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CHURCH LIFE
AMONG
THE BAPTISTS.

BY
REV. GEORGE DUNCAN,
(Pastor of Oakes Baptist Church, near Huddersfield,)
Author of "Baptism and the Baptists," &c.

London:
BAPTIST TRACT AND BOOK SOCIETY,
CASTLE STREET, HOLBORN.

1883.

TO THE

Oaks Baptist Church and Congregation,

THIS VOLUME

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH THE LOVE, GRATITUDE AND PRAYERS OF

THEIR FRIEND AND PASTOR,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THIS volume, like my former one,* consists of "Notes" of Lectures which were all delivered without notes. I had no thought of publication when I prepared my manuscripts, but indulgent friends insisted on their being printed; and the success of the volume already issued, which was sold out in about six months, makes me not unwilling to go to press once more.

It was, however, with some hesitation and misgivings that I have inserted the Lectures entitled "Christian Baptism,"—"The Study of Baptism?"—"What doth hinder you from being baptised?"—"Wavering or witnessing?"—"Why not join the church?"—But friends, whose judgment I do not like to resist, argue that though these are but the merest notes, and are largely of a hortatory character, yet they exhibit a method of handling the subject of baptism which has proved very acceptable. I hope they may prove helpful to some inquirers.

Lectures II., III., IV. are reprinted from "The Northern Pioneer," a Huddersfield paper of spirit and enterprise. Lecture V. is reprinted from the "Sword & Trowel." Lecture VIII. was originally prepared and used as a speech in a discussion which I held with a ritualistic clergyman on "confirmation."

The lectures given on the Wednesday evenings were presided over by leading men in my own and neighbouring churches. I have found this a good way of extending a knowledge of and interest in our principles and history. I wish I could persuade my brethren in the ministry to turn their week-evening service to more account denominationally. It affords a good opportunity of expounding our principles, tracing our history, and telling the story of our worthies. I feel sure that the adoption of this course would be refreshing at once to themselves and to their people.

I have in the press, a third volume, consisting of Lectures on "Baptism among the Pædobaptists," and sketches of the history of the Baptists in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. This third volume, which will be out in a few weeks, will probably be my last contribution to our denominational literature. My Lectures on "Baptist Worthies" I will not publish until there is a very strong desire that I should do so.

If the demand for Vol. I. continues, probably a second edition of it will be issued at an early date.

Once more do I feel tempted to urge pastors and teachers to adopt one or other of these works as a handbook for their Bible classes.

I conclude with expressions of sincere thanks to the many friends who have not only kindly spoken of the efforts of my pen, but have done their best to circulate my works.

GEORGE DUNCAN.

23, West Hill, Huddersfield,
January, 1883.

* "Baptism and the Baptists."—London: Baptist Tract Society.

a thousand more chapels than churches, because where we are weak we group the churches—one church having several places of worship, under the superintendence of the same pastor.

We provide sittings for 952,279 persons; a small number certainly, but not small when we consider that for many years we could possess no chapel property at all, and were forbidden to meet in our own houses for religious purposes if there were five visitors present. We have 281,061 members; but this represents but a small percentage of the Baptists—for one-fourth only of our congregations are members of our churches, and many in the congregations and churches of other bodies are Baptists, though they are not numbered among us. We may well claim them as adhering to our principles, though they find no place in our statistics.

We have 1,902 settled pastors, and 3,039 evangelists; 44,120 Sunday-school teachers, and 430,608 Sunday-school scholars.

Here we have a powerful witness for primitive Christianity in our own land; and if we were inspired with a greater zeal for the cause of God and truth, God would work mighty things for us and by us. Throughout the world we have 28,505 churches, 17,683 pastors and missionaries, and 2,473,088 church members. These represent the converted among us who have joined our churches. Those who are identified with us in principle and attend our meetings amount to over *eight millions*. Let me try to give you some idea of this great number. It is one-tenth of the whole English speaking communities throughout the world. *Every tenth person that speaks English is a Baptist.*

As a denomination, we are as large as all the Congregationalists and Unitarians put together. What are we to think, then, of the boastings of the latter, and the overtures of the former for us to join them. It would be much more reasonable for them to speak of joining us.

We hear a great deal about the hundreds of sects of dissent. What are we to think of this cry, when we remember that the Baptists are just about six times larger than all these lesser sects put together. We hear much also concerning the multiplied forms of infidelity; and yet all these put together, combined with those who decline to call themselves by any religious name, are numerically less than the Baptists by half a million. If we compare ourselves with the larger bodies, we find that

we are only two millions less than all the Presbyterians—English, Scotch, Free Church, and United Presbyterian Church put together, wherever the English language is spoken. Whitaker's Almanack gives us these interesting particulars.

We have no desire to boast of our strength numerically, but it is as well for our friends to know that we are not the least of the many thousands of Israel.

2. *We are strong in Institutions.*—In America, for instance, we have 31 colleges and universities, and nearly 5,000 students in them; besides 10 theological institutions, with 454 students preparing for our ministry. In Great Britain we have 10 theological colleges, supported for the most part by the voluntary contributions of our churches. We have few day-schools, for the most of us loyally accept the Board School system. Education has all along been prized by the Baptists. We have almshouses; societies for aiding poor ministers and poor churches, an Irish mission, &c., and Home and Foreign missions. Our Missionary Society spends £50,000 a-year on foreign missionary labour, and the Baptists everywhere spend £130,000 a-year on this good work. We have excellent institutions well supported for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, though it is well to add that all our institutions ought to be better patronised by our people, and no doubt they will be, as they are better known.

3. *We are strong in organisation.*—Most of the counties have their "County Association of Baptist Churches," and these associations do a great and increasing home mission work. Each is divided into districts, with its own president, secretaries and committee, who meet quarterly for the transaction of business, and to hold public meetings for the exposition of our principles. The secretaries see that all the village stations are supplied by the local preachers, who kindly place their services at their disposal. All these associations unite in one great union, "The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland." Twice a year this Union meets, when all the churches send up delegates and pastors. This Union has no legislative power over our churches, nor over our ministers. The Union is purely voluntary in its principle, and any church or pastor can withdraw when they please. But we all find it beneficial, helpful, and refreshing to be members of the Union, and to attend its spring and autumnal meetings, and hence the Union is well supported.

The Baptists, as a denomination, are thus well-organised, and if we were a little more tenacious of our principles, and more resolved to enforce them on the people, a greater harvest would be ours. We are strong, and we ought to be stronger still, and no doubt will be, as our people increasingly see the importance of our main contention.

II.—THE DIVISIONS OF OUR DENOMINATION.

1. *We are told that we are so many contending sects. The Registrar-General practically says so.* If we are to believe his report, there are no fewer than fifteen Baptist sects—that is fifteen denominations call themselves by our name, not to speak of others who agree with us in our two main contentions, but who yet do not call themselves Baptists.

Here is a national, authoritative document representing us as hopelessly sub-divided, and unless we are at pains to explain this matter, outsiders must get a false impression, when they read of “Baptists,” “Baptised Believers,” “Old Baptists,” “Strict Baptists,” “General Baptists,” “Calvinistic Baptists,” “Open Baptists,” “Scotch Baptists,” “Particular Baptists,” “Union Baptists,” “Unitarian Baptists,” “Presbyterian Baptists,” “Seventh Day Baptists,” “New Connection General Baptists,” and “General Baptists New Connection.” Besides these, we have the several sects, or segments, or fractions, or factions of the Plymouth Brethren, the Christadelphians, and the Mormons—for these all hold practically to our two main contentions, though they have wandered so far from us and the Book of God on other points. We must remove this blot. We must not allow the enemy to describe us as fifteen sects. We ought to have our own places of worship registered as simply “Baptist” chapels, and then we can specify what distinctions we think proper in the schedule of doctrines appended to our trust deeds and in our Baptist handbook. We, as a denomination, notwithstanding these fifteen names given us, are substantially one in every sense; no religious body can be more united than we are, and yet we have permitted ourselves to misrepresent ourselves and to be misrepresented to others to our own hurt. Cannot the secretary of the Baptist Union set this matter right? I hope he will be induced to try.

Eminent church historians represent us as actually divided into contending sects. John Henry Blunt is an arch-offender in this respect. He hates dissent bitterly, but

he hates the Baptists most of all; and in at least one of his "Church History Manuals," he misrepresents us as antagonistically divided among ourselves, "contending sects," as he calls us, and this manual is used by thousands of church people. Mr. Blunt is an able man, and his works are deservedly popular among Episcopalians, and hence, the greatness of the injury done us by his writings. Dean Stanley, who powerfully argues that our contention is right, yet speaks of us as the narrowest sect of Christendom; and Baptists so often allow these statements to pass unchallenged, that many, both Baptists and others, think that we are narrow, bigoted, and sectarian. We are to blame for this, for no such statement ought to pass uncontradicted and emphatically repudiated. Even the Rev. R. H. Haddon in "Church and Chapel" represents us as the most divided of all the sects. He then specified fourteen names by which we are known. This work finds its way into cultured episcopal homes, and our church friends who know no better really think that we are divided into fourteen different religious sects. If they tried to ascertain who were the fourteen presidents, secretaries, and treasurers of these sects, they would surely have their eyes opened. I do not blame church people for not knowing our denomination better, but I do blame the Baptists for their own carelessness in the matter. The fourteen names forthwith ought to give place to two, "The Particular Baptist," and "The General Baptist," and even these two may well unite and become one "body."

The Rev. John Henry Blunt and others contend that we have no right to the name "Baptist." Now, we will not quarrel about a name, for during the past eighteen centuries we have called ourselves, and have been called by others, many names. The name to us is a matter of very little consequence, for we have covered all the names by which we have been known in history with glory; and as the rose by any other name would smell as sweet, so we by any other name would still be the church of the New Testament. We do object, however, to be called "Anti-Pædobaptists," as some still persist in calling us. The Pædobaptists are anti-Baptists, for we existed before the oldest of them were known. We existed in the person of the Lord Jesus, who was a Baptist. We existed in the apostolate, for all the apostles were Baptists. We existed for the first few centuries with few rivals, for the early church was a Baptist church. All the sects of

Popery—the Eastern Church, the Anglican Church, and all the Protestant bodies are simply anti-Baptists—bodies, that is, that appeared and opposed us, for we did not appear in the course of the ages to oppose them. We were founded by the Lord Jesus, and the Pædobaptists appeared during the course of subsequent ages.

The church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ was a Baptist church, and, therefore, however appropriate the term “anti” may be to others, it is altogether inaccurate when applied to us. If we draw our information from the Registrar-General and our ecclesiastical opponents, we appear self-ruinously divided; but we who know ourselves best, know that we are all substantially one, and live and move and have our being as one.

2. *We are said to differ seriously in points of doctrine.* The names which appear in the Registrar’s return are supposed to show the extent of our differences, and these suggest that—

(1). *We have General versus Particular Baptists.* The former believe that the atonement of Christ had a general reference to all men, and a particular reference to none; that, in fact, he died equally, and in the same sense for all men. The latter believe that the Lord Jesus died in a general way for all men, but more particularly did he die for His own people. He laid His “life down for His sheep;” “He loved the Church and gave Himself for her,” and secured the certain salvation of a numberless number. The General Baptists have a denomination, a college, and a home and foreign mission of their own. They are, roughly speaking, about *one-tenth* the strength of the Particular Baptists, and it is greatly to their credit that they spend £10,000 a-year on foreign missions. These two bodies are on the most amicable terms. General Baptist churches accept Particular Baptist pastors, and *vice versa*. We receive each other into our several county associations and into our Baptist “unions.” We are one substantially, and ought not to subsist as two denominations, which we do more technically than truly. We may and we ought to unite formally, and probably will do so at no distant date.

(2). *We have Trinitarian versus Unitarian Baptists.* This difference sounds serious at first, and if it represented a reality, it would be mournful in the extreme. The fact is, a number of General Baptist chapels and endowments fell into the hands of the Unitarians, or else the people themselves became Unitarian, and stuck to

the property, and we had an Act of Parliament passed which enabled us to reclaim some of the property—the rest of it remained with the Unitarians, where it is to this very day. These Unitarians call themselves “General Baptists,” but they are Unitarians, and not Baptists. They are not recognised by us, nor are they members of any of our associations or unions, nor do they subscribe to our institutions. They are identified with and by the Unitarians. The only point wherein they agree with us is the immersion of believers. In all other points they are as the poles asunder from us. We recognise all whose names appear in our hand-book, and that document reveals no serious doctrinal divisions among us. We are most united doctrinally.

3. *We are represented as being divided on most important points of church discipline. What are they?*

(1). *We have Presbyterian versus Congregational Baptists.* There is nothing very serious in this fact. Both these systems of church government have their strong and their weak points; each is endeavouring to secure the strong features of the other, and thus they are drawing nearer and nearer to one another, and the end may be a mode of government which will combine what is best and strongest in both systems. The Book gives us no hard and fast rule on this subject, but it does insist on Congregationalism as being at least the basis of all church discipline, and we as a body strictly adhere to this, and will adhere to it to the end.

(2). *We have open versus strict communion.* This difference does not constitute us two denominations. In all our churches we have members who are strict communionists, and members who are open communionists; and, though the controversy is keenly conducted by many, yet we all sit down at the same table. Both sides can quote powerful names and urge strong reasons for their respective positions, yet we are one, and belong to the same churches, associations, and union, and all our colleges, with one exception, take in students of either way of thinking.

(3). *We have “Baptist” versus “Union Churches.”*—That is, we have churches consisting solely of immersed disciples, and churches where some of the members have been immersed, the others having been sprinkled by some Pædobaptist. The pastor in every case is a Baptist, and when he baptizes he immerses, but the church will receive Pædobaptists into its membership. We have not

two sects here, but one church. While some conscientiously approve of this discipline, others as conscientiously disapprove of it, but we have substantially the one aim in view. The Union churches are increasing in number, but they are all *our* churches, and are numbered among us.

(4.) *We have "Scotch" versus "English" Baptists.*—The former allow the church to edify herself by the members who have the gift of utterance, and the pastor is more the evangelist of the church than anything else; but the Scotch Baptists can, if they so please, allow the minister alone to edify the church in public. The latter course is for the most part followed by the English Baptists—that is, by the Baptists of the "Baptist Union." But we can vary our service, and if we think proper, we can allow the church to edify herself. In fact, this is but a question of arrangement and convenience, and not one of principle, and it is simply outrageous to label the Scotch and the English Baptists as two sects, when they are thus essentially one.

(5.) *We have "Seventh-Day" versus "First-Day" Baptists.*—In this country we have a handful of Baptists who worship on Saturday, like the Jews, because they believe that the Sabbath of the Old Testament is still in force. In Rhode Island, and some other parts of America, the brethren are stronger than they are in England; still they are everywhere but few in number. All the other Baptists worship on the Lord's Day. We have no serious difference here. It is only a question of shall we rest on the seventh day of the week, or on the first? Surely, a difference of opinion on a matter of this kind—when we agree in all others—is not such as justifies any one in calling us two sects. Thus the whole fifteen sects mentioned by the Registrar-General are one, though nominally two, and for the most part are, or may be, members of the one Baptist Union, and they all extensively co-operate in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. The Baptists throughout the earth are substantially one, and are at least as united as any other denomination.

