

# Household Baptism.

A SCRIPTURAL INQUIRY AS TO THE CLAIMS—

What is Valid Baptism?

Is there a Circle of Privilege?

Are Disciples made by Baptism?

What are the Results of Household Baptism?

BY

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# “HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM,”

A Departure from the Pattern.

By W. HOSTE, B.A.

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CONTROVERSY is never pleasant, especially with highly-esteemed brethren, but it is sometimes needful. Paul did not love Peter less when he opposed him at Antioch, but he loved the truth above all. The same may be true on a humbler plane.

Two principles of obedience run through the Scriptures : “ No adding to or diminishing from the Lord’s commands ” (Deut. 4. 2 ; Prov. 30. 6 ; Mark 7. 9) ; “ No turning aside to the right hand or to the left ” (Deut. 5. 32 : Prov. 4. 27). The one applies to teaching, the other to practice. Household Baptism violates both principles. It adds to the “ one baptism ” of Ephesians 4 ; another, that of unregenerate households ; forms “ a circle of privilege ” for these baptised households, a thought abhorrent to the present dispensation of grace to all ; deprives young converts of that which was intended to be the first step in their Christian life, a public identification with Christ in baptism, and as we shall see, most serious of all, substitutes\* a teaching of children “ to live in accordance with their baptism ” for the true teaching laid down for such in the Word of God. In a word, its whole tendency is to make void the commandments of God to keep Household Baptist traditions.

## Believers and “ Household ” Baptism.

That water is used in Believers’ and Household Baptism does not constitute them one and the same. It is not the

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\* See “ Reply to W. Hoste on Household Baptism,” by R. Elliott.

element in which the rite is performed, but the subject, to which it is applied, which is the first essential.

Household Baptism is applied to babes and other unregenerate persons, and is therefore a different baptism to the "one baptism" of the Word of God, which is only applied, as far as the Scriptures teach, to believers, or those who profess to be such.

One Household Baptist teacher asserts that even sprinkling with holy water by a Romish priest is valid, because done in the Name of the Trinity; but this Holy Name is not a mere incantation, as the exorcists of Acts 19. 13 discovered. The demons mocked their claims, for the character of the men robbed the Name of its reality and power. The validity of baptism depends on whether it is rightly applied and Scripturally performed.

### A "Circle of Privilege."

As for the Household Baptist "circle of privilege," into which unregenerate persons are admitted by Household Baptism, and in which they professedly enjoy rights denied to the unbaptised, this is to put the clock back 1900 years. The nation of Israel did form such a circle, and the initiatory rite was circumcision. It was to them that Christ first came; it was to them exclusively that the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached (see Matt. 10. 5); but there is no such circle to-day into which an ordinance admits.

Is it not very disingenuous to bring in 1 Corinthians 7. 14 in this connection, where a preferential right to the Gospel or to certain spiritual privileges are not even in question, nor baptism in any form once mentioned?

One Household Baptist\* affirms that infants can be brought into the house of God by baptism as truly as they were lifted into the arms of the Lord and blessed, and adds the astounding sentence, "*There (i.e., in the House of God)*"

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\* W. S. in "Christian Baptism," last page.

ONLY can they be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (my italics). This denies the unconditional grace of God apart from ordinances, which marks the present dispensation, and is a mere human tradition, as worthless as any other.

This doctrine deprives all non-household baptists of the right to bring up their children for God, for they are outside the *only* pale where they can thus be trained, and yet some would have us believe that "our differences are of the slightest."

### **Baptism and "The House of God."**

The "House of God," as described in the Scriptures, differs widely from that of Household Baptists. Theirs is a sort of half-way house of profession; the true is "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3. 15); to theirs, Household Baptism introduces; to the true, the new birth; theirs is formed of a mixture of unregenerate infants, children, household servants, and believers; the true is formed of "living stones," who, having come to the "Living Stone," "are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2. 5). The principles here combated remove the ancient landmarks,

### **Blend the Dead and the Living,**

and, carried to their logical issue, have made Christendom what it is.

I have before me a pamphlet entitled "Fellowship and Baptism" (no publisher's name), which illustrates these insidious and dangerous departures from the truth, in the form of a printed letter by Mr. Russell Elliott, of London, to a fellow-household baptist in Scotland. Did such arguments proceed from some ill-instructed sectarian pedobaptist we should neither be surprised nor notice

them, but the fact that this writer is known somewhat widely as a teacher may give his pamphlet a fictitious authority. "But God respecteth no man's person." "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

To answer these good brethren is no grateful task. They claim the right to spread their own views in pamphlets, etc., but seem to deny to us the right of reply. My last answer\* to Household Baptist teaching, written some years ago, was stigmatised by Mr. Russell Elliott as "a challenge," "an attack," "an onslaught." One would suppose it had fallen like "a bolt from the blue" among a flock of lambs. But he forgot to mention that at least three recent pamphlets by himself and friends, all in the interests of Household Baptist, were at the moment in circulation in the Assemblies.

