

Difficulties About Baptism

By
Douglas Bannerman

This handbook written by The Rev. D. Douglas Bannerman, M.A., D.D.,
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Changes made to this edition do not affect the overall language of the document, nor do they change the writer's intention. Spelling, grammar and formatting changes have been made, and modernized wording is used in specific cases to help today's reader more fully grasp the intention of the author.

FOREWORD

by The Rev, Professor R. L. MARSHALL, M.A., LL.D., D.D., F.R.Hist.S.

The mode and subjects of Baptism are living issues. It is obvious, therefore, that Christian people should be aware of what the Scriptures can teach us about this Sacrament, and of the nature and history of the controversies which have arisen concerning it.

Two generations ago Professor Witherow published a little book which very substantially fulfilled these needs, and later the Rev. Dr. Lowe's book provided a clear and trenchant exposition of the relevant issues. Both these are long out of print.

One welcomes, then, this re-issue of "Difficulties about Baptism" by D. D. Bannerman. To my mind it furnishes the sincere enquirer with a clear and judicial summary of the subject, setting out simply what we can learn from the Bible, and treating concisely the various questions about which there has been dispute.

We are indebted to the members of the Presbyterian Fellowship who have ably prepared this re-issue, and I cordially commend it to the careful and prayerful attention of all interested Christians.

R. L. MARSHALL

PREFATORY NOTE

The object of this little work is two-fold.

First, it seeks to supply something which may be useful to young men and women, who have been led to think specially of the questions: "What is Baptism?" and "Who should be baptized?" and who feel difficulties in connection with them. The Author has supposed himself to be in the presence of an audience of that class, and speaks to them in this book in the direct style which it would be natural for him to use in such circumstances.

Secondly, the book is meant to be of service to ministers and other teachers, who may have occasion to take up the subject in Bible or senior classes, and who wish to meet effectively the sort of difficulties about Baptism which experience shows are apt to weigh most with the young people for whom they are called to care. With this view, the work has been broken up into short chapters, with subdivisions and headings to the main paragraphs, so as to facilitate the study of the subject in a class.

The Scripture quotations are taken, as a rule, from the Revised Version.

D. D. B.

ST. LEONARD'S, PERTH, April, 1898

NOTE—This edition differs from the original only insofar as certain out-of-date references and statistics have been omitted.

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DIFFICULTIES ABOUT BAPTISM

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

I — NATURE OF THE DIFFICULTIES

The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Divines has a valuable section on the Sacraments. It is to the same effect as the corresponding section in the Shorter Catechism, with which most of us are more familiar; but it is fuller and more detailed in statement. The language may seem a little old-fashioned, but it is singularly weighty and well considered. The teaching of the Reformed Church Catholic on the subject of the Sacraments in general, and of Baptism in particular, could hardly be better expressed.

“A Sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ in His Church, to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace the benefits of His mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith and all other graces; to oblige (i.e., bind) them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion, one with another, and to distinguish them from those that are without. The parts of a Sacrament are two — the one, an outward and sensible sign,¹ used according to Christ's own appointment;

A “sensible sign” means one which can be perceived by our bodily senses, and which appeals to us through them. the other, an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified. Under the New Testament, Christ hath instituted in His Church only two Sacraments — Baptism and the Lord's Supper,

“Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into Himself, of remission of sins by His blood, and regeneration by His Spirit, of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible Church, and enter into an open and professed engagement, to be wholly and only the Lord's., Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him; but infants descended from parents, either both, or but one of them, professing faith in Christ and obedience to Him, are, in that respect, within the covenant, and to be baptized.”

In this little book we are to consider difficulties often felt by young Christians, and sometimes by those of riper years also, about Baptism. These difficulties, generally, arise in connection with one or other of two questions — what is Baptism, what it is, in particular, as regards “the outward and sensible sign used according to Christ's appointment”? and to whom ought Baptism to be administered?

First, What is Baptism? It is agreed on all sides that Christian Baptism, so far as the outward rite is concerned, consists in the solemn application of water, in the name of the Trinity, to the person to be baptized. The difference of opinion arises when we ask: How is this to be done? Should Baptism be by immersion only — i.e., by dipping the whole body under water, as our Baptist brethren hold? Or should it be by “washing with water”, as the Westminster Divines teach, in common with all the rest of Christendom — i.e., either by immersion of the person to be baptized in the water, or by pouring or sprinkling of the water upon him, as may be judged most for convenience and edification?

Second, Who should be baptized? Should it be adult believers only, as Baptists hold? Or should it be adult believers, when these have not already been baptized in infancy, on the

ground of their parents' Christian profession, and the infant children of believers, when brought by them for the ordinance? That is what the Reformed Church generally holds and practices, all over the world,

It is in connection with one or other of these two questions, or with both of them, that the difficulties are felt. In other and more technical words, they refer either to the "Mode of Baptism", or to the "Subjects of Baptism". In the first part of this little work, accordingly, we are to consider the first question: What is Baptism, as regards its mode? going on in Part II to consider the second one — namely, Who ought to be baptized? But before we do so, it may be well to consider for a little from what standpoint, and in what spirit this subject should be taken up.

II — HOW THE DIFFICULTIES SHOULD BE DEALT WITH: PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

1. Respect due to Baptist denomination

At the outset I would like to say that I have the kindest feelings towards our respected brethren of the Baptist denomination, I have read a great many books and articles on their side by their leading writers, from Mr. Gale and Dr. Carson to President Rooke and Dr. Clifford, I did so, I think, with an open mind, wishing to know all that was to be said on both sides of this question; but I did not find their arguments at all conclusive. On the contrary, I am fully convinced that our Baptist brethren have mistaken the mind of Christ for His Church on the two points which separate them from the great majority of their fellow-Christians. I sincerely regret the separation thus brought about. I am sure that both we and they lose something by it, 'But I recognize, of course, that their views are conscientiously held, and that they are convinced that loyalty to Christ requires them to take up this separate position.

C. H. Spurgeon was seriously alarmed about what he called "the down-grade movement", or the progress of unsound doctrines among the Baptists; and felt so strongly on the point as to withdraw, on that ground, from the Baptist Union, But, generally speaking, the Baptist denomination, in its various sections, has been distinguished — and will, I trust, always continue to be so — for soundness in the great fundamental truths of the faith, and for a warm evangelical spirit. They have done much good service in the cause of the Gospel at home and abroad. There are names of Baptist ministers and missionaries, such as those of Robert Hall and C. H. Spurgeon, William Carey, and Adoniram Judson, which will always be held in the highest honour in the universal Church of Christ.

2. Advantages on their side: Baptist argument simple and seemingly strong: Appeals to Christian conscience in young believers.

It is not at all surprising that young men and women, who have not hitherto given any special attention to the subject, should feel difficulties when a Baptist tract is put into their hands, or when some zealous Christian friend, who holds Baptist views, begins to argue with them, and to suggest objections to the ordinary practice of the churches which had not occurred to them before. It would show a want of intelligence if they did not now awake to see that there were apparent difficulties, at least, in connection with infant Baptism, and there was a good deal that was plausible at all events — if not conclusive — to be said in support of the Baptist view.

The Baptist argument is very simple, and easily followed. And it may be put in

such a way as to appeal strongly to the Christian instincts of a young convert. “You have come to Christ”—it is urged — “and have promised to follow Him. Well, why not follow Him into the river? Was He not baptized as a young man? Did He not say in connection with His Baptism: 'Thus it becometh us'— i.e., not Myself only, but all My true followers—'to fulfill all righteousness.'? Did He not say afterwards: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved'? You 'believe' now. You did not, and could not do so, when you were sprinkled with water as an unconscious babe. Why not go on now to be 'baptized' after the Lord's example and command? You should be 'buried with Him in Baptism'. Is not immersion like burial, whereas sprinkling is not? Is it safe for you to disobey such a clear command of Christ, or to shrink from taking up your cross and following Him in this way?”

Now, every one of these arguments — as I shall have occasion to show presently — is unsound and misleading. They rest upon a misunderstanding and misapplication of 'Scripture texts separated from their connections, and upon a failure to distinguish between things that differ. But they are certainly plausible, and fitted to impress young people who hear them for the first time from earnest Christian men and women, who honestly believe in them, and who have perhaps themselves acted upon them at some cost in the way of family disagreement, or separation from a congregation to which they were truly attached. There is often a great deal to sympathize with and to respect in such cases, however much one may regret the mistaken step.

Christian conscience, especially in a young believer in the glow of his first love, is naturally sensitive to appeals of that sort. The young man or woman does not see how to answer these Baptist arguments. He or she has never, till now, thought particularly about the question. Possibly “their whole argumentative stock-in-trade”, as one writer on the subject calls it,¹ is the fact that on three occasions the Apostle Paul is said to have baptized “households” or “families”. That is very soon disposed of; and they feel themselves controversially “bankrupt”. They begin to doubt whether they may not have been disobeying Christ in this matter hitherto, and whether they will not be acting against conscience now, if they do not take steps for being immersed without delay. They let their hesitation be seen, and that, of course, brings further pressure at once upon them. They are told: “I felt just so for months, or perhaps years, while I trifled with conscience, and put off coming to a decision. It was such a relief when at last I obeyed the 'Lord in simple faith in this matter. I felt so much happier; and you will feel the same, if you only have courage to lay aside 'the fear of man, which bringeth a snare', and to do what the Lord has been showing you to be right,”

3. How jar conscience a test in such cases: Analogy of Roman Catholic argument.

Now, observe, the fact that a certain action brings relief to conscience is no proof at all that the thing done is right in itself. No one who knows the facts of the case can doubt that Cardinal Newman, for example, honestly believed that he was following Christ when he joined the Church of Rome, and accepted the doctrine of transubstantiation, and that of the absolute supremacy of the Pope. Had not Christ said: “This is My Body.”? And was it not our part to receive that in simple faith, in the plain meaning of the words, without seeking to lessen the wonder or explain it away? Had He not said also: “Thou art Peter; and on this Rock will I build My Church. . . I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”? Was it not safest —

nay, the only safe way — to be in the only Church which claimed to be built on Peter, to give the body and blood of the Lord at all her altars to all her communicants, and to wield the absolute power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

Dr. Newman came to feel that he was resisting conscience by remaining longer in the Church in which he was born and brought up, and to which he clung with such true affection; and he tells us in his “Apologia”, and in his “Letters”, what relief of mind and peace of conscience he got by becoming a Romanist. 'But you can all see that that fact did not in the least prove that the step he took was right in itself., Well, it is equally clear that no experience of anyone's getting peace of conscience by being immersed, furnishes the slightest proof that the step in itself was a right one.

I have no hesitation in saying that most of you young men and women would find it very difficult to answer an intelligent English Roman Catholic, if you got into discussion with him about religion. He would press you with the arguments that convinced Cardinal Newman and Cardinal Manning, and would dispose of some of the common objections to Romanism, which you would be likely to bring forward, very rapidly indeed. The fact is that an educated Romanist in this country, and a Baptist, being both in a minority as regards their distinctive views, are usually much better up on the points of controversy, and the most effective way of putting them from their side, than the average Protestant, who has, naturally enough, not given special thought to the questions in dispute, and has taken things a good deal for granted. 'But that does not prove that either the Romanist or the Baptist is right, or that where they are wrong cannot be clearly shown by those who have given more attention to the subject.

The points of difference between us and our Baptist brethren are, happily, very trifling indeed in comparison with the great and vital differences between us and the Roman Catholics. But there is undoubtedly a certain analogy in the style of argument in the two cases., So far as the Roman Catholics try to defend their system on the ground of Scripture, as distinguished from tradition and the authority of the Church, they, like the Baptists, rest their argument on two or three isolated texts taken out of their connection, and insisted on in a sense which can be disproved from the connection.

4, Practical Considerations before taking up Main Question

The essential question to be settled, both as regards the mode and the subjects of Baptism, is: What is the mind of Christ for His disciples in this matter? But, before we go on to look at the Scripture evidence, I may say that there are three practical considerations which ought to be before the minds of all young Christians who are troubled by the sort of difficulties about Baptism to which I have referred, and which may help them to deal with these difficulties in the right way: —

First, This is not a vital or primary question at all, but a secondary one.— It is not about the essentials of the faith, or the way of salvation. It does not concern “repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ”;¹ nor that 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit', whereby all Christ's true disciples are baptized by the one Spirit into one body in Him,² As a minister of our Church puts it in an excellent little tract on this subject: “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Baptism of the Holy Ghost are what we need for salvation and for service. Let us seek after these with all our hearts; and then as 'doers of God's will', we 'shall know of His doctrine'.”

The question which we are considering now is simply the outward mode of administering a particular ordinance, and the precise persons to whom it should be

administered. It is a question about which there is an honest difference of judgment between Christian men, equally anxious to know their Lord's will, and to obey it. We should see, therefore, that we do not make too much of a difference of this sort. It is not a "term of Communion", so far as I know, in any Presbyterian Church in the world, for members as distinguished from office-bearers.