III.—THE UNITY OF OUR DENOMINATION.

There is no barrier to our being one as a denomination as well as one in name. We are one—parts of a whole, though we have a few free lances among us, and the surprise is, that where the church government is democratic, and the members are allowed such freedom of thought,

utterance, and operation, we have such unity of creed and conduct. We are all drawing nearer to each other. The hyper-Calvinist on the one hand, and the General Baptist on the other, with the Particular Baptist between. We have faith on the one hand, and hope on the other, with charity laying her hand upon both, and the other denominational variations group around this central figure—the Particular Baptist.

We agree in the great fundamentals of religious truth, and we agree in the great fundamentals of church government, order, discipline, and Christian life; and so we can and do co-operate—Open and Strict Communionist, General and Particular Baptist, Scotch and English, Baptist Church and Union Church all work together, shoulder to shoulder; and we have no desire to speak unkindly of our differences in comparatively lesser matters, because each difference has been conscientiously made by hyper-Calvinist, General Baptist, &c. Earnest men have thus laid emphasis on what they conceive to be important, and we respect each other on this very account. The very freedom we have enjoyed has kept us close together.

There are no fetters to bind us Baptists together as captives; no ice-bound principles of thought and action; no iron belt welded on to hinder the natural growth of this tree of life; no stagnation here; no graveyard uniformity. We are living, thinking, independent men; and as in nature we have variety of form, and of work, expressive of the one all-pervading life, so are all our little differences inspired by the one Christian life. If it were our desire to become one "Union," there is no insuperable barrier in the way; and if we prefer to remain as we are, let no one magnify our variations; for we are one—our unity is real, as our practical uniformity is evident. To all intents and purposes the Baptists everywhere are one.

IV.—THE WITNESS OF OUR DENOMINATION.

1. *We witness on behalf of the immersion of all believers.*
—It is sometimes said that we make too much of baptism; we make it everything, and seem to be Baptists first and Christians afterwards. But this is far from the truth; for we protest against the importance attached to baptism by all the great historical churches. The Church of Rome teaches that baptism saves the soul, and without it we can never enter into heaven. The Greek Church teaches the same awful dogma; and the Anglican Church teaches baptismal regeneration in her prayer-book and in her

catechism. These three churches form by far the greater number of the Pædobaptists, and see the importance which they attach to this rite! Now, we protest against this delusive and destructive dogma. The Protestant dissenting Pædobaptists make too much of the tradition which takes the place of baptism in their churches. They would baptise every infant; and mothers are generally very solicitous to have the child baptised at once when there is danger of death. Why is this? Do Pædobaptists not think that baptism does something for the child? If not, why do they baptise it? If yes, what good does it do the child? These two questions ought to be seriously considered by all Pædobaptists. We make the least of baptism of all religious bodies. We make so little of it that we baptise none but those who express a desire for it; and as for infants, we believe that the unsprinkled are as dear to God as any that are sprinkled. All the great religious bodies declare that we are right in our main contention; the church of Rome admits that scriptural baptism is immersion, and the Milan Cathedral knows no other baptism to-day. The Greek Church practises immersion, and calls the Papists "Sprinkled Christians," and declines to enter into negotiations for re-union, on the very ground that the Romish Church is not baptised. The Anglican Church teaches immersion, though for the most part it practises sprinkling.

John Wesley immersed candidates for baptism, not only before he went to Georgia, but during his stay there; and he allowed no one to partake of the communion who had not been previously immersed. Besides the great churches, such bodies as Plymouth Brethren, Christadelphians, and even Mormons immerse their candidates. They reject pædobaptism.

Scholars of all schools of thought agree that we are right, though they are unable to admit that themselves are wrong. We maintain that we have no right to alter an institution of our Lord, and in the case of baptism we have a gospel in symbols, a rite full of spiritual teaching; and it becomes us earnestly to contend for the immersion of the believer, which is his "burial with Christ in baptism," his publicly "putting on the Lord Jesus."

2. *We witness for a personal profession of religion.*—This is our main contention, our chief witness, and our most important testimony for Christ. The great religious bodies bear eloquent testimony to the truth of our witness by insisting on sponsors repenting, believing, renouncing,

and promising for the infant candidate. They thus admit that the candidate ought to repent and believe, and that these are necessary conditions of baptism. The episcopal Pædobaptists have no authority from God, nor from the infant to go through the service, but their doing so shows the truth of our contention, that faith must precede baptism. The other Pædobaptists have departed from this semblance of the truth, and therefore, they find it difficult to characterise their ceremony. They know not whether to call it baptism or dedication to God, and hence baptism is gradually dying out among them. They say that they will allow their families to make their own choice and confession when they have grown up and can understand what they are doing. This is a growing feeling among the Congregationalists. The neglect of the ordinance in the one case, and the vain ceremonies connected with it in the other, arise from a departure from the scriptural principle which we hold and teach, that religion is personal, conscious, voluntary. It is a soul embracing Christ as its Saviour and supreme good, and declaring the fact in His own appointed way.

3. *We witness for the freedom of all the branches of the Church of God.*—From the first we have rejected the principle of a State Church, and for many years we were alone in this contention. The other bodies have gradually grown up to this central principle. We began with it, and have been consistent with it, throughout our long career. We protest against State-made creeds; we protest against huge, ambitious, worldly hierarchies lording it over God's heritage. We protest against all State interferences in religious matters. The Church is a Divine institution, and is to be governed by the laws ordained by our King. The believers of the several districts form themselves into families or churches here and there for mutual edification and the conversion of the world. This is Christ's will concerning them. All sections of the Baptists witness on behalf of these important truths, and there is more need for our witness now than ever, hence the folly of all attempts to unite Baptists and Congregationalists, save on the condition of the latter becoming Baptists. With all our faults, and they are not few, we can look upon our present with complacency, and our future with hope; for, as Dr. Neander said, "there is a future for the Baptists," and we must struggle to make it even more bright than our past. We can do this, however, only by a strict adherence to principle.

LECTURE II.

Delivered Wednesday Evening, April 13, 1881, Mr. Enoch Taylor (of Milnsbridge) in the chair.

THE RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES OF THE BAPTISTS.

WHAT are the great principles for which we as a denomination contend? What is it that we ask mankind to believe? What is it that justifies our existence as a separate body of Christians? Each denomination ought to have some truth that is distinguishingly its own or else it ought to unite with the other body or bodies which teach that which it teaches. The Wesleyans, United Methodist Free Churches, the Methodist New Connection, the Moravians, the Bible Christians, and the Primitive Methodists ought to unite; and they incur, I think, no small responsibility in not doing so, for they hold substantially the same creed and adopt much the same church polity. The Free Church, the United Presbyterians, and the presently-to-be-disestablished State Church of Scotland can and probably will unite, and the Morisonians and the English United Presbyterians ought to unite with them, for these are to all intents and purposes one. The Baptists cannot unite with others, and for insuperable reasons. We contend that only immersion is baptism, and we can recognise no other ceremony as baptism, and we baptise none but those who make a credible confession of faith. The other denominations can consistently come over to us, but we cannot go over to them without ceasing to be Baptists. What are our fundamental, essential, and central principles?

I. WE ACCEPT THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

1. *We reject tradition as a binding authority in religious matters.* The Divine authority of the book is admitted by all evangelical Christians. God inspired this book. Holy men of old wrote it as they were breathed into by the Spirit of God; and so the book is final, perfect, authoritative in all that appertains to our religious interests. Nothing has equal authority with it, nor can any thing share its authority: all creeds must bow to this volume. They may be wrong; this must be right. We therefore ask concerning all ceremonies, "Is it in the book?" "Did the apostles teach it, authorise it,

or practise it?" It is not enough to show that it is a hoary custom, and that it belongs to the days of the apostles. We must show from this admittedly highest authority that God ordained it.

(1). *The traditions of the Christian Church have their proper function.* The traditions of each age show us how far these several ages have adhered to the revealed will of God. They show how, why, and when men have departed from the will and ways of God, and thus act as a beacon and a warning. They show us also noble instances of inflexible adherence to the truth, even at the sacrifice of all that the world holds dear, and are thus so far an incentive to us. We do not undervalue tradition; far from it. We study it and value it, but we must be careful not to overrate it.

(2). *The traditions of the Christian Church are often allowed to make void the command of God.* Pædobaptism is the lever of Rome; tradition is the fulcrum; and with this it seeks to overturn Protestantism. If you allow tradition in one case why not in all, argues Rome? If you base one of your sacraments on this foundation, why not other things as well? It is most difficult for the Pædobaptist to argue with Romanists, and it is as difficult for the Romanists to argue with the Baptists. The Rev. W. Ward was on his way to the North of England and met a French bishop, who, in the course of conversation, said, "Where do you get infant baptism but from tradition?" Mr. Ward, on his return home, weighed the matter over and at length became a Baptist, was baptised by Abraham Booth, and returned to the North—a Baptist minister. Mr. Denham, one of our Indian missionaries, met a Jesuit, who said, "How can I argue with you when you reject tradition?" Daniel French urged this very point in his debate with Dr. Cumming. We lay down our one creed, which is the Bible, and we say, prove your doctrines from this book, to which we believe tradition is at once subordinate and contradictory.

2. *We judge all doctrines and spirits by the book of God.* The Baptist's confessions of faith are thus tried. We have published several confessions of faith during the past 200 years, documents of which we may well be proud, and which ought to be read and studied by every Baptist. These, however, are not binding on us; they are not tests, but simply statements of what is generally held among us. We have been so misrepresented all along by our enemies, and often wilfully misrepresented,

that we have been compelled in self-defence to reiterate our common faith and our reasons for holding it. We have no authoritative creeds—no authoritative system of theology—no schedule of dogmas. These we regard not as authorities in themselves, but as helps towards our understanding *the* authority. Our body is sound, it is not rent and torn, as so many of the others are. As yet there has been a higher sense of honour among us, and when our ministers have ceased to think as we do, they honourably leave us.

(1.) *The Baptist pulpit is tried by this standard.* All prayers, addresses, sermons, lectures, books, are tried by the word of God. This is the touchstone—the moral *aqua fortis*—which tries all our religious currencies. Hence the Baptists have been great readers of the book. We read it, and need to read it more than others, for it is our only creed and binding religious symbol. We know it, and ought to know it. We are pre-eminently Bible Christians.

(2.) *The Baptist Church is tried by this standard.* All our rites and ceremonies, all our procedure, all our characters, must be tried by this. We claim and exercise the fullest right of private judgment. From the very first era of our history we have claimed this, and this has been what Rome was most determined to deny us. As no man can take my responsibility on the day of judgment, so I will allow no man to think for me just now. It is one of the most monstrous dogmas to deny any man the right of private judgment. The people have as much right to deny it to the priests as the priests have to deny it to the people.

3. *We demand to have the book in our native tongue, and we also claim the fullest liberty in interpreting it.* Hence the interest we have taken all along in Bible translation—hence our desire that all nations and peoples have the Bible in their mother tongue. Hence we always advocate liberty of conscience—we allow no man to forcibly control any other man's belief. Blind submission to mere human authority is the very essence of the church of Rome, and of all State Churches. The liberty we claim may be abused, and it has been abused, and Rome angrily points to all the sects, and says, "See the outcome of your principles." We reply (a) *Better far to have a number of sects which honestly and intelligently believe what they profess, than have one iron system which either destroys all liberty, or else makes men hypocrites and even infidels.* (b) *The sects are*

substantially one, and may and ought to unite. If the case were as bad as Rome represents, even then we must advocate the fullest liberty. We must do right, even if men will abuse their opportunity to the end of time. Men must be at liberty to adopt any creed they please—to decide for themselves what God says, and what may be logically inferred from His Word. Two cautions ought, however, to have great force with them, and these are, *first*—Be humble and teachable, and be not too ready to announce your crudities as the very word of God, and think everybody wrong who does not see with you in everything. *Secondly*—Beware of the dangerous dogma of “development, which has wrought such evil in Rome. The doctrine is not development, it is not the expansion of life, but only the accretions of age. Many have opened this evil door by a foolish spiritualising of God’s book. Draw as many spiritual lessons as you can from your text; but be careful how you spiritualise. We must always put two questions in regard to all dogmas and rites: “Are they in the book?” “Can they be deduced from the book?” And if they cannot abide these tests, we cast them to the moles and the bats.

II. WE ACCEPT THE SUPREME SOVEREIGNTY OF CHRIST.

1. *We allow no earthly sovereign to invade the crown rights of Jesus.* We allow the king no voice in the formation of our creed; we never ask his sanction for our religious rites; we do not allow him to appoint our ministers, nor say what their income shall be, nor where it is to come from. We repudiate his claim to say how God’s day is to be observed. What we deny the king, we deny emperors, presidents, chiefs. These governors may claim the rights which we cannot concede, but we will be law-abiding; we will not stir up rebellion, unless, indeed, the king himself became a rebel, and then we would not be slow to advocate his decapitation. We are willing to suffer for our loyalty to Jesus, and meanwhile we will seek by all constitutional means to alter the law that is wrong and oppressive. So with regard to Parliament. It had immense powers at one time; but it has surrendered one after another of them to the people; and we will go on educating, agitating, legislating, till we have rescued religion from the control of the State, while we seek at the same time to make the State truly religious.

2. *We allow no councils nor customs, however venerable,*

to deter us in our loyalty to Jesus. We read the story of these institutions—to us, however, they are but historical events. They have no binding authority over us. We see what certain men, good and bad, decided for themselves; and we read of others, who willingly or unwillingly submitted to them. Instead of allowing these councils to dictate to us, we try their dictation by the word of the book. So with the religious customs which have floated down the ages, we regard them with curiosity, interest, and often with respect; but these are not Christ, and are never to be co-ordinate with Christ, nor substitutes for Christ. We demand to know what he said. We do not allow these traditions to try us, but we try them by the words of the Lord Jesus. This is a most important position to assume. Our Pædobaptist friends by deeds support tradition; but they support it also in words by throwing doubts upon the plain, authoritative statements of the book, and even upon the custom of the Apostolic Church. Sir Isaac Newton, said that “the Baptists in no wise symbolized with Rome,” and he was right; for Rome “comes and finds nothing in us.”

3. *We allow no hierarchy to mar our loyalty to the Lord Jesus.* Christ is the only King in Zion, and not a mere man however exalted. We have no sovereign pontiff, no wearer of the tiara, none who assumes the triple crown. To us the Pope is but a vain foolish old man, the head of an evil and ambitious system. We have no prelates to interfere with our ministers—to shift them about at will, as in the Church of Rome—to suspend them, inhibit them withdraw their license from them, nor prosecute them in courts of law for doing what their consciences compel them to do, as in the state church. We have no priesthood which blesses us at birth, and puts us in its power till death, and even after death. Christ is our Prophet. We take our teaching from Him, and we try by His words all who teach in His name. Christ is our Priest, and we reject the claims of all others; to us they are not better than so many anti-christs. Christ is our King, and we owe Him loyalty of heart and life; and every man and every sytem which would in any way mar our loyalty to Him is His enemy and ours, and we must treat them as such. Christ is the only Head of the Baptist Church.

