

Household Baptism:

Is it from Heaven or of Men?

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INTRODUCTION

IN considering the subject of Baptism, we must avoid two opposite tendencies. On the one hand, of building on it as a foundation, ascribing to it some magical effect, regarding it as an entrance into some special place of privilege, or making it a *sine qua non* of Christian fellowship. Christ is the only foundation, the one door, the all-sufficient Centre and ground of Church fellowship. On the other hand, we must beware of making too little of it as some do, calling it "a Jewish ordinance," or agreeing, for the sake of peace, that it is a subject not to be spoken of. We must seek to give it exactly the place and value that it has in the Word of God.

Before considering the teaching known as Household Baptism, it may be well to give certain simple reasons why we should practice and teach baptism as it is set forth in the Scriptures, as an ordinance only to be administered to those who confess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1) DIVINE EXAMPLE.—Our Lord was Himself baptized. The fact that His baptism was of a different character and order to ours, does not touch the question. If He submitted to be baptized by John, we should be no less ready to submit to that which He instituted for the obedience of His people.

(2) DIVINE PRECEPT.—Our Lord ordained it. "Go make disciples . . . baptizing them" (Matt. xxviii. 19). "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved" (Mark xvi. 16). A commission to the servant of the

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Lord, is a command to the convert. The disciples were to be first made, and then baptized. This agrees with its

(3) DIVINE USE.—Our Lord Himself “made and baptized disciples” (John iv. 1) though the manual act of baptizing was performed by His disciples.

(4) APOSTOLIC CUSTOM.—The apostles (who had themselves, doubtless, been baptized by John), and the early disciples, baptized believers at Jerusalem (Acts ii. 41), Samaria (chap. viii. 12), Cesarea (chap. x. 48), Corinth (chap. xviii. 8), etc.

(5) SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLE.—There is no case in the New Testament of an infant being baptized, nor yet in the history of the first two or three centuries, A.D. The whole drift of Scripture teaches and favours believers' baptism. For thirteen centuries, as shown in Church History, immersion was the mode.

(6) PAULINE PRACTICE.—The Church apostle *par excellence*, was himself baptized, and he also taught and practised baptism, though, in but a few cases, he may have actually baptized with his own hands, “lest any should say he baptized in his own name” (1 Cor. i. 15).

(7) DOCTRINAL MEANING.—The apostles base much important teaching to the saints on the fact that they had been baptized; (1) of unity to the Corinthians (chap. i. 13); (2) of holiness to the Romans (chap. vi. 4); (3) of Christian position to the Colossians (chap. ii. 13); and as to “the answer of a good conscience” (1 Pet. iii. 21). All such teaching is practically thrown away, if others than believers are eligible for baptism.

(8) IMPORTANCE OF ITS SCRIPTURAL ORDER.—The Ephesian disciples who had been already baptized, were re-baptized as believers in Christ, in the proper order,

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by the command of the apostle Paul (Acts xix. 5). Those who insist on this in our day, are blamed for "exalting an ordinance," or "making it a ground of fellowship."

(9) PUBLIC CONFESSION.—Because it is a public "putting on of Christ" (Gal. iii. 27)—an immersion "into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii. 19), and an open act of separation from the world. The religious world, generally speaking, approves of infant baptism, and considers believer's baptism a folly (see Luke xvi. 15). In the case of Jews, Mohammedans, and Pagans, it is looked upon as an act by which the baptized are irrecoverably lost to their own people.

Household Baptism :

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EXCELLENT men are liable to err, but their errors are none the less mischievous. For although the alchemy of personal worth and gift cannot convert error into truth, it can gild it with pious phrases and probabilities. It was with no small measure of truth that Count de Gasparin in his work, "Innocent III," wrote: "Behind every heresy that has afflicted the Church, there stands a pious person."

Household baptism is a case in point. It is an attempt to form a synthesis of incompatibles: infant baptism *the device of man*, and believer's baptism *the ordinance of Christ*. But the attempt is based on the frailest inference, and only breeds confusion.

