

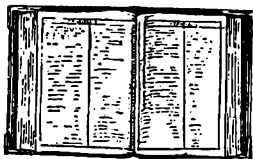
THE "HOLDFAST" BOOKLETS.

INFANT BAPTISM

IS IT OF GOD?

A REPLY to Dr. ANDREW A. BONAR,
OF GLASGOW

By A. LORIMER.



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INFANT BAPTISM.

DR. BONAR begins his short treatise on this subject with the words, "Infant Baptism: Is it forbidden? No: there is not one text that forbids or discourages it."

He does not begin by telling us what Infant Baptism is, when and why it was instituted, and by whom first practised; it is enough that we accept from him this principle to start with — everything not forbidden we may do.

But is this principle a wise and good one? Does the word of God commend it as a safe one for a Christian to follow? If we turn to Jeremiah, chap. vii., we find that the children of Judah, actuated by religious motives, burnt their sons and daughters in the valley of Hinnom. Doubtless, they imagined their sacrifices were well-pleasing to Jehovah,

whereas they provoked Him to anger, by doing that which He *commanded not*, neither had it come into *His* heart (ver. 31). How was it that these people were led into committing those things so grievously displeasing to God? The answer will be found in verses 23 and 24 of this chapter. They obeyed not the voice of God in the things which He had commanded—"they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward." Beginning by a neglect of those things which God had commanded, they ended by taking counsel with their own hearts to do the things which He had not commanded.

The important question, therefore, for every child of God is not, Does the word of God forbid Infant Baptism: but, Does the word of God command it?

The judgment of God fell upon Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, not because they did that which was forbidden, but because they did that which the Lord had not commanded (Lev. x. 1).

The Lord Jesus, after declaring that all power (Gr. authority) was given unto Him in heaven and in earth, instructed His disciples to teach those who should believe on Him through their words (John xvii. 20) to observe all things whatsoever He had com-

manded (Matt. xxviii. 18-20). It was not the non-observance of things forbidden, but the simple obedience of those things which He had commanded.

Did *He* then—the One having all authority—did He command infants to be baptized? Dr. Bonar says He did, and that it is a sin to neglect this ordinance. Further, Dr. Bonar affirms that Baptism has been substituted for circumcision, undergoing “expansion” in the process, so that female infants might be embraced in its provisions as well as males.

Here it may be well to pause and ask, does Dr. Bonar claim to speak to us by revelation in this? True, he makes no direct pretension (and God forbid that he should) to divine and definite inspiration. At the same time his words are most authoritative—they are the utterances of one speaking with the confidence that what he says will of necessity be accepted by those for whom his book is written; and he does not hesitate to condemn any lack of obedience to his dicta as “sin.” But, seeing he makes no attempt to furnish proof for his words from the Scriptures of Truth, his observations are, to say the least of it, remarkable.

The Apostle Peter, writing specially to Jews, says that Baptism is “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh (which circumcision certainly was), but the answer (enquiry,

Alford) of a good conscience after God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ who is gone into heaven" (1 Peter iii. 21). It is not a putting away, but a putting on, and those who have put on are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 26, 27). Once dead in sins and the uncircumcision of their flesh (Col. ii. 13), they received the Spirit by the hearing of faith (Gal. iii. 2), were quickened together with Christ, raised up and seated with Him in the heavenlies (Eph. ii. 5, 6). In Him they are complete, and in Him they are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (Col. ii. 11; also Phil. iii. 3). So that Christ, and not Baptism, takes the place of circumcision.

Admitting, however, a certain analogy between baptism and circumcision, what ground is there for saying that a literal infant under the law corresponds to a literal infant under the gospel? Because the child of a Jew was born a Jew, and therefore circumcised, is the child of a believer born a believer, and therefore to be baptized? If so, then the child is received by Christ and saved, by virtue of a mere fleshly connection. Can this be true, seeing we are distinctly told—"the flesh profiteth nothing" (John vi. 63). Further, does not the Apostle declare in Rom. ix. 8—

“They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God”?