#### Fellowship and Baptism.

In the same way the present paper would not have been written but for Mr. Russell Elliott's "Fellowship and Baptism," which enjoyed a comfortable start of eight months. It is a little hard, if one is attacked in the street, to find oneself summoned for assault by one's assailant, because one tried to parry the blow.

The occasion of Mr. Russell Elliott's pamphlet was a local trouble in an Assembly four hundred miles from his home in London, in which he felt called to intervene, because a local Household Baptist had written to him on the subject, and because he had ministered there from time to time as a visiting brother. I do not question his motives, I do his wisdom. Were such a principle of interference admitted, what a chaos would result! Are, then, itinerant teachers and evangelists to become "outside bishops," to be called in by one side in a local controversy to set things right?

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\* "HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM; is it from Heaven or of Men?" By W.H. 3d.

Surely local elders might be expected in dependence upon God to arrange such matters, and so it proved. But Mr. Russell Elliott's letter, published with his consent, not in any way marked for private circulation, and widely distributed in Scotland and England by his friends, only served to advertise the trouble to the four winds and widen the breach between brethren.

I do not say these men are not sincere ; some are my personal friends, but I believe them to be themselves victims of

### **A Traditional Belief,**

inherited from former leaders. Rome is not the only circle where to challenge the official interpretation exposes to a charge of heresy, and these theories, received at first with hesitancy from gifted teachers, came to be regarded as the very truth of God. No other hypothesis explains how such weak reasonings can be held as valid by otherwise intelligent Christians.

### **An Early Protest by C. H. M.**

Fortunately not all in this circle were led astray. There were many notable exceptions. WILLIAM KELLY, G. V. WIGRAM, ANDREW MILLER, for example. Another well-known teacher, Mr. C. H. MACKINTOSH, wrote under date December 22, 1871 :

“ I have for thirty-two years been asking in vain for a single line of Scripture for baptising any save believers, or those who profess to believe. Reasonings I have had, inferences, conclusions, deductions, but a direct Scripture authority, not a tittle.”

Wherever Household Baptism is pressed fellowship is threatened. At once the cry is raised, “ We are not gathered to views of baptism.” Quite true, we seek to know no centre but Christ. But is then the propagation of all “ views ” permissible in the Church of God ? Light

on baptism is not our ground of fellowship, but life in Christ, and this applies to Household Baptism, but the teaching we will not, we cannot, accept. We value every gift of the Ascended Christ, but better the thinnest pottage,\* if need be, than "wild gourds" (2 Kings 4. 38-41).

Had the Ephesian disciples of Acts 19 refused to be rebaptised and insisted on their right to practice John's baptism, would it not have meant an inevitable rupture with Paul? Does not Mr. Russell Elliott confound the unity of the body, which includes every regenerate soul in Christendom, whatever their present doctrine or practice, and the unity of the Spirit, which we have to keep, and which is only possible on the ground of truth and holiness? It is not "to put Christ in a secondary place" to refuse to tolerate what we believe He disapproves.

### How "Household Baptism" is Introduced.

Mr. Russell Elliott protests that he does not *press* Household Baptism, but unfortunately this very pamphlet gives him away. One brief page is taken up with the trouble referred to, the remaining seven with an attack on those he calls "Baptists" (thus creating a prejudice against us in the eyes of some by confounding us with the denomination so-styled), and a propaganda for Household Baptism. I do not complain of a man frankly standing up for what he holds to be the truth, but how could such a pamphlet even hope to pour oil on the troubled waters, or strengthen the fellowship of which Mr. Russell Elliott speaks so much?

I hold in my hand a pamphlet entitled "A Letter on

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\* These good brethren sometimes talk as though, but for them, God's flock must starve (see Mr. Russell Elliott's "Real Fellowship," at page 31), but we can thank God we are not on the horns of this dilemma. The risen Lord does meet the needs of His people, "feeding them with food convenient for them," by the ministry of some, who though not Household Baptists, He qualifies and uses to edify His saints.

Russell Elliott's 'Household Baptism,'\* which latter was being "*industriously circulated* among the Assemblies in Ontario" (Is not this "pressing" Household Baptism?) according to the writer of the letter, a Mr. C. K., of the "Close Brethren." Referring to Mr. Russell Elliott's relation to those they call "Open Brethren," he remarks, on page 1 :

"It seems hardly fair for one of Mr. Elliott's views to foist himself and his ministry on those whose views on baptism he must have known beforehand were diametrically opposed to his own. He must have known, too, how these brethren felt toward those who practise infant baptism, and it seems quite unfair toward them to expect their fellowship in his ministry under those conditions."

Though as a fact we have not gone as far as Mr. C. K. thinks we had a right to go, and Mr. Russell Elliott's ministry, apart from his Household Baptism line of things, has been welcomed in various places, it is interesting to learn how these things appear to one occupying an outside position, with no special prejudice in our favour.