DIFFICULTIES ABOUT BAPTISM

I remember hearing C. H. Spurgeon say once, in our General Assembly, where his presence was always welcomed in the warmest way, that he held the Shorter Catechism in the very highest esteem, and used it — if I am not mistaken — as a handbook in his College for the training of young Ministers. "He only took the liberty," he said, "of leaving out one clause of the answer to one Question: The infants of such as are members of the visible Church are to be baptized!" Well, it is clear that we may easily make too much of a difference of judgment upon "one clause of the answer to one Question" in the Catechism, when we agree so cordially with men like C. H. Spurgeon on all the rest. Should we not at least "agree to differ" about that one clause in a spirit of mutual respect and forbearance?

Second, The Baptist view is that of a comparatively small minority.—The vast majority of Christians and of Protestants hold a different view from that of our Baptist brethren on these two points:—How ought Baptism to be administered, and to whom? There is something pathetic about the way in which some of their leading representatives speak of this. "Urged," says Dr. Clifford, "by our judgment of the meaning of the New Testament as to the will of the Lord Jesus, we have dared to differ from nearly the whole of Christendom; and some of us have cultivated isolation lest we should be entrapped into compromise. We have preferred to dwell apart rather than endanger our integrity as trustees of truth. Knowing that catholicity of spirit has sometimes led to disloyalty to intellectual conviction, we rejoice with trembling in gatherings of Christians to promote intimate knowledge of one another, interchange of ideas, and the quickening of a kindly regard, lest it should issue in unwarranted concessions to what is regarded as Pseudo-Baptist error." (Dr. Clifford in Review of the Churches, 15th December, 1892 p. 157.)

While this is significant and worth considering, it is not, of course, conclusive. It does not decide the question on its merits. It is possible that the immense majority of intelligent Christians in this country, and all over the world, may have mistaken the meaning of the Bible teaching about Baptism. It is possible, but it is not very likely. The facts furnish, at least, a good reason why a young man or woman should not come to any hasty conclusion, nor rush into any hasty action on the subject, because they feel difficulties about it, and do not see how to answer arguments or objections which have been brought before them. The facts to which I have referred make it absolutely certain at least that there must be another side to the question than the Baptist one — that it must admit of being answered in a different way by intelligent Christian men; because, in point of fact, the overwhelming majority of Protestant Christians, with their Bibles in their hands, and with the promise of "the Spirit to lead them into all truth" needful for Christ's disciples, have come to one conclusion on this subject, and our Baptist brethren have come to another.

Third, The argument in support of the view of the Reformed Church generally is a CUMULATIVE ONE.— It is of great practical importance if we really wish to come to a

right conclusion in this matter, that this should be kept in mind, namely, that the argument in support of the view of Baptism held by all the Churches of Reformed Christendom except those of the Baptist order, is a cumulative one, just as the argument for the Divine authority of the Christian Sabbath is. No one who insists on one special method of proof alone — that of direct injunction in so many words — can possibly feel the full weight and force of the argument in support of the Divine obligation of the Lord's Day; neither can he do so as regards the argument in support of the true answer to the question "who should be baptized?" It draws from the whole field of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. It grows and gathers strength in a man's mind the better he knows his Bible as a whole,— the better he understands the connection between the Old Testament and the New, between the Church in the days when the Gospel was preached beforehand unto Abraham,¹ and the Church under the Gospel now.

The argument needs, therefore, a little time and thought to be spent upon it, if we are really to understand it and take it in. In the case of the Jews in our Lord's time, and the first disciples in the Apostolic age, there was no difficulty of this sort, as we shall have occasion to show in the second Part, because the transition from the Old Testament Church to the New Testament one was made in a perfectly natural way under their very eyes. But for us, living in the twentieth century from the birth of Christ, if we break away from what Origen — born only some eighty-five years after the death of the Apostle John — tells us was the practice of the whole Church from the Apostles' time as to the Baptism of infants,(Origen. Comment, in Rom. v., sec. 9; Homil, in Lev. viii., sec. 3; in Luc. xiv.) it requires some thought and study of Scripture and contemporary writers in order that we may so put ourselves in the place of the first disciples as really to understand what our Lord's words and actions in this matter means, and could not but mean, to them.

A young believer is apt to be a little hasty and impatient in such circumstances, to take one or two isolated texts in what he supposes to be their natural sense, without troubling himself to look beyond them or to consider their historic connection, and so to draw rash conclusions. Now, the Baptist argument, as I have said already, has a distinct advantage here. It is very simple, easily put, and easily understood. It seems quite convincing, so long as you do not go beyond Matt. iii. 15, Mark xvi 16, and Rom. vi. 4, and while you interpret these verses from the standpoint of the twentieth century instead of from the standpoint of the first disciples.,

If any of you young men and women feel difficulties about 'Baptism, the right and the wise course for you to take is to speak to older Christian friends in whom you have confidence, or to come to your minister or your elder for a little frank talk over the matter at the beginning. That is the time when their words are likely to be helpful to one who really wishes to know the mind of Christ for His people on this point, and not merely to follow his or her own impulses and impressions. Young people have repeatedly come to me in that way, and in most cases, I think, I have been able to remove their difficulties, if they came at an early stage. Of course, all who know anything of human nature will see that there is little use in a young lad or girl coming to their minister as to difficulties, after they have been talking for weeks about them to Baptist friends, and have practically made up their minds, and told other people that they meant to be immersed. It would require a very unusual amount of humility of mind to draw back at that stage, however much evidence on the other side of the question might be set before them.

MODE OF BAPTISM

PART I

WHAT IS BAPTISM, SO FAR AS THE OUTWARD RITE IS CONCERNED? HOW SHOULD IT BE ADMINISTERED?

CHAPTER I

EXACT QUESTION AT ISSUE: ANSWER OF CHRISTIAN CHURCH GENERALLY: ANSWER OF THE BAPTISTS: PRESUMPTIONS AGAINST THE LATTER.

1. How Far All Agree

CUTTING out of account the members of the Society of Friends (or Quakers, as they are generally called), and any others who may think, like them, that Baptism was not meant by our Lord to be an ordinance of permanent obligation in His Church, we may say that all Christians agree that this Sacrament, so far as the outward and visible part of it is concerned, consists in the solemn application of water to the person baptized, in the name of the Trinity. There is also general agreement so far as the symbols and symbolic actions in Baptism are concerned, that these represent the washing away of sins, cleansing or purification through the blood of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit, union with the Lord Jesus in His atoning death and risen life, and consecration to Him and to His service. The difference comes in when we ask how the water is to be applied, whether the person to be baptized must be put wholly under the water — i.e., dipped or immersed, or whether he may be baptized as lawfully by pouring or sprinkling.

2. Nature and Extent of the Difference as to Mode of Baptism

The view of the Christian Church, generally, is that, if the symbol of water is preserved, the amount of it is not essential, but is a question to be decided by considerations of convenience and edification.

All Christians admit — Baptists as well as others — that there is a liberty of this sort as regards the other Sacrament of Christ's appointment. The Lord's Supper, as the name implies, was originally held at night, and in connection with a full meal. We hold it now, generally, in the forenoon or afternoon, and we take only a morsel of bread and a sip of wine. Yet Baptists, like all other Christians, call it the Lord's Supper still, and consider that all that is essential in the use of the symbols is preserved. Is it not reasonable to think that we were meant to have the same liberty as to the amount of the element or elements used in the one Sacrament as in the other? Our Baptist friends say, "No; because, as regards Baptism, from the nature of the case, no choice is given us. Here 'the mode is the ordinance'. You may have a 'supper', which is taken in the forenoon, and which consists of a morsel of bread and a mouthful of wine. But you cannot have a 'Baptism' unless the person baptized is dipped over the head in the water. We cannot recognize any Christian, however eminent, as a 'baptized believer', unless the ordinance has been administered to him in that particular way." And most 'Baptists' — the immense majority of those in America, in particular — go further, and say, "We cannot admit him to the Lord's Table in our church; and it would be wrong for us to sit down with him at the Communion in his own church."

Now, it is not fair to meet that position, as is sometimes done, with mere ridicule. It is honestly held by a large number of earnest Christian men and women, because they believe that faithfulness to Christ requires them to take it up. They hold that He meant all His disciples to be baptized by immersion — that they cannot, indeed, be baptized at all

in any other way, because Baptism means immersion, and, therefore, they must obey Him at all costs, and must mark their disapproval of what they regard as disobedience on the part of professing disciples of Christ to His plain command, by “coming out and being separate” from those who disobey—”with such an one no not to eat” at the Lord’s Table.

It is not fair, as I have said, to meet such views with mere ridicule., But it is quite fair to point out that there are —

3. Certain Presumptions Against the Baptist Position

(1.) It is not likely that under the Gospel of Christ and the dispensation of the Spirit so much should turn upon a mere point of ritual. For that is what it really is — a dispute about the correct way of performing a certain outward rite. The question at issue here is simply this: whether a man is rightly baptized by standing in a river and being dipped over his head in the water, and wrongly baptized — or rather, not baptized at all — by standing in the river and having water poured or sprinkled on his head. We say, “It makes no difference. Either way will do.” Our Baptist brethren say, “It makes all the difference in the world. The first way is Baptism, and the second is not.”

(2.) It is not likely that the Divine Founder of a universal religion should have bound all His followers in all time to perform the rite of admission into the fellowship of His disciples in one particular way, which, in some countries,¹ is practically impossible for some six months in the year, and in others is highly inconvenient, contrary to the natural habits and ways of the people, and even dangerous to health.

(3.) It is not likely that the result would have been that throughout nineteen centuries the great majority of Christians should invariably have mistaken the meaning of their Lord’s command, and so should never have been baptized at all, although honestly believing that they were.

All these things are unlikely., It would need very strong and conclusive evidence to establish a position which involves them. Let us consider now what the evidence bearing on the question really is.

MODE OF BAPTISM

CHAPTER II

MEANING OF WORDS “BAPTIZE”, “BAPTISM”, ETC., AS USED IN SCRIPTURE AND BY WRITERS OF “HELLENISTIC” GREEK GENERALLY.

1. Exact Point at Issue needs some Scholarship to decide

As put by our Baptist brethren, the question of the mode of Baptism turns entirely upon the meaning of a particular word, or group of words, in the New Testament, namely, the word *baptizo*, with its derivatives. Baptists generally say that it means to immerse, and only to immerse, always and everywhere, in the New Testament and out of it alike, (Carson, *Baptism in its Mode and Subjects*. London, 1844, p. 55).

1—The separate ecclesiastical position of our Baptist brethren rests upon the further assumption that, if “Baptism” means “immersion”, that settles the whole question as to the mind of Christ for His Church in this matter. But the analogy of the other Sacrament is enough to show that this is an unfounded assumption. The proper meaning of “supper” is an evening meal. The Lord’s Supper arose out of the Passover — which was also an evening meal — and it was held at night, both when first instituted and on other occasions mentioned in the New Testament. But these facts do not prevent the Lord’s Supper from being lawfully held, in the judgment of Baptists and of all other Christians,

in the morning. Even supposing, therefore, that it could be proved that the proper, or at least the original, meaning of “Baptism” is “immersion”, just as the proper meaning of “supper” is an evening meal, it would not in the least follow that, according to the mind of Christ, His people could only be baptized by immersion, any more than that they could only lawfully hold the Lord’s Supper in the evening. In this chapter, however, the Baptist arguments regarding the mode of Baptism are considered on their own ground, for example, asserts that in the strongest terms; and he is, on the whole, the ablest Baptist controversialist whom I know.

Well, this just comes to be a question of scholarship, and of nicer and more exact scholarship than you might think at first sight; and, therefore, it is not easy to go into it in a popular handbook such as this without seeming pedantic, and being too minute for a good many of my readers., Because, observe, this is a question regarding the precise use and meaning of a small group of words, not in ordinary classical Greek — the Greek which boys learn at school — but in a certain dialect of Greek at a certain age, and as used by a certain class of writers, which differed in many respects from classical Greek especially in its use of certain words. The New Testament, like the famous Greek version of the Old Testament, commonly called the LXX. (or Septuagint), which was our Lord’s Bible, and that of all His first disciples, was written not in classical but in what is known as “Hellenistic” Greek — a very important difference.(Reference to any good school dictionary for ordinary Greek will bring out the point here. Turn up *Baptizo* in Liddell & Scott. Three chief meanings are given—”I., To dip under water; of ships, to sink them; Pass, to bathe; II., To draw water; III., To baptize, N.T.” [4th Edition, Oxford, p. 238].) Obviously, therefore, this point in dispute — namely, the exact meaning of *baptizo* in the LXX., in the New Testament, and in certain other writers who used what was practically the same, or a closely-kindred form of the Greek language, is a somewhat nice question of scholarship, which can only be settled by those who have studied the subject, and are competent to speak upon it.