If the Holy Spirit of God is now, under the new covenant, God’s seal given to those who have “heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation” (Eph. i. 13), and have believed on Christ (John vii. 39), as circumcision was the seal given to Abraham under the old (Rom. iv. 11), it is clearly despising the true birthright to say that the children born of the flesh have on any *natural* grounds an inheritance in the blessing. Christ profits nothing to those who find profit in the flesh (Gal. v. 2). “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John iii. 6, 7).

If Baptism takes the place of circumcision, then the domestic servants of a Christian ought certainly to be baptized as well as his children (Exod. xii. 44), and if so, it would be necessary in multitudes of cases to baptize them that *believe not*.

The Lord Jesus commanded *believers* to be baptized, and the Holy Ghost has left on record that only believers were baptized (Acts ii. 41; viii. 12), therefore the spiritual infant—the babe in Christ—answers to the little ones of the Old Testament.

The Lord Jesus, speaking His gracious word of mercy to the sinner, says, “Come

unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28). To those who have found rest in Him, He says, "TAKE My yoke upon you, and LEARN of Me" (ver. 29). And, if thus learning, the first thing the believer will be taught is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

I agree with Dr. Bonar that in Mark xvi. 16 the Lord is not laying down a rule about infants, but about adults who might be converted by the preaching of the gospel. Strange to say, however, though he admits there is no reference to babies in verse 16, he would commit us to the absurdity of deciding that babies *were* included in verse 15, for he supposes such to have been in the household of the Philippian jailor (Acts xvi.), and to have listened to the word spoken by Paul.

"There couldn't have been infants in that household," said one, "for wasn't the youngest eighteen years of age?"

"Where do you find that?" said another sharply.

"Just where you find there were infants. I guessed it."

Now, does the word of God encourage speculative reasoning of this sort?

Not at all. We read there—"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to

all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (verses 32 to 34). That is to say—"All that were in his house heard the word of the Lord." "All that were in his house" were baptized, straightway. "All that were in his house," rejoiced, believing in God. Is it possible that one of those could have been a helpless infant?

Note the comment of Dr. B. upon this passage. "We are not told of any one of his house having as yet possessed faith, but the head of the house had received Christ, and therefore his family also receive the covenant sign with him."

Dr. Bonar assumes that when a household is spoken of, it must of necessity have contained very young children. Does he not know of scores of households in the neighbourhood of his own church where there are no infants? nay, is he not himself the head of a household where there are none? Will Dr. Bonar tell us how many infants were in the house of Noah? The Lord said to him, even as Paul to the jailor—"Thou and thy house" (Gen. vii. 1). Is it not a fact beyond all doubt, that besides Noah and his wife (the

former 600 years old at the time of the flood), the remaining six souls (1 Peter iii. 20), obedient to the word of the Lord, were adult men and women to whom children were born "*after the flood*" ?

Of Lydia's conversion and baptism, he writes: "Lydia, a Jewess, believed and was baptized, she and her household, *i.e.*, her family, for 1 Kings xvii. 15, 'The widow and her house' is her son. Nothing is said of deferring the baptism of the members of the family till they had grown up and could believe for themselves : but because the head of the house had believed, her family receive the ordinance also."

Again, I am compelled to ask, Does Dr. Bonar speak by revelation, or has he some secret source of information beyond the reach of other Christians ?

What evidence can he give that Lydia was a married woman ? There is no mention of her husband, she is not spoken of as a wife, and it is, to say the least of it, highly improbable that she should travel all the way from Thyatira to Philippi to sell purple accompanied by young children. The probability is that "the house of Lydia" comprised the servants she employed to assist her in her business, for when Paul and Silas entered there, after their release from prison, they saw and comforted "*the brethren*" (ver. 40).

According to the assumption of Dr. B. that all households contained infants, "the household of Stephanas" must have contained infants also. They were all baptized (1 Cor. i. 16), and they all addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints (1 Cor. xvi. 15).

The defenders of Infant Baptism ask us to believe these two great absurdities—(1) that Paul preached the word of the Lord to babies at Philippi; and that babies at Corinth set themselves to instruct the saints there; and further, that Paul commanded the entire assembly to submit themselves to such, and to acknowledge that their spirits had been refreshed by their ministry (ver. 18).