III.—WE ACCEPT WHAT ARE CALLED THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE.

1. *We have had some variations in our creeds during the past ages.* When we claim as Baptists, the Montanists,

Novatians, Donatists, Paulicians, Peterines, Waldenses, Albigenses, Petrobrussians, Henricians, Arnoldists, Lionists, Lollards, &c., we do not maintain that in all points these men held what we now hold, for they did not. The church of Rome, like all the other churches, has varied during every age; so have the Anglicans; and if the more modern churches have not changed, they have had many rents, splits, and offshoots. The churches of to-day have many schisms. What we do assert is, that these men, whose names have just been given, though they held much rejected by us, yet held our main contentions, (1) the authority of the Book, (2) the supremacy of Jesus, (3) the right of private judgment, (4) the purity of the Christian church, (5) the importance of a Scriptural discipline, (6) the immersion of believers only. These are the main essential points of our religious contention as Baptists; and the Christian era has never been without men who held them, and never without those who at once rejected and misrepresented them. We know that these ancient sects held these doctrines, but the fancies ascribed to a few of them by their bitter enemies, are statements which have to be received with extreme caution. We Baptists claim liberty in our methods of stating the doctrines held by us all along, and, of course, this gives rise to a variety of ways of putting things. We take the old truths, and we suffer no antagonism to them, and we put them in the dress—the phraseology of to-day—altering nothing but the way of putting things. There will be in the future no essential change in our faith, though doubtless we shall know more of God's great books of nature and revelation. The great Book will tell us much we have not yet seen in it or taken from it, but all will be in unison with what we already know, for truth is everywhere and evermore harmonious.

2. *We have usually been in opposition to prevailing theories, both political and religious.* The fond fancies of the prevailing State Church have usually occasioned many of the so-called heresies among our forefathers. Some of our friends were forced into speculations about our Lord's human nature which drove them into Arianism, which at one time was a prevalent error in the dominant church. So, also, some of our brethren denied the reality of our Lord's human nature. These somewhat rash speculators were, however, but few in number. Our forefathers were also severe, perhaps too severe, in their discipline, and this they were driven to, because of the growingly lax discipline of the dominant

church. Some were thus driven into the opposite extreme, but they always were on the side of pious freedom, holiness of life, and purity of church fellowship. This ideal of the church and of church life lost us the people, for they were not disposed to live such lives of holiness and self-sacrifice, and it brought on us the hatred and persecution of the prevailing church, which we have even to this day, because our ideal shamed and angered the worldly thing they called a church. Our ideal of the headship of Jesus brought on us the hatred of kings, nobles, parliament; for these could not endure the idea of a great power to which even they must submit. We were always hated, but never despised—always persecuted, but never favoured. It is ground of great thankfulness to God that neither Church nor State could crush the early Baptists nor bribe our ministers nor our members, and, to-day, we are as staunch as ever to the truth as it is in Jesus.

3. *We have accepted, generally, a correct, clear, crisp creed.* The General Baptists are weak, comparatively, and do not occupy the commanding position which they held at the time of the Reformation. Except on the points of believers' baptism and the congregational polity, their creed is the same as that of the Wesleyans. Nearly all dominant churches are Arminian; but at the Reformation all, or nearly all, the Reformers, here and elsewhere, were Calvinistic. The distinction now between the Particular and the General Baptists is so small that we interchange pulpits, pastorates and associations. The Calvinistic Baptists hold, generally, the existence of one supreme, holy, omnipotent God, who made the whole universe and all that is within it. This God subsists as Father, Son, and Spirit. He inspired the Holy Scriptures. They maintain the supreme deity and authority of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Personal and eternal election of men in Jesus, who became their Substitute and is now their King; justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ; the final perseverance of the saints; the duty of all to believe the gospel; the everlasting joy of the saved, and the everlasting misery of the lost.

IV.—WE ACCEPT THE DOGMA THAT ALL MEN OUGHT TO BELIEVE, BE BAPTISED, AND JOIN THE CHURCH.

1. *We demand of all a personal trust in the Saviour.* The apostles announced the glad tidings—men flocked to hear, were stricken in their hearts; they repented,

changed their mind, will, affection; they were immersed in the rushing torrent or stream, and as they emerged into the light of heaven no word seemed too strong, too commanding to express the change. It seemed like a new birth, like an illumination, an enlightenment of the mind, like a resurrection, and in after days they would so speak of it, though afterwards this language was so perverted and so abused that men thought and taught that baptism effected what it only symbolised. We accept no proxies in religious matters, for the law book accepts none; we accept no sureties, no godfathers, &c. This is one of our most important principles. At first religion must be personal. It is a personal union with the Saviour. It is not a matter between priests and people, friends and ministers. It is a matter between God and the soul. The divine and the human are brought into contact, reconciled and espoused to each other. This is the principle which cuts up, root and branch, all the formal, sensuous churches, where religion is so much by proxy. It also levels a State church; for demand a credible confession of faith from the members of the Episcopal or any State church, and you would ruin it, empty the places of worship, and bring the occupation of the priests to an end. No one can enter into our fellowship till we get this confession of faith in Jesus Christ—it may be deceptive, but it must be made, and the responsibility lies with the people themselves who make it.

2. *We demand a public profession of faith in Christ in baptism.* The Bible—ancient liturgies—baptismal services, creeds and customs, show us conclusively that there was in the Primitive church, and ought to be now, a confession of faith in Christ in baptism. The candidates were all expected to renounce their former master, and accept Christ. There is beauty, there is meaning, there is power in all this; but the service is degraded when it is done *for* others, and when we speak in the name of those who have given us no right to do so, as happens every time when a Pædobaptist sprinkles an infant. It is out of reverence to the Book that we refuse to baptise a babe. It is out of kindness to both parents and children that we refuse to baptise babes. By no act of ours will we allow any one to fancy that one child is more precious in God's sight than another because water has been sprinkled on it. We do, however, expect that believers shall be baptised, and this is the best solution of the *Open versus Strict Communion* question. If all

believers were immersed, the communion question would simply be at an end. The Episcopalian is bound to allow you to commune in his church, if you are not a notoriously evil liver. The Presbyterians allow good, moral men, though unconverted, to be seated at the Lord's table. The Methodists are not so strict on this point, for they also will allow those who are not distinctly Christians, to partake of the Lord's supper. All Christian denominations agree that baptism is necessary to communion. Strict communion is the practice of most Christian churches; only one of them, however, says that it cannot recognise *that* as the rite of Christian baptism which is on all hands admitted to be but a human tradition. Baptists do not make too much of baptism; other churches do so, as we have elsewhere very clearly proved. We make too little of it, we treat it as if it were of no consequence, and as a matter which we may attend to, or otherwise, just as we please. The tendency of all modern practice is in this somewhat careless direction, and we ought the more loudly to protest against it.

3. *We demand that every immersed believer be incorporated into the church.* We say to the believer, you owe this to yourself, your conscience, your new spirit; you owe this to Christ, your new Master; you owe this to the Church, which is your spiritual home; you owe this to the world as a lesson, an invitation, an example. If you could serve Christ as well in the outside of the church as in the inside, still it is your duty to do your duty, and few duties are clearer than that all believers ought to unite in church fellowship and co-operation. You cannot, however, help the cause of God and truth so well in the outside as in the inside of the church. There are duties which you cannot perform, and responsibilities which you cannot assume outside of the church. Why should men hold back from the enjoyment of that which God so highly esteems? Let all take a decided stand and procrastinate no longer, but let us do our duty, claim our rights, enjoy our privileges as members of the church of the living God.

LECTURE III.

THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF THE BAPTISTS.

Delivered May 10th, 1882.

THE Baptists have never been what may be called an obscure sect. Our religious life has been kept as prominently before the public of England, and of other countries, as was possible. Enemies and friends alike have done—the one their best, the other their worst—to keep the public mind informed as to religious life among us. Our own literary men, and they have not been few; our own public leaders, and they have been many, have, over and over again, explained our theological and practical position. In recent years, this has not been done so often as one could wish. Definite teaching is against “the spirit of the age,” which is “selfishness” in the world, and “compromise” in the church. There is an anxiety to “make things pleasant all round,” even at the expense, not only of definite teaching, but of truth itself; yet we know that in order to true peace there must be purity of doctrine, and consistent practice based on it. It is because we are so thoroughly convinced of this fact that we proceed to give what may be called a picture of church life among the Baptists. A few facts will give the “cue” to our religious life.

I.—WE DETERMINE ALL OUR OWN RELIGIOUS RITES.

1. *The practices adopted by our forefathers which are abandoned by us.*—Their observances were somewhat different from ours in a few unimportant particulars, such as—

(1.) *The members, official and otherwise, were received by laying on of hands.*—Ministers were thus solemnly set apart to their office, as also were deacons; messengers of the churches, and messengers to the churches. Members even were thus sometimes solemnly received into fellowship. This was an apostolic custom, and one full of impressiveness, beauty, and suggestiveness; but the apostles always imparted with it some gift or some grace. It was the symbol of a great spiritual reality. The reality does not obtain now; no one confers or receives miraculous gifts

and graces, by the laying on of hands, and we infer from that that the symbol is to be done away with. Romish and all Episcopal churches keep up the vain and empty ceremony, though the power and purpose of it are gone. We will restore the custom when God shows His will that we should do so by restoring the reality of which the laying on of hands is but a symbol.

(2.) *The washing of the saints' feet.*—The Baptists interpreted our Lord's words literally, and so, in a matter-of-fact way, really washed the saints' feet. This was one of the commonest ways of showing hospitality in the East, and the custom served a most useful purpose where the feet were exposed to the heat and dust of journeying; but in the West it is different. We show hospitality in another way—a way more in keeping with our climate; and so we show to one another that hospitality which feet-washing expresses in the East. The main thought underlying both customs is being given to hospitality. In our country and age this is the true washing the saints' feet. If, however, it really served a good purpose, we would not hesitate to wash the saints' feet. This custom and Christian baptism stand upon quite different levels, for we are not told to go into all the world and wash the saints' feet; but we are told to go into all the world and baptise believers. Romish bishops keep up the practice by washing the feet of twelve paupers about the season of Lent. This formality, however, is neither scriptural, nor does it serve any good purpose whatever.

(3.) *The holy kiss.*—"Salute one another with a holy kiss." It was thought by some of our forefathers that this command was binding and universal, but there is no ground for thinking this; if it were so we certainly would have heard more of it. In the East there is (a) the kiss of salutation on the forehead; (b) the kiss of friendship on both cheeks; (c) the kiss of love and tender personal affection on the lips. These distinctions were well understood in the East, but they would be quite misunderstood in the West. The custom would be abused, and would lead to both scandal and misunderstanding. There is nothing wrong in it; if we were purer and better, we could restore the custom with advantage; but as it is, it is better to have it in abeyance.

(4.) *The occasional fast.*—The very smallest of our churches felt it incumbent on them now and then to fast for a few hours, or for a whole day, and even for days together. The period was determined by the occasion

which suggested the fast. The spiritual poverty and lifelessness of the church, the expulsion of an eminent member,—persecution,—want of success,—national sins and misfortunes,—were usually the occasions of our church fasts. The Bible neither commands nor forbids the church to fast; but I feel sure that all who do not take their meals with great gratitude—all who have marred the peace of the church, or in any way hindered the cause of God, ought to fast; and when they do so, to do it in the way commanded by Jesus. The Saviour commands men—members of the church—to fast, but He does not either command or forbid the church herself to fast. This is left, it would appear, to our own judgment. It would be well, I think, to revive the custom now and then.

(5.) *The anointing the sick.*—The Romanist anoints the man who is doomed to die, the sufferer whose sickness is unto death; but the text in the Epistle of James refers to the case of a man who is to get better. In faith the sick man sends for the elders of the church, and in faith he demands to be anointed. He has faith in the means he asks the elders to use, and so ought we to have faith in all divinely-appointed means. There is nothing unscriptural in all this, and if any one demanded to be anointed with oil by the pastor or deacons of the church, we could not refuse it; but we could show the patient that since this verse was written God has given us able physicians and valuable drugs; and these in this country, with the prayer of faith, ought to take the place of anointing. Oil is still most valuable in the East as a medicine, and even in this country we have several remarkable cases of healing by anointing with oil. “The Peculiar People” misunderstand the passage. We never read of the apostles refusing the aid of physicians. It is a good maxim to secure the best medical aid we can, for the physician is a minister for good, generally speaking.

(6.) *The catechising the young.*—This has been the custom of all churches from the very days of the apostles, and parsons and priests of the Roman and Anglican communions have to catechise children even to-day on the Sunday afternoons. In a day when there were few books, no religious press, no Sunday-schools, and even few day schools, catechising was absolutely necessary. It is not so now, still it may be emphatically said that catechising is the want in our Sunday-schools; and yet if we adopted it on a large scale, we would empty our class rooms. Scotland to-day, in all her Sunday and day schools, uses the Westminster

Catechism. Baptists might use Spurgeon's edition of this work to great advantage in our Bible classes. It would be well if our senior scholars would take this matter up and carry it systematically through. Formerly our members knew their faith much better than they do now, notwithstanding all our literary advantages.

2. *The practices adopted by our forefathers and modified by us.*—There are—

(1.) *The reception of members.*—A deputation would be solemnly appointed to visit the candidates and bring in a report to the church at her next monthly meeting. Sometimes the candidate would send in a written statement besides, or the written statement alone would suffice. The candidates were brought before the church, and questioned and cross-questioned, and the door of entrance, if not locked against them, was kept very close, and few officers or members seemed willing to open it wider. In many chapels the presence of the unsaved during public worship was not in any way recognised. A word of warning might have been spoken in their hearing, but no more. No words were addressed to them as such. It was necessary for a long time to have great precaution in receiving persons into our communion, because strangers—commissioned by parsons, or magistrates, or both—would come and seek fellowship with us and yet be but spies, whose mission was to betray the whole church. But as this is not the case now, it is quite a question whether or no we should ask candidates to come before the church at all. Scripture is all but silent on this particular subject. It is left largely to the judgment of the church. Personally, I prefer to see the candidates at our church meetings; but we must not make our preferences a law to the people. Unless we can give a "Thus saith the Lord," for each of our religious rites and customs, those rites and customs ought not to be binding on Christians.