Those who hold that Scripture teaches that none ought to be baptised, apart from personal faith, are accused of "troubling the waters." But this is only the fable of the wolf and the lamb over again. Pamphlets, catechisms, and circular letters, teaching, defending, and pressing household baptism have been scattered far and wide over the world, and are bearing their fruit of unsettlement and confusion; while those who have at some cost renounced infant baptism and all its works, are invited to open their arms to receive this household baptism theory, which is infant baptism and something worse thrown in. Some of the propagators of this practice protest in the name of Christian fellowship when they *find that, though they themselves would be received as brethren in Christ, there is no desire for their teaching*. Christian fellowship is indeed good and pleasant. But "how can two walk together except they be agreed?" This means much more than a tacit agreement that

certain subjects must not be mentioned, which savours more of carnal compromise than of godly faithfulness.* Mr. R. E., a writer to whom I shall refer later, remonstrates warmly in a pamphlet with a writer who takes a contrary view—but he misrepresents him. What that writer stands for is “the duty of not opening the door to that which would lead God’s people into error.”† It is the teaching that has to be excluded; not necessarily all who hold household baptism. The presence, to my knowledge, of some such in the meetings named by the critic, proves this. But loyalty to Christ and His Word forbids our conniving at a practice which, by its very principle, undermines all true separation between the church and the world, in that it introduces an intermediary class, which is not quite the world and not quite the church, but is a kind of half and half between the two.

To quote again the same writer: “One who is a public advocate and teacher of household baptism, who comes as a teacher wishing to instruct others,” excludes himself. This our household baptist brethren assert is making baptism the “test and basis of our fellowship.”‡ No. We do not make Incarnation, Inspiration, Eternal Judgment the basis of our fellowship, because we refuse those who bring a contrary doctrine. Nor do we make “baptism” the basis of our fellowship, because we refuse household baptism, which “removes the ancient landmarks” of the faith, and is bound to introduce division wherever it is received. Once we were charged with being “too loose.” Now we are “too close.” Really, some folks are very hard to please!

* One of these teachers writes complacently, “I never name or teach any question on Baptism at all, except at a Baptism meeting.” If all followed his example there would be very few “Baptism meetings” for him to attend. The Lord does not tell us to leave converts to do as they like, or to find out for themselves, but to “teach them to observe all things.” How is Baptism to be taught, if it is never named.

† “The Believer’s Magazine,” September, 1909.

‡ Mr. R. E. asks, “Are different views of Baptism in the Scriptures made the basis and test of fellowship?” No, for the good reason that there are no “different views” of Baptism in the Scriptures. But if the Ephesian disciples (Acts xix.) had refused to be baptised, I cannot conceive of Paul making light of it, and welcoming them as teachers in the Ephesian assembly. It is much more probable that he would have “rebuked them sharply,” and “stopped their mouths” (Titus i. 10, 12).

This household baptism teaching is far more serious than it may at first appear. It denies, as we shall see later, God's characteristic grace to the world in this age. It obliterates the line of demarcation so clearly laid down in the Word between light and darkness, between death and life. What does it entail? Nothing less than baptising whole households, including children, servants, retainers, irrespective of age and moral condition, if only one of the parents be converted. The family, according to this theory, can now call itself a "Christian household," though all its members, except one, be unregenerate and at enmity with God.

This is an attempt to amalgamate what cannot possibly unite, like the iron and clay of Nebuchadnezzar's image. The Lord has warned us that His doctrine will divide, not unite: "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." The Gospel of Christ normally makes divided households. Household baptism professes to make "Christian households." Can it then be of God? "Oh, but," say some, "they have been baptised on the ground of profession." How can a babe profess anything? And why should a servant if manifestly not born of God be asked to profess anything? It is all sheer hypocrisy, hateful to God, and most dangerous to the soul. Could anything be more unscriptural or subversive? Yet these brethren say, "Come with us half-way, if you cannot come all the way!" We are obliged to decline the invitation, because from the start, we see their way leads straight to a city called Babylon (confusion).

I have before me now, two of the pamphlets above referred to, treating wholly or in part of household baptism. The writers, both well-known brethren in Christ—Mr. W. S. and Mr. R. E.—with whom I would vastly prefer to go hand in hand than to criticise their teaching, but the good of souls demands that their writings be tested by the Word of God. May this be done and accepted in a right spirit. I am not for a

moment impugning their motives or conscience, but simply examining their practice and teaching.

