kingdom” put into man’s hand, as in Matthew 16: 19. But there must always be the submission of the *will*. Nor is there any limitation as to *age*, so as to lead us to infer that little children must not be disciplined, and in the absence of this, the inevitable deduction is that they do form a part of those Gentiles to *be* disciplined.

*As in the consecration of Aaron it is written, “Thou shalt take the anointing oil and *pour it* on his head and *anoint* him.” The pouring *was* the anointing, so the baptizing *is* the discipling (to be followed by the teaching)—not two consecutive acts in either case.

But note that there is no insistence in the Scriptures of any examination *preceding* baptism—all are ungrudgingly welcomed. That verse in Acts 8: 37 has been interpolated by those who supposed that such an examination must precede baptism, and so felt that some such word was needed, and added it, but there is no question as to its being an interpolation, as is evidenced by the Revised Version omitting it entirely. Nor is there one word in that divine commission about the baptized being first “saved,” and having “eternal life,” or “forgiveness, or of “heaven,” or of being united to Christ there.

This commission shows that the command was given to the disciples, so the obedience to the command must rest with *them*. No one can baptize himself, and a command, which, *from its nature*, could not be obeyed was never given. Baptism then, as the initiatory rite of Christianity, is the ordinance that defines, and in that sense admits into, a sphere on earth in which Jesus is owned as its true Lord. Thus people are—but *only in an outward way*—made disciples or “Christian;” precisely as in the earlier days it was by the ordinance that closely in its significance corresponds with it—“circumcision”—that people were, in the same outward way, made Jews. By that mark they were separated from the Gentiles, and so baptism is the line of demarcation between that part of the earth that is still under Satan’s unrivalled sway, and that part in which professedly its absent but true King is confessed.

But in this connection you have doubtless heard it claimed that a child was circumcized *because he was a Jew, not to make him one*, and thus by analogy one is baptized because he *is* a Christian, and not to make him one. But the premise is quite incorrect, as can readily

be seen if applied to adults. A stranger was actually and literally *made* a Jew outwardly by circumcision, and an infant in the same way was made a Jew outwardly (Romans 2: 28)—if not circumcized, he was cut off, as not being a Jew at all (Gen. 17: 14), and put outside among the uncircumcised where he belonged. Just so one is made outwardly a Christian by the ordinance of baptism, but we shall see that clearer as we go on.

Now we see how absolutely this is confirmed by a fact that I venture to say will rather startle some of you, for you have not thought of it. Find one letter of scriptural proof that the twelve apostles were themselves ever baptized with Christian baptism at all. By that of John possibly, but that is quite distinct from Christian, as a reference to Acts 19: 1-5 will prove. Nay, how *could* they be, for Christian baptism is, we all admit, "to Christ's death," and therefore could not be administered until *after* that death. Further, it was at its very first occurrence (which is always of peculiar significance) in order that *the Holy Ghost might be received*, and therefore that Holy Spirit must have come *before* any could be so baptized. But that was not until Pentecost itself, so that no one could have been baptized with Christian baptism before that. Where is there one single hint of the apostles being baptized after that "sound of a rushing mighty wind," on that, or any other day? How could they be? Who was there to baptize them? It is true we were told the other day of some good people who baptized each other; nor did the speaker seem to see anything incongruous in that; but there is not one letter of Scripture to justify it—they acted both unscripturally and ignorantly, as so many do. But if baptism is an act of obedience to

the Lord, how is it that the very apostles themselves failed thus to be obedient? If *that* were its significance why should they have not served each other in carrying it out by baptizing one another? Are *they* too under the ban of not "obeying the Lord in baptism" with all its consequences? Israel did not flee from Egypt as a matter of obedience to a divine law—the test for that obedience began *after* their baptism to Moses in the cloud and sea; and so with us, *after* baptism to Christ.

But grant then, if only for the sake of argument, that water-baptism is the divinely appointed way of admission into a position of discipleship on the earth, then only those who are *in* can admit those who are not. The latch of the door is on the inside, as it is written, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted," and this, as we shall see, may be done in baptism. The coming of the Spirit formed that sphere at Pentecost, and the apostles were thus in it, indeed themselves formed it, and on the part of the Lord admitted all who desired the privilege of entering the only place on earth in which He, its true Lord, was acknowledged and was to be forever obeyed, thus having not only the privileges but the responsibilities of discipleship. I sincerely trust that we can all go hand in hand thus far. We most certainly should do so.

But now let me go further and say that if you would be scripturally intelligent as to this subject, you must not confuse the two spheres, Heaven and Earth, Eternity and Time, as is nearly always done by those who press what I think may fairly be called "post-regeneration-immersion;" they must ever be distinguished. So people are not baptized in Scripture *because* of their sins being forgiven. On the contrary, we have on the very first occasion of

Christian baptism, the very opposite: they are baptized with that forgiveness, in some sense, being *still before them*. Now if water-baptism were to express what had already taken place in the soul of its subjects, then in not one single instance could it have contravened or denied that. But at Pentecost, this is absolutely and incontrovertibly done in 3000 cases, as any one can see, for they were baptized "*for remission of sins.*" Therefore (and I pray you mark it well), the meaning of the ordinance is not that those baptized are "forgiven," or are "saved," or even have "life," or a "good conscience," or have "put on Christ," but rather that all these blessings *as far as the earth and its government go*, are what they desire to obtain *by the baptism*.

Let us take another very striking evidence of this. Saul of Tarsus has been arrested when hot-foot in persecution of the Church of God. Do you think that he had any idea of being a "saint" then? Surely not. Precisely like those 3000 who were "cut to the heart" with a sense of awful guilt, it was anything but a sense of sanctity or of being "saved" that led them to baptism. So it was with Saul, Ananias comes and counsels him to *arise, be baptized*, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22: 16). Now you all know that no one ever washes *because clean*, but always to *become so*—we shall surely agree as to *that*. No one therefore needs first to be clean, or with sins washed away, in order to be baptized, for the cleansing from sins is the very object of the baptism, and by which it is actually effected!

If that were not in the word of God many of you would be greatly offended, for your whole idea is that people must first "believe," and that that belief brings with it

forgiveness of sins, and so the sins are already washed away, and it is to express this that they are baptized. The reverse was the case at Pentecost and with Saul—then surely if that is the way you have looked on it, *you have failed to see the significance of baptism altogether*. You must forgive me for pressing this on you—it is for your help.

The root of the mistake is in not seeing that there is a position *on earth*, in which the Lord Jesus is professedly or confessedly (I care not which word is used, the one word is translated both ways in Scripture) owned as its true Sovereign-Lord; and that there is a forgiveness and a washing away of sins in connection with the entry into that sphere, a forgiveness that is not eternal, but conditional on subsequent conduct. Thus there are *two* cleansings, *two* forgivenesses—the one vital and eternal, the other governmental and earthly.

I am aware that so little is taught as to this, and the confusion in which we are living is so great, that it is not easy to grasp; so then let me try and make clear by an illustration what is meant by a “governmental forgiveness,” or a washing away of sins that is not eternal, but has to do with the earth and its government. Suppose one of our States, say our State of New Jersey, should revolt from the Federal Government at Washington. At once every individual in New Jersey becomes, *because of his position*, a “rebel.” The whole State, as a State, would lie under that ban. But after a time, there are individuals in it who profess their desire to give in their adhesion to the U. S. Government. To do this they would have to *change their position*, and get out of the State. But suppose that could be effected by being baptized, and in that

ordinance, changing their position, burying all their past, disavowing all present complicity with the rebellion, take the Washington Government for their own. Do you not see how their sin of rebellion might truly be said to be "*washed away*" by the water of baptism? They would thus take a new position in which they most certainly would have their households with them. All that would be needed would be a change of *will*. But it would not *necessarily* mean that there had been a genuine change in their "condition" or sentiments. *That would have to be proved by their subsequent obedience*, and if they were found to be in communication with the rebellion again, it would be worse for them than at first. All this is so simple and clear that I feel sure that there is not one of you but that can take in what a "governmental and conditional" forgiveness is, and that is of the greatest importance to the right understanding of our subject. Not water, but the precious blood of our Lord Jesus alone could wash away Paul's sins from *before God and forever*; but there was, and is, a "washing," a shadow or figure of that, which applies to earth and its government only.

And for another unequivocal proof of a forgiveness which is conditional, turn to Matt. 18. Here we find a debtor forgiven—mark, the Lord Himself says that he is forgiven—a huge debt, yet because his subsequent conduct evidences that that grace has had no effect on him, it is revoked and he is imprisoned for life. Then mark the Lord's application of this, even to His disciples, "*So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.*" Little is this thought of by our young people—aye, and by our old ones too for that matter, but

it is very serious and weighty. If you say, "Oh, that was Jewish," do you think that God permits in the Christian what He condemns in the Jew?—that greater privilege justifies greater laxity? Surely not.

Water-baptism then is indeed always connected with salvation on the earth, that is quite true, but *never with life* already possessed; always with a new *place* desired, but *not new birth* preceding it.

Let me ask if some of you are not a good deal perplexed by such Scriptures as I have referred to, as to baptism not following, but leading to, "forgiveness" and the "washing away of sins;" you are puzzled, are you not? Well, there is another of the same character that actually attributes "salvation" directly to baptism. For listen to the apostle Peter, who deals particularly with our walk on earth under the government of God our Father. Referring to that earlier salvation of Noah and all his house, he says: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now *save you*" (1 Pet. 3: 21).* Could words speak more unequivocally of a salvation actually effected by water-baptism? But we are all agreed that this cannot be that "eternal salvation" which is consequent only on the atoning work of Christ being received by living faith. This, as Peter says, is only a "figure," and a figure can surely only save figuratively. The salvation is a real one *on the earth*, as it was in Noah's case, but it is still only a figure of the eternal salvation. That is, as Noah and his house were "saved" through the flood, and brought out on to a cleansed earth, so we are "saved" through the

*As it should be, for Peter was not baptized as a Christian.

waters of baptism, brought into a similar new place, and both are figures of a salvation that is eternal.