(2.) *The discipline of the church.*—The minister, all the officers and all the members were expected to watch over souls. All were watchmen on the walls of Zion. The discipline of the church was applied to two kinds of scandals, and these were:—(A) *Personal scandals.*—These embraced your attendance at the means of grace, even at a time when your presence meant the forfeiture of all your goods, imprisonment, banishment, and often death itself. It embraced your attire. Did you dress with becoming modesty, or were you gay, vain, showy, extra-

vagant. It embraced diligence at business. If the church thought you idle, you were dealt with. It embraced conversation. Gossip, scandal, evil-speaking, censorious mischief-making were all severely reprobated. It embraced companionships: were they suitable? It embraced marriage: did you marry in the Lord? You were not to marry out of the "body" to which you belonged, and in some cases you were not to marry out of the particular church of which you were a member. It embraced your recreations, your relaxations, your amusements. If you had a worldly taste, you were dealt with. The whole general deportment of the brother or sister was carefully seen to. This exacting discipline seems to open up a wide field for espionage, but it was made difficult for the accuser to lightly charge his brethren. It was regarded by all as a very serious thing to accuse any member of the church. The accused brother would be heard in his own defence. If guilty, he would be admonished to repent and confess. Three several deputations would be sent to him, if the first and second were disregarded, before the church resolved to cut the brother off. When the church resolved to excommunicate the offender, he would be exhorted to come and be expelled, in the presence of all the members. If the guilty brother were present, the expulsion consisted of a solemn service. If absent, a deputation would be sent to deliver the solemn sentence of the church. (B) *Public scandal.*—The same process would be gone through if the offence were public and notorious, with this difference, that the reproof would be public; the repentance, if any, public; the sentence public—usually at the close of the public worship. This severity served an excellent purpose; none but the most sterling Baptists could go through such an ordeal. It developed a high order of vigorous piety and church life. We have, it is to be feared, gone to the other extreme. We cut off and restore members of our churches far too easily and simply, as if these ceremonies were a matter of small import, whereas we know them to be most momentous events.

(3.) *The baptiser of the church.*—The church had an officer specially ordained by the laying on of hands for the work of baptism. The minister rarely baptised in those days, but now he is generally the Baptist; though, of course, any layman among us can baptise, if that be the most convenient or most desirable arrangement. Many things which we observe in baptising candidates are not

essential to baptism, and all that are not essential to it are simply points of convenience, which we can alter if, in our wisdom, we see fit. In apostolic times the converts were baptised on the spot, as in our mission fields to-day, and any Baptist minister can do so even now; but if these persons wish to join the church, which is another matter, then they must satisfy the church as to their Christian character. In that case we have to adopt those means most likely to secure a consistent membership. The preachers of the apostolic days baptised the people in the very garments in which they stood, and we can do the same, if it be convenient. I have done so in this very chapel; but, as a special dress forms no part of the service, and is no item in the symbolism, we consult convenience and taste as to whether we shall have it or not, and sometimes we decide one way and sometimes the other. The official garments of the priest and of the candidate are essential to the rite in some other churches, and are symbolic of religious truths. With us the special dress is nothing but an endeavour to "do all things decently and in order." The preachers of all ages baptised within doors—and sometimes out of doors—in houses, prisons, in pools and rivers, but as there is nothing essential to the ceremony in the place where the baptism takes place, we baptise where it is most convenient to us, which was the apostolic custom.

3. *The practices we have in common with our forefathers.*
 —We must always distinguish between what is essential to our system as Baptists, and what is not any real part of it. Our system is just as complete and as perfect without those practices of our sires, or with the modification of them, still observed by us, hence we can dispense with them, so be that we still adhere to the Bible in its spirit and in its letter. We must not add to or take from what God has given to His church. We can modify externals, just as Paul forbade the "Agape" to the Corinthians, but we cannot modify, say baptism, for that rite is our symbolically "putting on the Lord Jesus;" it is the outward sign of an inward grace; an avowing ourselves to be the Lord's and an act so full of beautiful meaning in itself that we must not interfere with either the act of baptism or the persons to be baptised. We can receive no pleas about difference of opinions, no pleas of constitution, no pleas of climate as warranting believers in their refusal to obey the command to be baptised. All people as well as all climates are embraced in "all

nations" of our Lord's commission. We can warm the water, or baptise in private, if needful or desirable. In cases of deadly danger we can dispense with baptism altogether, but on no account are we permitted to sprinkle, pour, affuse, and call that baptism. Strip off the excrescences, which we have already discussed, and it will be seen that we and our fathers have substantially the same discipline. We have not made one single essential change in anything. We have changed only points of detail in matters of convenience. This statement is true, even if we go back to the Montanists, Donatists, &c. We claim these sects as being substantially Baptists. We obey the commands of God in His own way where he has revealed it, and when He has not done so we keep them in the spirit. We neither evade nor avoid God's commandments. His will once known to us is final and authoritative.

II.—WE ARRANGE OUR OWN MODE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

1. *The practice is that of the apostles and the early church.*—The Old Testament church required full details, for the religion was not only real in itself, but it was symbolic of something which was to come. So God gave all the details of sacrifice and service to His ancient church. That something—of which the Jewish rites, &c., were typical—has come, viz., the religion of the spirit; the religion of gracious, full, deep life—and this higher life is largely left to assume, for the most part, what organisation it may. The synagogue service consisted of singing, prayer, and exposition, and was as simple as the simplest of our services. It was as different from the elaborate ritual of the Jewish temple, and of those of the Roman, Greek, and Ritualistic churches of our day as it could well be. It appealed, like our own service, to the head, the heart, the conscience, and not to the mere senses. It was not a performance, but a religious service. No liturgies and no ritual of mystic meaning were allowed. The cry for these things in our day is a most unwholesome sign, and all the cry to make the services of the sanctuary more attractive is an unpromising sign. We are to make them attractive to whom? Not to God's people, who are expected to worship in spirit and in truth. Not to the world. Are we to degrade spiritual worship to the level of those determined to have nothing to do with God? We must not break down the middle wall of partition between a worldly amusement and the solemn worship of the living God. We are nowhere commanded to do anything

of the kind, and we are well warned not to conform to the world. Ungodly people will never be attracted by our worship, and the best way is, if possible, to raise them to our level, and not degrade ourselves to theirs. The apostles never dreamt of seeking the patronage of the world by largely conforming to its ways.

2. *The practice of our more immediate forefathers.*

(1.) They met in one another's homes, and there read and prayed. They had what we now call "cottage meetings." The Word of the Lord was precious in those days, when it was a criminal offence to worship God in our own homes with five or six friends.

(2.) They met in one meeting-house—Baptist and Pædobaptists together would meet for prayer, reading, and communion. They were glad to draw near to one another for mutual help, encouragement, and service.

(3.) They met, Calvinist and Arminian Baptists, as one communion, and worshipped and observed the ordinances together.

(4.) They met together both open communionist and strict communionist, but in after years these good brethren separated. The Pædobaptists and Baptists separated—the Calvinist and Arminian separated—and have been separate ever since, though they are now gradually drawing nearer and nearer to one another once more, and possibly never to be again separated. The Baptists from the first have had a weakness for "separations," but it has been usually a question of principle with them, and so the dividers are and were generally to be respected. They came out and were separate from what they conceived to be wrong. In modern times we have had separations, but these divisions arise occasionally from some personal dispute, and there is a split, but it all ends in good. Every split becomes another church, and thus have many of our churches been formed. Behold the number of splits the Methodists have had, and yet upon the whole these have worked for good, though the time has now arrived when they could all profitably reunite. The Episcopal church is all splits together. It is in a chronic state of unholy schism. The Papacy has been weakened again and again by separations, and perhaps is yet destined to break up. Our divisions have nearly all been overruled for good.

(5.) They met for mutual edification. Every brother was expected to minister to the rest in some way in holy things. Some expounded the Word of God, some ex-

horted the brethren, or evangelized the world. Each church had thus several ministers, most of whom followed some business or secular calling. As the Baptists increased, they set one of the members in each church apart for evangelizing, still adhering to the practice of mutual exhortation. The Scotch Baptists still follow this custom, as also do the Plymouth Brethren, but it was found to work ill, for (a) the educated and over-worked man of business came to God's house not to work but to worship, to get rest and refreshing to his soul, and (b) the uneducated speaker would, by his want of intelligence and judgment, offend the worshippers, and do harm rather than good. So our forefathers resolved to have an educated ministry, and to-day, in whatever way they are tried, our ministers will compare favourably with those of any other church. They have all along been able to expound and defend our principles. And all along they have had to do so, for we have been sorely and often savagely assailed.

(6) They grouped the smaller churches together as we do. When we read of so many of our churches being without pastors, let us bear in mind that they are places which for the most part never had, and do not expect to have ministers. They are well supplied by lay brethren. Our forefathers made much use of our laymen at first. Then we as a denomination overlooked them: but now we see the importance of employing lay agency somewhat more largely, and if we are to meet the necessities of the case, we must make a much more serious demand on their help. One of our churches will sometimes have two pastors, and two churches will have but one pastor, and sometimes a whole group of village churches will be supplied by one pastor and a staff of local brethren, and in this way we seek to carry on the work of God. Our motto as Baptists has always been—do the best we can, not simply for the priest, but for the people and for humanity at large.

3. *The practice of our churches of to-day.* Besides the things already enumerated, we seek in other ways to further the cause of God.

(1.) *We preach, like the apostles, where we can.* Paul preached by the river-side, in prisons, in private houses, in scholastic halls, in synagogues. He waited for no consecration service, no elaborate ritual, no bishop's license. He consecrated the place with the truths he preached at it or in it, and the service held was similar to those held in our

own chapels, &c. We simply go and do likewise, utterly ignoring the pretensions of any man or body of men to hinder us.

(2.) *We sing as we please.* We can have congregational singing alone if we prefer it. We can have a choir, we can have solo singing, and even have pieces sung by the choir alone. The book leaves all these things to us with the great law to "do all things decently and in order." Our forefathers were sorely exercised on this subject of singing and music. A brother would sing a hymn or a portion of Scripture just as another brother would give an address. Each gifted brother would contribute something towards the service. The congregation as such was not allowed to sing. The brethren would have no choir. Only Christians were permitted to sing at all. Fierce controversies arose, many bitter pamphlets were written; churches split over this subject; but gradually the singing Christians gained the victory, all along the line, and the wonder now is that there should have been such hot disputes about such a subject. At first all the churches sang a hymn at the Lord's table, then in after years the congregation was allowed to sing; after that our churches secured choirs, then they sang anthems, and now they sing even solos during the service, though this is not yet common among us. It was a severe and prolonged struggle which brought about the present order of things in our public worship. We have great liberty because the book gives it to us, and we can alter, abolish or rearrange what we please in our service and methods without asking the consent of parliament, prelates, parsons. The matter is in our own hands, but we must be careful to preserve the spiritual character of our worship, and not allow ourselves to be carried away with a desire for novelty or with the craving for the merely sensuous. As the case now stands, we must say that our method of conducting public worship is helpful and impressive and in keeping with the word of God.

III.—WE MANAGE ALL OUR OWN CHURCH AFFAIRS.

1. *The officers we alone appoint.* We have no hierarchy, for there is none in the New Testament; no diocesans, no princely nor priestly prelates, for these are utterly unknown in the book, neither the Old nor the New Testament knows anything about prelates. The Scriptural bishop is simply the overseer of a church and he may be

one of even several overseers of the same church. Every pastor is a bishop, and no one else is a bishop, not even His Grace of Canterbury. We have no priest, for none is mentioned in the New Testament, unless, indeed, it be the priesthood of all believers. We allow no presbytery to moderate, no conference to sanction our calls to the pastorate. We allow no body of men to tell us who shall be our ministers, nor how long they shall stay with us. The arrangement in our church is simply one between the minister and the people, and can cease and determine when it is desirable to both parties that it should do so; and with all its drawbacks and possible abuses, we have found this Scriptural rule to work well. The book mentions many officers whom we *may* have if we need them, and from these we elect just as many as we require for the spread of the gospel and the edification of the church, usually a minister, secretary, treasurer, and deacons. But we may have deaconesses if we choose. God has given us work to do, and in keeping with His book we do our best to prosecute that work, in His own appointed way and by His own appointed means and ministers. All our officers we appoint by the votes of the church as they did in the apostolic times.

2. *The work and discipline of the church.* Though our polity is congregational, and every church is so far forth independent of every other, yet we respect the discipline of all sister churches. If you are cast out by one Baptist church as unworthy, we cannot enroll you among our members unless you repent and seek restoration, unless indeed the case is one of flagrant injustice to the excommunicant, which rarely occurs, and when it does occur the church is made to know it, for all the neighbouring Baptist churches would frown on the guilty communion. The votes of the members receive, reject, and restore, all fellow members. The Baptist church is a little Republic, a democracy on the one side, and on the other an absolute monarchy with Jesus as King, and His voice is final in all things appertaining to His kingdom. All members of either sex, and however young have the same right to speak and vote on all subjects brought before our church meetings. We are one and all alike, brothers and sisters, and for the while all earthly distinctions are lost. This liberty may be and has been abused; but that does not warrant our refusing to all members the rights given them of God. We decide for ourselves what we shall do, what work we

shall undertake, who shall do it, and at what expense; and no one has a voice in these things but ourselves. We are a free State and a free people, endeavouring in the best way we can to serve the Master. We are a people whose mode of worship and methods are flexible, but whose principles are unchangeable and eternal.

LECTURE IV.

THE POLITICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE BAPTISTS.

Delivered June 14th, 1882.

KING JAMES I. was cunning enough to see that there was a strong and evident relationship between the form of church government and that of the civil government. He was crafty enough to see that "no bishop, no king" was a true adage, and that while an ecclesiastical tyrant was tolerated, the people would also tolerate a civil one. Let an absolute monarchy subsist in the church, and one could easily subsist in the State. He also saw—as kings both before and after him saw—that man's notions of civil government would always be modified by his conceptions of a Christian church. It is always so; our religion for the most part determines our politics, and the exceptions to this rule are more apparent than real. Romanists are Tories in every country but our own; let them get the power here, and they would be the fiercest of all Tories. Episcopalians, while in power, have always been Tories; the system is Tory, and it will be the great dividing line in party politics in the future; Episcopal churches will gravitate to the Tories. State churchmen will probably be Tory after the Church is disestablished. It is either a sense of justice, or an indifference to vital religion that permits Episcopalians to be Liberals now. Baptists have their politics cut out for them; their doctrine of church order does this. A few among us are Tories, and they are few, whom we cannot but look upon as curiosities; as strange survivals of a former state of things; as patriarchs who have outlived their contemporaries; as stage-coachmen who have lingered on, even into the days of telegraphy; but as a rule we have no difficulty in stating what are the political principles of the Baptists, for, as a body, we are pretty well agreed in political principles and policies. We will consider—

I.—THE BAPTISTS AND CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

1. *The Baptists have been loyal under all forms of civil government.*—Some apparent exceptions to this are pointed out to us, such as—

(1.) *The men of Munster.*—What, in brief, is the history of these men? There had been fierce contests in Westphalia between Papists and Protestants, the former being determined to extirpate the latter. In Munster the Protestants were powerful. The prelate, who was also the prince, left the town in consequence. The unsettled, the fanatical, the dreamers of that restless age flocked to Munster. They believed the millennium was at hand, and so they believed that in the little State which was forming in Munster they could have a foretaste of it. The majority made one of its leaders king, and also adopted a system of communism in property. Tumults followed, the revoltors were expelled, and the people did what they liked. All this was bad, but consider—

(1.) We have only their enemies' accounts of the proceedings, and these cannot be trusted. We can never trust a Roman Catholic historian. If he tells the truth, his own communion disowns him; and if he tells what is false, we must disown him.