Dr. Bonar tells us that Simon Magus received the sign and seal of Baptism as a heathen man and not as a real believer. But what says the word? "Then Simon himself believed also; and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done" (Acts viii. 13). Further, Dr. B. says—"The Lord does not say—'Let no one be baptized who is not an adult, and able to tell about the faith.'" Perfectly true. What the Lord *does say* is—"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing *them* in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii. 19). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but

he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16).

The nature of the transaction in Baptism is shown us in Rom. vi. chapter and elsewhere, and is not, as Dr. B. declares—"A confession on the part of the Father of His love towards the baptized one." "*In this* was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him" (1 John iv. 9).

But Baptism is a confession on the part of the believer, that he has died to sin, because Christ died for sin; that being identified with Him when He died on the cross, He is now raised from the dead and united to Him in resurrection. Therefore the going down under water in baptism tells of a burial with Him by baptism into death (Rom. vi. 4)—a burying out of sight of our old dead flesh, and an acknowledgment that the cross of Christ has crucified the world unto us, and crucified us unto the world (Gal. vi. 14). "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead" (Col. ii. 12)—a clear proof that all in the jailor's house, and in Lydia's household, *possessed faith*, for all were baptized, and it is absurd to speak of a babe having faith in the operation of God.

Dr B. speaks more than once of the Old Testament Church of God, and in this he shows how utterly he confounds the Jewish and Christian dispensations, so widely different as they are in their nature and constitution, the one from the other. The Jew being born of the natural seed of Abraham, was a child of the flesh (Rom. ix. 8), but those who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13).

The Church of God has no place whatever, save in type or figure, in the Old Testament. The only verse that seems to apply the term church to the nation of Israel is in Acts vii. 38, but it is only necessary to remark that the Greek word "*Ecclesia*," there translated church, is exactly the same as that applied to the turbulent mob or assembly at Ephesus (Acts xix. 32).

The Church of God had no existence, save in the mind and purpose of Jehovah, when Christ said—"Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. xvi. 18). It was *after* Christ had been raised from the dead, and set at the right hand of the Father, that God gave Him to be head over all to the church, which is His body (Eph. i. 22, 23).

If the church had any existence before then, as Dr. B. says it certainly had, it was a body without a head, and a body without a

head is a corpse. Such a body the church of the *living* God is certainly not, for He is not the God of the dead but of the living (Matt. xxii. 32).

The subject of the Church of God, however, is too large and important to be discussed within the limits of this paper.

As for the reference to 1 Cor. vii. 14, a glance at the context will suffice to show that what the apostle is dealing with is not the subject of admitting infants into the church, but whether a believing brother ought to put away an unbelieving wife, or *vice versa*. Under the law, the Israelite who married a Gentile wife was unclean (Deut. vii. 3-6; Ezra x.), but under grace it was different. The believer was forbidden to be yoked in marriage with an unbeliever (2 Cor. vi. 14); but, in the case of two unbelievers already united in marriage, if one of them was converted to God, and so brought into the church, not by man's admission or permission, but by the Lord who added them (Acts ii. 47), the believing one was not to put away or be separated from the one who remained an unbeliever. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified *in* the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified *in* the husband: else were *your children* unclean (*i.e.*, not only the progeny of such an union, but the children of all in the church of God at Corinth); but

now (in the new dispensation of things) are they holy"—holy in the sense that they were not to be regarded as ceremonially unclean, and therefore put away. So that a believing brother, who had an unbelieving wife, was neither to put her away, nor the children she had borne to him. As for saying that this furnishes an argument for sprinkling the faces of infants with water, and admitting them into church fellowship,* it may as sensibly be urged that the unbelieving wife was to have water thrown in her face, and admitted too.

Then, how would Dr. Bonar's picture look, substituting the word wife for infant? "See that helpless wife, *receiving* the water, giving nothing, doing nothing. Here is a picture of an impotent sinner receiving God's salvation-gifts: simply receiving: offering nothing of price in return: submitting to be a mere recipient, like the little children in Christ's arms."

It is difficult to understand how any one can see in infant baptism a picture of an impotent sinner receiving God's salvation-gift.