The question we have now to consider is what the third meaning in Liddell & Scott covers. They do not settle that point for us. They leave us to find out what “to baptize” really means in the N.T. and other books written by Jewish authors in Hellenistic Greek.

Others must be guided on this point, as in similar cases, by the evidence of experts.

2. Differences between Assertions in popular Baptist

tracts and Admissions of more competent representatives of the Theory

Some of the tracts and pamphlets commonly circulated by our 'Baptist friends, when they try to handle this question of the meaning of *baptizo*, supply remarkable illustrations of the truth of the saying that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing”. The authors of these pamphlets, as a rule, do not know enough to know their own incompetence. It is in that class of writings that you find strong assertions that *baptizo* means to immerse and only to immerse, with the still more amazing assertion that “all scholars admit this”. And therewith these writers often give a list of names of commentators from patristic times and from the Reformation period, whom they declare to be all on their side. Nothing could be more irrelevant and misleading than such references.

When we come, however, to Baptist controversialists whose scholarship is of a higher order, such as Dr. 'Carson and President Rooke, we find considerably .greater

caution, and some very noteworthy admissions. Take Dr. Carson, for example, in his able work to which reference has already been made: “*Baptizo*, I have asserted, has but one signification. . . . My position is that it always signifies to dip, never expressing anything but mode. Now, as I have all the lexicographers and commentators against me in this opinion, it will be necessary to say a word or two with respect to the authority of lexicons. Many may be startled at the idea of refusing to submit to the unanimous authority of lexicons, as an instance of the boldest skepticism.” Dr. Carson proceeds accordingly, at some length, to explain why his readers should in this case follow him rather than the lexicons. Now this is a frank and courageous admission on the part of Dr. Carson., He has “all the lexicons and all the commentators against him in his opinion” on the crucial point of this controversy., And although Dr. Carson goes on to fight vigorously for his opinion, an ordinary jury of intelligent readers may see reason to side with “all the lexicographers and all the commentators”, rather than with him and the Baptist writers generally who agree with him.

3. Evidence from the Lexicons

It is unnecessary to give this in detail, in view of Dr. Carson's candid admission that “all the lexicographers are against him” A few instances may be enough: —

First, Gases, a learned scholar of last century, a Greek himself and a member of the Modern Greek Church, defines *baptizo* in his large lexicon as meaning— (1) To wet or moisten; (2) To wash or bathe; (3) To draw water. None of these meanings suits the Baptist view,— not even No. 2; for a thing or person may be “washed”, or “bathed”, without being “dipped”. All the meanings of course, except the last, suit our view of the modes of Baptism.

Second, Scapula, one of the great Greek scholars of the Reformation period, says, in his Greek-Latin Lexicon, that *baptizo* means—”1, To dip or immerse, as when we immerse something in water for the sake of washing or purifying it; 2, to submerge or overwhelm with water; 3, to wash or purify (Mark vii. and Luke xi).” Only the first of these meanings suits the view of the Baptists. Scapula's interpretation of the “Baptisms” spoken of in Mark vii, and Luke xi. if, of course, fatal to their theory.

Third, Grimm's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament defines *baptizo*, “1, Prop, to dip repeatedly, to immerse, submerge (of vessels sunk, Polyb.; of animals, Diod.); 2, to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash or make clean with water; in the Mid. and 1 Aor., Pass., to wash one's-self, bathe; so Mark vii. 4, where W.H, txt. *rhantisontai*—i.e. sprinkle themselves...*baptismos*, a washing, purification effected by water; so Mark vii., 4-8; of the washing prescribed by the Mosaic Law, Heb. ix. 10.” It is worth noting that the meaning, “to wash or make clean with water”, is the one given by Grimm in reference to the New Testament passages, with the alternative reading of “sprinkle themselves”, in Mark vii. 4. For *baptismos* (the word used for Baptism in Mark vii. 4-8, Heb. vi. 2 and ix. 10, and by Josephus of John's Baptism¹) Grimm does not give “immersion” as a meaning at all, but only “a washing, purification effected by water”, He gives immersion as one of the meanings for *baptisma*, a kindred word,

Fourth, Dr. E. Robinson, Professor of Biblical Literature in New York, and author of “Biblical Researches in Palestine”, a book which marked an era in Biblical Archaeology, compiled also an excellent Greek and English lexicon of the New Testament. In it he gives the meaning of *baptizo* in the N.T. as, “1, To wash, to lave, to cleanse by washing...; 2, to baptize, to administer the rite of baptism, either that of John or

of Christ.”(Compare also Cremer's *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of N T Greek*, 3rd English ed., pp. 126-130)

The general result, then, is this: according to the lexicons, *baptizo* has several meanings — immerse, wash, wet or moisten, wash away, cleanse or purify. Which of these meanings it has in a particular case, or class of cases, depends on the context, or the usage of the writer or group of writers.¹ When we turn to the group of writers who used Hellenistic Greek we find that this word, especially as employed by Jewish writers on religious subjects (and all the N.T., writers, it is to be remembered, were either Jews or proselytes), means to wash or purify with water for some religious purpose, in whatever way the water was applied. It may be by putting the thing or the person into the water — i.e. by immersion; or it may be by putting the water upon them — i.e. by pouring, wetting, or sprinkling.

Illustrations of this might easily be given from the LXX., and other sources. But, for the readers whom I have specially in view, it will be more convenient to turn at once to the New Testament.

4. Evidence from the New Testament

In Mark vii, 4 we have two instances of the kind I refer to in one verse.

(1.) “When they — i.e. the Pharisees and all the Jews,—’ come from the market-place, except they wash (literally, as in margin of R.V., “baptize”) themselves, they eat not.”

That does not mean, of course, that they immersed themselves over the head in water each time before eating. There were no private baths, as a rule, among the Jews of our Lord's time, even in wealthy houses, far less among the people generally. To go to a public bath, even if there had been such institutions — which, “Immerse” is sometimes spoken of in the lexicons as the “proper” or original meaning of *baptizo*. That the “proper” meaning of a word may often largely, or entirely, give place in the course of time to one of its “secondary” meanings may be easily understood by English readers if they think of such words in their own language as “manufacture” and “blazon”. The “proper” or original meaning of the first of these terms is to make with the hand; we use it always now of things made by machinery. The second meant originally to explain a coat-of-arms; it means now to publish abroad in any way. was the case only in a few Greek cities like Tiberias — would have been, from the Pharisees' point of view, to contract additional uncleanness. What they did was to sprinkle themselves with a bunch of hyssop, or something of that sort, for ceremonial cleansing, very much as Roman Catholics sprinkle themselves with holy water on entering a church.(‘Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be clean”, was what the Jews of our Lord's time read in their Greek Version of Ps li 7) You will see on the margin of the R V., “Some ancient authorities read 'sprinkle themselves", instead of 'baptize themselves.’” That is the reading of the Vatican and the Sinaitic MSS., both of them very high authorities. It may not have been the original reading, but a gloss or interpretation added at a very early date. But, if so, it was a correct interpretation of what “baptizing themselves” meant in this connection — namely, “sprinkling themselves” with water.

(2.) Mark vii. 4.—”And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, washing of cups and pots, brasen vessels and tables,” The R.V. gives the last clause, “Washing of cups and pots and brasen vessels”, noting in the margin, “Many ancient authorities add and couches.”

Here again, while the A.V., and R.V, rightly give the meaning of the word by

“washings”, literally it is “baptizings”. These were some of the “divers baptizings” of the Jews, referred to in Heb. ix. 10 (And possibly also in Heb. vi. 2 — “the teaching of baptism's,” where the same word is used, or sprinkle water upon it, and use a sponge or something of that sort. Well, that was what the Jews did in these “baptizings of coppers and tables”, or “couches”.) which consisted in application of water in various ways with a view to washing or purifying. You might wash a cup, for example, by immersing it in water, though you might also do so by using a sponge or a wet cloth. But you certainly would not wash a great brassen vessel or copper, or a table or a couch by dragging it down to the river and plunging it in. You would pour. (3.) Luke xi, 38.—“And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that He (Jesus) had not first washed (literally baptized Himself) before dinner.”

Our Lord had come from the midst of a multitude of people,¹ many of them, in the judgment of the Pharisee, “common and unclean”. After being in contact with impure persons, why had He not purified or “baptized” Himself in the usual ceremonial way? That did not mean that every casual guest was expected to immerse himself, and his clothes also, before taking his place at the table. But those who came in from the marketplace—as in Mark vii., 4—or from contact with a crowd, as in this case, were expected to wash their hands, which was usually done by pouring water upon them, and to sprinkle themselves and their garments from a vessel set in some convenient place in the hall or court of the house, with a bunch of hyssop beside it for the purpose.

This explains the verse in the account of the Marriage at Caina of Galilee, in which we read: “Now there were six water-pots of stone set there, after the Jews' manner of purifying, containing two or three firkins a-piece.”² That was the provision made for the numerous guests “baptizing themselves”, as they passed in to the wedding feast. They were not to “immerse themselves” in the water-pots, but to pour a little of the clean water on their hands, or sprinkle it on their garments “after the Jews' manner of purifying”. (4.) John iii. 22-25.—After a statement that Jesus was baptizing in Judea at the same time that John was doing so in Enon, the evangelist proceeds: “There arose, therefore, a questioning on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him: Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou hast borne witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him.” These disciples of John, as it appears, were jealous in behalf of their master when they heard of crowds flocking to be baptized by Jesus of Nazareth. Some Jew had apparently been taunting them about the greater popularity of the new Teacher and His baptism. They came to John' himself to decide the difficulty as to the rival baptisms. “The 'questioning about purifying' was just 'a questioning about baptizing'. The evangelist uses the words interchangeably just because in the ecclesiastical language of his day the two meant the same thing.” (Dr. James Bannerman, Church of Christ, ii. 126)

As the writer now quoted points out, it is easy to see how the transition of meaning took place. The same process may be traced in the history of the kindred word *bapto*. It has two chief meanings — first, to dip, and secondly, to dye. “Men dipped objects in liquid in order to impart colour to them; and so *bapto* came to signify to dye or impart colour. The Jews immersed, or washed, or sprinkled, in order to attain purity, and so baptize came to mean to purify.” As commonly used by the Jews in our Lord's time, the word conveyed the general idea of purifying without any special reference to mode. “It had become practically equivalent to *katharizo*.” Look at the first instance in the New

Testament of the use of the term, and you will see how well the rendering “purify” suits the whole scope of the passage, and how obviously unsuitable “immerse” is, in the second part of it. “Then went out unto John, Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan; and they were purified (immersed or dipped) of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his purification (immersion or dipping), he said: .. I indeed purify (immerse or dip) you with water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I. . . . He shall purify (immerse or dip) you with the Holy 'Ghost and with fire...Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be purified (immersed or dipped) of him. But John would have hindered Him, saying, I have need to be purified (immersed or dipped) of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him: Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matt. iii. 5-15. Dr. James Bannerman. Church of Christ, ii. 124/. 2-Acts xi. 15)

It may safely be left to the common sense of the reader to decide whether Scapula's third meaning of *baptizo*, Robinson's first (for the N.T.), and Grimm's second — viz., “to wash or purify”, “to wash or make clean with water”, is not a more suitable rendering here than “immerse” or “dip”.,

(5.) Compare the promise given in the passage quoted above—”He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire”, and repeated by our Lord in Acts i. 5, with its fulfillment when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, and upon those gathered in the house of Cornelius afterwards at the “Pentecost of the Gentiles”. “As I began to speak,” the Apostle Peter said, who had been an eye-witness of both events, “the Holy Ghost fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how that He said: John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.”² It is suitable that the symbol should represent the reality as closely as possible. As regards the mode of baptism, that is better done when the water falls upon the person baptized, as in baptism by pouring or sprinkling, than when the person is plunged into the water as in baptism by immersion. The Scripture symbols for the Spirit in His gracious operations are dew or rain coming down from above, not a pond or pool into which men are plunged.

The apostle's words in the house of Cornelius, when he enjoined that the outward sign of baptism should follow the inward grace and power of the 'Spirit already received, are in perfect accordance with this view, “Then answered Peter: Can any man forbid the water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”¹ “The expression is interesting,” Dean Alford says in his Commentary on the passage, “as showing that the practice was to bring the water to the candidates, not the candidates to the water. This, which would be implied by the word under any circumstances, is rendered certain when we remember that they were assembled 'in the house'.” In other words, this is one of several cases in the N.T., in which there is something like moral certainty that the baptism was by sprinkling or pouring, and not by immersion,

(6.) In I Cor. x. 1 /., the Apostle says: “Our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto (Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”

The Israelites at the crossing of the Red Sea were no doubt sprinkled by drops from the cloud, and by the spray of the sea waves as the strong wind swept over them all

night. But certainly they were not immersed. They “went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left...The Children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea”.(Exod. xiv. 21) The Egyptians were immersed afterwards. 'But that was not a kind of baptism to be desired or followed.

(7.) Heb. ix. 8-10.—”The first tabernacle is a parable for the time now present, according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect, being only (with meats and drinks, and divers washings,) carnal ordinances imposed until a time of reformation.”