(2.) We have the fact that though the leaders were Baptists, the people consisted of all religious sects then in the continent. It was not a Baptist question at all, but Millennium views bewildered the people.

(3.) The Baptists then, and ever afterwards, were careful to state that they had nothing whatever to do with the men of Munster, and that they in no way represented the sentiments of our denomination.

(4.) The men of Munster were not a religious body, but were the unsettled and excited of all the bodies, so that no one sect is responsible for their doings. The men paid dearly for their folly; for about 100,000 were butchered in the most barbarous way possible.

(5.) The men revolted against the inhuman cruelty of the government, as many have done both before and since; and though they did wrong, they were far more sinned against than sinning. In any case, the Baptists are in no way responsible for these men. Baptists' doctrines would have forbidden all the wrong they did, and humanity itself protests against their sufferings.

(2.) *The Monmouth rebellion.*—Many of the inhabitants

of this country regarded the Duke of Monmouth as the proper heir to the English throne. These men thought that no Papist could or ought to ascend the throne, and whether that was the law then or not, it is the law now, and those men who joined this rebellion were so far right in their conception of what ought to be. Some very few Baptists shared this opinion and joined this rebellion, and suffered death for their alleged treason like the others. As a body, the Baptists hastened to disclaim all sympathy with this rising. We believe it to be perfectly lawful, and even necessary, to rise against a sovereign, when he or she has violated the coronation oath, subverted the constitution, or seeks in any way to ruin the country, or has altogether ceased to have a place in the hearts of the people; but it is a very extreme case, and must be resorted to only when all remedial legislation has become impossible. It is a question even now whether the so-called rebels were not the real friends of their country and of the Protestant religion, but, as a religious body, the Baptists had nothing whatever to do with the rebellion.

(3.) *The Fifth Monarchy Men.*—These brethren believed that the millennium was at hand; that the reigns of gold, silver, iron, clay, mentioned in the Book of Daniel, were past, and that the time of the fifth monarchy was at hand, and that Jesus was to be the only King. The conception was right enough, but it was wrongly applied. Christ was to reign, but it was in the hearts and in the lives of all. Civil governments which were righteous were to find in us Baptists loyalty and hearty support, and so have we ever taught. These fifth monarchy men were few in number, and they differed from the body of their brethren on this subject of civil allegiance. The Baptists have always held sober views on this great theme, and hence monarchs have always found us loyal.

(4.) *The oath question.*—Some Baptists, like the Quakers, refused to take an oath of any kind, whether of allegiance or in a court of justice, and this raised doubts concerning the loyalty of their brethren; but it need not have done this, for many loyal men think it wrong to swear. Good men do not need oaths, and bad men disregard them, and probably oaths will yet be altogether abolished.

(5.) *The magistracy.*—Some Baptists refused the office of magistrate when appointed to it. They thought it wrong to take it. They thought that the management of

the country was so godless, that Christian men could have nothing to do with it. Our forefathers seldom got the chance of filling this office, and when offered it by our enemies it was generally in order to secure the fine imposed, because of our refusal to take it. The Baptist body, as a whole, held that we ought to take the office of magistrate when we were appointed to it.

(6.) *The war question.*—Some of our brethren did not believe in war, and many good men do not now believe that war is justifiable; and surely we all think that the earth has seen enough, and more than enough, of war. The brethren were men of peace, and thought that national feuds ought to be settled by arbitration, and by the other resources of peace and civilisation. These brethren, however, represented only individuals, and men here and there, who were opposed to the main body of their co-religionists, who were politically what we are to-day. Our loyalty, as a body, is recognised and appreciated by all historians, although we have nothing to gain, but everything to lose, by it; yet the State Church parsons, though they speak so much about loyalty to the king, their master, were and are always the first to rise against the throne, if the throne does not serve their selfish purposes. Take the "pilgrimage of grace," for instance. Take the treason against the Commonwealth. Take the non-jurors and James II. Take their treatment of William III. and their Jacobitism. These instances show how valueless is the loyalty of the State Church parsons. These men rise up against whatever sovereign does not serve their purpose. We, on the other hand, are loyal to all sovereigns alike, even when they persecute us, and Acts of Indemnity have had to be passed because of our taking up arms on behalf of our sovereign, when many of his subjects were fighting against him—church parsons and churchmen among the rest, as in the cases just named. It was the same with the Presbyterians who came to this country. They would serve parliament or the king, just as it suited their selfish purpose. Whichever sovereign would give them the best and the most, had their loyalty. They would serve Cromwell or his enemies, according to the power promised them. They left Richard Cromwell, and sought the return of Charles II., because they expected power of him, and which he was not slow to promise, but, of course, never performed, though so often reminded of his words uttered at Breda. You can never trust the loyalty of State Church parsons,

whether they be Papists, Episcopalians, or Presbyterians. These have served for power. But kings could always trust us, who have always acted on high principle. It may be said, so, also, did these churchmen. Just so, but their principle was tyranny and State support, ours was liberty to all and State favours for none.

2. *The Baptists, as such, advocate no specific form of civil government.*—We can pray for our rulers in whatever country we live. Go where we may, we do this, not because we are paid by the State for doing so, nor because our party is in power, nor because we like the particular form of government under which we live, but because God has commanded us to do so, and hence we regard it as our duty. It is often, also, in these days our pleasure. If we do not like the party in power, nor the form of government under which we live, we seek, by constitutional means, to get things altered. We sided with Cromwell and his great colleagues, in their struggle for national freedom. The country was tired of the worthless king and the still more worthless bishops of that age, and so it rose up in indignation, to sweep away the evil bureau, and we were not slow to join the movement, and to take a leading part in it. The Baptists were among Cromwell's best soldiers and officers, and they defended him with most vigour through the press. Baptists may be believers in any form of constitutional monarchy, or in an empire, or even in a republic. In point of fact, we thrive best under a republic, as witness our prosperity in America. The freer the institutions under which we live, the better we get on. Most of the Baptists are satisfied with the limited monarchy under which we live. It is a first-class form of government, and is largely republican. Parsons require an absolute monarchy for their purpose, and they require that the people should have as little voice as possible in the management of their own affairs, whether religious or political; but with the growth of freedom their position is doomed, and they are now fast tottering to the end, which ought to have been reached years ago.

3. *The Baptists are, and always have been, advanced politicians.*—All religious bodies are necessarily political. The State Church was made by politics, is governed by politics, is reformed and deformed by politics, paid by politics, and is soon to be abolished by politics. The political parsons have all along persecuted, imprisoned, and burned all who dared to differ from them. The

Presbyterian State Church sought the same power here and in Scotland, to put down all that differed from her. The Papists, Puritans, and, in some small measure, the Independents did the same. None of these at first knew the great principles for which we contended, principles which we preached in our pulpits and defended through the press, and from which we have not swerved an inch for three whole centuries. On every occasion the State has exempted us from the measures of liberty afforded to others, and denied us the royal pardon, when it was freely offered to other Dissenters on their recanting. From the Westminster Assembly, and from every scheme of church comprehension we have been carefully and by name excluded. All Dissenters are now on a level, but we were the most oppressed of all the religious bodies; yet we have contended all along for others, even when they were contending against us; each in their turn sought to suppress us while we were unflinchingly fighting in the true interests of the nation. In our stern adhesion to principle, and in our keen political instincts, we have been called ‘bigots;’ but we do not fear to be called that; it is really a compliment to us who have served the nation so well. There is no doubt but that our principles, logically carried out, would lead the nation to republicanism, whereto, no doubt, all nations are fast tending.

II.—THE BAPTISTS AND STATE PATRONAGE.

1. *The Baptists maintain that the State ought not to be sectarian.*—We have said this all along. Roger Williams was the great father of religious equality in America, and Leonard Busher was the great champion of the same principle in this country; and ever since their day, we have had a long line of champions in the cause of religious and civil liberty. If we were founding a new country, no one would dream of establishing a State Church. The plea now is, that as we have one we may as well put up with it; but we live in an age when every institution has to justify its existence or perish. State-churchism is not a question of national religion; for national religion is simply the religion of the nation, not of national recognition of religion, because a nation does this only so far as she is religious. It is simply a question of sectarianism. Sometimes the sect known as the Papacy was in power, sometimes the party in power was half Papist and half Protestant, sometimes Episcopalians, sometimes Presbyterians, sometimes several of them at one

and the same time ; but these State recognitions of sects did not make us as a nation one whit more religious. The Church of Christ can have no alliance with the State, for that means subservience to the State; nor antagonism to the State, for that is disloyalty; and next to our loyalty to the truth has been, and is, our loyalty to the State. We ask that all religious bodies be left to their own resources, and let their power and position be determined by their moral force, their number of adherents, and the amount of good which they have done and continue to do. To establish our creed would leave us where we are—Dissenters. We would even then advocate disestablishment. It is the principle of a State Church which we object to, more than to our present establishment, bad as that is, and it is, in many respects, as bad as it can very well be.

2. *The Baptists maintain that no sect ought to be supported out of the public funds.*—Some few Baptists occupied parish pulpits during the Commonwealth, because all bodies were treated as equal in the eyes of the law, and if the parishioners desired a Baptist minister, they had the man they desired, instead of one whom they rejected; and if ever an establishment could be defensible *that* was the one, yet not a score of Baptists could be induced to occupy the position of parish minister, and these did so altogether against the wishes of their brethren, who not even in this form would touch a State Church. The "*regium donum*" we always condemned and helped to abolish. Public funds we held, and still hold, ought to be used for strictly public purposes, and all that is now set apart for the parsons we ask to be spent simply for the good of the public. The State ought to support no sect, and the episcopal sect, rich as it is, ought to be ashamed to act the part of a pauper church.

3. *The Baptists maintain that no man should suffer any disabilities on account of his religious convictions.*—We would be very pleased if every M.P., magistrate, judge, and sovereign, were a Christian, and governed the country and the institutions of the country according to the most enlightened Christian principles, but even then we would not allow them to impose any disabilities on any one on account of his religious views. The State has written our religious history in blood; the darkest pages of our national records, the most inhuman events, have been connected with the determination of the State Church parsons, to put down dissent and to exalt the establishment. Our position, if it prevailed, would open all our

national universities. It would permit the queen to be other than an Episcopalian. It would permit the lord chancellor to belong to any church. It would turn the bishops out of the House of Lords. It would turn the parson out of the chair of the vestry meeting, unless duly elected thereto by the vote of the meeting. Every man should be appointed to office according to his ability to perform the duties required, and the sect to which he belonged ought to be no factor in the decision, nor the fact that he did not belong to any sect at all. As in Ireland, America, and in some of our colonies, we desire to see here a free church in a free state.

III.—THE BAPTISTS AND STATE CONTROL.

1. *The Baptists maintain that the State ought to protect all men in the peaceable enjoyment of their property. All religious bodies can have property. A State Church can have no property. It has bartered away its birth-right for a mess of pottage, and so the terms of its trust deeds, the purposes of its existence, the offices to be filled and the persons to fill them, and how they are to be filled are all determined for the Episcopalians by the State. We can erect what property we please, devote it to what purpose we please, put what we like in the schedule of doctrines, and appoint our own trustees, and we expect the State to vindicate our civil rights in the enjoyment of our own property. The State prevents any one from abusing my property. It protects our deeds, but it makes those of the State Church. From first to last we do what we please, from first to last the Episcopalian must do what the State pleases. Property must be held in one of these ways.*

(1.) In our own right.

(2.) By corporations which are all the creations of the State.

(3.) In trust. All property must be vested in some one. The trustees are not the owners of the property, nor is the church. The buildings are properties set apart for specific purposes, and the trustees are to see that we abide by the terms of the trust deeds. Parliament may pass an act which will declare each local church a corporation, and then it will be able to hold property, and this may yet be the solution of this difficult problem. The State merely protects me in my rights, civil and religious; but it neither controls nor patronizes me. Baptists as a body,

everywhere and always have denounced State patronage and control of any religious sect, however numerous or otherwise its adherents.

2. *The Baptists maintain that there ought to be no Ecclesiastical department of the State.* The State maps out the country into so many dioceses, and puts a superintendent of the Ecclesiastical policemen in each division; then it subdivides these into parishes or stations, and puts a parson or Ecclesiastical policeman in each station to see after our Ecclesiastical interests. The State determines the pay, the status, and the duties of each officer. It gives his creed to each officer, and tells how all its servants are to be consecrated. The chief officers and many of the parsons are but the nominees of the crown, and religion is reduced to a department of politics, and is the subject of parliamentary wrangling and ridicule from almost the beginning to the end of each session, and from generation to generation. There is not the slightest scriptural authority for all this; so we Baptists can and do preach where we may, and consecrate what and when we please. It is a political wrong as well as a travesty of the Christian Church to degrade it to a branch of the Civil Service, and that is all that a State church can ever hope to be.

3. *The Baptists maintain that the State ought not to interfere with the internal affairs of a Christian Church.* It was long before other denominations saw the truth of this proposition, though it is now generally accepted by all religious communions. Even State Churchmen when they see Parliament altering the rubrics, depriving the clergy, and even imprisoning them; and when they see that they are, indeed, manacled and fettered, and that they are reduced to a mere political bureau, feel that there must be a change in the relations of Church and State, but that change can only come along the lines laid down by us Dissenters. Churchmen must accept the principle which we have advocated all along the ages—and for which we have suffered the loss of all things, and even dear life itself, viz., the principle of a free church in a free State, which can belong to Episcopalians only at the price of disestablishment and disendowment. Baptists wonder, and cannot help wondering, that Episcopalians do not see these things. Dr. Watts has put our relation to civil government very tersely in his well known lines—

“Let Cæsar’s dues be ever paid, to Cæsar and his throne;
But consciences and souls were made to be the Lord’s alone.”

LECTURE V.

THE REVISED NEW TESTAMENT AND THE
BAPTISTS.

Delivered Wednesday Evening, May 28th, 1881 :

Rev. R. Briggs (Blackley) in the chair.

ON June 22, 1870, now nearly eleven years ago, a revision of the New Testament was commenced by a body of twenty-five able scholars, assisted by a committee of American divines. These men devoted what was equivalent to two years' labour on this work. The revision appeared on May 17, 1881, and the work has been searchingly discussed in our daily press and in our religious periodicals ever since. The verdict of the press is much divided.

We Baptists are more affected by this revision than any other church ; for the book is our only creed and our only standard of authority in matters of faith and practice ; and a revision of the Bible is like a revision of our principles and doctrines.

We have felt this to be so all along, hence one of the very earliest divines who subjected the authorised version to criticism was Leonard Busher, a Baptist scholar in the reign of James I.