As for the good that is supposed to come to the recipient of this ordinance, it is at best exceedingly impalpable, even if we accept Mr. R. E.'s definition, according to which "Household baptists believe that baptism connects their children outwardly, BUT ONLY OUTWARDLY, with that which will save them, if in time they accept it by faith." What advantages—in all conscience we may ask—has a baptised babe over one unbaptised? God's Word is, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Is not that enough to "connect them outwardly with that which will save them?" Why, then, add to what is written? Household baptism may make a fair show in the flesh, but what can it be to God who looks on the heart? Mr. W. S. claims more than his fellow-teacher, but from time to time his trumpet gives a very uncertain sound. After repeating again and again that children should be brought into the house of God by baptism—"In God's way and according to His rule"—he suddenly has a qualm and then writes, "WE DO NOT SAY THAT UNBAPTISED CHILDREN ARE NOT IN THE HOUSE OF GOD, NOR DO WE AFFIRM THAT THEY ARE." What, then, is the object of writing a pamphlet of 32 pages to prove what he is still uncertain about? But this playing fast and loose with what he professes to hold as truth, crops up in other places in Mr. W. S.'s pamphlet, and I shall have occasion to refer to it again.

Because we differ from Mr. W. S. as to the mode of baptism, he calls us "baptists," warns us against making baptism "our badge" our "bond of union," or our "centre of gathering." He reads us a little homily which is quite orthodox, against "confounding baptismal waters with the waters of the new birth," exhorts us not to ascribe "saving efficacy to ordinances," for "life is in the Son," and so forth. All this is perfectly true, and has never, by God's mercy, been questioned by any of us. So far are we from relying thus on baptism, or giving it "the first place," that we would not dare

to say, as Mr. W. S. does so constantly, that it "introduces the baptised into the house of God." The first thing we ask of a candidate for baptism is some proof of "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," while the first thing that Mr. W. S. would apply to the families and servants of the newly converted head of a house would be water baptism—apart from their personal faith. Mr. W. S. speaks of Paul as relegating baptism to a "secondary place" in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. With all respect to our brother, Paul does nothing of the kind, for the simple reason that it had never put it in any other place. It was not baptism, but the apostle himself they had set on a pedestal. He was glad, therefore, he had personally baptised so few, "lest any should say he had baptised in his own name." But nevertheless, all his converts were baptised, and such was his custom everywhere. I think it is quite clear that the household of Stephanas was in the assembly at Corinth. Paul speaks of them as being "of you" (ver. 14) in his epistle, which was written only five years after his visit. In the last chapter of the same epistle (chap. xvi. 15), they are mentioned as "having addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints," which fits quite naturally with the belief that they were a converted household at the time they were baptised, as was also that of Lydia, being called "brethren" (Acts xvi. 40). And it is said that the house of the jailer in Philippi shared in his joy, at the very crisis of his conversion (ver. 34).

It is Mr. W. S. who gives baptism a wrong place. Twice he affirms, it is the only way of getting into the house of God, outside of which persons cannot be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (!) No doubt it is a great privilege to have Christian parents. The atmosphere and opportunities of a Christian home are peculiarly favourable. But this should be true for all the children of Christians, quite irrespective of baptism. What is there to hinder a Christian mother from teaching her children—though not baptised—of Abraham, Moses, David, and of the Lord Himself?

Did Eunice and Lois wait for Timothy to be baptised before teaching him the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. iii. 16)? Is the instruction of an unbaptised child of no value? Will God withhold His blessing from such? Apparently Mr. W. S. believes so, for so he teaches.

This creation of a circle of preferential treatment is a most serious denial of one of the great characteristics of the present dispensation, namely, "the Gospel of the grace of God," for every creature, irrespective of national position or ordinances. But Mr. W. S. would build up a little preferential fold, which he calls "the house of God," and create a circle of privilege for certain unregenerate persons, where alone they can be trained up for God. But we have done with all "folds" and circles of privilege. The only circle that the sinner needs to be in, where the grace of God may reach him, is the circle he was born in—a circle 7000 miles wide, this poor planet earth. The word is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." According to Mr. W. S.'s theory this should have been, "Go ye into the house of God and preach to every baptised creature."

This bringing of persons into an imaginary place of special favour builds them up in a false hope, and later on deprives them of that which the Lord instituted as the initiatory rite of the Christian life, the baptism of believers.