The service of the tabernacle in O.T. times is here described as consisting, among other things, of “divers washings” (literally baptisms). The context² shows that what the writer specially had in view was — first, “the water of separation”— namely, spring-water with which the ashes of an heifer were mingled, and which was applied for the “sprinkling of the unclean”; secondly, the water mixed with blood with which Moses sprinkled the book of the covenant, the people themselves, and the tabernacle with all its vessels. These “baptisms”, therefore, were in point of fact sprinklings and not immersions.

2-See verses 13 and 19-22. “For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled sanctify unto the purifying of the flesh...Moses took the blood...with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people...Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood. And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood.”

“The way in which the Baptism of our Lord and that of the Ethiopian eunuch are described proves that these were cases of immersion. We read in Mark: “Jesus . . . was baptized of John in the Jordan; and straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit as a dove descending upon Him.” The narrative in Acts says: “They both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.”(Mark i. 9; Acts viii. 38) Ought we not to follow the example of our Lord, and the practice of the Baptist and of Philip as to the mode of Baptism?

Answer to Objection I

Well, but the question remains: “What was the mode in these two cases? Certainly the words used in the passages now quoted do not settle the point-No one supposes that Philip himself was immersed; yet it is said of him equally with the eunuch that he “went down into the water”, and “came up out of it”. Our Lord may have been immersed at His baptism; and the eunuch may have been immersed also in what was probably a wayside spring or shallow stream by the desert road to Gaza; though the presumption in the latter case seems against it. But assuredly the words used do not assert it in either case. Those employed by the Evangelist in reference to our Lord would accurately describe such a 'Baptism as is set before us in the oldest Christian pictures of the rite in existence, those found in the Catacombs, where the candidate is depicted as standing in a shallow pool while water is poured upon his head from the hand, or from a shell or small vessel held in the hand of the person baptizing. (That is the sort of Baptism — e.g., represented in a picture in the cemetery of Calixtus in Rome, which is believed by De Rossi — one of our foremost authorities on such questions — to belong to the second century. In an

interesting mosaic of our Lord's Baptism in an old baptistry at Ravenna, dating from the fifth century, He is depicted as standing in the Jordan, with the water reaching to His waist, while the Baptist stands near, as if upon the bank, and pours water from what seems a small shell upon His head. See Marriott's Art. Baptism in Smith and Cheetham's Diet, of Christ. Antiquities, i. 168-170.)

Here is an instance of the same mode of Baptism as we see in the Catacomb pictures, and the same use of words in describing it as we have in the account of our Lord's Baptism and the eunuch's. I take it from the organ of the "Church Missionary Society" of the Church of England. Scores of similar instances could be given from missionary reports in connection with other Churches,

"The Rev. A., N. Wood baptized seventeen adults at Mamboia (Central Africa) on Easter Day. The Baptism took place in the river, Mr. Wood writes: 'The Christians were arranged on one side of the bank, and the heathen on the other. The candidates for Baptism were on the brink of the river on the side of the heathen...Turning to the candidates, I put the usual questions, with one or two others relating to their superstitions and heathen customs. These being answered satisfactorily, the candidates stepped into the river, and were baptized (not by immersion, the river being too shallow), and then taken by the hand by their witnesses to the group of Christians on the other bank., When all the seventeen were baptized, we sang, "O happy day that fixed my choice"' .. At Mawapwa also nine adults were baptized in the river on Easter Day by the Rev. J. C. Price." (Church Missionary Intelligencer, July, 1894, p. 535. The witnesses" referred to in this interesting narrative are two native Christians, who bear testimony to the consistent life of the candidate for Baptism, and promise to take some charge of him or her afterwards as regards religious things)

Here we have all the circumstances and expressions from which our Baptist friends argue that our Lord's Baptism and the eunuch's must have been by immersion. The candidates were "baptised in the river"; they "went down into it", and "came up out of it". And yet the officiating minister tells us, parenthetically, the Baptism was "not by immersion, the river being too shallow"., In that climate, and in view of the customs of the people, it would have been a quite natural and suitable thing, had the river been deep enough, that the Baptism should have been by immersion. But in point of fact it was not so. And it is quite likely that the Baptism of our Lord and of the Ethiopian treasurer took place just in the way in which those old Christian pictures represent it, and in which those groups of converts from heathenism were baptized in Africa on that Easter Day.

The words used about New Testament Baptisms leave question of mode open, Negatively, at all events, it is quite clear that no one can ever prove from such expressions as those now considered, that our Lord and the eunuch were not baptized, like those African converts, in the water, but without being immersed in it. It is simply a matter of more or less uncertain inference. These Baptisms may have been in one way, or in another as to mode.

Further, it is equally certain that the primary word used in reference to every one of the Baptisms recorded in the New Testament is a word which leaves it an open question in what precise way the water was applied. There are several Greek words, (Such as *kataduo* and *enduno*) as there are several English ones, which mean "to immerse, and nothing but to immerse"., These are sometimes used by early ecclesiastical

writers — by some of the Greek fathers, for example — when they wish to call attention to the point that the Baptism of which they speak took place by immersion, as was, in point of fact, the general custom in the post-apostolic age. These terms might have been used by our Lord and His apostles to show the mode of Baptism which Christians were to use. In that case there could have been no difference of opinion., But none of these words is ever used in the New Testament for Baptism, or in connection with it. It is always this word *baptizo* which is employed; and that, as we have seen, and as Dr. Carson admits, “according to all the lexicographers and all the commentators”—though not according to himself and the Baptists generally — has several meanings — in particular, in that age, and among the Jews, the meaning of “washing” or “purifying” generally. Its use, therefore, does not settle the question of mode, but leaves it “an open question”.

Observe, it does not concern us in the least to deny that some of the New Testament Baptisms may have been by immersion, total or partial. That mode of washing or purifying was in accordance with the Syrian climate, at most seasons, and with the manners of the country, where circumstances were favourable, and there was “much water” in the place. (John iii. 23: “John also was baptising in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water (lit. 'many waters') there; they came and were baptized.) probably some at least — perhaps most — of John's Baptisms were of that sort. We have no desire whatever to dispute it. But it is a matter of life and death — so to speak — for our Baptist friends to prove that not only some or many, but all of them, and all the other Baptisms spoken of in the New Testament, were Baptisms by immersion. Now, to prove that is simply impossible, because it is plain, from the facts already noted, that the precise mode of Baptism in every one of the New Testament instances is simply a matter of conjecture, or more or less probable inference from the circumstances of each case. If, in any one of them, the Baptism was — e.g., by pouring, as the very old Christian tradition, embodied in such pictures as those I have named, represents our Lord's as being, then that is fatal to the theory which declares the only lawful Baptism to be by immersion.

Conclusion on this point from Scripture evidence

All Scripture evidence, bearing on the question of the mode of Baptism, leads us to the conclusion that the view held in all the Reformed Churches, except the Baptist denomination, is the correct one, namely, that Baptism by immersion, although perfectly lawful, is not necessary, and that its expediency is simply a question of circumstances. It is never enjoined in Scripture; and it cannot be proved from Scripture, nor by probable inference from Scripture, that it was even the common mode as regards Christian Baptism. In several instances in the apostolic history — e.g., in the case of Cornelius and his friends, in that of Paul, and that of the jailor and his family — the strong presumption is that the ordinance was administered in some other way than by immersion.

Confirmation of this view from earliest post-Apostolic reference:

An interesting confirmation of this view is to be found in the very earliest reference to the mode of Baptism, which meets us when we pass beyond the New Testament writings. The 'Didache', or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, is variously dated by competent scholars as belonging to the end of the first century or the first half of the second. There is general agreement that it proceeded from some Jewish Christian community, whether in Egypt or Syria, being “an intensely Jewish document”.(Salmon, Lecture on Non-Canonical Books. London, 1886, p 57 2-Dr. C. Taylor, Cambridge, in his

Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, p. 118. ^-Teaching, chap. vii. (Dr. Taylor's translation.) The author of this "genuine fragment of the earliest tradition of the Church", as it has been called by one of the great authorities on such subjects,² testifies to the existence in his time of at least two modes of Baptism, by immersion and by pouring or affusion; and he evinces not the slightest doubt that the one is as valid as the other. After speaking of the preliminary instruction needed for converts from heathenism, he says: "And as touching Baptism, thus baptize ye: When ye have first recited all these things, baptize into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in living water., But if thou have not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, then in warm. And if thou have not either, pour forth water thrice upon the head unto the Name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost."

It is evident from this passage that at the time and in the circle of its author, the normal or favorite mode of Baptism was by immersion (total or partial) in "living"— i.e., fresh and running water; but that where water was scarce, as in a private house, a prison, or a catacomb, it was held equally lawful to baptize by pouring or sprinkling water on the head in the name of the Trinity. "We learn here," Dr. Schaff says, "that in the post-apostolic age a degree of freedom prevailed as to the mode of Baptism, which was afterwards somewhat restricted., From this fact we may reason, a fortiori, that the same freedom existed already in the apostolic age. It cannot be supposed that the twelve apostles were less liberal than the writer of the 'Didache', who wrote as it were in their name."(Schaff, Olden Church Manual, p. 34.)

Later Developments as to Mode of Baptism and Significance attached to it
Baptism by immersion became almost universal in the early Church when persecution ceased in the third century and beginning of the fourth, and it became possible to erect great baptisteries, and have suitable arrangements, with curtains, &c., for the convenient Baptism of men and women. The catechumens were baptized "in a state of absolute nakedness" in great numbers at Easter and other feasts of the Church, with elaborate ritual of all sorts. Immersion, generally three times repeated, lent itself readily to such ceremonial, and to the allegorizing tendencies of the patristic writers. It was identified in the most absolute way with regeneration; and the significance and vital importance of this precise mode of Baptism came to be insisted on in language of the wildest extravagance. Anyone who considers the way in which even such a man as Chrysostom speaks on this subject, will not wonder at the fashion in which "the pool of regeneration and justification" was spoken of by less enlightened writers of the patristic period.(See Marriott, Art. Baptism in Diet, of Christ. Antiquities, i., pp. 157-164; Isaac Taylor, Ancient Christianity, 2nd edit., i. pp. 236-239) Their position in this matter is represented very closely by the theory and practice of the Greek Church at the present day in Russia and elsewhere.

OBJECTION II

We read in Romans vi. 3-5: "Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized 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. For if we have become united with Him by the likeness of His death, we shall be also by the likeness of His resurrection." And so, too, in Col. ii., 12: "Having been buried with Him in Baptism, wherein ye were also

raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

Is not the figure in these two passages drawn from immersion, and does that not show that immersion at Baptism was the rule in the Apostolic Church, and ought to be with us? Does not the apostle here obviously refer to a person being buried for a moment under the water when baptized, and rising up again, even as Christ died, and was buried, and rose again from the grave?

Answer to Objection II

Personally, I do not think that there is any allusion in these passages to the mode of Baptism; and a number of eminent commentators (E.g., Principal D. Brown, Godet, Dr. Charles Hodge, President Beecher, &c. Dean Alford is doubtful whether the apostle intended any reference to the mode of Baptism or not. He is quite clear that, if there is such a reference, it has no binding authority for the Church as regards the question of one mode rather than another.) are of the same opinion, for reasons which I shall touch on presently. But suppose, for the sake of argument, that Baptism by immersion is referred to here. Suppose — what is not the case — that “burial” to the Apostle Paul and his first readers meant being lowered down into a pit or grave under the ground, and that “resurrection from among the dead” would thus mean rising up out of a pit or grave, such as we are accustomed to see. Then, being put down under the water for a moment in Baptism, and rising up again, would be, so far, like being buried and raised from the grave. The apostle might, in that case, naturally use it in illustration of his argument as to Christians being one with Christ in His death and burial and resurrection; because Baptisms by immersion, although never expressly mentioned in the New Testament, were probably common enough in the Apostolic Church — though not so common as they became in the third and fourth centuries when circumstances made that mode of Baptism more generally convenient, and a growing tendency to formalism led the Church to attach importance to it.

But, observe, the (supposed) fact of the apostle's drawing an incidental illustration from a common mode of Baptism would no more prove that Paul regarded immersion as the only lawful mode, than the undoubted fact that he draws not an illustration only but an argument, in I Cor., xv. 29, from a curious custom prevalent in those days of being “baptized for the dead”, give any evidence that he even approved of that custom, far less that he wished to perpetuate it.

An illustration, or even an argument, drawn from a prevalent custom of that sort, proves nothing as to the authority or importance of the custom itself., But the truth is that the whole connection of thought in these two passages is against the idea of there being any special reference to the mode of Baptism. What the apostle is speaking of in both cases is the real and spiritual union of believers with Christ as their substitute and representative in all that He did as such, especially in His death, which was sealed by His burial, and in His resurrection from the dead. The ordinance of Baptism is the outward sign and seal of union with Christ in all these respects, “The inward grace” is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the being “baptized into Christ” and “putting on Christ”, (Gal. iii. 27) the being brought into union with Him and His, which the ordinance represents. The apostle's argument does not in the least require any special reference to the mode of Baptism.