Twenty years ago, a committee of Baptist scholars, consisting of Drs. Gotch, Davies, and Green, assisted by Dr. Jacob, was formed by Mr. Joseph Gurney to revise the whole Bible at his expense, and the result of their joint labours appeared about four years ago in our "Revised English Bible," which is a monument of painstaking scholarship.

The American Baptist Union translated the New Testament some years ago, and did its duty by *translating* correctly, and not simply transferring, the Greek verbs and prepositions that refer to baptism. John Bowes, of Dundee, did the same.

The revision now sent broadcast over the face of the earth, had a sale in one week of one million and a quarter copies,

and the sale is going on as briskly as possible, and every denomination is canvassing the book, to see what they have gained and what they have lost by this revision. We Baptists have more need to do this than others. How far have we been affected by it is the question we now seek to discuss.

We will consider how the verb and prepositions have been translated, and what has been the decision of the revisers concerning the doubtful passages affecting our contention.

I.—THE VERB.

The verb *Baptizo* has not been translated; we have still the Anglicized Greek word "baptize;" nor has a translation of it found its way into the margin, as has been the case with some other words.

1. *The word has aforetime been translated.* Dr. Gotch, who has gone thoroughly into this matter, gives us the following results of a critical enquiry:—

(1.) *Cases where the word has been transferred and not translated.* Two *Egyptian* versions of the second and third centuries. A *Latin* version of the third, and the *Vulgate*. The *French, Spanish, Italian* and *English* versions of the sixteenth. These latter versions were all influenced by the *Vulgate*, and in all these cases the word has simply been transferred. Then, besides these, we have our own revised Bible, and others, such as those of Sharpe and Alford, which do not translate the word.

(2.) *Cases where the word has not been translated "dip."* The *Slavonic* versions from the ninth to the eighteenth century have "cross" instead of immerse, which is surely a daring importation of human tradition into the Word of God, giving us, not a translation of the word, but a reference to the sign of the cross made during the ceremony of baptism, as if the sign of the cross in the performance of baptism was of more consequence than the act of baptism itself.

(3.) *Cases where the word has been properly translated.* All our versions, from the *Peshito* of the second to the *Gaelic* of the eighteenth century, have the verb translated into words signifying wash, plunge, dip, immerse. So that, if precedent was to rule, the Revisers had all the best precedents in favour of translating the word "dip." If *personal conviction* was to rule, few or none on that committee would dare to dispute that our contention is right. Lightfoot has shown this in his work on the

Colossians, and Sanday in his work on the Romans. If the law of the church was to rule, then they ought to have rendered the word "dip:" for pouring is permitted by the Prayer-book only in cases of sickness. We had a right therefore to expect to find "dip" in the text itself, or else in the margin; the Revisers have put so much in the margin in some instances, that we were fairly entitled to this; but, from whatever cause, they have not done so.

2. *The word is rendered dip in this very translation.* Let us examine this statement carefully.

(1.) *In some instances the word is left untranslated.* This is true of all the passages which refer to the Christian rite of baptism, and to the baptism of John. In these cases the word is only transferred. Why not transfer in the same way the word signifying sprinkling? Why not say, "Have your hearts rhantized from an evil conscience!" "The blood of rhantizing!" "The ashes of a heifer rhantized?" The revisers have as much authority to transfer the one word as the other; and it is when we put the two cases thus together, that the conduct of revisers generally seems astounding.

(2.) *In some instances we have baptism in the text, and wash in the margin.* We have "the teaching of baptisms" in the text, and the teaching of "washings" in the margin (Heb. vi. 2.) There is no need for the alternate reading, it really misleads; for the term "wash" is generic; but baptism is a specific act.

3. *In some instances we have wash in the text and baptize in the margin* (Mark vii. 4.) The Jews had two ways of washing the hands (1), by pouring—we have one word in the Greek for that; (2), by plunging or dipping the hands—we have another word in the Greek for that. The case here is simply this—if the Pharisees had not gone out of their houses, they washed their hands before a meal; if they did go out, they immersed the whole body—they bathed on their return home, and before they partook of a meal. In the one case they poured water on the hands, in the other they immersed the whole body. We are told that some ancient authorities read "sprinkle" in this verse—that is to say, in some MSS. a different Greek word was used, and if these authorities are right, then this passage has nothing to do with the baptism controversy.

(4.) *In some instances we have wash in the text, and nothing in the margin.* "Divers washings" (Heb. ix. 10.)

The revisers have continued the rendering of the authorized version. Here the Greek should be immersions, for the word does not refer to several different ways of applying water, such as pouring, sprinkling, dipping; for these have all different words in the original of this very letter, but to the various dippings of the Old Testament, and there were several of them.

(5.) *In one instance we have sprinkle instead of dip* (Rev. xix. 13). We formerly read of a "vesture dipped in blood," now we read "He is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood." We are told some ancient authorities read "dipped in," and the T. R. had dip. The Syriac and Latin versions, and the Sinaitic manuscript have sprinkle.

This seems a strong case against us, but it is not so. When the Greek original meant dip we had dip; but when the reading is altered, so also is the rendering: it is one witness less to be summoned into court, not a witness gone to the other side; our case stands where it did. It is as strong as ever.

(6.) *In some instances the word is rendered dip.* "That he may dip the tip of his finger" (Luke xvi. 24.) "So when he had dipped the sop" (John xiii. 26.) So that when the word is translated, it is rendered wash and dip, but never sprinkle. No doubt in these cases, we have variations of "Bapto," a word never used to describe the act of Christian baptism; but inasmuch as it is a weaker word than baptizo, which is the word used in the New Testament to describe Christian baptism, one would have thought that the much stronger word would have been readily enough rendered "dip" by our revisers, especially as they thought that that was the correct translation. Our ground of complaint is this, that while the revisers had a standing rule to render the same Greek word into the same English word, they have seriously departed from the rule in this case.

The word is rendered baptism, wash, dip. It is sometimes "wash" in the texts, and "baptise" in the margin, and sometimes "baptise" in the text, and "wash" in the margin. Why not give us a uniform rendering, as they have done in the other words, and as they were to do with every word as far as possible?

We see therefore—

(a) That modern scholarship dares not, or else will not translate the word "baptizo."

(b) That where the weaker word "bapto," from which

baptizo is derived, is translated, it is rendered dip or wash. We have thus lost nothing, but we ought to have gained much by the recent revision. Let us now examine—

II.—THE PREPOSITIONS.

1. *Eis.* (1.) *This word is rendered before impersonal nouns "unto."* As for instance, "Baptism unto repentance." "Baptism unto remission;" but even here we prefer the correct rendering "*into*." Baptised, not "unto," that is "at" or "besides," but "*into*" the sphere of repentance. Aforetime we were hard and rocky-hearted, but now we are immersed into the sphere of repentance, a new condition of things. So with "baptism unto the remission of sins:" before, all our sins were on us, but now we are plunged into a new sphere, our sins are washed away.

(2.) *This word is rendered "into" before personal appellations.* "*Into* the name of the Father," &c., not "*in* the name," &c., as in our authorized version, for the *in* may mean only, at the instance of—by the command of, or in the name of Jesus, as distinguished from John or any other name. *Into* is a much richer and fuller word. The "name" represents the nature known by this name. It is a symbol of it. *Into* the godly spirit, nature, disposition, life, are we plunged. We are made partakers of the Divine nature symbolically in our baptism.

(3.) *This word is rendered "into" before the word church.* As for instance, "*Into* one body;" that is, we are ushered by baptism into that organization, that corporate body, the Church of Christ. Just as we wish a uniform rendering of the verb, so we wish a uniform rendering of the preposition. But our case is unaffected by this variety of renderings of the preposition "*eis*."

2. *Apo.* This word generally means "*from*," though it often means "*out of*." The authorized version rendered it "*out of*" in the case of the baptism of Jesus; but the revisers give it "*from* the water," a word that does not imply that our Lord was previously in the water. To this we object; for, firstly, he must have been "*in* the water," for John baptised not *at*, but "*in the Jordan*." Secondly, he baptised, he did not *rhantize*. Thirdly, the revisers in several other places, render this very "*apo*" "*out of*;" though here they disturbed the old rendering. The rendering, however, does not weaken our case. For all the evangelists tell us that Jesus went into the water. Mark tells us that Jesus came "*out of*" (*ek*) the water;

and Matthew tells us that when he did so, he went from the water. So that the revision here does not weaken our position in the slightest.

Why were the revisers so careful here, where they thought they could weaken our case? These same men, where baptism is not involved, have rendered "*apo*" "out of" in a large number of cases.

Here, again, the revisers, though technically correct, departed from their own rule.

3. *En.* This word means "in" in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, and yet when *baptism* is concerned, the revisers render it "*with*;" in nearly all other cases they render it "*in*." Why is this? I remark that—

(1.) The American revisers insist on the rendering "*in*."

(2.) Plumptre says it ought to be "*in*."

(3.) Sharpe has rendered it "*in*."

The revisers give it "*with*," though they put "*in*" in the margin as of equal authority. Mr. Gurney's revisers have done the same to their shame.

Why have the revisers so flagrantly departed from their own rule in the cases which refer to baptism, and in these cases only. We have got them a little nearer our mark, however; for there was no alternative reading in the old version. As in the rendering of the verb, so also in the rendering of the prepositions, we have ground of complaint. We have lost nothing, but we ought to have gained much. Let us examine—

III.—THE DOUBTFUL PASSAGES.

1. *Mark* xvi. 9—20. When a passage is spurious, it is omitted altogether; when there is a strong doubt, as in *John* vii. 53; viii. 1—11, the words are bracketed; when there is some ground of suspicion, the suspected part is spaced. This latter course has been adopted with *Mark* xvi. 9—20. A doubt with which we have been long familiar has thus been sanctioned by the revisers. Dean Alford bracketed the words, and two of the revisers, Drs. Westcott and Hort, who have long laboured on the Greek text, and have just published the results in two volumes which are likely to be a standard work for many years, have also bracketed this segment of *Mark's* Gospel. These men have therefore thrown more doubt on the passage than the revisers felt justified in doing.

To me, *Mark* xvi. 9—20, is as much the word of God

as any other part of the whole book. Dr. Morison has, in my opinion, demonstrated the authenticity of these words, and though it is now the fashion to call their genuineness and authenticity in question, I know no one who has answered the learned doctor's arguments. In a letter which I have just received from this great exegete, he informs me that he is busy with a new edition of his commentary on Mark, which he hopes to greatly improve, and no doubt he will have more to say on the affected paragraph.*

The Baptist position is simply this: we confirm our own belief in believers' baptism by a reference to Mark xvi. 9—20; and in controversy, if our opponents will not allow us to quote the passage as Scripture, we will quote it as at least very early church history—church history, that is of the apostolic age, and history which confirms our practice of believers' baptism. It at least tells us the custom of the church during that age, and that custom we find to be the very one which we adopt.

2. *Acts* viii. 37. This verse is omitted altogether, not a word of it appears. In the margin we are informed that some ancient authorities insert it in whole or in part. The text is said by critics to belong to the sixth century, and that it is a fragment of a baptismal liturgy, a formula adopted by the early church.

The revision, under the superintendence of Mr. Joseph Gurney, brackets the text, and so does Griesbach. Dean Alford omits it altogether, and probably it ought to be omitted.

We have not quoted this text as Scripture for a long time, and its rejection does not affect our case in the least—for (1.) It does not make the eunuch a baby; and (2.) It does not reduce his immersion in the water to a sprinkling with water. The narrative is as strongly in our favour without the verse as with it. Its presence or absence does not affect our scriptural argument in the least.

The rejection of this verse strengthens our historical argument; for the custom of demanding a confession of faith from the candidates for baptism must have been very prevalent, and adopted in high quarters, else no one would have dared to interpolate such a passage into the Book of God. We can well afford to transfer the text from Scripture to history; it strengthens our historical argument without weakening the scriptural one.

* The work has since appeared, published by Hodder and Stoughton.

Reviewing the ground taken in the preceding criticisms, we find that our case for believers' baptism has not been weakened by the present revision. One or two witnesses, such as Revelation xix. 13, Acts viii. 37, and possibly Mark xvi. 20, are no longer summoned into court to give scriptural evidence; but they are only so many witnesses less, not witnesses gone to the other side; they are simply out of court. If they do not witness for us, they do not witness against us, and we summon two of them to fortify our case historically. Our bulwarks are as impregnable as ever.

And now, my dear brethren, let us apply all this. What is our duty in reference to this matter? I think it is at least two-fold.

Firstly. Let us earnestly and clearly explain the doctrine of believers' baptism.—We must give the people the whole truth as far as know it. Herbert Spencer says, "The highest truth the wise man sees he will fearlessly utter, knowing that, let what may come of it, he is thus playing his right part in the world—knowing if he can effect the change he aims at—well: if not—well also; though not so well." We Baptists must act on that principle, and be most unlike the complacent Chinaman, who said to a zealous missionary, "Our Josh, your Josh; your Josh for you, and our Josh for us—all very good Josh." Take rather the position of Mohammed, who said, "Though they array against me the sun on my right hand, and the moon on my left, I cannot renounce my purpose."

We have been too silent on this great theme. This is an age of compromise, coalition, combination, and to speak on baptism would mar the happy concert. "Union and unity" is the cry of the age, and it is a question with me whether this cry has its origin in our increased and increasing brotherliness, or in an increasing indifference to the form of sound words. We know that indifference is rife in many quarters, and it becomes us to watch carefully that truth is not sacrificed on the altar of love. I fear that our villages suffer as well as our towns from the prevailing silence on this great subject. Can you local preachers not arrange among yourselves that in every village pulpit this subject shall be preached upon—say, six times a year? Our ministers could go occasionally to these village stations, and explain this subject to the people. Why does not our district committee of the Yorkshire Baptist Association take this matter up, and

arrange for lectures to be given in all our village stations, and in our town and city pulpits also? Let our principles be periodically explained, and this can be best done by most of us in sermons or by lectures.

Secondly. Let us enforce the subject of believers' baptism on our people.—Whether we Baptists be few or many in any particular place, let us urge our principles on the people with all the fervour of faith. Think of Purna, the Buddhist missionary, who determined to preach to a brutal tribe in India. Buddha sought to dissuade him by saying, "They will abuse you, and speak vilely to you; what then?" Purna replied, "I will say they are good, for they do not strike me." "But if they do strike you?" responded Buddha. "I will still say, Good people, for they do not take the sword," replied Purna. "Suppose they do take the sword?" continued Buddha. "Then I will say, Good people, they do not kill me," said the fervid Purna. "But if they do kill you, what then?" urged Buddha. "I will say, Good people, to ease me so speedily of the burden of life," replied the irrepressible Purna. "You may go," said Buddha.

Purna was one of the right sort; he loved his fellow-men, and he loved what he believed to be truth, and resolved at all hazards to make that truth known. In this spirit we must enforce our principles. We must never forget that our doctrine of baptism alone lays the axe at the root of Romanism and Ritualism. We fight these systems with unmanacled hands. We go to tradition for no doctrine and no principles. And hence, these worldly religions come, and find nothing in us that they can use for our overthrow.