Let me try and make that clearer to you younger people. Throw yourselves back over 4000 years to Noah's day. He is living in a *filthy* earth, filled with "corruption and violence" (Gen. 6: 11), and he needs two things; first, a new earth from which that "filthiness" has been cleansed; and then some basis of clear acceptance with God *in* that new earth. He gets both; the first by the flood, *that* puts away the filth of the earth, and the last by a sacrifice of sweet-savor which, as we may say, gives him a good conscience (Gen. 8: 20, 21). Beautiful figure! And we have one like it. We, too, need a new position, for all the earth is under Satan's sway, "filthy" and under judgment: the waters of baptism take us out of that position, and in the new one we get a good conscience, not merely the putting away of external "filth" by water, but by a sweeter savor than came from Noah's sacrifice, in that of our Lord who died for our sins, and is even "gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God." *There we have a good conscience.* For it is not the good conscience that demands us to be baptized, for if already saved and having a good conscience, what need for anything more? But it is demanded and found in Christ risen and in the place of fullest acceptance, answering to Noah's sweet-savor offering. It is a very beautiful figure, and I hope that you will enjoy it.

But now I hear some one say: "All that may be quite true and as far as I can see, is; but cannot you make it clearer in what way it justifies the baptism of the household of professed believers? That is what we want to know. Such are surely *in* that sphere of profession of which

you speak, by being *born* into it—a child of Christian parents is as much in it, if not baptized, as if he were—how then can baptism admit into it?”

That comes of interpreting Scripture by the complete confusion and ruin that has come in. We are, in our shame, like Jerusalem of old—the walls are all broken down; can there be any wonder that there is some uncertainty as to the gates? Baptism is like one of those beautiful entrances we often see in the country. There is no fence, no walls. One can step quite easily on to the lawn and grounds, yet there are two beautiful pillars, with perhaps a chain or gate between them. You can *get in*, or *be in*, without going through the *gate*; but that does not affect the truth that the *gate* is the only way of entrance appointed by the owner of the grounds, and if you will please him you will use it, and not come in “some other way.”

So of old, as we have seen, a child might be born in the heart of Judea and of Jewish parents; but was he therefore, because he was born there, a recognized Jew? Had he any part in the congregation? Not at all; *that*—his true entrance—is only effected by an ordinance. He must be circumcized, and if not, he was cut off from the congregation absolutely, as not being a Jew, even outwardly (Romans 2).

So the mere fact of being born in a certain geographical area does not make a Christian outwardly. Many a heathen child—Buddhist or Mohammedan—is born in New York, but that does not make any of them professedly Christian—*that* must be effected by the ordinance of baptism, as you will surely admit.

But our brethren, who strongly insist on post-regenera-

tion-immersion, insist on our having a literal command to baptize such households or they will have none of it. A brother wrote me the other day: "You have not found one solitary command for such practice." No, there is none; and God be thanked that there is not, for that "law of ordinance" (Col. 2) is precisely what we have been delivered from, and it is nothing but unhappy legality that would lead to expecting such a command as there was for circumcision.

Baptism is, it is true, always linked with salvation; but that salvation, I must repeat it, is solely on the earth; and here I must ask you to note most carefully (for it answers your question as to households) that wherever or whenever it is a question of divine government of the earth, the one consistent principle running through all Scripture and through all dispensations, is in the words, "*Thou and thy house!*"

The earthly privilege is conferred upon the whole household in virtue of its vital connection with its head, who is not placed in one position on the earth, and all his household, *of which he is the representative before God*, in another.

In the illustration given of the revolt of the State of New Jersey against the Federal Government of the United States, would the father think for one moment of leaving his dependent wife and still more dependent children in the position of rebellion, and go away by himself? Most surely not. He would settle the question for them, and take them with him; nor would the fact that his infants could not enter into the merits of the matter, and exercise their own judgment, prevent him from so taking them. But having them all with him, he would—if sincere—bring

them up and train them in loyalty to the Washington Government, as the Christian does his children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

It was thus God spoke to Noah: "Come thou *and all thy house* into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before Me" (Gen. 7: 1). Not one word is said as to personal faith or righteousness of his sons, nor of their wives; nor does Ham at least, give any very clear evidence of being converted, as you say, or very righteous; but Noah, the head of the house, only. In Hebrews 11: 7 we are very distinctly told, it was Noah's faith, and Noah's faith alone, that resulted in "*the saving of his house.*"

Nor is this principle confined to the *righteousness* of the Head; it is equally true in an opposite sense. Look at Achan in Josh. 7: 24. What had those little children done? Yet down to death they all go because of their vital connection with that sinning Head! His sin brought death on all linked with him. Look again at Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16: 27); the earth opens her mouth and swallows without the slightest discrimination every child of theirs.*

* A brother writes that the case of Korah refutes this, since his house did not suffer from his sin. Yes, quite true; it is a striking instance of the sovereignty of grace and in that sovereignty alone they were saved; but that does not nullify the principle which is seen constantly through both Old and New Testaments, and some of us have often enjoyed the sweet truth that those "grace psalms" 42, 81, etc., tell out in accord with their title: "To the sons of Korah," whom that sovereign grace had spared.

The same ardent advocate of so-called "believer's baptism" also writes that Lot too was an exception, which I

The New Testament continues the same principle. Take, for instance, the jailer at Philippi. Awakened by an earthquake, he sees all of the doors of the prison opened and the shackles off every limb of the prisoners. About to kill himself, he hears from the inner prison, Paul's cheery voice: "We are all here, do thyself no harm." Calling for a light, he springs into the foul dungeon and leading the two prisoners out, cries: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The answer is instant: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved *and thy house*" (Acts 16). But here let me ask a question: "Do you think that poor heathen jailer knew as much as you do of the danger under which he awoke to find himself? Did he know anything of that 'Great White Throne,' and its eternal judgment, or of the Lake of Fire?" Most surely not. But then it follows that we err in forcing into his word "saved" all the intelligence that we have derived from the Scriptures of which he knew nothing. In his mouth that word must have had in it a terribly clear idea of God's wrath overhanging him, and even then threatening him, but a very indistinct knowledge of its nature. It was not the earthquake, of course, for *that* was past, but a present, overhanging divine judgment threatening him and his, and from which he saw no escape; and it was from that wrath, so terribly expressed in the earthquake, that he longed to know of deliverance. So

fear only shows how far party-prejudice may blind the eye and warp judgment, for Gen. 19: 12 reads: "And the men said unto Lot, 'Hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place,' " etc., and would seem a fairly effective answer, would it not?

Paul's instant answer has in it the same broad, double character that the condition of the man to whom it was spoken demanded. Let him believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and he, but not only he, but his whole family—his whole house—should be saved.

But that needs careful guarding. The jailer's faith could not be the basis of the *eternal salvation* of his house as well as himself, or eternal life would run uninterruptedly in families for ever. For each child of the believer, as *he* too believed, would become heir to the same promise that *his* children would be saved eternally, and so without end—which surely requires no argument to refute. And yet the promise is there clearly enough: "Believe," and based on *thy* belief (as because of Noah's belief), both "thou and thy house shall be saved." His faith, and nothing but his own faith, should, in some sense result, as did Noah's in the salvation of his house as well as of himself. There is not another condition, explicit or implied, attached to this salvation, but his own belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

To say that if he believes he shall be eternally saved, and if the members of his household believe, they, too, shall be eternally saved, not only does gross violence to the inspired Word, but really vacates this special promise altogether of any meaning; for that is universally true of all who *truly* believe, quite irrespective of the father's faith. Let the child of the most blatant atheist so believe, and eternal salvation as surely results for him, quite irrespective of his father's unbelief, as it would for the child of the most pious Christian.

On the other hand, to press that salvation of the "house" is a promise that was alone intended for that one

case and has lapsed, is quite wide of the mark. The two clauses are vitally connected, and this simple, pregnant answer has echoed and re-echoed all down the centuries of gospel testimony, and will do till that gospel shall sound no more: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved *and thy house.*"

But what we have already learned gives the simplest, clearest solution of the difficulty (if it may be termed such): as there are two spheres, Heaven and Earth, so there is, as Peter tells us, a salvation connected with each: as to the latter, the jailer had the inestimable privilege of having his house with him, as did Noah. As to the former, *that* is dependent on sincere repentance and the living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ of each individual. But here it is asserted that that *was* the case at that time—that it was solely because all the household believed, that they were all baptized. But the Scripture itself does not justify such a conclusion, for the verbs in verse 34 are in the singular: "*He* rejoiced householdly (an adverb), *he* having believed in God" is a very literal and exact rendering. So they were baptized, not as believers, but as forming the *household* of a believer. Scripture predicates the "rejoicing" and the "believing" of that Head of the House alone, as it does of Noah alone, and as a consequence of his believing, he has his house with him in the external sphere of salvation, as corresponds to Noah's at the flood. That does not mean that all in the house did, or did not, in heart accept the apostle's message—that is not the point, or it would have been so said.