Baptism, if wrongly applied, is useless; if practised in an incorrect mode it is meaningless. When rightly carried out it points to a great reality, the identification of the believer at the moment of his conversion, with Christ in His death and resurrection.

We do not practise "adult baptism" any more than "infant baptism," but only "believers' baptism." Now Mr. W. S. stumbles over this expression, for why should a believer need to be buried in baptism? The answer is simple. Baptism is the act of the believer. But he goes down into the water in his character for the nonce of a child of Adam. He accepts God's estimate of himself as a man in the flesh, and desires to show forth

his identification with Christ, in His death and burial. It is as a believer that he emerges from the water, as "a man in Christ," having put on the new man. If baptism is a figure of "burial with Christ," it is clear that it is of great importance to preserve the Scriptural figure. To baptise by sprinkling is just as impossible as "to break bread" without eating. Mr. W. S., however, accepts sprinkling as true baptism! "Sprinkling," he writes, "does not commend itself to US, but WE accept it as truly and as really baptism. The way in which it was done is not a question with US. WE practise immersion, and consider it THE SCRIPTURAL MODE, and would STRONGLY ADVISE all to adhere to it alone. On the other hand, do not make a question of a matter which, after all, is a *mere trivial one and of no real importance*" (italics mine). If so, why "strongly advise" all to adhere to immersion alone? For ourselves, we dare not thus play fast and loose with the "Scriptural mode," or accept the pontifical dispensation of any man as to its observance.

Mr. W. S. never tires of repeating that baptism is a matter of profession. Well, be it so, but surely not of false profession. The teaching of Romans vi. is based all through on the assumption that the profession at their baptism had been real. What power against sin could result from pointing a believer back to the moment when he had made an unreal profession? How exhort to "newness of life" dead professors? How could such "know their old man had been crucified with Christ," or be said to have "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered unto them?" (v. 17). The whole chapter breathes reality, and yet Mr. W. S. seizes one sentence out of verse 3., "baptised into His death," and seeks to show from the preposition translated as "unto," that baptism only looks forward, not backward. But in ver. 2, believers are said to have already "died to sin" (R.V.), so that their baptism does look back. The only ground for the Romans being baptised was, that they had died judicially with Christ through faith in Him, and this is fully borne out by the

rest of the chapter. To apply Rom. vi. all through to infants or unsaved persons, is exegesis "with straws in its hair," and Mr. W. S. very wisely refrains from attempting the task.

His dictum as to the Greek preposition need not trouble us too much. The very instances he quotes, are against him. For instance, "baptised unto repentance." The repentance was not future. John only baptised those who already professed repentance. Then as to Galatians iii. 27—another verse he builds on—verse 26 says, they had become "sons of God"—there was nothing future about it. Again, take the well known words, "Where two or three are gathered together *unto* My Name there am I in the midst." No one believes that this Name is only a future object. The Name of Christ represents His Person—Himself. If He is not a present reality, the meeting is a failure.

The only way Mr. W. S. can connect children with baptism is by falling back on the figurative baptism of Israel in the Red Sea and in the cloud. But even this is a broken reed, for figuratively, Israel were a redeemed people, and their little ones correspond, not to literal infants in the flesh, but to newborn babes of the family of God.

So with the baptismal formula of Matt. xxviii. 19. How is it possible to connect mere false profession with that most solemn formula—"into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." That a false professor may have these words said over him is sadly possible, but that anyone should defend such a travesty as the deliberate intention of our Lord, really shocks one's moral sense.

I have failed to find a single place in Scripture where baptism is connected with entrance into the "house of God," though Mr. W. S. lays it down as an axiom that requires no proof. Anyhow he attempts none, but merely gives a reference in brackets—I Cor. vii. 14—after one such statement. We eagerly turn to the verse. Here, at length, must be some weighty Scriptural proof. Imagine our feelings when we find that neither in it,