Further, it is to be noted that the modes of burial, customary among the Romans,

the Greeks, and the Jews, were not in the least like immersion. Among them the body was not lowered into a pit-like grave at all, as with us. It was laid reverently on a rock shelf at some height above the ground, in a cave or built recess. Often there were several of these shelves, rising one above the other, in the walls of the cave, or sepulchral chamber. (The early Christian graves in catacombs are “long, low, horizontal recesses” in the walls of the narrow galleries, “commencing a few inches above the level of the floor, and rising tier above tier, like the berths in a ship's cabin, to the number of five, six and sometimes even twelve ranges.”—Art. Catacombs in Diet, of Christ. Antiq. i. p. 306) Or else, as generally among the Romans, the body was reduced to ashes, and these were stored in a vase or urn, which was put on a shelf or tiny niche in the wall. (From the rows of such little niches in the walls of the Roman burial chambers, these were commonly known as “Columbaria” or dovecots.) If we put ourselves, therefore, in the place of the first readers of the Epistle to the Romans and the Colossians, it seems quite unlikely that immersion in water would suggest “burial” to them, or be a natural image for it, Lazarus, when he was called back to life “from among the dead”, and our Lord on the Resurrection morning, did not rise up out of a pit in the ground. They rose up as from sleep on a bed, stepping down from a shelf cut in the side of the cave, or rock-hewn chamber, which had a door “against which” (Mark xv. 46; John xi. 38, R.V., Comp. Matt, xxvii. 60; xxviii. 2; Mark xvi. 3. 2-Matt. iii. 15.) a stone was rolled to keep it in position. They “came forth”. They did not come up out of a grave dug in the ground, with a flat stone laid on the top of it, as we are apt to think from our association with a quite different mode of burial.

No reliable argument, therefore, can be drawn from these two passages, in Rom. vi. and Col. ii., in support of the Baptist view that immersion is the only lawful mode of Baptism.

OBJECTION III

“But did not our Saviour go down into the river to be baptized, and did He not say, in connection with His Baptism, “Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness?” We ought to follow Christ in all things. Is it not safest at least, if not absolutely necessary, for a believer to “follow Him into the river”?

Answer to Objection III

1. As to our Lord “going down into the river”, we have already seen that that expression does not prove that He was immersed in the river, any more than those seventeen African converts of whom we read that “they all went down into the river”, and were all “baptized in the river”, and yet not one of them, as it happened, was baptized by immersion.
2. As to that argument about “following Christ into the river”, no doubt it is used in all sincerity by some earnest and well-meaning Christians; but it really embodies such a series of fallacies that it would take more time than it is worth while to bestow upon it to unravel them all. It may be enough to say two things to any young person who is inclined to be impressed by that phrase.

In the first place, if you are to follow Jesus in that literal and indiscriminating fashion, why not begin sooner, and go further. He was circumcised. He submitted Himself to the initial Sacrament of the Church of the Old Testament, and was thereby received into the visible fellowship of the covenant people of God. And, from the time

when He was twelve years old, our Lord kept the Passover, the Sacrament of redemption by sacrifice and the shedding of blood. Why not follow Him in these things? There is just as much reason for doing so as for following Him in the matter of John's Baptism. For observe, in the second place, John's 'Baptism was not Christian Baptism; and therefore it was no model for us as Christians to follow. It would seem that John's disciples, who received that 'Baptism,— who followed Jesus or preceded Him in the Jordan,— had to be baptized over again when they became Christians. The case of those twelve believers at Ephesus, who had received only John's Baptism, and knew nothing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is conclusive on this point. They, and all in like position, required “to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus”. (Acts xix. 1-7)

For those of the first disciples, such as John and Andrew, who had followed the Baptist before they turned from him to Christ, John's Baptism was a temporary ordinance instituted for temporary reasons, which have no application whatever to us. For our Lord Himself, it was an ordinance to which He submitted Himself for reasons connected with His Divine mission as the Saviour and the Substitute, which are still more applicable to us. He had “to fulfill all righteousness” in the room and stead of His people. Coming forward now to be owned by John, as “He of whom he spake,” “The Son of God,” “The Lamb of 'God, which taketh away the sin of the world”, our Lord speaks of Himself with the same majesty of utterance as when He said to Nicodemus: “We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.” “Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” The plural does not refer, in either case, to His future disciples at all. (The only other admissible interpretation of the “Us” is that given by some commentators — viz., that our Lord includes the Baptist with Himself. In that case the meaning would be as Meyer puts it: “If I do not allow myself to be baptized, and thou dost not baptize me, there remains something unfulfilled, which ought to be done by us in accordance with the Divine will; then satisfaction is not made by us to all righteousness.”)

To bid young converts “follow Christ into the river”, on the ground of our Lord's utterance as to His “fulfilling all righteousness”, however sincere and well intentioned the adviser may be, is simply to misapply Scripture altogether, and to furnish an illustration of what Archbishop Whately, in a valuable essay of his, speaks of as “the danger of an erroneous imitation of Christ's example”.

The whole question of the precise mode of Baptism is, from the standpoint of the New Testament, an entirely subordinate one. The questions to which importance is attached by our Lord and His Apostles are such as these: Into what Name, and unto what gifts is anyone baptized? In what spirit and on what grounds ought a believer to seek the ordinance for himself and those that are his? “There is one body and one spirit, even as ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.”

“For in one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (Eph. iv. 4; 1 Cor. xii. 13) The “one Spirit” has, indeed, “diversities of operations”; and so the symbol of the one outward Baptism, by “washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost”, may fitly have its diversity of administration, whether by immersion, or pouring, or sprinkling. That does not break the unity of the symbol. And over unessential points like these, Christians ought not to break “the unity of the Spirit”, nor the unity of communion in the Church of Christ.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTISED?

PART II

CHAPTER I

STATE OF THE QUESTION: HOW FAR ARE ALL CHRISTIANS AGREED AS TO THE PROPER SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM?

1. How far entire Agreement prevails

It is important to understand the exact point of difference here. Putting out of account again, as in Part I., the Society of Friends (or “Quakers”), and any who may think with them that Baptism and the Lord's Supper were not meant by Christ to be permanent ordinances in His Church, we may say that all Christians agree, all over the world, and have agreed in all ages, that those who have grown up without Christian Baptism should be baptized only when they make a personal Christian profession. Certainly all the evangelical Churches of Christendom are cordially at one on this point. Our Baptist friends agree with us, and we with them, on what the Shorter Catechism says about it: “Baptism is not to be administered to any who are out of the visible Church, until they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him.”

Now, observe, that applies to all the cases of Baptism expressly recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of the New Testament, except some three or four instances of household or family Baptism, of which I shall speak presently. Every other case is common ground with us and our Baptist brethren. Nothing can be settled on either side of this controversy by quoting any of these cases of New Testament Baptism., Suppose a minister of our own Church, or of any other of the Churches which believe in Infant Baptism, in the position of Peter with Cornelius, or of Philip with the eunuch, or of Paul with Lydia and the jailor of Philippi; he would act precisely in the same way as the apostles and the evangelist did. He would baptize each and all of these four persons as believers; as men or women who had “professed faith in Christ and obedience to Him”, in circumstances which made their profession a thoroughly “credible” one. So also would a Baptist minister. (Except that he would insist on immersing them, and would delay the Baptism till he could get water enough to do it. We hear nothing of any such delay in the Acts. On the contrary, we hear of circumstances in the case of Cornelius and his friends, and the jailor, which make it decidedly unlikely that that mode of baptism was employed) There would be no difference whatever, so far; just as there is no difference in this respect between the practice of Baptist Churches in the mission field at the present day and our own. Every adult convert from heathenism is baptized by their missionaries and ours, only on his or her personal profession of faith in Christ.

Where the Difference comes in

The difference comes in only when a further question arises: What is to be done about the infant children of these baptized believers, supposing they have such? The whole of Christendom, except our Baptist brethren, answers: Baptize them too on the ground of their parents' faith., As the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly puts it: “The infants of parents, either both or one of them professing faith in Christ and obedience to Him, are, in that respect, within the covenant, and the baptized.”

Testimony of Origen as to Apostolic practice of Infant Baptism

We believe, on Scripture grounds which we shall consider presently, that this is the mind of Christ for His Church in this matter, and that Origen was right in what he says on this point. He was one of the greatest of the early Greek Fathers, born about A.D. 185, a man who had lived for years in the Holy Land, who had visited almost all the Churches of the East, and who knew their views and customs better probably than any other Christian teacher of his time. Both his father and grandfather had been Christians before him; so that their combined testimony takes you back to the days when the Apostle John was still teaching and baptizing in Ephesus.

Well, Origen says without the slightest hesitation: "The Church has received it by tradition from the Apostles to give Baptism even to infants." (Orig. in Rom. v. § 9. Comp. the Apostle Paul's injunction to the first Church in Europe, to which he wrote an epistle: "So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word or by epistle of ours." (2 Thess. ii. 15). The flagrant abuse of the principle of "tradition" in the Roman Catholic Church ought not to keep us from attaching due weight, in its own place, to the historical testimony of the early Church, as to matters of fact such as Origen speaks of here.)

Facts about Family Baptism in Apostolic Church, to be explained somehow

We never find instances of Baptism in the Apostolic Church apart from faith in Christ. But we do find instances of several persons being baptized together, where the only faith spoken of is the faith of one person, who stands towards the others in the position of a parent or head of the family. Whatever explanation you give of such facts of the narrative, the facts are there; and you are bound to face them frankly, and give some reasonable explanation: —

1. Look at Acts xvi., 14:—"And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, to give heed unto the things spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized, and her family, she besought us, saying: If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there."

It is worth noting that there is a distinction here in the Greek which it was impossible for our Revisers to bring out in English. There are two distinct words used in the New Testament for "family" or "household"; and we have no two English words that correspond to them, (We come nearer the distinction in our Scottish use of the word "family" to mean "children". "A man with a family" means with us not the head of a household, including relatives and servants, but a father of children.) The one (*oikia*) means "household" in the wide sense, "an establishment", including not only children but relatives, servants, and dependants., The other (*oikos*) is a narrower and more sacred word, denoting especially the children, the family regarded as a unity under a common representative head. This distinction in the use of these two terms runs all through the Greek Version of the Old Testament — which was "our Lord's Bible", and that of almost all the first disciples — and it is observed also by the New Testament writers. (There is a full discussion and illustration of this interesting point in my Cunningham Lectures, The Scripture Doctrine of the Church, pp. 76., 85-88, 320, 325, 504-06.)

Now, it is the narrower word which is invariably used in these cases of family Baptism, while the wider word is sometimes used in the very next verse, (E.g., Acts xvi. 31 and 32.) when others than the "family" strictly so-called are meant.

Notice how this distinction comes out in connection both with the first and second instances of individual conversion recorded on European ground. Lydia was a proselyte, accustomed to attend the Jewish worship at Philippi, and familiar with Jewish rules as to the position of children in the Church. She seems to have been like Mary, the mother of Mark, at Jerusalem, a woman of some wealth, and probably, like her, the widowed head of a family. Her trade was a lucrative one; and her house was of a size suitable afterwards for the meetings of “the brethren” in Philippi. The steps in her own conversion are carefully noted. “She heard” the evangelists “speak” in the Jewish place of prayer, “The Lord opened her heart to give heed unto the things spoken by Paul.” She was “judged” by Paul and his fellow-workers “to be faithful to the Lord”, And the result was, “She was baptized, and her family.”

There is not the slightest indication that anyone in the family believed, or was of age to believe, and to be “judged faithful to the Lord”, except its head and representative. The natural conclusion is that, as in the Old Testament Church, with the usages of which as to the circumcision and baptism of proselytes and their children, Lydia was familiar, (Of these we shall speak presently. See pp. 66-69.) the children received the token of God's gracious covenant, and of “the Gospel preached beforehand unto Abraham”, on the ground of their parent's faith.