But I want you to see what weighty and eternal truths hang upon this principle of "Thou and thy house," for it is a beautiful and perfect figure of eternal things, in which

(I beg you note) the two Heads—Adam and Christ—bring the result of their contrasted acts on their respective houses, for so is it written: “As by one *man’s disobedience*, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous” (Rom. 5: 19). All the “house” of Adam are sinners, and with condemnation attached to the life they have received from their head. But all who are of the “house” of Christ are righteous, with justification attached to the life received from their Head. Is it not as weighty as it is scriptural, as precious as it is simple?

This brings us to a scripture, and I will close with it for this evening, to which I must ask your very special attention: 1 Cor. 7: 10-17, for although the actual word “baptism” does not occur in it, yet in the light of all other scripture (surely not a false light), we shall find, I believe, that it has a direct bearing on the subject. Please read it all; but I will begin to quote with the important introductory words: “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord; if any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away, and the woman that hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him; for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by (or, in) the wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by (or, in) the husband, else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.”

First, then, we must note carefully that this is *not* a divine revelation. The apostle is not, in anything that he here says, communicating to them something that they did not know, as when he says, “*This we say unto you by the word of the Lord;*” or as just before: “*Not I, but*

the Lord." It is by no means without deepest significance that in direct contrast here he says: "I speak, NOT the Lord." It tells us that he is speaking (under divine inspiration, of course, but) simply as a man, and so, in the form of what we may call a human argument; which demands that he base it *on what they already know*. This is of the utmost importance, for in the light of this evident truth, we see that in these last five words, he is not revealing something to them of which they were ignorant, but it is a fact so well-known to them that upon it he can base his answer to their question. Next, note that there is no discrimination whatever made between the children of these mixed marriages; all are equally "holy," irrespective of when born, either before or after the conversion of their parents.

And now to clear our minds, as much as possible, from the fogs that inevitably arise from the present confusion, let us throw ourselves back to Corinth about A. D. 52. There is a little family there consisting of young parents, and, let us say, two children—there must have been many such in this large city. All are naturally in the darkness of the surrounding heathen idolatry, for no gospel has yet reached them.

The apostle Paul comes, A. D. 53—54, and the parents hear him proclaiming the gospel of God. Let us assume, as our scripture justifies our doing, that *one* of them—say, the mother—accepts the gospel, and the father does not.

Time goes on, and other children are born, but the question arises, Should such mixed marriages be maintained? Paul is asked: "Should not that believing wife leave her unbelieving husband?" "Certainly not," he

replies. "But why not?" "Because, as you can see, the marriage relationship itself has been hallowed, and the unbelieving husband is (as far as that relationship goes) accepted in his believing wife." "But what proof is there of that?" "If that were not the case, then those children, the offspring of the marriage, would have been put away as 'unclean,' as was done in the day of Ezra and the law (Ezra 10); but all *your* children are, as is evident, and as you know perfectly well, not put away, but are holy, even now." It is on this known holiness of the children that the direction not to separate is based.

And this really gives clearly enough the force of the word "holy." We are all of one mind surely that this cannot mean that they are essentially different in natural character; or that they do not need regenerating by the Spirit and Word of God as much as the veriest heathen in Corinth. The contrast with "holy" is "unclean;" so that it means simply "clean," and our acquaintance with the constant use of that word in the Scriptures—that the "clean" were *inside*, and the "unclean" *outside*, the camp, where God's dwelling was on the earth—leaves us in no doubt as to its force here; these children are in an external relationship with the Lord, and so have a standing in quite a different position to the heathen or Jewish children all about them.*

Assuming that we have that quite clear in our minds,

* The suggestion that some have made, that "holy" here means "legitimate," is absolutely baseless. The word *agios* never has such a sense, while the contrast in that case would be, "else were your children illegitimate" (*nothoi*), *not* unclean. The basal idea in the Greek word is "separation to God."

we can take the next step: How did these children become thus holy, or clean? For all such sanctification, or "separation to God," whether it be internal and essential, or as here, external and positional, is always due to some agency; as for instance, it is "the temple that sanctifies the gold" (Matt. 23:17), "the altar that sanctifies the gift" (Matt. 23: 19). The tabernacle was sanctified by the divine glory (Exod. 39 -45, etc., etc.), and even apostates are sanctified by the blood of the covenant, having professed faith in it (Heb. 10: 29)—always by some agency, so we must endeavor to find that agency here.

Someone says: It was due to their natural birth from parents, one or both of whom were believers. Well, if so, those two children, born when *both* were still heathen, could not possibly have been holy on that account—the offspring of heathen parents surely could not be holy merely on account of their birth—that would appear sure. Yet the scripture permits of no discrimination; all are equally holy.

But it may be said that even *these* became holy, simply by the conversion of their parents, or one of them. *That* is far nearer the truth and is supported by the principle of "*thou and thy house.*" But how could that be *known*? Think, I beg of you. Is the Lord, in this letter to Corinth, revealing that to them? That is precisely what He is *not* doing, and Paul is divinely inspired to deny this. Yet something must have made them so sure that all their children were holy, that Paul can make it the very basis of his answer that the believer should not depart from the unbeliever.

There was then—there is still—an ordinance by which that holy Name that never loses its power was put upon

the whole "house:" an ordinance that separated—not as circumcision, between Jew and Gentile, but—between Jew and Gentile on the one hand, and *disciples* of the Lord Jesus on the other. And just as Saul of Tarsus was baptized and washed away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord, and became thus ceremonially "clean," or "holy," by baptism to that Name, so it was that holy Name, thus put on these children, that had made them clean or holy in just the same external way. They were "holy" as to their position on the earth because separated to the Lord Jesus Christ, with all the significance of that ordinance put upon them, with its confession of the sin, and its penalty death, derived from the first Adam; the confession of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ as having borne that penalty, and in resurrection, being the Source of a new life. They were holy by baptism. The *Name* was not put on them because they were holy without It, but *It made them so*.

Nor is this at all forced. One of the basal ideas in the word "baptism" is that it "makes clean," as Mark 7: 4 is enough to prove: "The washing (*baptismous*) of pots and cups." Further that very word was used expressly to define that ceremonial cleansing of the person, as we have here in Corinthians. Simply for this purpose we may appeal to the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, where we have the expression—referring to Num. 19—he that is *baptized* from a corpse; that is, made "clean" so as to be able to reassume his place in the camp; the water of separation having been *sprinkled* upon him.

This (1 Cor. 7: 10-17) seems so conclusive a Scripture that I would sum up the points that we have spoken of.

1.—It is *not* a direct divine revelation, telling the Cor-

inthians of what they did not know. Paul himself speaks as a man, as he is divinely inspired to tell us.

2.—Not the slightest discrimination is made in any of the children of the Christians at Corinth, irrespective of when they were born; *all* are holy.

3.—The clear force of that word “holy” is that they are in a position of external separation to the Lord, as were the people of Israel who were “clean”—they were inside the sphere of external acceptance.

4.—There must have been some appointed agency to effect this. *It could not be natural birth, for some must have been born before the conversion of their parents, whilst no discrimination is permitted. Nor could it be because of conversion of parents, for how should they know that the Lord had thus accepted the children born when they were heathen?*

5.—There has always been some ordinance of deepest significance that admits to this sphere of external acceptance, as circumcision to Israel.

6.—That is water-baptism to Christ.

7.—Therefore the Corinthians *knew* that their children were “holy,” because thus marked with divine acceptance. Holy because baptized, and hence the answer, “Let her not leave him.”

The introductory words, “I *speak*, not the Lord,” are for the express intent of leading us to make the correct and inevitable deductions that spring from, and are absolutely confirmed by the Scriptures.

But I quote an objection from a recent publication:

“This passage has been lamentably perverted from its obvious meaning in order to favor the human device of ‘infant baptism.’ But if the passage warrants the baptism

of unregenerate children, why not also of the unregenerate husband, seeing that he also is thus relatively 'sanctified.' A similar use of the word 'sanctified' is seen as to food in 1 Tim. 4: 5."

We can omit reference to the quite unnecessary lamentation, and leaving the charge of "perversion" to rest wherever it may justly belong, who cannot see that there is at least a clear difference in the forms of the words used? The children of such mixed marriages were holy—how? In their parents? Not at all, but in *themselves*. The unbeliever is not, but is sanctified *in the believer*, that is, solely in that marriage relationship that has made him the father of those children. Surely ordinary candor would admit the force of the difference in the forms of the expressions. The unbelieving parent remains a heathen; the children are externally Christian disciples: is that no difference? But our objector says, if the passage warrants the "baptism of unregenerate children, why not also of the unregenerate husband," and by implication "food," for all are on one level, since (in his point of view) regeneration is necessary to make baptism valid or to justify it. Well, that is the basal error in all such arguments, that water-baptism expresses what has already taken place in the soul of the baptized. We have seen by proof after proof that it does nothing of the kind, but is always (with one instance that might be looked on as an exception, and which we will consider) linked with the present divine government of the earth, and the inducement (if the term may be so used) for baptism is always something *before* the baptized, as: "To Moses," "To Christ," "To His death," "To repentance," "To forgiveness," etc. But as to forcing the one who *rejects* to own that he *accepts*

Christ, perhaps it would be enough to say: "*Try it.*" Force is not to be thought of in any of these cases.

The writer merely refers to sanctification of food as being an analogous use of the word; but some have done more, and with a consistency, although flippancy, altogether unfitting, have carried the writer's argument as far as to say: "Why not baptize your food since it is sanctified?" He too makes the mistake of putting effect before cause. Food is sanctified by the Word of God (that is, the Scriptures telling us from Whom it comes), and by partaking of it in communion with the Giver, as is the force of the word rendered "prayer" in A. V. It is thus *separated* from "common" food.