When we ask Mr. Elliott for a command of the Lord to baptise our children, he replies, "Show us a single Scripture

#### **Where it is Prohibited,"**

which he asserts to be "far more to the point." I am astonished at such a suggestion. Is the absence of prohibition a clearer permission than a positive command? Then admit babes to the Lord's Table, practice auricular confession, and pray for the dead, for I do not know where, in so many words, these evil practices are forbidden.

#### **A Very Pertinent Question.**

In another of his Household Baptism pamphlets, Mr. Russell Elliott emphasises this point : "The silence of the

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\* I think this is his reply to myself already referred to.

New Testament becomes the strongest testimony to the truth of Household Baptism ;" but, as Mr. C. K. remarks, " was not Israel condemned by God for this very thing—doing the thing He had not commanded ? that ' neither came into His heart.' " (See Jer. 7. 31 ; also Deut 17. 3.)

But the Lord does prohibit the baptism of unregenerate infants and other persons by limiting the application of baptism to " disciples " (Matt. 28. 19, marg.) and " believers " (Mark 16. 16). Peter's question, too, at Caesarea, prohibits baptism to all but those who give some evidence of the reception of the Spirit. It is a strange argument that, because persons like Simon have been baptised on a false profession, the custom should be systematised to-day. As Mr. C. K. again well says :

" The curse of Christendom is its profession without reality ; why then should I, by baptism or any other means, increase it and so add to the confusion already existing between the real and the unreal, the wheat and the tares, the possession and the profession ? "

Two things are predicated in the New Testament of those baptised : (1) A personal change of attitude to God ; (2) a resultant change of relation with God. John demanded " fruits meet for repentance " as a condition of baptism (Luke 3. 8), and some refused the conditions and were not baptised (Luke 7. 30). Our Lord made disciples by preaching before baptising them (John 4. 1). Were the making and baptising one and the same, as Mr. Elliott asserts, the necessary deduction would be that the Lord and His disciples baptised every one unconditionally, which is incredible. Baptism does not *make* disciples, it *marks* them. Mr. Russell Elliott overlooks the fact that disciple in the New Testament, like our word scholar, has two meanings. A boy becomes a scholar when he joins his school, but only one in the deeper sense after years of study ; so the moment a man acknowledged the claims of Christ he

became His disciple, but to become one in the sense of Luke 14 meant self-denying devotion to His cause.

**“ By Baptising. ”\***

To read Matthew 28. 19 thus, as the Household Baptists do, is mere *ex parte* interpretation. Only the darkest sacramentarian ever attempted to carry out such a programme. If Mr. Russell Elliott and his friends really hold this to be the Divine method, why do they not do it? It would certainly yield an abundant harvest of disciples of the Household Baptist type. The Apostle Paul did not take this view of the Lord's commission, though he valued baptism in its place and habitually practised it: “ God sent me not to baptise,” he says, “ but to preach the Gospel ” (1 Cor. 1. 17). It is thus that disciples are made (see Mark 16. 16), not by baptising.

**Children Living up to their Baptism.**

I thought if there was one thing enlightened Christians were clear about, it was that the unregenerate cannot be taught spiritual truth. “ The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned ” (1 Cor. 2. 14). But Mr. Russell Elliott, in his “ Household Baptism,” writes :

“ It is often said that Christendom, with all its worldliness and formality, is the result of Infant Baptism. Nothing could be more wide of the mark. It is because children have not been taught to live in accordance with their baptism, and their parents were not true to their own ” (my italics).

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\* Dr. Handley Moule denies “ by baptising ” to be the true translation. The Revised Version does not even suggest such an alteration as a possible rendering, and yet Mr. Elliott quietly assumes it as undoubtedly correct. This system of amateur emendation to bolster up private theories hardly commends itself as legitimate exegesis.

One really rubs one's eyes in astonishment at such teaching. It is the very High Church teaching which we as evangelicals (when I was in the Church of England many years ago) used to regard with horror. There is not a word here, it will be noticed, of teaching children their sinner-ship or of pointing them to Christ. No; we must point them back to their baptism, and teach them to live according to it.

### **Household Baptism and Sunday Schools.**

Is not this in very deed to "cast down Christ from His excellency" to propose another object than Himself—an ordinance instead of His work for us and His Spirit's work in us? If this teaching of Household Baptism as regards the young were right, all our Sunday schools would be wrong, for they never point the young back to their baptism. No; we have not been wrong, for we are obeying the Divine command to preach the Gospel to every creature, young and old. And we intend to continue doing so and oppose to the best of our ability this unsound and subversive teaching. What is it but an appeal to man in the flesh to be something for God? Besides (in the verse in Matthew 28 just referred to) the Lord was speaking of "all nations," not of "households," so what has this verse to do with Household Baptism except to confuse the issue? The same principle runs through the Acts. The 3000 baptised at Pentecost had received Peter's word (chap. 2. 41), consequently no unconverted households were included. So at Samaria (chap. 8. 12) only "men and women" believers were baptised. Simon and the Ethiopian were both baptised on their profession of faith in Christ, and so with Saul. His case has no connection with Household Baptism, yet these teachers gloat over chapter 22. 16 as though it favoured their views. Lydia's household (chap. 16), as "the brethren" in verse 40 would show, is no exception, nor is the jailer's.