2. Look at the next case of individual conversion. The jailor falls down before Paul and Silas in deep spiritual concern, and asks: “What must I do to be saved?” The missionaries had seen in the house of Lydia how blessing comes to the family when it comes to its head; and they said: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house (family).” The words recall those of our Lord regarding the conversion of Zacchseus, recorded by Luke in his “former treatise”: “This day is salvation come to this house (family), forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.” (Luke xix. 9.) When the Philippian jailor became by faith a son of Abraham, he became an heir of the promise given to Abraham: “I will be a God to thee and to thy seed.” “The promise was to him and to his children.” His faith is to be a means of blessing to them; it brings them with himself within the fellowship of the visible Church. And in token of this, the outward sign of admission to that fellowship is given alike to the believer and to his infant seed, as in the case of Abraham. “He was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And he brought them up into his house (*oikon*, his own house, or possibly the family room)., and set a table before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, he having believed in God.” (Acts xvi. 30-34)

Observe, there is no mention in this whole passage of anyone having believed, except the jailor himself, although “he and all his were baptized”. This is the more noteworthy, because it is distinctly stated that the evangelists preached the Gospel that night to a wider circle than that of the jailor's family, “They spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all who were in his household” (*oikia*) We may be sure that Luke, one of whose characteristics among the New Testament writers is his scrupulous accuracy in the use of language, would not have used two different words here in two successive verses to denote the same thing.) — i.e., all who made up the establishment of the prison, the attendants and underkeepers, as well as the prisoners who had already been impressed by the way in which “about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God”, It does not appear, however, that any except the jailor were brought to full decision that night, or gave, at least, such evidence of faith in Christ as would have warranted the

Apostle in baptizing them forthwith., But, with respect to the jailor himself, there was no difficulty. “He was baptized, he and all his, immediately, he having believed in God.”

3. The same distinction between individual and family Baptism meets us in the same natural and individual way in Paul's first letter to the 'Corinthians. “I thank God,” the apostle writes, “that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius.” That was true as regards adult believers, whom he was specially addressing in his letter. But in Corinth, as in Philippi, there had been Baptisms also of another sort; and Paul, as he writes that sentence, recalls one of these. “And I baptized also,” he adds, “the family of Stephanas,”(I Cor. i. 14-16. 2-1 Cor. xvi. 15.) Here again it is the same special word which is used, denoting the family in the narrow sense — the family as a unity represented by its head.

There were older persons, as we learn afterwards incidentally, connected with the home of 'Stephanas, some of them probably slaves or freedmen. These Paul refers to in the last chapter of the same epistle; and he does so with a significant change of expression. “Ye know the household of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have set themselves to minister unto the saints.”² It is the other and wider term which the apostle uses now, the one which denotes members of a circle where the union is not so close as in the “family” strictly so-called, and where separate individuality is more recognized'.

The distinction between the two words is worth remembering; and it is worth noting also that Baptist writers, so far as my knowledge goes, seem not to be aware of it, or at least take no notice of it.

These three passages bring out very clearly the difference between one of our missionaries to the heathen and a Baptist one. The former has no difficulty in understanding why Lydia and her family should be baptized together as soon as she received the Gospel, and why Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, should put a family Baptism in a different category from an ordinary adult one.

Our missionaries baptize converts and their families on precisely the same principles as the apostle seems at least to have applied at Philippi and Corinth, They do so every year and in every mission-field, and report them in the same sort of terms; but a Baptist missionary has to say: “No, There must be some mistake here; there cannot have been any children in these 'families' of Lydia, and the jailor, and Stephanas. They must all have consisted of grown-up persons, each of whom made a separate profession of faith in Christ — although that happens not to be expressly stated — before he or she was admitted to Baptism. And although Paul does use one word in speaking of the 'family of Stephanas' which he baptized, and another and different word in speaking of 'the household of 'Stephanas' who ministered to the saints, he must, nevertheless, have meant the same thing; because we read: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved', and we infer from that that belief must always go first, and Baptism second, in the case of every baptized person.”

These Cases not our main Argument, but show precise Point of Difference

Well, these cases of “family Baptisms” do not form our main argument by any means. It is a great mistake to treat them as if they did. They might, possibly, be explained away, if they stood alone, especially if you take them apart from the history of the Church from the beginning on to the apostolic age; but they fit in perfectly with the

view which, Origen tells us, the whole Church in the second century took of this ordinance, and did so on apostolic authority, and which the Church as a whole has undoubtedly taken ever since. Such cases, at the very least, may be fairly said to give a certain presumption in favour of that view; and they certainly do not fit in easily into the theory that infant and family Baptisms were unknown in the apostolic age. They always give our Baptist friends some trouble before they can explain them away, even to their own satisfaction.

I refer to these “family Baptisms” at this stage, because they bring out clearly the precise point of difference between us and our Baptist brethren as to the proper “subjects of Baptism”. We say that in all such cases as appear, at least, to have occurred at Philippi and Corinth, the “family” of Lydia, and the “family” of Stephanas, should be baptized, as well as Lydia and Stephanas themselves. Our Baptist friends say: “No. Only the heads of the family, and any adult members, should be baptized. The children must wait till they are grown up, and can make an intelligent personal profession of faith for themselves.”

CHAPTER II

OUTLINE OF MAIN ARGUMENTS FROM SCRIPTURE IN SUPPORT OF INFANT BAPTISM

What is the evidence from Scripture in favour of the Baptism of the infant children of professing believers?

As we saw at the outset,¹ the argument in support of the view generally held on this point by the Church of Christ is what is known as a “cumulative” one. It does not depend on three or four isolated texts, taken out of their historical connection. It draws from the whole field of Scripture, literally from Genesis to Revelation. It rests especially upon the teaching of Scripture as to the place of the children of believers in the covenant and the Church of God from the time when God first revealed His covenant and established His Church on the earth. To do the barest justice to the argument would need much more space than can be given to it in such a handbook as this. It is only an outline and indication of the argument that I can offer here.

I.—The infants of God's professing people were members of the Old Testament Church from the days of Abraham to the days of Christ, and received, by Divine appointment, an outward sign of their being so. They are spoken of and treated, during all that period, as within God's covenant on the ground of their relation to believing parents.

Of course you must remember here the distinction between being a member of the Church and being “in full communion”, having full privileges. Your being received as a member of the visible Church by baptism, on the ground of your parents' faith, does not make you a Communicant; there are certain further conditions to be fulfilled by you as you come to years of understanding and independent choice. Infant membership is, so far, like infant citizenship. A child under age in this country has not the right to vote, to hold property, etc.; but it has important rights and privileges from its infancy as the child of a British citizen. If it were ill-treated, for example, or carried away by a foreign enemy, the whole power of Britain would be put forth, if needful — as has been done in well-known cases — in the child's behalf.

Now, the Church of God has been essentially one from the beginning; membership in it has been determined by the same great simple principles, and has included always the same classes of persons, namely, believers and their children. “The

Gospel,” the Apostle of the Gentiles tells us, “was preached beforehand unto Abraham.” It is “the blessing of Abraham” which “has come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus”. It was not a mere outward or earthly covenant that God made with Abraham as “the father of all them that believe”,(Gal. iii. 8, 14; Rom. iv. 11.) It had nothing to do with the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law. “The covenant,” the apostle says, with special reference to objections of this sort, “which was confirmed beforehand by God (with respect to Christ), the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect.”(Gal. iii. 17. The clause “with respect to Christ” is excluded from the text of this passage by the Revisers, as insufficiently supported by MSS. authority. But the whole context and scope of the passage show that it is at least a correct interpretation) And the promise was the great Gospel promise, which binds all God's record of redemption together from Genesis to Revelation, that God would be for an inheritance to His people and to their children: “I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.” “If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”(Gen. xvii. 7; Gal. iii. 29; comp. Jer. xxxi. 31-34; xxxii. 38-40; Ezek. xxxvi. 24-28; xxxvii. 26/.; Hosea i. 9/.; ii. 18, 23; Rev. xxi. 3, 6/. 2-Gen. xvii. 11; Rom. iv. 11.) There is no greater or richer promise in all the Word of God to which we could be heirs. Well, observe, the infant children of believers from Abraham's time onward got the same sign and seal of membership as their fathers. Circumcision was the Old Testament Sacrament of admission into the visible Church, the outward fellowship of God's professing people on earth., “It shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you,” God said to Abraham. “He received the sign of circumcision,” the apostle wrote, interpreting the ordinance for us, “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be in uncircumcision.”² And this sign and seal of the covenant was administered to Isaac, a child of eight days old, as well as to Abraham his believing father. Now, if infant children were capable then of membership in the Church, and were entitled on the ground of their parents' faith to receive the sign of membership, it follows that they must be so still. The olive tree of the Church — to use the apostle's figure in the Epistle to the Romans — remains the same, although the Gentiles have been “grafted in” and “made partakers”, with the true Israel of God, “of the root and fatness of the good olive tree”. The covenant promise and the sign of the promise become their birthright also in Christ.

II,—The right of the infant children of believers to be members of the Church, and to be recognized as such, having been once established by Divine authority, must be held to continue unless and until it is withdrawn by an express statute of repeal.

The infant children of believers were members of the Church, it is admitted, from the days of Abraham to the days of Christ. When were they put out of their privileges as such, and why? “The gifts and the calling of God,” says the apostle, in a passage where his whole argument is based on the unity of the Church in Old Testament and New Testament times, “are without repentance,” literally “are not repented of”, do not admit of change of purpose.(Rom. xi. 29) In other words, it is not the manner of God, if we may say so with reverence, to give promises and privileges to His believing people for themselves and their children, and then withdraw them. Certainly He would not do so without some great exceptional reason, and without clear intimation of His mind to His Church. Therefore, clearly, the burden of proof lies with our Baptist friends here. It is

allowed on all hands — it cannot with any plausibility be denied — that infants were members of the visible Church from the time of Isaac's circumcision to the time when the holy child Jesus was also circumcised the eighth day, and afterwards presented by His earthly parents in the temple at Jerusalem. Why should such infants not be members of the visible Church still? They used to enter with God's blessing into the covenant fellowship of His professing people, on the ground of their parents' faith, by the door of the Sacrament of admission which God appointed, Why should we shut the door against them now?

The only change is that Baptism has taken the place of circumcision — being, as the Apostle of the Gentiles calls it, “the circumcision of Christ”,(Col. ii. 2) just as the Lord's Supper has taken the place of the Passover, and the Lord's Day of the old seventh-day Sabbath. In these circumstances, we are not only entitled but bound to ask all anti-paedobaptists for their warrant for excluding the children. To do so without an express Scripture warrant is to incur a most serious responsibility, which I, for one, would not venture to take even were there no further evidence bearing on the case than what has been already touched upon. Where is the statute of repeal and prohibition? Not only have we no command of our Lord or His apostles to exclude the children from their former privileges, but we have many positive indications to the contrary, as we shall see presently.

The New Testament history extends over more than a generation after Pentecost; but not a single instance can be given from that period of the children of the first disciples being left to grow up without Christian Baptism, and thereafter baptized as adults. The Baptist argument for the exclusion of the children is all a matter of inference — a very precarious inference — from such a text, or half-text, as: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved [but he that believeth not shall be condemned.]”(Mark xvi. 16) III.— Look at some of the chief passages in the New Testament which refer to Baptism and to the place of children in the Church.

In studying such passages, it is specially important to remember one fundamental rule of all sound interpretation of Scripture, It has been admirably expressed by one of the greatest and most devout of German commentators: “In the interpretation of Holy Scripture, the reader ought always to seek to place himself, as it were, in that very time and place in which the words were spoken or the things done; and to consider carefully the mental and spiritual attitude of those concerned, the exact force of the words, and the whole connection.”(Bengel, Gnomon. Nov. Test in Matt. xvi. 13. 2-Acts ii. 5-11.)

Keeping Bengel's golden rule in mind, let us consider: —

1. Our Lord great Baptismal Commission

Matt, xxviii. 19/.—”Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

To whom were these words spoken? To men every one of whom had been brought up in the Jewish Church, who were familiar from childhood with its ordinance of admission and its principles of Church-membership. There was no other Church in the world then. They had never heard an objection to infant Church-membership. To them the place and privileges of the infant seed of believers were not matters of theory to be learned from books, but matters of fact and of every-day religious experience. And to

whom were “the eleven and those that were with them” to carry this message? First of all to Jews and proselytes; to such hearers as Peter had at Pentecost, “devout men, Jews and proselytes”, gathered for the great Jewish festival, “from every nation under heaven”;² to such audiences as Paul found fourteen, twenty, and thirty years afterwards in the synagogues and *proseuchae* (places for prayer) of Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth and Rome.

You cannot possibly understand what our Lord's words meant to the first disciples, and how He must have expected them to interpret and apply them, unless you realize the historical situation and connection. Take the Apostle Peter's audience at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. Every devout Jewish father in that crowd had been himself circumcised in infancy, and had had his own child circumcised, pleading the promise to Abraham, “I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed. This is the token of the covenant.” Every proselyte, who was the head of a family, had received himself that “seal of the covenant” when he believed, and had then brought forward his little ones to receive it on the ground of his faith. Thereby he had openly cast in his lot and theirs with the despised people of God. His most memorable religious experiences were indissolubly linked with the momentous step which he then took, and with its outward sign and seal. These men did not need any elaborate explanation about all this., It could all be taken for granted by those who preached to them the glad tidings concerning the Christ.