The unbelieving parent is sanctified only in his or her relationship with the believer, not in him or herself at all.

The children of such marriage are sanctified, or made holy, or clean, by that ordinance that separated them from Gentile or Jewish children.

So was it then, and so is it now; nor can the subsequent confusion alter the basal significance of the ordinance, although it has so utterly obscured it that esteemed brethren not only make the mistake of the writer quoted, but can so freely charge those who certainly cleave only to Scripture, with "perversion" of it!

Thus *all* the children of Christian households are ever addressed in the epistles as being simply "disciples" (which, let me remind you, only means "learners"), and as such, having a distinct relation with the Lord, carrying such responsibility, as if judiciously pressed upon them would, by the grace of God accompanying, lead to their feeling a need of a Saviour in another and a deeper sense than by a mere external position, and to their becoming children

of God in truth; or as the Lord spoke, not merely "disciples," but "disciples indeed" (John 8: 31). So then in order to avoid the errors that must come from a false perspective, let us again throw ourselves back to the year A. D. 60 and to another heathen city, Ephesus. We will invisibly visit a Christian household, composed of father, mother, and children of various ages. Paul's letter to the Church is read. The parents are exhorted to bring up all those children (not a part of them, who may give some evidence of new-birth, but *everyone of them*) in the nurture (really "discipline," that is, as *disciples*) and admonition of the Lord.

Then all the *children* are themselves addressed as members of a Christian household, and thus as being in the place of "disciples," in which baptism puts all, they are counselled, not be it noted on the same basis as their parents, to whom the *vital* relationships between Christ and His Church afford fitting ground for exhortation; but they are pointed even to the law and "the first commandment with promise," as evidencing the Lord's appreciation of submissive obedience. Now suppose the Ephesian parents had discriminated between those of their family who were baptized as believers because (supposed to be) born again, and others who did not as yet give sufficient evidence of new birth, and so were not baptized, and when Eph. 6: 1-3, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," was read, should say, "That is addressed to *you*, John and Mary, for you are regenerate;" and to others, "That is not meant for *you*, Clement and Phoebe, for you are not regenerate"—would not that have gone altogether counter to this very scripture? have entirely subverted the foundation of the family unity? and have tended to no little

damage to all the children themselves? But this is the logical consistent outgrowth of the false idea that water-baptism was intended to express a work that had already taken place within the baptized, and to sever between regenerate and unregenerate; and so part of the household were baptized, as regenerate, and part were not, as unregenerate: the one could be counselled, the other not. This is most unhappily the *practical tendency* of the error. No, the whole household, as such, had been admitted by that ordinance of baptism to a positional relationship with the Lord. Nor is it the mere element of water in itself, nor the way that it is applied whether by dipping, pouring, sprinkling, or immersing, but the *Name* that is the sanctifying agency in the ordinance. Could *that* Name be applied without effect?

Is it not of just such little ones that the kingdom of heaven is composed, Matt. 19: 14; and was not one such little one made the model even for the adult apostles in the words: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven?" (Matt. 18: 3). And yet some have not shrunk from speaking of these very little ones, who are given the position of acceptance and honor by the Lord, as being "tares" to be gathered into bundles and burned! I will not insult you by even a refutation of what is as repulsive to all natural right feeling, as it is utterly opposed to Scripture.

The Lord's words would appear to simple minds to accredit, in the strongest clearest way, the admission of such little ones into the kingdom of heaven *on the earth*, by that significant ordinance that marks its boundaries: baptism to Him who is, although absent and in heaven, its King. If the kingdom of heaven is "of such," it is strange to keep them out of it!

But the four words: "Who believe in Me" (Matt. 18: 6) are said to "shatter" all this claim for the peculiar place of the little children of the Lord's people; and to show this He is only referring to *spiritual* little children who are that by new birth.

The context makes it quite impossible to exclude that literal little child that He had placed in the midst, unless he too were regenerated. For note the warning addressed to those who were themselves admittedly only spiritual little children. "Take heed that ye (who were surely quite young in the faith) despise not one of these little ones, for in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." It was just a simple literal little child whom the Lord thus made the model, not one necessarily new-born.

But how then as to the words, "Who believe in Me?"

They evidence that there was *no opposition of will* in that little child; and that is equally true of *every* little one brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord in a believer's household; for they ever confess to believing in the Lord with the first lisp of their infant lips.

Have you children? Have you brought them up as disciples of the Lord? Then go home, and ask your little son if he believes in the Lord Jesus, and see his eyes open with astonishment that you should think it necessary even to ask such a question, as he answers with some indignation: "Why, of course I do." It is that spirit of simplicity of believing—that *spirit* of *willingness* to believe—that *spirit* of trustfulness and dependence—that *spirit* of self-distrust, that is itself the "angel" that ever characterizes such little children and appeals to the Father in heaven. For the word "angel" here is used in precisely

the same sense as in the letters to the Churches (Rev. 2 and 3) where each "angel" is the *representative spirit* that characterizes the Church that is addressed; and each closes with eliminating any "angel," and putting the Church itself in its place as what is really addressed.

But as time goes on, and the little child ceases to be that, how very rare, alas, is it that self-confidence does not take the place of dependence, and unhappy experience with a false world destroy the simple faith, so that the "angel," or spirit, automatically disappears from the Face of the Father, and the word becomes as true of those little children, when they are no longer that, as of all others; that they too must be converted and become again as little children, or they shall not enter into the kingdom in its full display when the Lord is revealed.

Here let me note briefly what I may call the progress of doctrine in the New Testament on this subject, which will only confirm the evidence that we have already had that Baptism has to do solely with the earth and its government. In Matthew, as we have seen, it is very prominent. In Mark it becomes incidental, and begins to fall into the background: "Whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (and here too, note, one is not baptized because he is already saved, but with "salvation" before him), but believing not, "shall be damned." Luke is, as you know, far more moral, and here we find forgiveness of sins, and no baptism referred to at all; till John closes with the Lord's disciples following Him to heaven. The further we retire from earth and its government, the more Baptism recedes, but does not alter its significance or its relative claims.

But the lingering mercy of God over Israel begins to

come definitely to an end with the martyrdom of Stephen; and then Paul, called directly by the Lord Jesus out of Heaven, with a distinctly heavenly gospel, boldly says: "I was not sent to baptize."*

Let me ask you, and I beseech you, beloved brethren, answer candidly: Could any of those with Him on the mount in Galilee say that they were not sent to baptize? Why, that is specifically what they *were* sent to do—"disciple all nations, baptizing"—it was a specific and vital part of their mission. But Paul, who received all that pertained to his own characteristic ministry, directly by special divine revelations, as, *e. g.*, The Church, its heavenly calling, hopes and final rapture, and specifically that other ordinance, the Lord's supper, did *not get one word as to baptism!* It is not included in Paul's commission at all. Have you weighed that? It is very significant.

"Yet," you say, "he *did* baptize." Of course he did. He was not *forbidden* to baptize, for he too could admit into the sphere of Christian profession those who, as the Philippian jailer, heard, believed, and with all his house, was baptized.

And there is no writer of the New Testament who presses the responsibility consequent on baptism as does Paul. That Name above every name has been put upon them and they bear it through a hostile world.

But I think I hear someone saying: "To listen to you, one would suppose that not a word could be said for 'Believers' baptism.'" Indeed I would take no such place.

* I think it is explained that this means that Paul was not sent to baptize in his own name. To which it would be quite enough to answer by asking, Who *was*?

I have quite as strong a conviction as to the scripturalness of the baptism of believers, when applied as it is in the Scriptures, as anyone here. Nor do I question for a moment that any who have not been baptized as in a believer's household, *should* be, before breaking bread. Have I not said too how strongly I was myself inclined in the direction of Post-regeneration-immersion (nor do I use that term in any provocative sense) till I saw clearly these three truths.

First, that the Word of God not only recognized those who were eternally saved or lost, but a sphere of *discipleship on earth*, that may, and as a matter of fact does, include both. Romans 11: 22; Hebrews 2: 3; Rev. 3: 16, and many other passages, were most assuredly not spoken to heathen, or professed unbelievers, but were addressed to those occupying this sphere of profession.

Second, that baptism never expresses what has already taken place within, but is always in view of something *before* the baptized.

Third, that the responsibility of obedience in carrying out the ordinance of baptism rested on those who were alone able to fulfil it—the baptizers, not the baptized.

How these can be denied by any to whom the word of God is the sole standard of truth, I find it difficult to conceive, but still many most devoted saints *do* deny them; and were I to stigmatize them as wilfully blind or disobedient to the Scripture, I should be acting as I condemn others for doing. One does not find oneself opposed to so many honored names without much exercise, and being correspondingly anxious to stand upon the Scripture alone.

The main purpose that I have in view in addressing you on this well-worn subject is that we may not condescend-

ingly bear with, but sincerely *respect* each others' consciences on such points, and seek more constant occupation of heart with our Lord Himself. For without mutual respect, love and confidence soon wither away, and discord is but too certain to take the place of fellowship. God forbid, then, that I should slur any beloved brethren whose *teachings* I may still be compelled to oppose.

I have no doubt whatever as to the truth of what I have been saying as to those three points mentioned above, and that *nothing* in the Scriptures can *possibly* reverse that truth, although, taken from the context, it may appear to do so.