Does the helpless babe *receive* the water? Is it not either totally unconscious of any-

* "The admission of infants into the church was a rule never disturbed in apostolic times."—(See page 10 of Dr. Bonar's book.)

thing having been done to it? or does it not resent the unexpected application of cold water to its face as an unwarranted interference with its comfort? When the impotent man received God's salvation-gifts, he walked, and leapt, and praised God (Acts iii. 8). Are the struggles and screams of a rudely-awakened and fretful child a fitting illustration of a pardoned sinner, rejoicing in the salvation of God? How then does gospel grace shine out brightly in infant baptism? Impossible! The grace of God shines out at the cross. There we see the flesh condemned—"no good thing in it." But in infant baptism the flesh is not condemned, for there is supposed to be some inherent holiness in it, by virtue of which the newborn babe is *admitted into the church* (whatever that may mean). The God-given Word declares the absolute necessity of the new birth (John iii. 7)—the man-made ordinance virtually sets it aside; for, in the case of multitudes in this misnamed Christian country, their ground of acceptance before God to-day is, that they were baptized in their infancy, and admitted into the church. Taught to believe that the ceremony performed upon them in infancy was that by which they were made "members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven," Christ indeed has profited them nothing.

Speaking to a dying man a few days ago, he told me he had been a Christian all his life. On my expressing surprise at this statement, he said, "Yes, I was made a member of Christ when a child." The man, before his illness, had been addicted to intemperance, yet he confidently relied on infant baptism for salvation.

Speaking of the deliverance of the Westminster divines, in the Shorter Catechism on the subject of baptism, Dr. William Anderson, of Glasgow, in a speech delivered before the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church, 16th May, 1860, said, "I have never seen nor heard a satisfactory attempt to vindicate that deliverance from the charge of teaching baptismal regeneration." Replying to this statement of Dr. Anderson's, Principal Cunningham, of Edinburgh, in an article entitled, "Zwingle, and the Doctrine of the Sacraments," in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, for October, 1860, said, "Infant Baptism is to be regarded as a *peculiar, subordinate, supplemental, exceptional thing*." Why did he not add, "and *unscriptural thing*"? Further on, he professes to have shown "that the Shorter Catechism teaches, by plain implication, that the sacraments were *intended for, and actually benefit, believers only*." Surely then, by his own showing, the "peculiar, subordinate,

supplemental, and exceptional thing" was but setting aside the ordinance of Christ.

Is infant baptism therefore forbidden? Yes, indeed it is: The cross of Christ forbids it. It is an invention of the third century. It has no place in the Word of God.

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thess. ii. 15). "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deut. xii. 32). "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 20). "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. xxx. 6).

Infant baptism would seem to be of Egyptian origin, as Tertullian states that disciples were initiated into the religion of Isis and Mithra by washings and lustrations. "They everywhere absolve by water which they carry round, and sprinkle upon villages, houses, temples, entire cities, &c." Certain it is, that both Greeks and Romans used lustral water for their children a few days after birth. When the Pergamos period was reached, and the children of God joined in unholy alliances with unbelievers; when the Nicolaitanes were bringing out *their deeds*, and *their doctrines* (Rev. ii. 6-15), "the notion

of a magical influence or charm connected with the sacraments" gained ground, and then, according to Neander, "Infant Baptism was introduced." This historian further states (Torrey's translation, vol. i.), "We have all reason for not deriving Infant Baptism from apostolic institution. Immediately after Irenæus, in the last years of the second century, Tertullian appears as a zealous opponent of infant baptism: a proof that the practice had not, as yet, come to be regarded as an apostolical institution, for otherwise he would hardly have ventured to express himself so strongly against it."

Of a century later, Mosheim writes—"The bishops cast a cloud over the beauty and simplicity of the gospel, by the prodigious number of rites and ceremonies which they had invented to embellish it."