The promise to him was not as Household Baptists seem to read it,

**“Thou shalt be Baptised, and Thy House,”**

but “saved.” But nobody believes that a “household” is saved on the spot by the faith of their parent, but on the same principle, if at all. The fact that the whole household rejoiced with their father forces us to conclude that they had a like reason for doing so. Were such things as “swaddling clothes” or “feeding bottles” mentioned in the context we would rightly infer the presence of infants in the households, but as there is no hint of such things in the passage, why “add to His words” by asserting there were babes at all in either household? It is all pure imagination and assumption. One more instance must suffice. “Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptised” (chap. 18. 8), which, as one Household Baptist sagely remarks, is “just what one might reasonably expect.” Yes, indeed! Among those who believed were Crispus and all his house. Such were fit subjects for baptism, like Cornelius and his kinsmen in an earlier chapter. The burden of proof rests with the Household Baptists to show that the two or three other households mentioned as being baptised, were not in the same condition of believing God.

### **No Command for “Household Baptism.”**

Mr. Russell Elliott admits that “those who ask for a command (*i.e.*, for Household Baptism) in so many words of course would ask in vain.” But why “of course;” are there no plain commands in the Scriptures? We must no more expect a plain command, Mr. Russell Elliot asserts, than a boy eating “a delicious pudding” made with an egg could expect to find “the egg shell and all” in his food. “IT IS MIXED WITH IT.” I should call this trivial casuistry. Our answer must be, “The egg is bad, and it was added by yourselves.” A mixture certainly results of conflicting

principles. Some are baptised in the faith; some without faith; some in positive unbelief. The result is, we are told,

### A "Christian Household,"

a phrase which, apart from the conversion of the individual members, is as unscriptural as "Christian Nation."

Christ warned that His doctrine would make divided households. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt. 10. 36). We know which to believe.

The Church is not built up of tribes and families, according to the flesh, as was Israel nationally, but of regenerate souls. This shows the fallacy of arguing, as Mr. Russell Elliott does, from circumcision, the sign of the national covenant, applied to all born in the nation, to baptism, which is not a sign but a "figure" of death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6. 3; Col. 2. 12), "the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3. 21), a condition out of the reach of unregenerate households. At least, we thought so, but there seems, according to Mr. Russell Elliott, few spiritual experiences impossible for a baptised child.

### The Child in a New World.

Mr. C. K. quotes him as saying of baptism :

"It separates me from the world, for it is a figure of death and, in the sense of Colossians 2. 20, I no longer live in it, and it is in view of a new world, with which all my hopes and associations are bound."

Think of asking a child to believe that its baptism had done all this, as you are compelled to do if you apply baptism to it! As a matter of fact baptism does *not* do what Mr. Russell Elliott claims for it, but only that of which baptism speaks, namely, personal faith in and identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. If the neophyte

be a stranger to Christ, the whole ordinance is a meaningless make-believe. Mr. Russell Elliott charges us with

**“ The Crassest Ignorance ”**

of the Jewish mind, if we refuse his assertion that Jewish converts inevitably raised the question of baptising their children. We do not profess to know more than the Scriptures, which are silent on the point. Mr. Elliott asks, moreover, why we have no records of refusals to baptise children in the New Testament. Our answer is, there are exactly as many recorded instances of refusals to baptise children, as of their being presented for baptism. In reality, as far as we know, the most ignorant convert never confused circumcision and baptism.

Mr. Russell Elliott seeks to show that our differences are unimportant, “ of the smallest degree ” is his phrase in another of his Household Baptism pamphlets, Household Baptists see “ more in baptism ” than we are able to see, that is all. Were this so, would it be justifiable to endanger fellowship by practising Household Baptism ? To us the differences are vital. The something “ more ” is just that tradition of the elders which makes the Word of God of none effect (Mark 7. 13). I notice the side of baptism Household Baptists emphasise is that of Galatians 3. 27. They degrade that most important phrase,

**“ Have Put On Christ ”**

to mean merely “ profess Christianity,” and that, in the case of their unregenerate households, falsely. They seem to have “ profession ” on the brain. A man should not masquerade in a uniform if he is not a soldier. These baptised households remind one of the small boys, so common during the War, running about the streets in fake uniforms. Mr. Russell Elliott asserts we do not understand the meaning of baptism. We may charitably hope he does not. How could he otherwise put “ a lie into the right hand ” of his unregenerate households ?