It would have been a new and strange thing to them if there had been no token of God's covenant for the infant seed of His people now, when all the difference was that the Messiah had come, for whom Israel had been waiting so long, and had proved to be far greater, more glorious, and more gracious than they had dreamed., That the place and the privileges of the children of believers were to continue to be in the Church what they had been hitherto, if nothing was said to the contrary, was from the standpoint of all the first disciples the most natural thing possible., “It went without saying,” as a matter of course. It is to be remembered, in this connection, that in the Jewish Church of our Lord's time, and for centuries previous, both in the Holy Land and in the Dispersion throughout the civilized world, the circumcision of infants was the rule, and that of adults the exception; just as in the Christian Church now, save in its Mission fields, Infant Baptism is the rule, and Adult Baptism the exception.

Suppose initial ordinance of Old Testament Church continued: How would our Lord's Commission read?

Suppose, as is quite conceivable, that our Lord had retained the old Sacrament of admission, and had said to the apostles: “Go ye and make proselytes(Justin Martyr and other writers of the sub-apostolic age often use the phrase “to become proselytes”, as synonymous with “to become Christians”. “So short a time is left you in which to become proselytes. If Christ's coming shall have anticipated you, in vain you will repent.” “Christ and His proselytes — namely, we Gentiles, whom He has illumined, etc.”—Dial, cum Tryph. xxviii., cxxii.) of all the nations, circumcising them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things.” In that case, no one would maintain that any “Jew or devout proselyte” would ever have doubted that the infant children of the converts were to be circumcised as before. It presented just as little difficulty for them when our Lord, without forbidding circumcision, singled out the easier rite of Baptism — which in His time, there is reason to believe, was the ordinary accompaniment of circumcision in the case of proselytes and

their children — as His appointed ordinance for admission into the fellowship of His Church., The Messiah promised to their fathers, had not come to cast the children of believers out of their ancient birthright. Only “in Christ there is neither male nor female”; and the token of the covenant was to be a gentler and more gracious one, as became Him who “called their babes unto Him, saying: 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.'”(Luke xviii. IS/. 2-1 Cor. X) Unless some positive prohibition of Infant or Family Baptisms had been given by our Lord to the first disciples, their whole Providential training and previous religious experience made it inevitable that they should understand the terms of the Baptismal Commission in this way. “To disciple — or make proselytes of — all the nations” meant, from their standpoint, to bring parents and children together into the covenant fellowship of God's people, and into the school of Christ, this being represented and sealed by an outward ordinance of admission, as from time immemorial in Israel. The Apostle Paul expresses a similar thought when he speaks of the Israelites being “all baptized unto Moses” at the crossing of the Red Sea.² They were all thereby, adults and infants together, definitely pledged to Moses as their leader and lawgiver in God's name. They stood in the closest union with him henceforth, with many things to learn in the school of the wilderness, but always looking back upon that Baptism, as the public and definite beginning of their discipleship.

2. Confirmation of this Argument from the Facts about Proselyte Baptism among the Jews

The argument now sketched is, I believe, perfectly conclusive in itself, even although it stood alone. But it finds a strong confirmation in the facts regarding Proselyte Baptism among the Jews in the New Testament period, as these are brought out by investigations such as those of Prof. Schurer in his great work on “The History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ.”(Clark's Ed., ii., 319-324. See also my Script. Diet, of the Church, 235-238. 2-Comp. John iii. 3-8. 3-See Winer, Real. Worterb. s. voce “Proselyten”; Leyrer in Herzog's Real. Ency. Art. Proselytes, 242/., and other references in Script. Doct. of the Church, 236/.)

Put shortly, the facts are these — Baptism (as well as circumcision in the case of males) was administered by the Jews in our Lord's time to all proselytes, men and women alike, and to all infants whose parents made a profession of the Jewish faith. The two things were combined with a sacrifice in the Temple (or a .vow to offer one when possible), to form the full ordinance of admission into the Jewish Church. “Baptism makes the proselyte like a little child,” the Jewish teachers said: “He undergoes therein a new birth.” In a very ancient Ethiopic version of the Gospels, our Lord's statement about the proselytizing zeal of the Pharisees in His days — which was specially successful among women of good social position — is translated: “Ye compass sea and land to baptize one proselyte.”

Our Lord, therefore, simply singled out one of the three elements usually combined at that time in the admission of proselytes, as the most suitable for the initial ordinance of His Church, and left the other two to die out of themselves. Circumcision and Baptism evidently continued for a time side by side in the Jewish Christian Church, just as the observance of the old Seventh-day Sabbath and of the Lord's Day did, and as Hebrew Christians, some thirty years after the Resurrection of Christ, still made certain offerings in the Temple. Paul did not “forbid the Jews which were among the Gentiles to

circumcise their children”, as the elders of the Church at Jerusalem told him, on his last visit there, was falsely reported of him.(Acts xxi. 20-26) But he baptized “families” as well as individuals, when the head of the family had believed.

3, Christianity the Completion of Judaism

“It was, 'in the fullness of time' that Christ came. Things were ripe for the transition from the old to the new. Both dispensations were arranged by the same Mind; and the one was meant to prepare for the other, so that there should be no rude jar or shock when the transition was made, but that as childhood passes into youth, and youth into manhood, by an easy and natural growth, so naturally and easily should the Jewish Church become the Church of Christ...This idea, that Christ came as the completion of Judaism, and that His reception had been prepared for by the history, the religion, and the ecclesiastical ideas and arrangements of Israel, is essential to the understanding of the work of the apostles.”(Prof. Marcus Dods, Presbyterianism Older than Christianity, p. 9)

Now, chief among “the ecclesiastical ideas and arrangements of Israel”, were those of which I have been speaking, as to the place and privileges in the Church of the infants of God's believing people. An understanding of these things came naturally, as it were, to all the first disciples. They had grown up from childhood in the midst of them. They needed no explanations such as I have been giving now. But for us there is need of some little pains and study of the subject, if we are to put ourselves at their standpoint. Yet that we should do so is essential, as Dr. Dods says truly, if we are to understand the work of the apostles, and the ordinances of worship and government of the Apostolic Church.

This is where our 'Baptist brethren so seriously fail.

Their argument is plausible enough, if the Bible had begun with the last verses of Matthew or Mark, and if Christianity had not been divinely prepared for through some two thousand years by the Providential training, the religious history, and the ecclesiastical principles and ordinances of Israel., Let a man once intelligently realize the historical situation in which our Lord's Baptismal Commission was given; and the whole Baptist argument falls to the ground.

4. Consider our Lord's words and actions when babes were brought to Him for blessing Luke xviii. 15—”And they brought unto Him also their babes that He should touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them (the babes (Our Lord's call here was to “the babes”, not the parents merely In the original this is unmistakable from the gender of the them)), unto Him, saying: “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God.” “And He took them in His arms,” Mark adds (x. 16), with the minuteness of one who had his account from an eyewitness; “and blessed them, laying His hands upon them.”

Here, and in other like passages, we find Christ recognizing and acting upon that same principle of representation, or covenant headship, which was so familiar to the Jewish mind from the days of Abraham. The father, or the mother, was the head of the family, Our Lord counted it a “call” to the babes, although it reached them only in and through their parents. He counted it as their “coming”, in some real sense “unto Him”, when they were brought in their mothers' arms; and He gave them, as thus brought, a visible sign of His special love and blessing, which was never, so far as we know, given to any disciple of riper years.

Is it not clear how all this applies to what is done when a believing father and mother now

bring their little ones to the Lord for His blessing in the ordinance of Baptism?

“Of such is the Kingdom of God.” If the Lord owns such babes as belonging to His Church and Kingdom, why should we refuse them the sign of connection with its fellowship on earth? “Whoso shall receive one such little child in My name receiveth Me.” (Matt. xviii. 5.) Infant Baptism is just the Church doing in Christ's name what our Lord Himself did when on earth, and bids us do after His example, namely, “receive a little child in His name”, as in a special sense dear to Him, and to be recognized as such in His Church on earth, especially when it “comes to Him”, even in the arms of a believing father or mother. “If the sheep are in the fold,” as an American writer puts it, “why should not the lambs be also,” with such special tokens of welcome from the good Shepherd? Is it not a serious responsibility to seem to take the position of the disciples, who rebuked those who brought their babes to the Lord for His blessing, and for an outward sign of it?

5. Children of Believing Parents called “Holy”

1 Cor. vii. 14—“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.”

The Church at Corinth had risen, like almost all the Pauline Churches, out of the local synagogue, with its circle of proselytes or God-fearing Gentiles. Several of the leading men of the Church, such as Crispus, had been Jewish office-bearers. No one familiar, as they were, with the Old Testament and with Jewish synagogue usages, could have any difficulty in understanding the Apostle's argument in the text, or the terms he uses., “Holy” and “unclean”, have their ordinary Old Testament sense. They mean “consecrated”, “set apart for God”, “within the fellowship of His covenant people”, or the reverse. All Christian parents at Corinth knew from the teaching of the Apostle, and from the practice of the Church under his guidance as to “family” Baptism, as in the case of Stephanas, (1 Cor. i. 16.) that their children, even where only one of the parents was a believer, were counted holy in that sense of the word. They were “set apart for God”, entitled to a place and name within the covenant fellowship of His people on earth, and treated as such. In other words, the Church membership of the infants of believers was an admitted and a familiar truth in the Church at Corinth, as in all the other Apostolic Churches, just as it had been in the Old Testament Churches, and, as it was at that time, in every synagogue congregation, whether in the Holy Land or in the Dispersion.

The Apostle takes all this for granted in the text, and argues from it. “If your children, who from their age are not yet able to 'believe', are yet — as you know — not 'unclean', but 'sanctified' or 'consecrated' in -God's sight, in virtue of their union with you, their believing parent, why should you not also be assured of this, and take the comfort of it, that your husband or wife, who does not yet believe, is likewise, not common or unclean, but, in a sense, 'set apart for God', in virtue of his or her relation of union with you, in which they desire to remain. They and you are right in counting that union a sacred thing. They are brought, so far, near to God thereby. 'The unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife in the husband.' Cherish the link, and use the opportunities it gives you as a means by God's grace to a deeper and closer union 'in the Lord', that thou mayest save thy husband . . . , mayest save thy wife.' “

Prof. Godet of Neuchatel, one of the very ablest interpreters of the New Testament, says on this verse: “For my part I cannot regard the expressions used by Paul

in this passage as intelligible except upon the supposition of the existence of the custom of Infant Baptism.”(Godet, *Premiere Epitre aux Corinthians*, Paris, 1886, i. 312-317. See his excellent exposition of the whole passage, in which he shows, with his usual lucidity and force, how incompatible the Apostle's statements and reasonings are with the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration.)

6. Practical illustration of how Infant Baptism speaks for itself in the Mission field

Reference might have been made to other passages in the New Testament similar to those now considered, such as that in which Paul speaks of Baptism as “the circumcision of Christ”, and that in which he explains the spiritual meaning of circumcision; or the “family” Baptisms at Philippi and Corinth, might now have been taken up more in detail than was done above.(Part II., chap, i., pp. 52-57.) But our space is limited; and I close this chapter with a practical instance of the way in which Infant Baptism speaks for itself to earnest and thoughtful Christians, when brought fairly into contact with the practical working of our system in this matter in the field of Missions, whether at home or abroad.

When I was in my first charge in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, I came to know a very intelligent Christian man, who at that time was a strong Baptist of the good old school of the Haldanes, as his father, I think, had been before him. He was a man of decided ability and of good education, and held a position of trust in connection with large mining works in our district., He was led by degrees to change his views about Baptism, both by an independent study of Scripture, and by observing the practical working of the Presbyterian system as to family Baptisms., We had a time of great spiritual blessing in our Mission Church among the miners close to the place where he lived. There were many conversions of careless and unbaptized parents; and there were often very touching scenes in connection with the Baptisms, both of adults and children, in the presence of the congregation, or in little household gatherings. This good man had thrown himself heartily into the work, and was much impressed by this feature of it. Presently he came to me, of his own accord, to speak about the question of Baptism.

I remember well that he told me, with tears in his eyes, how on those evenings he seemed to see the scenes in the Apostolic Churches at Philippi and Corinth actually before him. Here was “Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken”. When she was “judged faithful to the Lord”, “she was baptized, and her family”; and her house became a centre of Christian life and influence, and a place for little meetings of “the brethren”. Here was a rough man, like the jailor at Philippi, a terror sometimes to his family and neighbours, but now shaken by the power of God in his own conscience, asking: “What must I do to be saved?” The Gospel was spoken to him, as bringing salvation for him and for his family. Others in his household did not believe at the time; but he did. There were little children in the house; and, after suitable probation and instruction, “he was baptized, he and all his family, straightway”., “And there was great joy in his house,”—even the little ones feeling the difference,—“he having believed in God.”

“It was all so real and living, like a bit out of the book of the Acts; it spoke for itself to me,” I remember my friend said. His doubts and scruples about Infant Baptism all disappeared. He became one of our best and most trusted helpers in the work, and was one of the first Elders chosen and ordained in the Mission congregation., All his own children, then grown up, became decided Christians., I had the privilege of baptizing

them, on their own profession of faith, and some years afterwards of baptizing also more than one of their little ones, before their father passed away in a ripe age, leaving an honoured name as an inheritance to his children and his children's children.