But why should I not be perfectly candid, and confess to you freely that I have been, in days gone by, quite as uncomfortable when some of these Scriptures that we are about to look at, were being pressed, as ever was one of our "Post-regeneration" brethren at Peter's baptism for the remission of sins, or Saul's washing his sins away in baptism, or telling us that he was not sent to baptize at all, or that baptism actually *saves*.

There is a series of Scriptures in which our friends greatly delight, nor would we lessen that delight, but only so direct it that there may be no embarrassment when all others are looked at. I have never heard an address on Baptism given by any so-called "Believers' Baptist" but it lingered at Romans 6, as if shrinking from leaving so harmonious an environment. Whilst others, who feel that *their* strength lies elsewhere, hurry over this as apparently lacking any great interest. It is here that our brethren feel most at home and secure. To this they flee as to a covert, and there ensconced, like Job's war-horse, they cry "Ha, ha," to the trumpet that challenges

that impregnable position. Well, brethren, let us clasp hands, for I can respect your conscience here, and recognize the strength of this position too. And yet we both know perfectly well that there is no real discord in the precious Word of God—on that we are absolutely agreed—and can we not consider as carefully as our gracious God may enable us, this and some other of these Scriptures, in the spirit of brotherly amity.

Let us turn, then, to Romans 6: 1-11, and I must beg you to read it for yourselves.

From this it is frequently deduced that baptism expresses that we have previously died with Christ, and so are “buried,” which is figured by the going down into the water. And, having already a new life, we are raised with Him, and come up from the water to figure that resurrection.

But look at the first statement on which all hangs, and then read: “As many of you as were baptized unto Christ were baptized *unto** His death.” “To His death,” mark. But if baptism be with that death as the objective in view, it cannot possibly be because we have died with Him *previously* to the baptism. It cannot be both before and after too—that surely must be plain to the youngest and simplest of you. Therefore we are not baptized because we have died with Christ.

On the other hand, people are surely not buried because alive, any more than they are washed *because clean*. They are washed because defiled, and needing and

* The Greek preposition *eis* may be rendered either “into” or “unto,” but the parallel passage 1 Cor. 10: 1, where “into Moses” would give no intelligible sense, fixes its meaning here as “unto” or “to.”

seeking to be cleansed by the washing. So they are buried in baptism because dead, and needing a new life which is here what is sought; just as, at Pentecost, it was "remission of sins and the Holy Ghost" that were thus sought. Here death is confessed and life is sought, but not previously possessed, *in the figure of baptism*.

But I hear one exclaim, "Buried because dead! How dead, if not by Christ's death." Let us get our answer from the context; it is a plan that cannot be improved upon. The root of the whole of this part of the epistle down to chap. 8: 39 is naturally enough where it begins, in chap. 5: 12. And there we learn of two "heads" (as I must call them) of mankind; and that it was the *first* Adam, not the last, who brought in sin, and by *death*. It was in him, and not in *Christ*, that "*death* passed upon all men;" and it is because of that sentence of death under which all lay—young and old, without any exception—that all, as far as that goes, are fit subjects for burial.

But another Man has come, over Whom that death-sentence had no claim; and He, in a love so true, real and deep that none can take in but a little of it, identified Himself with sinful and guilty man before God, and all God's consuming judgment against sin has been carried out in *His* sufferings on the cross. There He endured the full sentence, not only of physical death, but of that divine reprobation and judgment, termed the Curse, that follows death, in man's appointment (Heb. 9). But He, the last Adam, has been raised, able to give us that new life that we need so deeply (blessed be His Name), and for that we are baptized to Him.

The *penal* death, and subsequent *curse*, we owe to the

first Adam. The *atonement* death, and the subsequent *eternal life*, we owe to the last Adam. That is the gospel that we poor sinners of the Gentiles, living (let us say) in Rome, have heard and accepted, and we take that new position on the earth that figures it, where all our hopes are alone in Christ, nor do we leave our families behind, but gratefully accept for all our "house" the grace of God that does not separate between the house and its head, in this position on the earth.

But this is so important a Scripture that we too will linger a little further, for it gives us the practical answer to the question of how we may be delivered from the power of that old evil nature "Sin."

The Spirit of God is not simply preaching the gospel to sinners, but instructing adult saints whose faith had gone abroad, in deeper truths, and He shows that God has not offset by a precise equivalent the consequences of Adam's sin, and restored His people to a life and position that should be open to the same testings (with the same fatal consequences to himself and all his race) as Adam's, but "where sin abounded grace did *much more* abound."

But here the apostle himself voices an objection: "What shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" This meets with three refutations, each marked off by the words, "Know ye not," as in chap. 6: 3-11; vers. 12-23; chap. 7: 1-6. We need but dwell upon the first.

1.—Continue in sin! Why, the very ordinance that made us Christians in an external way at all forbids it. The very thought shows that whilst you have indeed been baptized, yet you still have to learn its significance. You were baptized to Christ's death—*that* was the end, goal, and

aim of your baptism, to identify you with that death of Christ; and as that death was due to sin, how can you possibly continue in that to which you have thus *in figure* died?

In Christ we have passed out of our old position on the earth as in Adam; that "old man is crucified with Him." For the "old man" is not exactly the "flesh" or "evil nature"—*that* is not a "man" at all, nor can it thus be crucified judicially; but *oneself* simply as born of Adam, and standing in a position of responsibility before God. That old man has been buried in the waters of baptism (of course in figure only), just as, you remember, in Israel's deliverance from the Egyptian taskmasters, they were seen "dead upon the seashore," and at the sight Israel's song arose. So again when Israel entered her own land, and crossed Jordan; the twelve stones that represented the tribes were left behind in Jordan and never raised, for there "they are to this day" (Josh. 4). But other twelve stones were brought out of the river; and so with us, although (as Paul said) "crucified with Christ, nevertheless we live." Where then can we find a life absolutely free from the nature received from Adam, and by which we can live to God? In Him alone to Whom we have been baptized. And where is He? He is risen, and the new position on the earth to which we have been brought, is filled with Christ alone. He, and He alone, gives the life needed—pure and holy as its Source, as that from Adam was impure and unholy. No matter when we enter into this, or at times lose its power, you and I can never live unto God apart from absolute dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ.

2.— The second basis of refutation is that we have another Master, with another and different kind of service, and very different recompenses (vers. 12-23).

3.— We have severed our relations with Law as a principle, for this produced only “motions of sin,” and now find all power for fruitbearing in Christ risen (chap. 7: 1-6).

On these we need not dwell; but the three give a three-fold cord, not soon broken: first, it is as a dead man who has been buried, and shut up to Christ for life in the new position on the earth.

Then it is a slave who has changed masters; and in the third, it is as a woman who has another husband.

But it is still urged: How can an unconscious infant be assumed to walk in newness of life? That surely presupposes the possession of that new life first. In other words, that new birth is assumed to precede baptism.

We answer as graciously as we can: We fear, dear brother, that you have not read the scripture very carefully, or you would have seen that the new life is not carried *into* the burial (What an anomaly! That would be—“buried” as being *alive!*), but springs as it were, from it; for verse 5 is explanatory and reads: “For *if* we have become identified with Him in the likeness of His death” (that is, in the baptism: if what baptism figures is, or becomes, an actual verity in our experience, then), “we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection,” that is, our life will be of that divine character.

That grave, that burial with Christ, is the very starting-point of the new life. But for this there must be more than a mere figure, there must be a vital identification with

Christ, as is really involved in that word not quite correctly rendered in A. V. "*planted* together;" the word carries the idea of *vitally* growing together, and that cannot be in a figure but in actual experience. This is as true for adults as for babes. Many an adult is baptized on a profession of a faith that is not any true expression of the work of God in the soul. One may question if amid all the thousands Simon Magus was the only one, or indeed the first—he certainly was not the last even in the days of the apostles. Are then *all* such shut out from the virtues of Christ's atonement forever? Are they never to find in Him their own Saviour? Is there nothing before all who have been baptized before regeneration, nothing but a fearful looking-for of judgment? Oh, surely not. Even Simon was exhorted to repentance, with the hope of forgiveness following, and myriads of such adults have entered into what their baptism signified long after the ordinance itself, and only from the time of so doing have really "reckoned themselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ."

And I would say this to you parents who are so justly solicitous for your children; the more that you yourselves enter into the profound significance of this beautiful figure of the gospel, and practically show it by finding all your power of life in the living Lord, the more will you be able to make your children feel the hopelessness of meeting the responsibility of living to God apart from taking Christ for themselves; and so, He who is precious to you, through His meeting your deep needs, shall become ever more and more so, both to you and to them, and what was only figured in baptism become a living power in life.

Nor can I omit that oft-used, and, I can but believe, *divinely* provided, illustration from 2 Kings 13: 20, 21.

“And Elisha died and they buried him. And the bands of Moabites invaded the land at the coming of the year. And it came to pass as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood upon his feet.”

As the dead man did not owe his death to, but was buried with Elisha (whose name means, significantly enough, “the salvation of God”), so are those dead through Adam, buried in figure with Christ—the true “Salvation of God.” And as the dead man revived as soon as he *touch*ed the dead Elisha, so *whenever* the death of Christ is appropriated by living faith, which alone answers to this touch, resurrection-life is communicated.

But we must remember that this is but an illustration, and must not be pressed beyond that; for divine life is never actually given in or by an ordinance.

But it has been objected that if this were true, there would be no reason why everyone should not be baptized, for all are thus dead through Adam. Quite true; but again, let the objector try it, and he will find that there is a very decided difficulty in the human *will*. There was no reason why all should not have had true life, save as the Lord said: “Ye *will* not come to *Me*” for it. There is no reason why everyone should not be saved, except that opposition of the human *will* to the humbling way of salvation, that sovereign grace alone overcomes. That *will* acted in those days, and acts to-day, under the same

conditions, in the same way, in the figurative earthly salvation, as it does in the heavenly and eternal. "God will have all men to be saved," but man's *will* opposes.