If the appropriateness of this expression be questioned, I would refer to page 3 of the pamphlet under review, where Mr. Russell Elliott defines baptism as "a public declaration of a complete change of position," and again on page 8 "a solemn and weighty undertaking, a public pledge that we have renounced the world and sin and intend to walk in newness of life." Suppose for the sake of argument we accept these definitions as accurate or adequate, then to instruct unregenerate baptised persons of responsible age to make such declarations is indeed

**"to put a lie into their right hand;"**

indeed "lies" would be more accurate, for these unregenerates have *not* "changed their position," nor "renounced the world and sin," nor do they intend to "walk in newness of life," and never will, apart from the grace of God. It is quite beside the mark to argue that some of these children may eventually be converted, an untruth is no less untrue because under certain hypothetical circumstances "it may later become true." Cases are not unknown of children of Household Baptists, converted later, who, far from ascribing this blessing in any way to their having received Household Baptism, have repudiated it altogether and been baptised as believers.

Such expressions as the above do connote a spiritual change—how can any one renounce the world and sin apart from the grace of God and the new birth? It is a hopeless muddle. The Household Baptists either put a lie into the right hand of their neophytes by teaching them that certain things have happened to them in their baptism, but not in any true sense, or else they teach that these great changes have taken place, and what then becomes of their protests that they do not hold or teach "baptismal regeneration?"

**Infants? Servants? or What?**

An expiring effort has been made to escape this dilemma,

in part, by denying that Household Baptists ever do baptise any but infants. Well, that would be bad enough, but the denial is quite futile. The reverse is a matter of common knowledge. Only last week I heard of a servant-maid brought to Christ in an evangelistic meeting here in London. Afterwards, as the preacher told me himself, when he put baptism before her he learnt to his surprise she had been baptised only a few weeks previously, when she entered her situation, as her master held Household Baptist views, and yet she was an absolute stranger to grace at the time.

After the visit to an "Open Meeting" of two teachers (both of whom believed in Household Baptism, though it was understood they would not teach it), one of the elders had his two children baptised after the manner of these teachers. These children were not *infants*, and this is the insidious way in which the doctrine is propagated. This is no ancient history, nor is it a unique case.

One Household Baptist, who made the above denial, told me in triumph that he once refused to baptise two boys of responsible age at the request of their Household Baptist father. Surely the request showed what the common Household Baptist custom is, the refusal, only that my informant is a half-hearted, indeed, I hope, a half-converted Household Baptist. Indeed, what sense has "household" if limited to the babes? It must include those who form the "household," converted or unconverted, children of responsible age, and household\* servants, too. If Household

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\* An attempt has been made to distinguish between *oikos*, as meaning the family only, and *oikia*, the household, as including the servants. Professor Grimm notes the attempt, but does not allow its validity. The distinction does not hold good in the N.T. Instances might be quoted: Did the house of Pharaoh (*oikos*) (Acts. 7. 10) exclude the servants? Are we to believe that Cornelius' household servants were not included in *oikos* of Acts 11. 14? Were the servants of Stephanus included in the ministry of 1 Cor. 16. 15 (*oikia*), and excluded from the baptism of chap. 1. 16 (*oikos*)?

Baptists only baptise unregenerate infants (and in how many households there are none such?) they ought to style themselves simply

**"Infant," not "Household," Baptists.**

As I said in my former pamphlet\* "the Household Baptism theory is infant baptism and *something worse* thrown in." I was then charged with making thus some dark hint in order to create an atmosphere of suspicion against the Household Baptists, but I think I made it abundantly clear to what I referred, for, bad as infant baptism is, baptising unregenerate persons of responsible age is still worse, being, if possible, more abhorrent to Holy Scripture. What possible help can come to the unregenerate by cloaking them in a false profession, or by applying to them the same Scriptures and principles as to believers? It conveys the impression that by their own efforts they can be pleasing to God, blurs the demarcation between the living and the dead, and is probably responsible for much of the vague teaching of this school as to new birth, eternal life, entrance into the kingdom, etc.

But what is supposed to be

**The Effect of Household Baptism?**

We may expect diverse answers, where every man is a law to himself. A great Household Baptism teacher asserts the household is now brought into the house of God, but attempts no Scriptural proof. In past days men gave chapter and verse; too many, alas, to-day dispense with this. Another says the children are

**"In the ambit of the Church of God."**

We have heard of a "within and without" (1 Cor. 5), never of this "ambit." This is one of the glib assertions characteristic of these teachers. It has a clever ring; if it is not true, it ought to be; IT IS TRUE! Mr. Russell Elliott gives us

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\*"Household Baptism; is it from Heaven or of Men?" page 6.

a very wide choice of effects. They vary with his published letters and pamphlets. Here he tells us the children are brought "under the authority of the Lord" (as though He only had authority over the baptised). "Unbaptised children," he adds, "have not come in by the appointed door." Where does this door lead, and who appointed it? In a previous pamphlet Mr. Russell Elliott, who was anxious to rebut a charge of teaching "baptismal regeneration," states that "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." But all this is quite imaginary. The Bible does not say so. Surely a godly upbringing with the Scriptures is a sufficient outward connection. Apparently Abraham was a sort of progenitor of the Household Baptists, because he commanded his children after him. But why drag in Household Baptism? And so with the other alleged proof analogies from the Old Testament. They illustrate the well-known principle that a man should protect, influence, and provide for his own.