nor in its context, is there the slightest reference either to "baptism" or to "the house of God," or to entrance into anything, or even to ecclesiastical position in any shape or form. Here is the verse, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified (*hagiazain*) by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy" (*hagios*). The whole question is one of family relationship. A Jew had to put away his heathen wife (Ezra ix. 10), for such an alliance was condemned by the Scriptures. The question raised by the Corinthians was, must a husband on his conversion to Christ, leave his wife? The answer is *No*, for the unconverted wife has been sanctified by or set apart to her husband by the divine ordinance of marriage. Else, the apostle adds, "your children too would have to be separated from as ceremonially unclean. But now are they holy." This word "holy" is from the same root as "sanctified," applied to the unbelieving parent, and both words have the same limited sense. The point raised is not about baptism, or bringing anyone into the house of God, but of being able to live under the same roof. This practice of bringing babes and unsaved persons into some supposed place of privilege by baptism is unscriptural. It confounds saints and sinners, and with all deference to Mr. R. E., is apt to foster a superstitious faith in an ordinance. I refer to his words: "We do not build at all upon baptism itself;" "Household baptism has absolutely nothing to do with baptismal regeneration." I fear building on household baptism is by no means such an impossibility as our brother believes, as the following incident shows:—A household baptist brother in Belfast, while speaking to some Christian ladies known to the writer, expressed the confident hope that he and his sons would all be "caught up" when the Lord returned. On the ladies expressing surprise that he should have this confidence about his sons, who were known to be anything but godly, the good man replied that they had been "brought on to Christian ground by baptism," and he trusted all would turn out

right. They had, in fact, been baptised as members of his household. Household baptism in such cases is "baptismal regeneration" in the "sheep's clothing" of so-called "deep teaching." Small blame to unsaved servants who are told they have been brought into "the house of God," if they do attach to this high sounding pretension some sacramental virtue. And those who have put "a lie into their right hands" incur a heavy responsibility before God.

We are utterly opposed to all such notions, as both unsound and dangerous, and yet Mr. R. E. tells us our differences are only "of the smallest degree."

This theory of bringing unregenerate persons into the house of God is built, I believe, on a triple misconception (1) as to what the house of God is, (2) as to what baptism means, and (3) as to the conditions on which households were baptised as recorded in the Acts. The house of God is another name for "the Church of the living God," as 1 Tim. iii. 15 shows. It is composed of the "little ones" given to Christ, and He, as Son, is Head over God's own house. False professors may "creep in unawares," but they are never "living stones," or in the house of God at all, and will one day "go out from us." Those who hold fast the beginning of their confidence, etc., prove themselves to be the true house of God (Heb. iii. 6). It is only those who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious" who form the "spiritual house" of 1 Pet. ii. 5, and over this house—the only house of God known in Scripture—our Lord is said to be High Priest. How could He be "high priest" over such a mixed multitude, as the "house of God" of the household baptists?*

Mr. W. S. would have us believe that the commission of Matt. xxviii. 19 should be translated, "Go and disciple all nations BY baptising them . . . and BY teaching them." It is strange that our Authorised and

* Much is made of a phrase in 2 Tim. ii. 20—as though it read "in the great house," i.e., "the great house of Christendom"—but the Scriptural phrase is "in a great house," i.e., in any great house at Rome or Ephesus. The verse is only an illustration.

Revised Versions both overlooked this. At any rate this was not the way our Lord made disciples. He "made" them first and "baptised" them afterwards (see John iv. 1), and so did the apostles. But a certain Mr. W. C. J., to whom Mr. W. S. refers with great confidence, says the only way the Greek can be translated is, "by baptising." The way this poor, "dead language" (the Greek) is claimed as an ally by slight acquaintances, is enough, were it buried as well, to make it turn in its grave. Leave it, however, for a moment to rest in peace, and let us ask a question which all may understand. Where are "nations" being disciplined in this fashion? Has Mr. W. S. ever seen it done? Why do not the household baptists go and do it, if they think this is the right way? If it were, then Francis Xavier, with his water sprinkler and his thousands of baptised heathen, was not so very far wrong after all.

But Mr. W. S.'s "revised translation" goes too far for household baptists, for it would justify the indiscriminate baptising of everyone, and the teaching them to observe all the Lord's commands. But how teach a natural man to whom the things of God are foolishness?

Mr. W. S. ought logically to urge all baptised households at once to observe the Lord's Supper, for there is no Scriptural ground for asserting that baptism is for the unregenerate any more than the Lord's table. Both are intended for true believers. If, unhappily, the unconverted, under the cloak of a false profession, approach the Lord's table, they do not spiritually partake, though they go through the manual act. The baptism of Simon Magnus in no way affects the ordinance. He was never really "buried with Christ." Nor is there the slightest hint that Philip knew him to be unconverted when he baptised him; so that this no more justifies household baptism than the supposed presence of Judas at the institution of the Lord's Supper would justify the reception in our day of an undoubted hypocrite.