Now let us turn to the case in Scripture, in which baptism *followed* true living faith, for it is taken as providing the model for the baptism of believers for all time (Acts 10). The gospel had been preached to Jews and proselytes only—Gentiles had had no part in it; nor, apparently, was there any idea in the minds of those early Jewish disciples that they were *intended* to have any part in it, notwithstanding the commission given in Galilee to "disciple all the nations," or Gentiles. The apostle Peter needed a special vision to break through his Jewish prejudices and to prepare him to go to the Gentiles, Cornelius and his friends, whilst those he left behind in Jerusalem when he did go, showed what their feelings were by "contending with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them." It took a mighty work of God to break through all that deep-rooted prejudice against the Gentiles, and to prevent a never-ending schism in the infant church.

But Peter goes with the messengers Cornelius has sent, and six of the Jewish brethren accompany him. Arriving at the house of the centurion, after a few words of introduction, Peter begins to preach; but his address has hardly begun before it is interrupted (see chap. 11: 15) by the Holy Spirit coming on the listeners, as on the Jews at the beginning. Thus God having clearly made no distinction between Jew and Gentile in eternal things, but indifferently giving to each the same infinite and highest blessing. Can *we* make a distinction? says Peter. Shall we withhold the lower privilege when God has granted the higher?

Impossible. So he commands that they should be baptized in the Name of the Lord. Not that the command was directed to the willing Cornelius—he needed none, and to say, Who can forbid water? would be a strange way of commanding such—but to those who *could* baptize them, who, being Jews by birth, might still have objections.

Are then Gentiles placed on such an entirely different footing to Jews that the ordinance of baptism itself has a different significance when applied to them than to those? Does it mean one thing to the Jews and another to the Gentiles? Such distinctions are precisely what the whole narrative denies, and we shall surely not admit them. Baptism must have the same significance ever and always in both cases.

But must, then, the same evidence of divine acceptance always precede baptism of Gentiles now when *no such causes, as there were then, exist?* Must we still admit the Jew *without*, but the Gentile *with* the evidences of the Holy Spirit's presence? Surely we shall be in accord in denying *that* too, for that would again make the distinction that the Scripture denies.*

This leads to that word in Acts 18: 8 that is assumed to be a proof-text that baptism must always come after new birth. It reads: "And many of the Corinthians *hearing, believed and were baptized.*" "There," it is triumphantly asserted, "is the normal sequence, and you

* Think of Paul preaching to a company composed of both Jews and Gentiles; and discriminating amongst those who professedly accepted his message: baptizing the *Jews in order that they might receive the Holy Ghost*, but not baptizing the *Gentiles* till quite sure that they *had already received that blessing!*

might just as well argue that people must *believe* before *hearing*, as that they should be *baptized* before *believing*." Certainly, we reply, we are quite of one mind with you-- it is the normal sequence in the exact conditions that the context predicates. But it is only by ignoring the context altogether, and wrenching the text violently out of its setting, that it is made to do duty as it could not were these taken into proper account.

Suppose an evangelist should to-day go into a heathen city like Corinth was then, with idols and demon-worship on every side; does anyone for a moment contend that he would begin his ministry by baptizing everyone with whom he came in contact? Who among them would submit to anything so summary? Who would think of baptism preceding hearing in such a place and under such conditions? And after "hearing," if one rejected what was preached, would his will submit to baptism, as giving adhesion to what he rejected? Of course not--that is an absurdity; and surely our brethren do not think that we are contending for anything so preposterous.

But it does not touch at all the *significance* of baptism, as being at that time (and what it was then, it is now-- neither time nor conditions can have changed its meaning) the separating line between the surrounding heathen idolatry and professing Christianity; and here the question was then and still is; "Shall the *households* of all who *did* hear and *did* then believe, be left in that sphere on *earth* in which there was no Scripture, no Holy Spirit dwelling, no confession of the sentence of death, no submission to Jesus, but where Satan ruled unrivalled, and where *his* worship was alone avowed in Heathendom, and where was a desolate and empty house in Judaism?"

It was from *that* that the belief of the head of the house saved all his family; and the house took its place with its head as believers; but if any of years of responsibility wilfully rejected, they were not forced, any more than the scoffing relatives of Lot (Gen. 19: 14). *The submissive* will, and not any question of new-birth, would decide that. It is only the snatching the text from its context that can account for its complete misunderstanding—we will not say “lamentable perversion,” for we are sure that it is not due to an evil design.

Many of us—and I think I may say all who insist on what we are opposing—have entirely lost the different ideas that there are in the scriptural use of the one word “believe.” Most of you are what are termed “Believers’ Bâptists.” Let me ask then: Do you not invariably connect “belief” solely with regeneration and the possession of eternal life, as is indeed justified by such passage as John 20: 31: “Believing ye might have life through His name,” and many other Scriptures? In your minds, and according to the meaning to which you limit that word, no one can believe except he be, as you say, “saved,” or “born again,” and such Scriptures would justify such a deduction. But that is by no means always the case, as John 2: 23-25 would be quite enough to prove; “Many *believed on his name*, when they saw the miracles that He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, for that He knew all men.” So John 8: 30: “As He spake these words many *believed on Him*.” Yet trace those “believers” down a little further, and you will find the Lord telling them that they are “of their father the devil,” and did not, in the deeper truer sense “believe” at all (see verse 45). So we are plainly told that Simon

Magus "heard" and "believed," and because he "believed" was baptized quite as effectively as the others. Yet he was soon told that he had "neither part nor lot in the matter;" which most surely does *not* mean (as some of the most intelligent advocates of post-regeneration-immersion have felt themselves compelled to insist) that Simon was not *really* baptized at all, but it means that he had no real part in the *gospel* itself.

To escape this, it is boldly said that Philip "made a mistake" in baptizing Simon; which he undoubtedly did, if our brethren who insist on evidences of new-birth preceding baptism are not themselves mistaken. It is quite certain that had these brethren been there, *they* would not have baptized *any* of those Samaritans without a very careful examination, and probably a period of probation, *by which they would have sought to discern whether they were all regenerate; would they not?*

Nor is Philip the only lax one. Not one of the apostles seems to have esteemed such an examination consistent with baptism at all; and certainly not because there was no false profession in those days—although not to the same degree as now—but that does not alter the principle on which they acted. Have we then improved on apostolic methods, or does the unauthorized change, in itself, witness to the forsaking of apostolic truth? Which? The only verse that would seem to deny this is acknowledged to be spurious. Consider that, I beg you.

At all events there is not the faintest hint in the Scriptures that either Philip or any of the others erred in not taking care that those who were baptized were *regenerated* first. Either then the apostles and Philip erred or our baptist brethren do so; which?

For my own part, and I can but believe that many of you will agree with me, I cannot hesitate in such an alternative for a moment, but esteem it a good deal safer, as well as far more honoring to the Word of God, to say that it is our brethren who err through attaching a basal wrong significance to baptism, rather than that honored evangelist who was chosen because "full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom" (Acts 6: 3).

The Lord's Supper, indissolubly linked with the Church as the Body of Christ, is of quite different significance, and here great care is indeed demanded, for it is assumed to express that which is the very creation of God.

Another scripture that has been assumed to conflict fatally with the baptism of the households of believers (by profession, for it is always that) is Gal. 3: 26, 27, which reads, "For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized unto Christ have put on Christ." "How can," it is asked, "an infant (irrespective of what household he is in) put on Christ? How can an unconscious infant be accredited as a son of God?"

Again, let the context throw its light on this. The Holy Spirit is insisting on the contrast between Christianity and Judaism—between the *principles of faith and law*, to which the Galatians were in danger of turning. The law was the Jew's schoolmaster up to Christ; but now, the principle on which God is dealing with men is not that of "law" but of "faith," and He dismisses the schoolmaster who might be very suitable for the time of childhood; and now attached to the very *principle of faith* is this "sonship." Thus He would extol the dignity of their present position, and belittle that to which they were tempted to return.

But that most surely does not mean that all who had been baptized in all the region of Galatia were true “*sons of God.*” There were “false brethren who had crept in,” and who although baptized as believers, were not really sons of God. Indeed did not the writer “stand in doubt” at times of them all? (4: 11, 20). But the *principle* being faith and not law, they are no longer in the place of, and only treated as infants, but are, in God’s dealing with them, in the external place of sons, they are *all* the sons of God* by faith in Christ Jesus. It is the supreme dignity attached to the faith-principle. Of course that could only be really and actually the case when and where the faith was true and living, whether in adult or child. But the very initial ordinance of baptism had introduced them to that *external position* in which the blessed Lord of glory was ALL, obliterating all political, social, and even sex distinctions: although we know well that there are points of view in which these are not obliterated at all, as in another point of view many were not “sons” at all. But they in their very baptism did “put on Christ.” They were not baptized because they *had* already put Him on, that was actually accomplished *in* the baptism itself—and that is the basal difference between us.

But that the “putting on of Christ” in water baptism is only external is certain, for in writing to those saints at Rome whose faith had gone abroad widely, he still exhorts even them “to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof ”

* The word is not *tekna*, “children,” but *uioi*, “sons.” The former would predicate the communication of a *nature*; the latter here speaks only of *external position*.

(Rom. 13); and you and I, beloved brethren, must still daily thus "put on Christ." The one act does not fulfil this.