We, my brethren, contend in this controversy for a great principle. It is not with us a question of much water or of little water, or of adult or of infant baptism. We contend for the principle that religious rites are for religious people; Christian rites for Christian people; and that all scriptural ordinances must be observed by those only who are conscious of what they are doing. We contend for personal religion, as against religion by mere proxy.

This is our great contention, and the prosperity of this doctrine is the overthrow of all Popery, and Puseyism, and Erastianism, and the firm establishment of evangelical truth.

A celebrated general struck terror into the heart of a Persian king by sending him a message that he would

come to him with an army of men, who loved death as much as he loved life; and we must strike terror into the heart of the indifference among us by sending into it men who love truth as much as the age loves indifference and compromise.

The man who tells for good in the final issue of things is the man with settled convictions. Let us, therefore, "be rooted and grounded in the truth."

LECTURE VI.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

Preached Lord's-day Evening, June 26th, 1881.

"For as many of you as were baptised into Christ did put on Christ."—Gal. iii. 27.

ONE is glad to escape from all the subtilities and superstitions which may be associated with this ordinance of the Lord Jesus, and study it just as He has presented it to us in the Book. Here all is simple, plain, suggestive, and we must get as near to this as possible. People who study this subject as it is presented in the one Book seldom go wrong. It is those who wade up to it through many volumes on baptism that go most wrong, and those also who give the subject little or no attention.

Let us take what may be called a general view of the scriptural doctrine of baptism.

I.—THE ACT OF BAPTISM.

I use the term "act" and not "mode," for there is strictly no mode; it is an act, and that act is immersion.

1. *The etymological import of the word.*—This has been settled long ago, and there is neither room nor occasion to open it up again. The word never means to sprinkle; so that whatever be baptism, sprinkling is not baptism. Some contend that the word means copious pouring; some extensive washing; but no one pleads for sprinkling; so that whether we are right or no in our contention, the Pædobaptists are wrong.

But all scholars admit that the term means "immerse." It may mean also washing, &c., by dipping; but the word

means "dipping, so that while the Pædobaptists are admittedly wrong, we are admittedly right.

We are right, and so on the safe side; and so are all who agree in practice with us. Hence, many of all denominations get baptised at our hands, and still remain in fellowship with their own religious bodies.

2. *The figurative use of the word.*—"Buried with Christ in baptism." Some sorely perplexed controversialists have tried to explain away these words, and so have broken the confidence of otherwise appreciative readers. It is painful to see how the Book is twisted by some of our opponents—I say some, for the great majority admit that the figure of our text is immersion. The whole thought of the text involves this—we have death, burial, resurrection. We Baptists embody all this in our rite of Christian baptism, but no Pædobaptist does so.

3. *The decision of scholarship.*—We commence at the first century, and go through all the centuries, and name the greatest scholars of each, and they all admit the force of our contention. So of the scholars of our own day, of whatever church. Take our most recent expositions and commentaries on the sacred word of truth, and you will see scholarship in our favour.

This combined and concurrent testimony ought to influence our thought on this subject considerably.

4. *The testimony of ancient baptisteries.*—We have several baptisteries throughout England, we have many in France and Italy, and the large fonts of our old parish churches are simply baptisteries. In these we have the very stones crying out in our favour. The combined force of this argument is irresistible.

Immersion is baptism, and nothing else is; and until we are immersed we are unbaptised.

II.—SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

1. *The believer alone is commanded to be baptised.*—We have many commands concerning our children—how to train them; how to feel towards them; what to expect from them; but not *one* command to have them baptised. If they are to be baptised—seeing that baptism was a new institution—we ought to have been told so, yet parents are told nothing about it; not told about the act, nor the time to have it done, nor even its importance.

Children are told much, but not a word about this. It does seem marvellous—all this silence of Scripture. The silence receives emphasis, when we remember that *believers*

everywhere are commanded to be baptised. We have the clear, repeated, and urgent command to the believer, but no command to the child or its parents, so we ask all believers to be baptised, and these only.

2. *The believer alone was, in fact, baptised by the apostles.*—With us it is not a question of “adult baptism;” no such baptism is commanded, and no such baptism was or is performed. With us it is “believer’s baptism,” and whether the believer is an adult or a child, we baptise him or her. If we have erred at all, we have erred in keeping out the young. Some churches have not done so. Some time ago a young girl, nine years of age, told her father of her conversion, and asked his consent to her baptism. The request set him thinking and praying, which ended in his conversion, and some time after his own little one led him to the baptistery, where he was baptised. How beautiful! May we have many such cases.

We are so afraid, and the world is so ready to scorn the fallen professor, that we have gone to the other extreme, and hold people aloof from baptism. We baptise the believer, because the Book commands us to baptise him and no other.

No twisting of texts, no subtleties can destroy this one fact, that a single instance of baby baptism cannot be found in all God’s Book.

3. *The believer alone can understand, and so the believer alone should participate in the service.*—There is nothing magical in our Christian institutions; they are moral in their meaning, and can do good to those only who understand, embrace, and enjoy them. Sprinkling water in a child’s face can do good to no creature, least of all to the child. It neither alters its state nor its status. It is the same morally, and it is the same ecclesiastically after its baptism as it was before it.

The believer, however, knows what the service means. He knows it to be Christ’s command—his Master’s will; he knows it becomes him to fulfil all righteousness, and to enjoy the privileges of the kingdom.

Every believer, but no other person, ought to be baptised.

III.—THE FORMULA OF BAPTISM.

This is given us in Matthew xxviii. 19.

1. The text is a summary statement of the whole Scripture teaching of the doctrine of the holy Trinity.

We have the *Father*, as He has been revealed to us in the whole Bible, and especially by the Lord Jesus.

We have the *Son* in all that He is, has done, is doing, and shall yet do for us.

We have the *Spirit* in His personality and many offices.

The electing love of the Father, the redeeming love of the Son, and the regenerating love of the Spirit.

We say in baptism, this is the God whom we adore; for baptism is an act of worship—one of the highest acts of worship. We here come to God in a very special manner—full of meaning and solemnity.

2. *The text is the formula used when we publicly declare ourselves on the Lord's side.*—It is not “names” of the Father, Son, and Spirit; we have the three persons and one name, indicating nature; they are one in substance, in nature. Men have been baptised into the name of Moses and other great religious teachers; but we are baptised into the name of our triune God. We declare thus, that we are partakers of the Divine nature, children of God, heirs of the kingdom.

The very formula is dear to us, it is so suggestive.

IV.—THE DESIGN OF BAPTISM.

1. *The believer hereby declares his death to sin.*—“Ye are dead;” the past is to be done with; it is to suffice for sin, and the love of it. The “burial with Christ,” is the believer being placed in the watery tomb—withdrawn from life’s activities—his coming out of the water, his resurrection into a new life, walk, and conversation.

The past is gone, and all now is become new. Baptism teaches all this; we aim at this; this is our desire; we fall far short of it no doubt, and may never in the flesh realise it, but we will always aim at it.

We are not to wait till we can say all this, but be baptised, and in so doing say what our aim is.

We aim at nothing short of this—a new course and career.

2. *The believer hereby declares the spiritual change, which God, through His Spirit, has wrought in his heart.*

1. To be baptised “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is to be baptised in the way and in the name of the Holy Trinity, as indicated by Jesus; that is, to receive Christian baptism, as distinguished from the baptism of John.

We have been baptised—immersed in the Spirit, and so we have seen (1) our undone state before God; (2) we have believed in the Lord Jesus; (3) We have been accepted in the Beloved. The Spirit has wrought this

change, and as we are plunged beneath the yielding water, we symbolise what God has done for our hearts.

We have had "the washing of regeneration"—that is, the renewing of the Holy Spirit. We have been born of the Spirit, and now we seek the birth of the water to emblemise it.

The water is an emblem of the washing, and the immersion is an emblem of the burial with our Lord.

3. *The believer hereby avows his covenant to be the Lord's.*—“As many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ.”

This avows that we have chosen Him to be our Master, our Lord, our Saviour.

This avows our badge of discipleship.

This avows our new relationship of Bridegroom and bride.

This avows our enlistment into the army of God.

This avows our response of a good conscience towards God. He appealed to our hearts, and we here respond.

It marks us off from the world, and marks us for God.

It is an act by which we publicly and professedly renounce Satan, and embrace God.

Every unbaptised man refuses all this to himself; he (1) denies himself a participation in this beautiful gospel of symbols; and (2) he denies to others the impressive sight of this symbolical gospel, which is very serious; we must not make our weak brother to offend.

The best way to help ourselves, and others, is to do our duty.

V.—THE EFFICACY OF BAPTISM.

1. *The act of baptism can never save the soul, and is never meant to save the soul.*—We Baptists of all sections of the church of Christ attach the least importance to baptism. The Greek, Roman, and Anglican churches teach that you are saved by it.

Many in these communions, it may be, do not believe this; but this is the teaching of the churches.

All other Pædobaptists attach sufficient importance to it as to desire the sprinkling of all infants, and feel that the unbaptised child has been denied something of great value.

The Lutheran church teaches baptismal regeneration.

We say, "No;" baptism will never save, and you must neither try it or trust it; it will do nothing for you till you are saved, and you have no part nor lot in this matter till you are a believer—a saved man. It is because

you are saved ; it is because you are a child of God—an heir of heaven—that we ask you to be baptised.

2. *The act of baptism is an important means of grace, and always brings with it the reward of obedience.*—We teach that in the keeping, that is, while we are keeping, while in the very act of it ; and for keeping His commands, there is great reward ; and the blessing connected with baptism, when we solemnly and seriously go through it, is the blessing ever related to the doing God's will, because it is His will.

We know that we are obeying His command ; we are following His example ; we are symbolising some of the most precious truths in all the Book ; we are enjoying one of the most impressive means of grace.

Unless we use the ordinance, we cannot get the blessing God has associated with its observance.

There is no saving efficacy in it, but there is a sanctifying efficacy—we feel that the vows of God are on us, and that He is befriending us.

VI.—THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM.

1. *The act is the imperative duty of every believer.*—If the believer can be baptised, if he be not on a sick bed, or in some place where there is no water, he ought to be baptised *at once*.

It is the immediate and pressing duty of every believer to be baptised at the very earliest opportunity possible ; and if, through procrastination, he die unbaptised, the fact of his continued disobedience is his own sin.

Many thus die : many even say that if it were the Lord's will to restore them they would be baptised, but they are often taken away.

There is nothing to wait for. God neither commands nor countenances waiting—*now* is the time for baptism, as well as for salvation.

2. *The act can only be slighted at our own peril.*—We must lightly esteem none of Christ's commandments. They are given, all of them, that they may be obeyed—not those only which we like or prefer—we must have no preference—but obey all the commands He has given us.

This is the test of our obedience. God often establishes tests, that are nothing in themselves, that He may the more put us to the proof. The fruit in the garden was nothing in itself, but it served the moral purpose of trial. So there may be nothing in the act of baptism, but it

serves a high moral purpose. Shall we, or shall we not, submit to the authority of God? All else is but will worship. We must obey, because He commands.

If baptism be not necessary to salvation, it is necessary to obedience.

If there be any doubt about your salvation—if you are an honest and earnest man—you will have the doubt solved at once, and not live in uncertainty, that baptism be avoided. If you are convinced that you are saved, then you are guilty of moral cowardice in not being baptised. Be baptised, every one of you, who believe in the Lord Jesus.

LECTURE VII.

TYPES AND FIGURES OF BAPTISM.

“The teaching of baptism.”—Heb. vi. 2.

THE figurative language of Scripture offers a tempting field for the exercise and display of human ingenuity, and men have not been slow to avail themselves to the full of the opportunity thus given.

The Scriptures are written, not for scholars merely, but for those who will exercise their reason and common sense; and hence the sacred penmen do not hesitate to use bold figures of speech when writing divine truths. Baptism, for instance, is several times referred to in language highly tropical, and on this language the awful structure of baptismal regeneration has been reared. The doctrine is not based on a plain statement, but on some striking figure of speech which, had it been interpreted according to the laws of language, would have rendered impossible this sad delusion. In this discourse I will endeavour to expound the several passages containing figures which, it is alleged, refer to Christian baptism.

I.—THE TYPES OF BAPTISM.

These seem to be two—

1. *The flood.*—The words which seem to make the flood a type of baptism are, “Which also, after a true likeness, doth now save you, even baptism; not the putting away

of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience towards God." 1 Pet. iii. 21. The Quakers use this passage to prove that water baptism is useless, and need not be practised—that the chief and, indeed, only point, is to have "the response of a good conscience towards God." That if we respond to His high appeals, if we in spirit inquire after Him, and so walk after Him, baptism may be well overlooked. The Roman, Greek, and Anglican churches point to this passage, to prove that baptism in water saves us, and that, in point of fact, we cannot be saved without it. Here we have two classes of men drawing diametrically opposite and antagonistic conclusions from one and the same passage. But both these conclusions are condemned in other parts of the book, and, therefore, cannot be the meaning of the passage here, for all parts of Scripture must be interpreted, according to the analogy of the faith.

We are nowhere taught that the flood was strictly a type of baptism, and it is not so regarded here; it is more an illustration than a formal type, and the idea is that as the waters saved Noah and his friends, so the water of baptism in some sense saves us.

The writer then warns us against any idea of water saving us; so he adds, "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh." That is all that water can do, but that is not enough; if we have no more than that, we have nothing—mere baptism cannot save us.

There must be the inquiry—the interrogation of a good conscience towards God. It is this that saves. It is this coming to God, believing in God, responding in heart to God that saves, and this is the teaching, not of this passage, but of the whole book.

Mr. A. J. Mason, in his thoughtful commentary on 1 Peter, says, "Noah's flood, in antitype to this day, saves you, which is no cleansing of the skin from dirt, but an application to God for a clear conscience."

After we have had this spiritual cleansing, or baptism, let us have the outer cleansing in water as its symbol.

I need not add that the text precludes infants, for they know nothing of the state described as an interrogation of a good conscience towards God. The passage only knows of believers' baptism.

2. *The passage through the Red Sea.*—In 1 Cor. x. 12 we read, "For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant how that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptised unto Moses

in the cloud and in the sea." Does this passage refer to the act of baptism, or to the profession we make in baptism, or to both these put together? Most Pædobaptists say it refers to the act of baptism. If this is so, then the idea is that as the Israelites were walled in on either side with water, and overshadowed with the cloud overhead, they may be said to have been baptised. As Stanley puts it, they were "overshadowed by the cloudy pillar, as in baptism we pass under the cloudy veil of water, and through the sea as through the waters of baptism." They were immersed, overshadowed, as far as the possibilities of the case would admit. If immersion was to be typified at all, it was typified here.

The reference, however, is more to the profession made in baptism, than to the act itself. The Israelites here professed their faith in God, and in His servant Moses. They were, as Stanley puts it, "baptised into the dispensation of Moses."