Our household baptist friends, make little or no reference to the baptising of unsaved servants, but this

is just as essential a part of their system as baptising babes. One of them is reported to have said that, had he lived in the old days of slavery, and a slaveowner had been converted, he would gladly have baptised the whole slave gang with their master! And this is no more than the household baptism theory consistently applied!

Mr. W. S. deprecates our understanding Matt. xxviii. with Mark xvi. But why? They were directions given to the same persons in view of the same work, and are mutually explanatory and perfectly consistent. In Matt. xxviii. 19 there is something to be done before baptising, and that is "discipling." In Mark xvi. 15 there is something to be done before baptising, and that is leading souls by the Gospel to faith in Christ. Mark explains Matthew. The godly way to "disciple the nations" is to preach the Gospel to them, and that is exactly how the apostle Paul and his true successors down the ages have understood their Lord's command, and acted on it.*

The expression, "discipling the nations," is a phrase like canvassing a constituency or fishing a lake—where no one supposes that all the votes will be won, or all the fish caught. It is by preaching the Gospel to the nations that true disciples are made, and such prove to be the people whom God is taking out of the nations for His Name. Only one nation will ever be converted as such—the remnant of Israel.

Mr. W. S. seeks to evade all this by pointing out the difference of detail between various baptisms at Pentecost, Samaria, Ephesus, Cesaræa, etc. But these differences do not really affect the broad principle that baptism was always *subsequent to conversion* under whatever form this was manifested. And when Mr. W. S., the teacher, takes the place of Mr. W. S., the controversialist, he explains quite adequately the peculiar characteristics of the various cases in the Acts. He airily brushes aside

* See "Baptism into what Name?" by the present writer, where the meaning of the expression, "all nations," *in loco* is discussed.

the order of the words, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" as quite unimportant. To most who believe that our Lord spake the Word of God in the very words of God, the order—faith first, then baptism—is very significant, and what is more, it tallies with the Scriptures all through. On the day of Pentecost it was they who received His Word who were baptised (Acts ii. 41). It was when the Samaritans "believed" that they were "baptised, both men and women" (viii. 12). But nothing is said of households on either occasion. It was after his conversion that Paul was baptised. If he had not bowed to "the heavenly vision" he would not have been baptised. His baptism was very normal. The expression in Acts xxii. 16 is admittedly difficult, but whatever its meaning, we may be sure it is much more than "a washing away, so to speak, of his sins, AS ONE WHO HAD OUTWARDLY SEPARATED HIMSELF FROM THE SINFUL NATION OF ISRAEL." Thus Mr. W. S. glosses over the mighty spiritual revolution wrought by God at that time, in the heart of Saul of Tarsus.

If I were asked to explain the meaning of the words, "Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the Name of the Lord," perhaps the first part of Mr. W. S.'s explanation would be adequate. It was a "washing away, SO TO SPEAK, of his sins," in baptism, as one who had already been cleansed from them in reality, by his contact with the Lord Jesus. For I cannot believe that Saul's meeting with the risen Saviour had left him in his sins as he was before.

Mr. W. S. again affirms, "Ananias received Saul into God's house," though one searches in vain in all the three accounts in the Acts, for one hint of such a thing. Teachers of this school have a great advantage over those less favoured in matters of interpretation, in that they do not feel the necessity of saying "I judge," or "I would submit," when advancing the most arbitrary statements. They also possess a wonderful intuition as to drawing distinctions between the various writers of the New Testament. I remember when I quoted some

words of our Lord in John's Gospel to one of these brethren, he merely pushed my argument aside with, "Oh, that's John," which to me was not very convincing. This same brother, Mr. G. H., writes (March, 1911): "I find in Scripture that 'whole' households were baptised as well as individuals, and I certainly am not wiser than the Scriptures. I should not object to baptise households, if the household was in the condition which the Scripture suggests." Exactly, but what that condition was, is the whole point at issue. In every case of baptism, whether of individuals or companies (at any rate other than households) in the Acts, the proviso was a change of attitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ. In the case of the three baptised households mentioned in Scripture, internal evidence points to this great change having taken place. The burden of disproof lies with Mr. G. H. and his friends.