### **Household Baptism and Baptismal Regeneration.**

Mr. Russell Elliott adds a footnote at the end of his present pamphlet. "Household Baptism must not be confounded with Baptismal Regeneration." Such a warning is not needless. The difference between the two seems, in some cases, more in word than in fact.

On page 19, in the pamphlet above reviewed by Mr. C. K., Mr. Russell Elliott asserts, "It (Household Baptism) does introduce a child outwardly to *inestimable benefits*." What can they be? What does "*introduce outwardly*" mean? Does he mean that the child sees the blessings but will not possess them unless it lives "in accordance with its baptism?" Then this is salvation by works; or does he mean the child will only have them if brought to true faith in the Lord Jesus? Then that is no less true of the child of a "Baptist?"

To be very frank, Mr. Russell Elliott's baptismal teaching is not to be distinguished in principle from sacramentarianism. Thus extremes meet, and what began early in last century as a true protest against this evil, has embraced, in certain circles, the very errors it abhorred. What benefits, we may ask, has a baptised baby over one unbaptised ?

### **The High Churchman and the Household Baptist**

answer in chorus : It is on Christian ground, and the other is not. Scripture and Christian experience answer there is no difference. Of course, I shall be told that I misrepresent things, that Household Baptists do not teach this or that, and that they do preach the Gospel faithfully. Well, one can only go by what they themselves publicly affirm, and as for preaching the Gospel, they are like some evangelical clergymen, who, after pronouncing children "regenerate" by baptism, will "faithfully" preach to those present that they "must be born again." Would not faithfulness be better shown by relinquishing unscriptural practices and teachings, than by blowing hot and cold ? And so with Household Baptists ?

It might be added that many evangelicals in the Church of England use the word "regenerate" in the baptismal service to mean practically what the Household Baptists teach. I do not think they would go so far as Mr. Russell Elliott, and say a christened child had been introduced, even outwardly, to

### **"Inestimable Benefits,"**

but they would agree with him that children must "live in accordance with their baptism," or some such legal phrase, to reap the benefits.

Some years ago in Belfast I remember hearing of a Household Baptist who was speaking to some friends of mine about the Coming of the Lord and of his joyful expectation that he and all his family would be caught up

to meet the Lord in the air. On their expressing surprise that he should have this assurance for his sons, who were not, it seems, leading professedly Christian lives, the good man replied, "Oh, they have all been brought on to Christian ground." They had, in fact, been baptised as members of his household. How does this differ from baptismal regeneration? Only in being more sacramentarian, for the most extreme advocate of "baptismal regeneration" believes that the baptismal grace may be sinned away, whereas "Household Baptism" grace seems to survive all contingencies.

Only a few days ago I was informed of a Household Baptist who said that "he could not believe that any one who had been brought

#### **On to Christian ground by baptism**

could be eternally lost."

To all who share such views, and, as we have seen, count as valid even Christening by a Romish priest, the hope that baptism affords is indeed a "larger hope," but it is a hope that will make ashamed.

Baptised households are taught they are "on Christian ground," "in the House of God," in "a circle of privilege," "within the door," "holy," and are referred to the very real deliverances effected on behalf of Noah and Rahab, and their respective family circles to explain what happens when they were baptised. Are they not justified in believing themselves *in a place of safety*? For Shem, Ham, and Japheth were not only "outwardly connected" with the ark, clinging on outside, nor were Rahab's kinsfolk only "within the ambit" of her house, but both companies were actually inside their respective refuges, else had they all perished. Mr. Russell Elliott's mistaken interpretation arises from a mistaken application.

#### **Baptism not for the Unregenerate.**

Christian baptism is not for the unregenerate, and does

not look forward to what may happen if the one baptised fulfills certain conditions, which is really as legal a covenant as Sinai, but backward to what the Lord has done, with whom the one baptised has already been identified by simple faith. "Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6. 4, R.V.). Baptism is "a figure," as Peter tells us (chap. 3. 21). These Roman believers had thus been figuratively identified with Christ, and so with the Colossians "They had been buried with Him in baptism, wherein they were also raised through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Col. 2. 12, R.V.). But from Ephesians 2 it is clear that the believer has been raised with Christ quite apart from baptism: "God... quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up with Him." This is shown forth by baptism, and the believer is thus openly identified with Christ, in whom he has believed.

To apply such truths to infants and the unregenerate is to turn the truth upside down, strip it of its meaning, and lead the blind into the ditch. It may be said that all Household Baptists do not go so far as Mr. Russell Elliott in his notions. I hope this is the case, but why is there no repudiation? "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me," and the same may be said of "a fellow Household Baptist."

**"Your children holy."**

I would refer at this point to the two verses on which Household Baptists chiefly rely. The first is 1 Corinthians 7. 14, "else were your children unclean, but now are they *holy*." But note that this "holiness" is not said to be the result of baptism, which is not mentioned in the chapter.

The question is, Should a believing husband separate from his wife, or vice versa? No; marriage has sanctified (not in the deep sense, but in that of setting apart ceremonially) the wife for the husband.