The ordinance, therefore, is a tradition which has not come to us by the word of the Lord through the apostles, but is the product of dark superstition—a Romish error, against which multitudes of well-meaning Protestants do not protest, but which, as in the book now under review, they do their best to disseminate far and wide, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

"All attempts to make out infant baptism from the New Testament fail. It is totally opposed to the spirit of the apostolic age,

and to the fundamental principles of the New Testament.”—Professor Lange, University of Jena, *Infant Baptism*, p. 101. “For whom is baptism appointed? For adults; not for children: for adults of all times—not only of those times. There can be no question about any infant baptism if the Christian Church will remain true to the gospel. The children of Christians are, *by nature*, formed just as those of Jews or heathens. They need the new birth just as Jews or heathens do.”—Dr. Lindner, *The Pattern of the Lord's Supper according to Scripture*, p. 275.

“Immersion is not scriptural baptism,” says Dr. Bonar, speaking again with the voice of authority, and with the air of one who won't be contradicted. But in this assertion he sets aside, in the coolest manner possible, the overwhelming mass of historical evidence which proves just the contrary. Let one D.D. answer another. “Baptism signifies generally an *immersion*, of whatever kind, and done on whatever occasion.”—Dr. Chalmers' *Instit. of Theology*.

Or another—

“In that early age the scene of the transaction was either some deep wayside spring or well, as for the Ethiopian, or some rushing river, as the Jordan, or some vast reservoir, as at Jericho or Jerusalem, whither, as in the Baths of Caracalla at Rome, the whole popu-

lation resorted for swimming or washing. The water in those Eastern regions, so doubly significant of all that was pure and refreshing, *closed over the heads* of the converts, and they rose into the light of heaven new and altered beings. Such was the apostolic baptism. Baptism was not only a bath, but a plunge—an entire submersion in the deep water,” &c.—Dean Stanley’s article on Baptism, *Nineteenth Century*, Oct., 1879.

“There can be no question that the original form of baptism—the very meaning of the word—was complete *immersion* in the deep baptismal waters.”—Dean Stanley, Lecture I, *on the History of the Eastern Church*.

“We see, from this instance, what was the baptismal rite among the ancients, for they plunged the whole body in water.”—Calvin on Acts viii. 38.

“The word baptizo, to baptize, both in sacred authors and classical, signifies to dip, to plunge, to immerse. It is always construed suitably to this meaning. Thus it is *in* the water, *in* Jordan.”—Dr. George Campbell *on the Gospels* (Matt. iii. 11). “There was no such thing as sprinkling, or *rhantismos* used in baptism in the apostle’s days, nor many ages after them.”—Joseph Mede.

But, apart from the judgment of learned men, what saith the scripture? The word of

God expressly declares baptism to be *a burial* (Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12)—that is, the putting out of sight of that which is dead.

Abraham said, "Give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may put my dead out of sight" (Gen. xxiii. 4). In baptism, the believer acknowledges what he learnt at the Cross, that the flesh is incurably bad, and therefore only fit to be put out of sight. Our going down into the water, and submitting to be immersed (Acts viii. 38), signifies that we have died, and are buried with Christ. Our coming up out of the water, and going on our way rejoicing, signifies our being risen with Him to walk in newness of life.

"To be immersed in water, and to be under water, represent the death and burial of our old man, in virtue of the death of Christ."—Vitranga. "Therefore in our baptism we are dipped under the water as signifying our covenant profession, that as He was buried for sin, we are dead and buried to sin: that as the glorious power of God raised Him from the dead, so we should rise up to live to Him in newness of life."—Richard Baxter. "In this phrase (Col. ii. 12) the apostle seemeth to allude to the ancient manner of baptism, which was to dip the parties baptized; and, as it were, to *bury* them under the water for a while, and then to draw them

out of it, and lift them up, to represent *the burial* of our old man, and our resurrection to newness of life."—Westminster Assembly of Divines. *Annot. on Rom. vi. 4.**

Dr. Bonar asserts that an eastern burial had not the remotest resemblance to immersion, and yet he speaks of our Lord being laid *in* Joseph's tomb—buried *in* a cave. Where is there any resemblance to sprinkling in this? Baptism, or immersion, according to the Word of God, is, as I have shown, the putting of something "out of sight." So the apostle declares—"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all *immersed* unto Moses *in* the cloud, and *in* the sea" (1 Cor. x. 1, 2).—*American Bible Union Trans.* They were out of sight *in* the cloud, and *in* the sea, as the body of Lazarus was out of sight *in* the cave and *in* the grave.