CHAPTER III

OUTLINE OF EVIDENCE REGARDING INFANT BAPTISM FROM CHURCH HISTORY AFTER APOSTOLIC AGE

So long as the early Church was essentially a missionary one, making its way in the face of heathen persecution, we find, as was to be expected, that adult Baptisms were both more numerous and much more conspicuous than infant ones. Precisely the same thing holds in the Foreign Mission field to-day., It is by Adult Baptisms that definite progress is marked. They fill the foreground in all our missionary reports.

But as soon as we get any information on the subject, we find Infant Baptism proceeding as a matter of course, in the second and third centuries, alongside of that of adult converts. It is referred to in that way by Irenaeus, (Irenaeus, *Adv. Hour.*, ii. 22, 4; *Comp.* iii. 17, 1.) born early in the second century. He was a personal disciple of the martyr Polycarp, who was a disciple and friend of the Apostle John.

Justin Martyr, another contemporary of Polycarp and born in the Holy Land, speaks to the same effect. "With us," he says, "are many, both men and women, who were discipled to Christ in their childhood, and at the age of sixty or seventy years do continue un-corrupted, and I could produce such from every race of men." The reference is obviously to the words of the great commission, "Disciple all the nations, baptizing them." Justin wrote about the year A.D. 148. These contemporaries of his, now sixty or seventy years old, must have been "discipled to Christ" as children before the death of the Apostle John. With Justin, as with the early Christian writers generally, Baptism is treated as having taken the place of circumcision, "We have received not carnal but spiritual circumcision, and we have received it through Baptism." (Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, i. 13; *Dial. cum Tryph.*, iv. 3.)

The evidence of Origen on this point has been quoted already, (See above, p. 52.) He was born about A.D. 185, and speaks as an eminently competent and reliable witness both to the practice of Infant Baptism by the Church of the second century and to their belief that in baptizing the infants of believers they were following the precepts and example of the apostles. It may be added that Origen expressly guards himself against being supposed to teach Baptismal regeneration., "Not all who are bathed in water," he says, "are forthwith bathed in the Holy Spirit." (Origen, *Horn. in Num.*, iii. 1.) Tertullian, the first of the Latin fathers, born before A.D. 160, speaks in the clearest terms of Infant Baptism as the practice of the Church in his time, and does not give the slightest hint that in his view it was either an innovation or unscriptural. But, with characteristic boldness, he argued against it on the ground of expediency. In the case of infants, "it would be more useful to delay". And why? Because, in his opinion,— and it was a growing one in the Church from that date onwards,— Baptism in every case washed away all previous sins, "We enter the font once; once are sins washed away. . . . Why then should that innocent age hasten to the remission of sins?" etc., etc. It was on that ground only that he opposed Baptism both in the case of infants and of all persons exposed to special temptations, such as the unmarried and widows. (Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, xv. 18.) And on such grounds delay of Baptism became common at that time

and later, as in the well-known case of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, who was not baptized till almost on his deathbed.

It is well worth noting that Tertullian is the first opponent of Infant Baptism on record, and that he opposed it simply from the standpoint of his theory of Baptismal regeneration. But "his protest", as Dr. Schaff says, "fell without an echo". We hear no more of opposition to Infant Baptism until the Anabaptists arose in the sixteenth century.

Our Baptist brethren in this country are, as a rule, strongly opposed to Sacramentarianism in every form; and they often represent it as one great advantage of their view of Baptism that it secures them against the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration and all errors and evils connected therewith. No one will be inclined to accept that representation as correct who remembers that the first man to oppose Infant Baptism was one who did so expressly in the interests of Baptismal regeneration; and, further, that probably the strongest upholders of Baptismal regeneration in the world are a sect of Baptists known as the "Campbellites", or — as they prefer to call themselves — "Disciples of Christ". President Rooke, sometime head of Rawdon Baptist College, Leeds, in his book on Baptism, gives an account of this body., They are very strong in the United States. "The" Campbellite Baptists," says President Rooke, "hold the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration very much as we can imagine the Christian fathers of the third and fourth centuries held it...They not only insist upon, but put into special prominence, this utterly unscriptural notion of Baptismal regeneration." (Rooke, *Doctrine and History of Christian Baptism*. London, 1894, p. 53.)

According to the Campbellite Baptists, no one was ever regenerated unless he was immersed as an adult in Baptist fashion; and everyone who has been thus immersed has been regenerated. And their method of proving this is exactly the Baptist method of interpreting Scripture. They quote three or four isolated texts, which, taken alone, and out of their connection, certainly seem to teach Baptismal regeneration, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit" (water first, they bid you observe, and then the Spirit), "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." "He saved us through the laver of regeneration." These texts, or fragments of texts, certainly seem to teach Baptismal regeneration quite as clearly as the other three or four isolated texts, or parts of texts, which our Baptist brethren — the Campbellites included — quote in support of their view, teach that adult believers are the only persons whom it is lawful to baptize., But the method is equally unsound in both cases, and the conclusions arrived at are equally unreliable.

CHAPTER IV OBJECTIONS TO INFANT BAPTISM ANSWERED

THE objections usually urged against Infant Baptism have, in substance, been dealt with already; but a few words may be added before closing. The objections reduce themselves practically to two: First, There is no express warrant for Infant Baptism in Scripture — "Who hath required this at your hands?" And, Secondly, According to New Testament precept and example, belief should always go before Baptism. What is the use or the sense of baptizing unconscious babes?

I.—"Give a text enjoining Infant Baptism," our Baptist friends say, "and we will obey it at once. But until you can produce an express Scripture warrant for the practice, we will never adopt it."

Two things may be said in reply:

1. This is an altogether wrong attitude for us to take towards God. He is not bound to one way only of making known His will to His people. We have no right to say we refuse obedience unless God speaks to us in express precepts like the Ten Commandments. That particular way is characteristic rather of the earlier dispensations than of the manhood of the Church under the Gospel. If God's mind and will are made plain to us in any way, or by many ways combined,— by good and necessary inference from Bible statements, by right application of Scripture principles and examples, by the silence of Scripture, — there is the same obligation resting on us to obey, as if He had laid command upon us in so many words.

You remember how our Lord blamed the Sadducees for ignorance of the Scriptures because they had not learned the doctrine of the Resurrection from the words spoken to Moses at the bush. “Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God....As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” The truth concerning the resurrection was certainly not taught in that passage in so many words, but it was there. The mind of God was “spoken unto them” by good and necessary inference from the words; and the Sadducees are blamed for not having drawn the inference, as they might and should have done.

Our Baptist brethren act on this sound principle in other instances. They keep the Christian Sabbath, and believe in its Divine obligation; yet they could not give a single text in the New Testament enjoining them to observe the Lord's Day instead of the old Seventh Day Sabbath, which is enjoined in Scripture. (One body of Baptists, with praiseworthy consistency in the application of Baptist methods of exegesis, have adopted a separate position on this point too. They hold that all Christians should keep the Seventh-Day Sabbath, because it is enjoined in express words, and not the Lord's Day, because its observance rests on no definite text of Scripture. “The Bible, logic, and consistency,” says an able representative of this denomination, “compel me to be a Seventh Day — i.e., a Sabbath-keeping Baptist...there is no middle ground at this point. I must be a Roman Catholic, or remain a Seventh-Day Baptist.” (Rev. Dr. Lewis in *Why I Am what I Am*). New York, 1891, pp. 142, 144.) All Baptists welcome women to the Lord's Table. Yet there was no woman among the disciples in the upper room when the Lord said, “This do in remembrance of Me”; and there is no text in the New Testament authorizing women to eat of the Lord's Supper. But in both cases, as regards both the Lord's Day and the Lord's Table, the duty and the privilege can be established by good and necessary inference from what God's Word says and from what it does not say, and by the right application of general Scripture principles and statements. And in precisely the same way can it be fully established that it is the duty and privilege of believing parents to present their little ones to the Lord in Christian Baptism.

As has been shown above, (See above, p. 62. 2-Mark xvi. 16) the burden of proof in this matter lies unquestionably with our Baptist brethren. The children of believers were in the Church in our Lord's time, as they had been confessedly since the days of Abraham., They received the Sacrament of admission, the sign and seal of the covenant, on the ground of their parents' faith. It would have needed an express command, or its equivalent in an authoritative instance of prohibition, to put them out. Where is such a

command to be found in all the New Testament? Where is there a single instance of an apostle delaying to baptize any of the “family” of a believer, on the ground that they were too young, and baptizing them years afterwards when they were grown up? When our Baptist brethren maintain that the command to “disciple all the nations, baptizing them” is narrower in its scope than a command to “disciple all the nations, circumcising them” would have been, the burden of proof certainly lies with them, because the presumption to the contrary is of the very strongest kind. And no proof is forthcoming, in either of the two forms in which alone it could be received, a prohibition or an instance.

II.— It is objected. “Belief should always go before Baptism, Does not the Evangelist Mark say: “He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.?”

Infants cannot believe; therefore they ought not to be baptized.

Well, that half text, so often quoted, really proves nothing whatever against Infant Baptism. Take the text as it stands — only take the whole of it, and take the context with it; and the meaning is perfectly plain. It refers to the Gospel being preached “in all the world”, the great heathen world beyond the bounds of Israel., It is to be preached and heard under solemn sanctions. It carries with it “a savour of life and of death”.

Everywhere it calls for faith, and confession of faith before men. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.”

The promise and the warning apply only to the case under consideration. You can no more rightly infer from these words — it is purely a matter of inference at the most — that the infants of believers should not be baptized, than that they cannot be saved, because they cannot believe. Yet “He that believeth not shall be condemned.” You might just as well argue from the Apostle's rule: “He that will not work neither let him eat”, that because infants do not work they should get nothing to eat., In both cases, the words apply to those only in reference to whom they are spoken. And the historical situation makes it perfectly clear how the first disciples would understand Christ's command about “discipling the nations”.

If we are asked: “Why baptize unconscious babes?” our answer is: Because it is in accordance with Scripture principle, and Scripture precedent in the Church of God from the days of Abraham to the days of Christ. If unconscious babes were circumcised, as we know, according to the will of God, on the ground of their parents' faith, why should they not be baptized on the ground of their parents' faith?

“If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” “For to you is the promise,” Peter said, speaking to devout Jews and Gentile proselytes, “and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him.”(Gal. iii. 29; Acts ii. 39.)The Saviour “called the babes unto Him, and took them up in His arms and blessed them”, when brought to Him in the arms of believing mothers. “He was much displeased” with the disciples, who, with the best intentions, would have forbidden them to be brought for the blessing, because they were but unconscious babes, who could neither understand nor believe. Is there no danger of a like mistake being made in our time by those who, with the best of motives, would act in a similar way?

Conclusion

“Baptism,” as has been well said by R. W. Dale of Birmingham, “is a glorious

Gospel in an impressive rite.” In this little hand-book I have sought chiefly to meet difficulties which young men and women may not unnaturally feel about this ordinance, and to show on what broad and strong foundations the common view and practice of Reformed Christendom really rest, as regards both the mode and the subjects of Baptism. It is not possible within the limits assigned me to speak, as I would like to do, of the positive message of this Sacrament to us all; nor, in particular, of the special message of Infant Baptism to parents and children, and to the whole congregation in whose presence it is administered.

A few words only I may say, in closing, as to the message of your Baptism to you, young men and women, who have been baptized in infancy, brought by believing fathers and mothers for the sign of God's covenant. Remember, Christ called you then as certainly as “He called the babes unto Him” when the mothers brought them to Him in faith for His blessing. Have you answered to the call? It has been often repeated — “He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.” Your name was given in to God then as of one brought by loving hands into the school of Christ, “discipled” unto Him. Is it known now as the name of a true disciple of the Lord Jesus, who has gladly taken his place in the ranks of His people, confessing Him at His Table and following Him in daily life?

You were “baptized into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost”. That great inheritance — that -God should be your God, as He was your father's and your mother's God, through Jesus Christ and by the Spirit — was brought near to you then. Your baptism in God's house, and in the midst of His people, was a public testimony from God that He was willing that this should be your inheritance. Earnest prayer was offered then that it should be yours. Have you claimed it and made it your own by personal faith, by “receiving and resting upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation as He is offered to us in the Gospel”, offered from the first both by word and sign?

“The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered”; but “by the right use (and improvement) of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such, whether of age or infants, as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's will in His appointed time.”(*Westminster Conf. of Faith*, xxviii. 6.)

Our Baptism in infancy is thus a “visible word” to us from God at the very beginning of our life, repeated every time we see a little child baptized, telling us that the Lord has been beforehand with us from the first, calling us to Himself by word and sign from our earliest days that He may lay His hands upon us and bless us. It brings us under a special “obligation to be the Lord's”. It involves a special sin if, when we come to years of understanding, we deliberately put away from us the Lord's offer, and His promise of all needful grace and blessing, which were presented and sealed to us in our Baptism.