But to go back for a moment to Matt. xxviii., somebody may ask, "Does not the Greek really oblige us to translate, 'by baptising' and 'by teaching,' as Mr. W. S. and Mr. W. C. J. assert?" No, it does not. I will quote as my authority Dr. Handley Moule, the present bishop of Durham, a man as well known for his scholarship as for his simple evangelical faith. I remember at a "Church Society" meeting, years ago in Cambridge, met to consider the subject of baptism and kindred questions, a certain High Church Canon present, quietly read the words as Mr. W. S. would give them to us—"Make disciples BY baptising them," etc. Dr. Moule rose and protested against such a reading of the verse, on the ground that it was "not translation but interpretation." There were scholars present, but no one questioned the Doctor's dictum. Dr. Moule has since confirmed this in a letter to me. I quote his own words in answer to an enquiry of October, 1912: "It is not translation but interpretation to say that baptizontes (in Matt. xxviii. 19) should be rendered 'by baptising them,' rather than 'baptising them.' Grammatically, it is at least as natural to take *matheteusate* and *baptizontes* as giving two concurrent facts or

thoughts, make disciples, and baptise, without specifying the connection of the two. As a matter of fact, no mission has ever begun by 'making disciples by baptising.' It began by making men and women disciples—learners by patient teaching—then came the sacred and solemn incorporation into membership in a united body, of which baptism is sign and seal. . . . No one can say as a grammatical certainty that *baptizontes* in Matt. xxviii. must be rendered 'by baptising' as the true Greek meaning. It is a question of interpretation and an open question at best." Scriptural authority, experience, commonsense, and the Greek text are all allied against this fundamental idea of Mr. W. S. that disciples are made "by baptising." The baptism of the eunuch was the outcome of his faith, and this does not rest on verse 37—which is in the R.V. omitted—but on the very desire that he expressed to be baptised. It is clear that Philip must have explained baptism to him as the initiatory rite appointed by Christ. He would certainly not have learnt it from reading Isaiah or from the Jewish Rabbis. It was on believing (see Acts x. 47) that Cornelius and his friends were baptised. Peter commanded them in the Name of the Lord to be baptised (R.V., Greek order), and that because the Lord had commanded him. The apostle had, of course, been baptised by John. It was he who "made ready a people prepared for the Lord," and it is inconceivable that any should have become apostles of the Lord who had rejected the testimony and baptism of the forerunner. This was valid, if received before the institution of Christian baptism by our Lord, which would account for the fact that there is no record that the apostles were ever re-baptised. In the case of the Ephesian disciples (Acts xix.), they had clearly received John's baptism AFTER it had been superseded, hence they needed re-baptism. A command to the servant entails a command to the converts. If a mother tells her nurse to *put* the children to bed, it is an order to the children to *go* to bed.

Yet a word more about Lydia and the jailer of

Philippi. These are the two "little ewe lambs" of Mr. W. S. But truth demands they should be sacrificed. Why have we only these two or three cases of household baptism given? Because it was naturally a rare thing for households to be converted as such, and therefore such baptisms were quite exceptional. Mr. W. S. wishes us to believe the contrary, but he advances no proofs. As for the case of Lydia (Acts xvi.), Mr. W. S. cannot have it both ways. When he wants to show, in the interest of "household baptism," that all in the household, except Lydia, were unconverted, he sternly rules out the possibility of their being converted, on the ground that "so far as we are informed, Lydia alone had her heart opened of the Lord;" but when asked to explain who those "brethren" in the house of Lydia were, mentioned in the fortieth verse, he says they were persons whose hearts "no doubt" had been opened subsequent to the baptism of Lydia. But "so far as we are informed," there were none such. When it suits him he builds on the silence of Scripture, when it suits him he overrides it. He adds, however, one crushing proof to show that these "brethren" could not have been "the household" of Lydia, by pointing out that the former were "comforted," the latter "baptised," as if these two could not be true of the same persons. I am sure no godly comfort could come to unsaved neophytes from household baptism as taught by Mr. W. S., but obedience to the Lord's command, in the Lord's way, yields at once the fruit of joy and consolation. Rather than introduce what is quite repugnant to the positive teaching of Scripture, it is much simpler to believe that the members of Lydia's household, not likely to be numerous, were all brought to the Lord at the same time as their mistress, like the ruler and his house in John iv., or Cornelius and his friends or the household of Crispus, as recorded in Acts xxviii. As for "the jailer," the argument in favour of household baptism is still more precarious. The household baptist theory demands that the jailer alone was converted, and that the rest were baptised, though unconverted,