It is remarkable that so many brethren, to-day, should be so ignorant *how* these people were "*under*," and "*through*," and "*all immersed*," as to suppose that the dropping of water on the head or face is a fitting simile of the transaction. Even Dr. Bonar's

*The Church of England baptismal service appoints that the priest shall warily dip the child, except it be certified that the child is too weak to bear it,

own words imply that this baptism of the children of Israel had not the remotest resemblance to sprinkling, for he says—"Not even a drop of water touched them." Would that this could be said of the helpless babes that have passed *under* and *through* his hands.

Said John Selden, a man of vast learning, who lived in the seventeenth century, at the time when sprinkling was first introduced into England—"In England, of late years, I ever thought the parson baptized his own fingers rather than the child."

"Everybody knows," says Dr. B. "that John went *into* the water with those he baptized." But why? If baptism meant sprinkling, surely it was quite unnecessary for John himself to go *into* the water. No one needs to fancy that Philip went *under* the water. He went down into the water, and baptized the eunuch, a totally unnecessary thing for him to do, if baptism meant sprinkling, but clearly showing that a sufficient depth of water was required to immerse the believer. He did not go down into the water to wash the Ethiopian; and sprinkling is not washing, though Dr. B. tells us—"The word baptism may mean washing with water in any way you like." "*Any way you like*," reminds us of the ordinance of Jeroboam's appointment (1 Kings xii. 32, 33) and of those degenerate

days in Israel, when "every man did that which was right *in his own eyes*" (Judges xxi. 25).

Dr. B. says further—"Baptism is a word adopted by the New Testament writers to express the Old Testament '*washings*.' For in Heb. vi. 2, and ix. 10, 'baptisms' and 'washings' are the very same words, and used of the various washings under the law of Moses." The Greek word in these passages, correctly translated "washings," is only used, be it observed, in two other places in the New Testament (Mark vii. 4, 8), where it has obviously the same meaning. It is never used to express the rite of baptism. The apostle, writing to the Hebrews, declared that these once-all-important lustral ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation, were now to be *left* (chap. vi. 1) by the true circumcision for the perfection to be found alone in Christ risen from the dead.

"The prominent idea in baptism," says Dr. B. "is that of cleansing. The person, child, or adult, is represented in baptism as *needing* cleansing and purifying, and is shown *where to find it*." Now, if we turn to the word of God, we find that those who had believed the Gospel message could say—"In whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i. 7). Having believed in

Christ, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (ver. 13), and in that Spirit made members of Christ, immersed into one body (1 Cor. xii. 13). Because they were baptized *in* the Holy Ghost (Mark i. 8), they submitted to immersion in water in obedience to the authority of that Name (Acts x. 48) through whom they had received remission of sins (ver. 43). The baptism in the Holy Ghost did not supersede or set aside the baptism in water (ver. 47). Yet these saved persons to whom in giving the Holy Spirit, God set His seal to the efficacy and value of the sin-cleansing blood they had trusted, were not, according to Dr. B. "clean every whit" (John xiii. 10) through the word spoken unto them (xv. 3), but were still *needy* sinners, unwashed (1 Cor. vi. 11), who were shown in baptism where to find cleansing. Evidently he confounds the baptism of repentance which John preached to Israel (Mark i. 4), with the baptism which Paul preached to believers in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus (Acts xix. 2-5).

The prominent idea in baptism is not the washing or cleansing of a soiled body, or part of a body, but the burial out of sight of that flesh which the cross of Christ has condemned, and which a holy God declares to be in His sight "altogether stinking" (Psa. xiv. 3, see margin).

The Lord Jesus did speak of His death, in Luke xii. 50, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" Dr. B. says of this passage—"Christ there speaks to this effect—'I am to be given over to the Father's hands to be dealt with as He shall please, like a Levite or a Priest, washed and so set apart for God's work.'" Surely Christ was set apart for God's work from the moment when He said—"Lo I come to do Thy will, O God" (Psa. xl. 7, 8; Heb. x. 7), but the baptism He spoke of was that endured at the hands of Jehovah. "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me" (Psa. xliii. 7). This was an immersion. It was no sprinkling.