What then does the phrase “else were your children unclean, but now are they holy” mean? Simply that if the principle just enunciated did not allow a husband to retain his unbelieving wife, he would also have to send away as unclean his children; but the principle does apply and also to the children. They, too, are “holy” (same root as above) in the same restricted ceremonial or social sense as the parent. Clearly this verse gives no support to Household Baptism, for it does not refer to baptism in any form, nor does it justify in any way the idea of “a circle of privilege” in the sense condemned earlier in this pamphlet. It is not a question of Spiritual, but of social privilege; not of preferential treatment in the matter of the Gospel, but of ability to live under the same roof. No hint is given that henceforth the unbelieving parent or the unregenerate children are on “Christian ground,” or that now only they may have the Gospel preached to them or “be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” On the contrary, the next verse supposes the unbelieving partner leaving the other, in which case the word is “let him or her depart,” for how does the believer know whether he or she will be the means of the other’s salvation? Of course it is an advantage to be born in a land where the Word of God is spread abroad, or in a family where Christ is known, but these are providential circumstances quite apart from baptism. To get baptism in any form, let alone Household Baptism, out of this verse, it must be put in first.

#### **The Baptism “unto Moses.”**

Another text which Mr. Elliott himself quotes is 1 Corinthians 10. 1, 2. This, indeed, is the only passage which he

alleges teaches definitely the baptism of children, so it may be of interest to consider it somewhat closely. The Apostle is exhorting the Corinthians so to run in their Christian race, that they may not be disapproved of God, and cites as a warning the history of Israel. The first word of chapter 10 should not be "moreover," but "for" (see R.V.), thus linking the chapters, and then the Apostle quotes five common privileges Israel had enjoyed: (1) All were under the cloud—*protection*; (2) all passed through the sea—*deliverance*; (3) were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea—*leadership*; (4) did all drink the same Spiritual meat—*provision*; (5) and did all drink the same Spiritual drink—*refreshment*. Nothing is said here about the fact that they had all been under the blood, for that meant *redemption*, the effects of which they could never lose. But "with most of them God was not well pleased" (R.V.). Now who are the "all" here of whom most were not pleasing to God?

Mr. Russell Elliott would have us believe all the Israelites, including infants; therefore "all our fathers were baptised unto Moses" would include these latter, and so we have straight away an instance, and a justification for infant baptism.

On the face of it, it seems strange to have to go back to the beginning of the Old Testament for the solitary instance of "infant baptism." One at whose feet I judge Mr. Russell Elliott would be willing to sit, Mr. W. S.\* says of this event: "Being a national act, and one effected prior to Christian times, 'unto Moses,' while Christian Baptism is 'unto Christ,' we may dismiss it, as not directly applicable to us."

But Mr. Russell Elliott makes much of the word "examples." "These things were examples" (v. 6).

**"Why don't 'Baptists' then follow this example?"**

he asks. But the word is rather "types" (*typoi*), and the

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\* In his Household Baptism pamphlet, "Christian Baptism," p. 4.

Holy Spirit is emphasising the figurative character of all that had gone before. Types point forward to antitypes. The whole history of Israel was in a sense typical, and so far their little ones would represent new-born babes in the family of God. But we might as well teach from the Passover that by a literal sprinkling of blood infants could be saved to-day, as the baptism of such now from the crossing of the Red Sea.

If in the "all" who were baptised, the infants as such were included, they must also as such have partaken of the manna and drunk of the spiritual rock that followed them, which is absurd. Mr. Russell Elliott draws a harrowing picture of the embarrassment of the Israelites had they been mere "Baptists." How could they violate their Baptist principles and allow their babes to be baptised in the Red Sea ? Must they then leave them to the mercy of the Egyptians ? It seems it was their Household Baptist principles which saved them ! It is on such reasoning as this that Household Baptism is based. But there is a difficulty which invalidates this cherished argument. We may be quite sure that none in Israel, from Moses downwards, had any idea that they were being "baptised" in the Red Sea, nor is the event once connected in the Pentateuch with "baptism," so that the above reasoning of Mr. R. E. is only the fruit of imagination.

#### **"All who were Baptised."**

To return to our first question, who were the "all" who were baptised, etc., and of whom most were displeasing to God ? The following words limit them to those "who were overthrown in the wilderness," that is to the older generation, who were numbered at the commencement of the desert journey, all of whom, except Caleb and Joshua, died in the wilderness. The phrase, "all our fathers," therefore, definitely excludes any but the adults. In Numbers 14. 28-33 this distinction is clearly made, the

children are contrasted with the fathers, who alone were held responsible for rejecting "that good land," the children were not numbered, and did not count in Israel, nor can they be in view in 1 Corinthians 10 any more than the "mixed multitude." But you cannot fulfil a figure with a figure, so the crossing of the Red Sea is not typical of Christian baptism at all, but of the great truths, of which baptism is a figure, in which all Christians participate by faith, whether baptised or not, the death and resurrection of Christ.