“to get them on to Christian ground.” Now we are met with the staggering fact that the whole household is said to have “rejoiced” with the jailor, and that, just after they had ex-hypothesi, rejected the Word of the Lord spoken to all in the house. How explain this anomaly? Mr. W. S. does not hesitate. He draws us a beautiful but imaginary picture. “The joy of the jailor at once *communicated itself to his household*. What a change had been wrought! the joy of the convert welled up in his heart, and *flowed over to his family*” (my italics). Well, that has not been the experience of the present writer. Nothing irritates the Christ-rejecter like the joy of a new convert. “The dead praise not the Lord.” This general joy of the household can only be reasonably explained on the supposition that they had the same cause for rejoicing as the jailor himself: they had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and had been saved.

Of the Corinthians we read, “Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptised.” To which Mr. W. S. adds this note:—“There is not a word said about the families or households of those people, if such they had. As to the order here followed, ‘many hearing believed and were baptised,’ it was just what one might reasonably expect.” Yes, indeed, for it is consistent with all that has gone before. It is refreshing to be able at last to heartily endorse one sentence from our brother’s pen, when there has been so much to criticise.

Mr. W. S. makes a point that nothing is said of the baptism of “Crispus and his believing household,” and that even in 1 Cor. i. only Crispus is said to have been baptised, (Paul says *he* personally only baptised Crispus), whereas other households, not spoken of as believing, were baptised. In other words, those believing are not always said to be baptised, whilst those baptised are not always said to be believers. The explanation is simple. With Paul, believing and being baptised seem almost convertible terms. To say a man is baptised presupposes his faith, to say he believes supposes he was to be or had been baptised.

When we ask for proof of this household baptism, we are given a list of fifteen references which will "enable anyone" (so says Mr. W. S.) to get hold of the main idea involved in household baptism. Any unprejudiced person will I think conclude, after examining the texts, that "the main idea" in the whole theory is its non-scriptural character. To what straits men are reduced to bolster up a false system, a study of these references which I here give below* will show. Most of them have not the most distant connection with household baptism. They illustrate the familiar principle that a man should provide for his own (1 Tim. v. 8), and certainly shield them from danger. Noah and his house (Gen. vii. 1), Rahab and her father's household (Josh. vi. 25), Israel and their little ones (Exod. x. 9), are instances of this. They teach also that a man should exercise authority in his household. Abraham is commended for commanding his children after God (Gen. xviii. 9), bishops and deacons should rule their houses well, and then our old friend—1 Cor. vii. 14—does duty again. All this is perfectly true, but what has it to do with baptising unconverted households?

The fact that Mr. W. S. cites such real and literal deliverances as those of the Ark, the Exodus, and of Rahab's house to illustrate "the main idea involved in household baptism," favours the suspicion that household baptists are not always so far from building upon baptism as Mr. R. E. supposes.

The reference in 1 Pet. iii. to Noah's deliverance from the flood as a figure of baptism, shows that the baptism referred to there is not that which speaks only of an "outward profession," but of a deep reality—the "answer of a good conscience to God."

This expression is in itself destructive of their whole theory, for an infant has no conscience at all, and the unregenerate adult has a defiled conscience and no "outward profession" will ever give him anything else.

* Mr. W. S.'s proof texts for Household Baptism, are Gen. vii. 1, xviii. 19; Exod. x. 9, xii. 3, 4; Josh. vi. 25; Matt. xviii. 10; Luke xix. 9; Acts ii. 39, xi. 14, xvi. 16, 31-34; 1 Cor. i. 18, vii. 14; 1 Tim. iii. 4, v. 8; etc., etc.

The truth of baptism rightly understood does enable the believer to take his place intelligently before God, as one who, having been buried out of sight with Christ, as to his old man, now stands as a new man in Christ on RESURRECTION ground. Anything else, is a delusion and a snare!