Dr. Bonar attempts to show that the much water, or "many waters" of Ænon, were not chosen by John for the purpose of baptism, but by the crowds of people who needed water to drink. It is only necessary to read the verse in order to avoid coming to any such conclusion—"And John also was baptizing in Ænon; near to Salim, *because* there was much water there; and they came, and were baptized" (John iii. 23). "Will any one prove," says Dr. B., "that the children of Israel were Baptists because they always encamped at wells or springs?"

There is certainly no evidence that they were called Baptists, neither were the disciples

so called, though they baptized three thousand on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 41). Neither were they called Lord Supperists, though they broke bread in obedience to their Lord's command on the first day of the week (Acts xx. 7). They were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts xi. 26), but the calling was not of men—it was of God.

The architecture of ancient ecclesiastical buildings (misnamed churches) proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that the primitive mode of Christian baptism was by immersion, and by no other. Writing of a font built at Rome by the Emperor Constantine, in the fourth century, Bonanni (A.D. 1700) says—“It must be observed that the font was necessarily large and deep, in order to receive those who desired to be regenerated by the trine immersion (*immersionem*), in which the rite of baptism was in that day administered.” Anastasius tells of a boy who, in the year 383, fell into this font and was drowned. What need to construct fonts under the surface of the floor, from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep, and over 6 feet in diameter, if baptism was performed by sprinkling?

It is argued in this, as in all other pleas for pædo-baptism, that it is necessary to practise it in order that Christian parents may dedicate their little ones to Christ. But what a strange delusion! Surely it

carries with it its own refutation! Did Hannah need to sprinkle the infant Samuel's face with water before she could say—"As long as he liveth, he shall be returned to the Lord" (1 Sam. i. 28). Or when the Lord Jesus was much displeased at those disciples who would have kept the infants back, is it written, or is it not, that one of the reasons for His manifested displeasure was, that they refused to fetch the water with which they were to be sprinkled? If it is not written, what object can those have who maintain that infant sprinkling is the means by which an infant is dedicated to the Lord? Is not their practice, like the mistaken zeal of the disciples, but the interposing of something of their own between the little ones and Christ, which He never placed there, and is not this the very thing which called forth His indignation on the occasion referred to?

It is unholy trifling with the word of Christ to act, and to teach others to act, as though He had said, Suffer the little sprinkled ones to come unto Me. May Christian parents be encouraged to bring their children to Jesus, that in their very childhood they may know the holy Scriptures (2 Tim. iii. 15), and be saved from the errors of those who consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. vi. 3).

Dr. Bonar concludes with a reference to

the word "sprinkling" in connection with blood, and says that "every drop of the water may remind us of the blood drops from the hyssop of the priest, or on the door-posts and lintels on the night of the passover."

The sprinkled blood, however, speaks to the believer of the time when, as a guilty, wrath-deserving sinner, he fled to the cross of Christ for salvation; when, in simple faith, he applied the virtue of that precious blood to *himself*, and knew that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin (1 John i. 7). The blood was sprinkled upon him, and the One who alone knew the extent and depravity of his guilt had pronounced him clean (Lev. xiv. 7). He was thereupon called to "wash himself in water" (ver. 8). The salvation wrought in him by God was to be worked out (Phil. ii. 12). He was commanded to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. vii. 1). "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Peter iv. 2). The heart thus sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body thus washed with pure water (Eph. v. 26), the believer could draw near to God in full assurance of faith, and worship with acceptance (Heb. x. 22).

In all this, the thought of sprinkling is

connected with the blood ; and the washing of the body in water corresponds to the separated, holy walk of the one who, because of that blood, has been loosed from his sins, and made a priest unto God (Rev. i. 5, 6).

Drops of water sprinkled upon the flesh of an infant, can never resemble the willing surrender of a blood-bought ear and hand and foot to God (Lev. xiv. 17). It is an *entire* consecration that God seeks from His people. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world : but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. xii. 1, 2).

A. L.