Nor does the word, "Ye have put on," necessitate any act on the part of the baptized, any more than the same word and the same part of the verb in 2 Cor. 5 necessitate the clothing ourselves with that body which is out of heaven, as being our own act—for all will agree *that* is beyond both our responsibility and our power.

Let me then press upon you this foundation truth, "*Baptism is not the act of the baptized Godward; but the act of God manward*"*—that has a very important bearing on our subject.

Let us turn to Eph. 4: 4-6, where we have in three concentric circles a sevenfold unity, the holy Trinity forming the one Centre; but the circumference widening as one or the other of the divine Persons of the Trinity be in view.

Verse 4: "One *body*, and one *Spirit*, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling."

In this verse we have truths that ever remain such quite independently of all our "endeavors;" "one Body" coming first to give it emphasis as being peculiarly that which would lead to the "longsuffering and forbearing one another in love" between its members. Irrespective of the practical denial of this truth in the various divisions in Christendom, it ever remains irrefragably true that there is only one Body, formed and indwelt by the one Spirit, and including not a single one not born of God, but including every one of such; and so infused by the one

* "Paraleipomena," by Tyeth Hart.

hope. It is the divine sphere in which God alone has worked, and is of a purely spiritual or heavenly character. The only baptism here would be that of the Spirit as 1 Cor. 12: 13. But now for the earth and its government, and here we have:

Verse 5: "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism.*" Here the divine Person before the eye is the *Lord*, and everyone confessing faith in Him as such, does so by being baptized to Him with water. For it is not a repetition of the preceding verse which *does* speak of the Spirit; nor is this the baptism of the Spirit, which is never to be understood by the simple word "baptism." This is precisely what we have seen this ordinance of water baptism is connected with. Nor is it here a question of regeneration, but of the confession of the once rejected Jesus as being *Lord*, and this circle includes all who make that confession—it moves in another, more earthward, and more extended plane than the first.

Verse 6: "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.*"

Here again the plane is changed; and in contrast with the "gods many" of the heathen and the Jehovah of the Jews, Christians alone recognize one God and Father of all. It is the widest possible circle of creation, but Christians alone have that knowledge which separates them from both heathen and Jews and unites them in the unity here insisted upon.

It has been claimed that this destroys the sevenfold unity. I can see no reason for such an assertion. The alternative is filled with insuperable difficulty. That alter-

* Reading here uncertain.

native is that this is a sevenfold unity, binding together in one those, and only those, who are born again. If that were the *full* truth, then none but those born and indwelt of the one Spirit could be owned as in that unity all through. Then it must follow that the "one baptism" is of these alone, and none others *have been really baptized at all*. For assume a man baptized who is not really in "the one body," and is not indwelt by the "one Spirit" (and who will deny that there are myriads?), he is not in that sevenfold unity, hence it follows that he cannot be considered as baptized at all—his baptism is invalid, and he must be again baptized at every profession of being "saved."

Nor is this a mere theory. Some of our brethren have actually acted, and are acting in conformity with it. Again and again I have been personally told that genuine faith—covering regeneration, is *necessary to justify baptism, and so make it valid*. Were that the case there is nothing, in theory, to prevent one being baptized once a week, and so the error becomes evident.

Yet is there truly a sevenfold unity here. The true, and only the true, are held together in real living unity in recognition of say even of "one God and Father of all." It is however equally true that this one God and Father bears a distinct relationship to a far wider circle than the Church, as this very epistle evidences: "The Father, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named" (chap. 3: 15, R. V.). Precisely so, only "disciples indeed" are held together in *real* unity, and real submission to the one Lord. But He too bears a distinct relationship to a circle that is wider than that, even to all who have been baptized in profession of faith in Him. This intermediate

circle refers to the earth and its government, as the first does to what is purely divine, and the last does to the universe.

Nor does this involve the acceptance of that heresy termed, "The Fatherhood of God," as applied to all men. Like all the lies of our arch-foe there is a gilding of truth over it. Scripture from beginning to end teaches us that as to men, "We are His offspring," as the heathen poet wrote, and as the apostle accepted. But that truth of offspring by creation has lost its true power, and a new birth is needed which is alone by a living faith in Christ Jesus, so that in the truest sense we are only sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

If there is one portion of the inspired Word that minimises external ordinances, and permits nothing in heaven or earth to rival in the slightest degree our Lord, we should say that portion was the epistle to the Colossians. In all things He must have such preeminence as shall fasten eye, and heart, and faith on Him alone.

Yet this very epistle has been made to give a significance to water-baptism as hardly any other. For in connection with Col. 2: 12 it is said, "Those who are baptized, are risen with Christ in that very baptism, which certainly could only be possible for those who have been regenerated, and therefore it follows as a certainty that only regenerate persons are assumed to be baptized. Hypocrites may, of course, slip in, notwithstanding all the care taken, but that does not affect the significance of the ordinance, or the principle on which it should be administered. Infants are absolutely excluded."

Plausible as this sounds on the surface, it requires but the slightest touch of the context to evidence its falsity.

For the very next words read: "*Through the faith of the operation of God who raised Him from the dead.*" The raising is not in the mere external ordinance, but "through faith" in Christ in whom we are complete.

But what then of the words, "Wherein also ye are risen with Him?" Do they not say distinctly that the raising *is* in the ordinance?

Yes, but that very translation, "wherein," of the two words (*en hoo*) makes a discord in the verse itself. If resurrection is in the ordinance as a figure, that is at least quite comprehensible, but then it requires no faith at all. The figure *is* a figure quite irrespective of any faith. It is not faith that makes Adam a figure of Him that was to come (Rom. 5: 14). So here, if baptism is a figure of death and resurrection with Christ—if we are raised in baptism—it can require no "faith" to make it that. But here the raising is not attributed to the figure, but to "the faith of the operation of God who raised Him from the dead."

Nor do the Greek words *en hoo*, themselves necessitate the reference being to baptism. All through this part of the epistle there are exactly seven recurrences of the Greek preposition *en*, our "in," and always referring to our Lord Jesus Himself, and what we have and are "in Him." It is always so, why not here? Look at ver. 3: "In whom* (precisely the same words, *en hoo*) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; Ver. 4, "walk in *Him*"; Ver. 7, "rooted and built up in Him"; Ver. 9: "For *in Him* dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily";

*Some render this, "in which" (mystery). I believe the reference to be to Christ.

Ver, 10, "Ye are complete *in Him*"; Ver. 11, "*In whom* (again precisely the same words, *en hoo*) ye are circumcised"; and so we come to verse 12, where too I believe that we should read: "*In whom* ye are co-risen"; still referring to the Lord, and not to the ordinance. Both translations are quite permissible, and it is only a question of discernment. As far as my light goes, I can but coincide with Mr. F.W. Grant in *The Numerical Bible* that it is impossible to refer the raising to baptism itself, for if so, it would not depend on "faith." If resurrection be dependent on faith, then the "*en hoo*" should not be rendered "wherein," but "In whom," so that the *figure* does not go beyond burial, and for that, death is the only prerequisite. The weighty truth involved in the figure may be livingly entered into at any time.

There are some who make everything of the manner in which the water is applied; and if the baptized has not been completely immersed then his baptism goes for nothing. With what flippant contempt do they speak of "infant sprinkling," as if the word baptize could not by any possibility be rendered by "sprinkle," quite unaware that in at least one place in the Scripture it has that very meaning.*

* In Hebrews 9 the apostle speaks of divers gifts and sacrifices that cannot take away sins, or make "him who does the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience, consisting of meats, and drinks, and divers washings (*baptisms*), carnal ordinances imposed on them till the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building: neither with the blood of bulls and goats but

The manner must be held quite subordinate to the Name: all the efficacy in baptism is in that Name, irrespective of the form in which it may be carried out. But as we are repeatedly told that baptism is burial, we believe that immersion comes nearer to carrying out that figure; but we do not lose the *truth* of baptism *as applied to the conscience* because of the form in which the water may have been applied. The Israelites were baptized to Moses in the sea, but it was not *they* who were "immersed"—*that* was the fate that befell the Egyptians.

Endless controversy too has ever been about the formula in which baptism should be carried out; nor is it unknown for poor fearful people to be baptized again and again, fearing that they have not correctly fulfilled what they esteem a law. The original commission is clear: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." But when we come to the carrying out of that commission, as far as we have any record in Scripture of its being carried out, we do not find that particular formula used once; but it is to the Name of the Lord Jesus.

But considering the different surroundings of these *ap-*

with his own blood, he entered in once into the holy places, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Then the argument returns to the carnal ordinances. "For if the blood of bulls and goats *and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean* sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

Thus the "washings," or literally, "baptisms," refer to the water of separation that was "*sprinkled*" (Num. 19). See *ante* the quotation from Ecclesiasticus.

parently divergent formulas, we mark that when going to the heathen world, it is God fully manifested in His unity, yet threefold Personality, in contrast with the "gods many" of heathendom. But when going to the Jews or proselytes who have a knowledge of the true God—they were monotheists; the contrast lies rather with the one Person of the Lord Jesus, and so it is directly to that One that they are baptized. I can only speak suggestively, not at all dogmatically, on such a point; but every scriptural formula would appear fulfilled by baptizing directly to the Lord Jesus, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

I am well aware that this address is not by any means exhaustive, but I have already gone far beyond my original intent, and I have but a few words more, but they are solemn.