### **Is Baptism a Meritorious Act?**

There is another difficulty which Mr. Russell Elliott attempts to meet, namely, how a command like baptism could be addressed to children. Household Baptists have not yet, we believe, introduced "sponsors" into their system. Mr. Russell Elliott boldly cuts the Gordian knot. Baptism, he says, is not a command at all, "as Baptists are so fond of saying." The word "command" suggests, he affirms, that "the act of baptism is the principle thing," that it is "a meritorious act" to be baptised. This is a strange and arbitrary assumption. Did the fact that the Lord commanded His disciples to evangelise have this meaning? Oh, but, objects Mr. Russell Elliott, how can you command a person to do what he cannot do (*i.e.*, baptise himself) if "he is entirely dependent upon the will and act of another?" In a very simple way. Suppose an officer were ordered in the presence of his men to lead them to the attack, that would be equivalent to a command to each soldier to follow; or a mother who tells her nurse to put the children to bed, would she not by this fact order each child to go to bed? The daughters of Zelophehad were commanded to marry within their tribe, but were certainly dependent on the will and act of others (Num. 36. 6).

### **What did the Lord command?**

If in Matthew 28 the Lord commands His servants to make disciples and baptise them, it is equally a command to these latter to submit to baptism. In Mark 16. 16 the command is directly to the believer, for no one suggests he should be baptised against his will. How suitable it would have been for the Lord when instituting His baptism to

leave directions, too, as to baptising the households of believers. But not a word or hint does He give. Is it not "adding to His words" to insert here "and their household," when the Lord in both cases denotes those to be baptised, disciples and believers. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved."

### **Baptising Unregenerate Households.**

Baptism is not a legal enactment to be bowed to in a spirit of bondage, but an expression of the Lord's will to be joyfully obeyed. Peter, at Caesarea, recognises the double responsibility of baptisers and baptised. He asks the former, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptised, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" Mr. Russell Elliott, unfortunately, leaves out these last words, which limit the application of the rite to certain persons—"who have received the Holy Ghost." Did Mr. Russell Elliott put such a question to us as to baptising his unregenerate households, we should firmly forbid him in the Name of the Lord to proceed, for confessedly the household would *not* have received the Holy Ghost. But at Caesarea no one could forbid it, and so "He commanded them in the Name of the Lord to be baptised," putting the responsibility both on baptisers and baptised. All this only shows what a grave departure from the Divine pattern the whole system of Household Baptism is, and one to be resisted to the utmost of our power.

### **An Appeal.**

In conclusion, I would affectionately appeal to our Household Baptist brethren to reconsider their position in the light of God's Word. They do hold believer's baptism. why cannot they definitely lay aside that which, themselves being judges, produces at the best quite inappreciable results, scandalises multitudes of their brethren in Christ, may so easily delude its subjects, and tends to limit their own ministry and to divide the saints?

## HOUSEHOLD BAPTISM.

THE question of "Household Baptism" has of late been brought prominently before Assemblies of Britain by pamphlets and otherwise. It is likely to be raised in other parts of the world, hence we think it wise to examine the subject in the light of Scripture.

So far as we can trace, this theory of what is known as "Household Baptism" (that is, the baptism of "Households," including children and servants, apart from personal faith in Christ, on account of their relation to the Christian head) was first set forth in a letter, afterwards published as a booklet, by J. N. DARBY, and now, probably in a developed form, is held by many of our brethren known as "Exclusives." In his pamphlet J. N. D. gives the kernel of the whole matter. He says: "As to *Christening*, it is the word which most truly expresses what baptism is—*being made, as to outward position, a Christian.*"

That it is an "old question," and one which was in measure *behind* much of the alienation of heart and divisions in days gone by, we are assured by a venerable brother who knew the early leaders and passed through the mill. In confirmation, he sends us copy of a letter by

C. H. MACKINTOSH,

EDITOR OF "THINGS NEW AND OLD,"

at that time the organ of the party. Writing from Bristol to Andrew Miller, London, under date, 22nd December, 1871, he says:

"I am glad you have called my attention to my little book, 'Thou and Thy House.' I am aware of the use which has been made of it in a recent tract on the subject of 'Baptism'—a use which I consider to be *aught but disingenuous*. With the theory of that tract I have no sympathy whatever; still less its monstrous statements. I believe the course of some of our friends, in urging on this question of baptism, will, unless God in His mercy interpose, *lead to most disastrous results*.

I complain not of any who conscientiously hold this view on the subject, but I do complain of those who, instead of preaching and teaching Jesus Christ, are *disturbing the minds of God's people by pressing infant baptism upon them*. For my own part, seeing the question has been thus *forced upon me*, I can only say I *have for thirty-two years been asking, in vain, for a single line of Scripture for baptising any save believers* or those who professed to believe. Reasonings I have had, inferences, conclusions, and deductions, but of direct Scripture authority not a tittle. I may further add that there is not a word about baptism from beginning to end of my book, 'Thou and Thy House.'"

—Quoted from *The Witness*, March, 1922.