It is frequently said: "Cannot I present my children to God, and bring them up for Him, apart from baptism, leaving *that* for them to decide upon for themselves?" It is done, and so it would be absurd to say that it *cannot* be done. But the question we have to settle is, What is the scriptural significance of baptism? and whether that does not show baptism to be the *divine way* of bringing our children to God.

I desire to press this on your conscientious consideration with all soberness. As a matter of clear revelation, no child of fallen man can ever be in any kind of covenant relationship with God (and children of believers are this as we have seen—are not as Jewish, or heathen children) apart from a confession that all are under the sentence of death.

Thus, circumcision (death on the flesh) was the "*sign*

of the covenant" (Gen. 17: 11), and even though thus admitted, yet no Israelite was counted at all till he, at 20 years of age, had brought the half-shekel (Exod. 30: 15) that again spoke of the one atonement for all in the blood of Christ. And thus even Moses, on his way to deliver Israel from Egypt, is met at the inn by the Lord, who "*sought to kill him*" (Exod. 4: 24), till Zipporah confesses that sentence of death, and circumcises their son, and then he may go his way without hindrance.

I do not judge my beloved brethren, and I know something of the compassion of our Lord in such a day of confusion, but I cannot see how any *dare* to present their children to God, without this practical and divinely appointed way of confession of the universal sentence on the flesh, and the hope alone in the cross of Christ, as told in the significance of baptism. One other word from my own experience: in days gone by I was told that the baptism of children was never heard of during the earlier centuries of this era, and that it was introduced with other evils that so quickly clouded the testimony of the Church. Indeed, a much to be regretted instance of this comes to hand as I write. Our esteemed brother, the Editor of *The Witness*, a periodical that for its staunch maintenance of fundamental truth deservedly carries great weight, warns his readers against various "inroads threatening." The first place is given to "Modernism," and its basal evils are detailed. Then we read this: "Beware of the inroads of Ritualism," and are counselled to "set a determined face against those who teach from platform, or in private houses the strange doctrine of 'Household Baptism,' a figment which beloved and honored John Nelson Darby brought with him from the Church of Ireland."

It is not altogether easy to answer this with calmness of spirit, for this "strange doctrine"—this "figment" of the baptism of households, *as households*, is beyond all controversy found in the "Acts of the Apostles." Nor does it affect the truth to contend that there were no little ones in those households; or that they were all believers, in the strictest sense of the word. They were baptized, *not as individual believers, but as the households of believers.*

Then, hardly have the apostles disappeared, than from the meagre records coming down to us, this "strange doctrine" is referred to by Irenæus, the friend of Polycarp, who sat at the feet of the apostle John. Origen, who lived shortly after this writes: "*The baptism of infants, which everybody practises, and which has been practised always.*" And again: "The Church has received a tradition from *the apostle* to give baptism *even to the little ones.*"* And so the line of testimony might be continued.

Coming to a later day, a myriad names of saints might be given, many of whom have sealed their witness with their blood, and all of whom held this "strange doctrine which John Nelson Darby brought from the Church of Ireland!" Time would fail us to name them all, but think of Huss and Wycliffe; Luther and Melancthon; Calvin and Farel; Whitfield and Wesley; Horatius and Andrew Bonar; McCheyne and Mackay; Robert and F. W. Grant, etc., etc.

But against all such our watchful brother would warn his readers! They must be barred from the platforms! They

*And he defines one of these as *parvulus nuper editus*, or, "A little one just born." These quotations are from a work entitled "Paraleipomena, or Things left out."

must be silenced from ministry! And even in private houses their appeals to Scripture as maintaining these convictions must be forbidden!

Countless thousands of not the least humble-minded or Spirit-taught saints in the Church of God in all ages down to the present day, would come under this ban of The Witness!

For here is this brother, occupying a position of much influence, putting that truth (as we are well assured that it is), as far as his warnings go, on a level with the fundamental errors of Modernism; and not only hinting at it too being Modern—the comparatively recently formed Church of Ireland being apparently its source—but grievously slurring all his brethren who now hold it, and dare hold nothing else, as being led by a blind fatuous surrender of their consciences to a “beloved and honored” name!

Does our brother count on a few sweet words to offset so gross a libel? Is the *honey* an antidote to the *sting*? We can but feel that when he leaves the editor’s chair, and thinks this over quietly in the presence of God, that he will regret so intemperate and—well, unwise a statement, destructive as it is of all true Christian fellowship.

But the heading of the paragraph: “Beware of the Inroads of *Ritualism*” leads to the belief that it was really due to a lack of any real knowledge of what he was writing against—a lack that is almost universal amongst those who think that they at least “know all about baptism.” The *adulteration* of the doctrine in the interests of Ritualism; the attributing to mere water-baptism, eternal efficacy, did indeed come in during the early days, and is “the figment,” or “rag of Rome,” or “strange doctrine”

that our brother (with many others) confuses with, and attaches to what we know as the very truth of the Scriptures. It is the natural revulsion from this horrifying error that has driven so many of God's beloved people to the other extreme—to their loss. We care little for anything outside the pages of revelation, but our younger people are easily shaken by such statements, which although doubtless made in good faith, are absolutely baseless, and intensely pernicious in their effects on fellowship.

To sum up what we have found:

1.—Scripture speaks of a sphere on this earth, quite distinct from the heathen and Jewish, on the one hand, as it is from what is purely divine on the other. This defines God's responsible Witness on the earth. This is a place of such high privilege that entry to it is "salvation," but it also carries weighty responsibility of obedience.

2.—There must be a boundary to such a sphere where the responsibilities connected with it begin.

3.—That boundary cannot be found in new birth, which is not a matter of responsibility at all; nor could those within a sphere formed by the pure grace of God be threatened with divine reprobation as is the present Witness (Rom. 11: 21, 22; Rev. 3: 16): Nor can it be defined by geographical boundaries. It must be by an external ordinance, the administration of which is left to man's responsibility.

4.—Judaism was such a Witness, and Circumcision formed its boundary. But broken off from its own olive tree the place has been given to "branches" from a wild olive, the Gentiles, with Baptism for the boundary.

5.—As to this sphere of privilege and responsibility the

Scriptures identify the House with its Head. All the children of believers are thus sanctified, or holy.

6.—Baptism is not an act of obedience on the part of the baptized, for no one could baptize himself; and therefore that responsibility was placed on those who alone could fulfil it, as far as we know.

The apostles and the 120 disciples were formed into that sphere at Pentecost, but were themselves never baptized as Christians, with water.

7.—Baptism does not express what has already taken place in the baptized, but is always *to* something, or someone that is before them, and that it is desired to reach.

8.—The form is secondary to the Name, but Immersion is nearest to the figure of burial. The formula is to the Name of the Lord Jesus, as the Representative to us of the Trinity: "Father, Son and Holy Ghost." But when any have been baptized to the Lord Jesus by sprinkling, it would be unscriptural to repeat the act.

9.—In the confusion in which we are, nothing but the utmost patience with one another and mutual respect, leaving each free to walk in this, according to their light and conscience, is in harmony with such Scriptures as Romans 14.

And now, brethren, let me close with one other searching question: Why has the Lord permitted this divergence amongst those who, by His grace, would give up life rather than dishonor Him?

I believe that there may be two answers to that. First, is it not that we may be humbled? He, and He only, really "hides pride from man" (Job 33: 17; 40: 11), and from the very first of His dealing with our race, He has shown that purpose, even in forming the body of man from

the dust on which his feet tread, and giving him a name that should ever bring home to him that lowly origin, "*Adam*" from *Adamah* (*earth*). Thus too He may make the "eater yield meat" in turning *this* shame—that we cannot agree even as to the very initiatory ordinance of Christianity—to lowly confession and to blessing. But there is another reason that comes still closer. In writing to the Corinthians, the Spirit of God writes: "I hear that there are divisions (*schismata*, schisms) among you, *for there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*"—words that have perplexed many, and have, I believe, been greatly diverted from their true application by many others. Look at the threefold recurrence of the words "among you." How emphatic they make that application to those only to whom he writes. Never did he write that to the saints at Rome, Ephesus, or Colosse, but only "amongst *you*" at Corinth—*you* who are carnal—*you* who walk as men. That very condition will inevitably and necessarily result in schisms, divisions, heresies. In your carnality you will exalt someone or something to rival, and practically eclipse the Lord Jesus. You will make Peter or Apollos, Paul, or even Christ Himself, to be mere party leaders. And whilst, alas, that will manifest the sad state of the mass, it will also, God be thanked, result in showing out those who will not suffer any such divergence that does not so vitally affect Christ, His Person or Work, as to evidence basal wickedness, to sever them in heart and affectionate fellowship from other members of the one Body. *These* shall be shown out by their exalting the Name of the Lord as unrivalled, and by still embracing in their fellowship every evidenced member of the one

Body. To no leader, minister, or circle less than that One Body, will they pledge their fealty.

O my beloved brethren all, am I wrong in assuming to speak for you as well as myself, when I say how deeply do we need to know, by personal intimacy, our Saviour-Lord better? He knows us through and through, and knows well the desires of the heart; and where that desire is to please Him, whether it be in observing one day above another or all days alike; whether it be in eating, or refraining from eating meat; whether it be in confessing for our households the truths expressed in baptism, or leaving that for our children to do themselves, He accepts the heart's desires of all, and is "able to make all to stand." We too may thus make "the strong to yield sweetness" by showing that even the knowledge that we have of our Lord Jesus Christ—slight, alas, as it is compared with what it should be—is still sufficient to hold us firmly together; and so I close with my hand still firmly clasping those of you to whom He is in any measure precious, and who will retain it, in spite of possible divergence of convictions as to water-baptism.