Just as in baptism we declare ourselves the followers of Jesus, and the God who sent Him; declare that we have done with our spiritual Egypt; that we are no longer the slaves of a worse tyrant than Pharaoh, so these Israelites here declared their trust in Moses, and the God who sent him, they declare their renouncement of Pharaoh and Egypt.

They, like us, profess faith in the divinely-appointed leader, and declare their entrance into new privileges, hopes, and destiny.

Understood thus, the passage is full of beauty and suggestiveness. All Pædobaptist interpretations force and torture the passage. These two types or semi-types of baptism both clearly confirm our contention, that baptism is immersion, that it belongs only to those who profess their faith in God and render unto Him the inquiry of a clear conscience.

II.—THE DESIGNATIONS OF BAPTISM.

These are at least five, though some see even more than this number.

1. *The being born of the water.*—In John iii. 5 we read, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." This passage of scripture which is really simple in itself, theologians have made one of the most mysterious in the whole book; they have enveloped it in mysticism and controversial clouds.—Stanley's Corinthians, page 154.

(1.) *Some say that it does not refer to baptism at all.*—They say what is perfectly true, that water is an emblem of the Spirit—not the water of baptism merely, but the article—water itself is an emblem of the Spirit. Nicodemus knew this, as all Jews did; for the Old Testament Scriptures were full of the idea. The idea, then, is that except a man be born of the water, even of the Spirit of which water is the emblem, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Elsewhere, we read of being baptised with the Holy Spirit and with fire—not two elements, but one only—the fire being an emblem, of which the Spirit was the reality. And so here they contend that the Spirit is the reality, of which water was the well-known emblem, and we must have this birth of the Spirit shadowed forth by clear water. This doctrine is true, and it may be the meaning of the text.

(2.) *Some say that water here is the emblem of forgiveness.*—“Then shall I sprinkle clean water on you.” “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” “He shall sprinkle many nations.” “A fountain opened for sins and uncleanness.”

Dr. Guthrie thinks a special water is here referred to—viz., the water that had been mixed with the ashes of the heifer, “the ashes of an heifer sprinkling them that had been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh.” Heb. ix. 13. So that being born of the water means being a partaker of the benefits of redemption; and being born of the Spirit, our regeneration by the Spirit. The text would then point to these two great doctrines of redemption and regeneration.

The text would thus be altogether spiritual, like the discourse in John vi., which refers to spiritual eating and drinking, as this refers to spiritual baptism. Much may be said in favour of this beautiful interpretation.

(3.) *Some say that the words do refer to baptism, and show that without it men cannot see the kingdom of God.*—They say that the two births stand or fall together, and that without the one we cannot have either; no birth in water means no birth of the Spirit.

This may be called religious materialism, for Ritualists and Romanists are the nearest to Infidels in their belief in matter, and they rob the words of Scripture of all their beauty and significance and reduce them to a fossilized superstition. This very chapter shows us how we are to be saved; it is by “believing on Him;” it is by being born again, or born anew, and not by baptism. The

whole chapter contradicts the papists' interpretation of John iii. 5.

(3.) *Some say that the words do refer to baptism and the Holy Spirit.* The text teaches that there must be no rejection or slighting the Lord's ordinance. You ought to be baptised in water, if you have already been baptised in the Spirit. Baptism is the outward sign of your entering the kingdom or the church, and the Spirit is the inward power. You "can enter the kingdom of God *formally* only as you are initiated by baptism, and *really* only as you are purified by the Spirit." "Unless a man becomes the subject of a change of which baptism is the symbol, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." You must consecrate yourself to My service by baptism, and be washed by the renewing of My Spirit, if you are to enter My kingdom.

Men, then, did not think of separating the two births; it was only as controversies arose about baptism that this passage was overlaid with superstition. We are not to deny the presence of baptism in this text on the one hand, nor degrade the rite into mere magic on the other. If we are already plunged in the Spirit, we ought also to be plunged in water. Acts x. 47. Here are the double elements in which we must be immersed, if we would be and appear to be a member of the kingdom of God. If God through His Spirit has given you the pardon of your sins, you ought by baptism to publicly renounce your sins. We must be saved, and we must be obedient in order to be members of this kingdom. In order to be saved we must be born of the Spirit, and in order to be obedient we must be born of the water; and so it is said, "Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit," &c.

2. *The washing away of sin.* Paul in narrating the story of his conversion and commission, uses these words, and says they were addressed to himself: "Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name." Acts xxii. 16. Saul had the repentance and faith which are the prerequisites of baptism, so he is exhorted to observe that ordinance which symbolized his possession of these. He had the inner washing of the Spirit, so he is asked to observe the outward ordinance which symbolized this. He was born of the Spirit, had his sins washed away, so here he is exhorted to observe that new rite which is to signify to all that the baptised has had his sins washed away.

The baptism itself cannot wash away sin, and never was intended to wash away sin; for it is to be given only to those whose sins are already washed away; those who have repented towards God and have exercised faith in the Lord Jesus. But all who have been saved and have had their sins washed away, ought to observe the ceremony which says so to all who see it.

3. *The body washed with water.* "Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water." Heb. x. 22. Many able expositors see in these words no reference whatever to the rite of Christian baptism; but the majority of them do, and as I think correctly, Dr. Moulton, in the Commentary for English Readers, very finely says, "The thought of the whole verse connects itself with the priestly character of those who are the people of God. It is as priests that they enter the house of God, sprinkled with the blood of atonement, and with all defilement washed away. Sprinkled from an evil conscience; that is, freed by the means of the sprinkling from a conscience defiled by guilt."

Dr. Brown thus describes the exhortation of the text, "Having in your baptism made a solemn acknowledgment of your hope of eternal life through Christ Jesus, hold fast the hope which you have acknowledged in opposition equally to the threats of persecutors and the sophistical reasonings of false teachers."

The texts shows us (1) that baptism is a *washing*—not a sprinkling—the word though used in this passage is not applied to baptism; that is described as a *washing*—a washing *in*—not *at* or *with*, but *in* pure water. (2) That the persons referred to made a profession of faith at their baptism—they were believers in Christ. John Wesley says, the words referred to "the hope which we professed at our baptism." Not babes but believers professed this faith and hope, and partook of this baptism.

4. *The laver of regeneration.* "But according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Titus iii. 5. The first clause is "laver," or "bath," or "pool," of regeneration. The laver of regeneration—the bath of regeneration—the pool of regeneration, showing that we have here to do with no sprinkling, no meagre dropping of water, but a bath in which one may be bathed.

The bath of regeneration is the bath in which we pro-

claim our regeneration; the place in which we declare it to the church and the world. Not the place in which the regeneration takes place, but the place in which we declare that it has already taken place.

The second clause gives us the other side of the picture. I have been renewed, new made, made a new creation, born again of the Spirit. The washing which declares the regeneration would serve no good purpose, unless I had the renewing of the Spirit; it is the latter which gives me a right to the former.

Being born of the Spirit I seek the birth of the water; being renewed, I seek the washing, and seek not to sever for a long time that which God designs to be speedily united, the renewing and the washing.

God out of the sheepest kindness has saved us; this salvation becomes ours in fact by the renewing of the Spirit, and this renewal should be declared by our entering the bath of regeneration, the bath wherein it is appointed that we declare our spiritual renovation and renewal.

5. *The laver of water with the word.* "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing (laver) of water with the word," &c. Eph. v. 25, 26. Some see here an allusion to the bridal bath. The bride bathing herself before she is presented to the bridegroom; so the church, the heavenly bride bathes herself before she is at last presented to the Bridegroom to be for ever with Him. Some even have supposed that "with the word" we have a reference to the words of betrothal. The idea is beautiful and may be true, we are both betrothed and bathed.

Some think that we have here no reference to baptism at all. The cleansing, laving, washing, purifying referred to, is that which is accomplished by not literal water, nor symbolically by the water of baptism, but by the spoken word—the gospel of Jesus. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you." "Sanctify them by Thy truth: Thy word is truth." The word here is not the formula of baptism, but the preached the declared gospel and the word of revelation. This is the word which cleanses as water.

We are saved and cleansed from our sins by the word of life, and in the laver of water we declare our cleansing and our holy union with the Saviour.

The text tells us of (1) a laver or bath, and not of a

sprinkling ; and (2) of persons really cleansed, and so are not unconscious babes. The passage sanctions our whole contention as Baptists.

6. *The bathing of ourselves.* "And such were some of you before ye were washed" (bathed *yourselves*), &c. 1 Cor. vi. 2. The middle voice here implies (1) that their baptism was purely a voluntary act on the part of the converts, what was done was done at their own eager request ; or (2) that these converts really baptised themselves, or baptised one another while the pastor stood on the banks of the river, as was the case with the ancient Saxon crowds who poured into the river while Augustine stood looking on, or as the pilgrims who bathe in the Jordan in these days.

The text justifies those cases more common formerly, than now, of men baptising themselves. They broke no law, or church discipline in doing so ; but when the baptism can be performed by a preacher of the word, it is better that he should do it. When we baptise, we baptise according to the formula given in Matt. xxviii. 19 ; but this formula does not forbid people to baptise themselves.

These Christians at Corinth had been washed from their former vain and vile behaviour, therefore they were to live to God ; having been washed, they must now walk worthy of their new state.

This passage, like the others, teaches us (1) that we have here a bathing which washed away, removed, cleansed symbolically, and (2) that the persons cleansed were not infants, but reclaimed sinners.

All the passages of Scripture which we have examined in this discourse, favour our contention as Baptists, and offer not the slightest countenance to infant sprinkling, and we therefore must affectionately urge our Pædobaptist friends to reconsider the whole question of Christian baptism ; for we feel assured that they must see that this rite is immersion, and that it is intended only for believers in the Lord Jesus.

LECTURE VIII. CONFIRMATION.

Preached Lord's-day Morning, July 6th, 1882.

"Who will also confirm you unto the end."—1 Cor. i. 8.

ALL the great Episcopal churches attach much importance to the ceremony which they agree in naming "confirmation." Every week hundreds are confirmed in England alone, and the service is looked forward to with interest by all the parties concerned.

Baptists, and all the other non-Episcopal churches, have refused to observe this rite. They consider it unscriptural, and, on the whole, mischievous.

In this discourse I purpose to lay before you the explanation, the defence, and the refutation of the rite of confirmation.

I.—THE EXPLANATION OF THIS RITE.

1. *The signification of the rite.*—This we ascertain from the names given to it; the definitions which the various churches accept, and the various parts of the rite itself.

(1.) *The names given to it.*—It is called "*consecration*," for it is the setting apart of a person or persons to the service of God. These persons are no longer common or unclean; they are now consecrated to the divine life. It is called "*perfection*," for it perfects that which was commenced in baptism. Baptism pointed forward to this rite, and was completed, perfected in it. This is the final stage of baptism. It is called "*unction*," because of the solemn anointing with oil, which takes place in it in some churches. It is called "*sealing*," for the candidate is sealed—marked off as the possession of God. They are now His, and not their own. It is called "*confirmation*," for here the candidate confirms all that was promised in his or her name in baptism, and in this service he is confirmed in the grace supposed to have been imparted in baptism.

All these ideas are perfectly scriptural. We are sanctified, consecrated, set apart ones; but we are set apart by no mere outward rite, such as our Episcopal friends observe.

We are set apart by the Holy Spirit, and the evidence that we are so is not the observance of any human ceremony, but our living the consecrated life. We are sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God, and not by the manipulation of man.

We ought, after our baptism, to go on to "perfection," but the perfection we must seek after is spiritual. It is not the observance of a mere mechanical rite; our baptism points forward to a life of holy endeavour, and not to the mere submitting to some religious ceremony.

We ought to have an "unction," a sacred anointing; but it is not oil put on our foreheads by the fingers of a bishop. It is an "unction from the Holy One." It is a spiritual anointing. It is the act of the Holy Spirit on our spirits.

We ought to be "sealed," but it must be the "sealing of the Holy Spirit;" "the Holy Spirit of promise, by whom we are sealed." It is the Holy Spirit of God marking us off as God's people, and God's possession.

We ought to be "confirmed;" but this is not and cannot be done by a mere outward ceremonial. The rite of confirmation cannot effect nor occasion confirmation, in the Scriptural sense of the term.

It is God Himself who confirms, anoints, and seals us. "Now He, who *establishes* us with you in Christ, and who *anointed* us is God; who also *sealed* us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

We must look to God alone for confirmation, and if we look to any man or human institution to confirm us, we err. Man, by exhortation, can confirm us instrumentally, but he cannot by any mere mechanical act, such as that observed by Episcopal churches, confirm us.

(2.) *The definitions given to it.*—The Roman church defines it as "unction by chrism (accompanied by a set form of words), applied by the bishop to the forehead of one baptised, by means of which he receives increase of grace and strength, by the institution of Christ." But (a) Christ instituted no such ceremony; (b) Christ never commanded any of His ministers to put oil on the forehead of any believer; (c) Christ never promised to afford any special strength to persons thus anointed.

There is not the slightest evidence that people receive any grace or strength from observing this ceremony, and if they did, (1) that would not justify us in establishing a sacrament not appointed by Christ; and (2) The same strength would be vouchsafed to us by the observance of

those things really established by Christ and His apostles.

The *Greek* church defines it as "a mystery in which the baptised believer, being anointed with holy chrism in the name of the Holy Ghost, receives the gifts of the Holy Ghost for growth and strength in the spiritual life." But (1) The Lord and His apostles say nothing about this chrism. (2) The Lord and His apostles refer to another kind of anointing altogether. The "confirmation" of the Greek church is unknown in the Bible.

The *Anglican* church defines it as "a rite, by means of which the regenerate are strengthened by the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, on the occasion of their satisfying the baptismal vow." We ask, who required this service at your hand? What authority have you for asserting that the regenerate are strengthened at this rite and by it, by the manifold gifts of the Spirit? The Bible is silent about this "ratification of their baptismal vow."

The three definitions substantially agree, but they define a rite that sprang from human ingenuity, and is nowhere taught in the inspired volume.

(3.) *The several parts of it.*—The parts of the ceremonial are four; (a) The anointing with oil in the case of the Roman and Greek churches only; (b) The making the sign of the cross, which is also largely confined to these two churches; (c) The laying on of hands, which is observed by the Roman, Greek, and Anglican churches; (d) Prayer, which like the former item, all three Episcopal churches agree in observing.

Three of the ceremonies above-named have no grounds in Scripture, and their introduction as religious acts was simply to exalt the priest, at the expense of the people. They added to the importance of the priest, and the dependence of the people; and only where the pastors are considered, and called "priests," is the ceremony observed.

When people are declaring themselves by a scripturally warranted act to be on the Lord's side, prayer is comely, and hence, when we baptise we always expressly pray for the candidate or candidates. While the minister audibly prays, all the brethren and sisters unite in silent supplication to God that those about to put on Christ, by baptism, may prove faithful unto death. We have scriptural authority for thus commending all converts to God; but there is not the slightest authority for observing the

rite of confirmation, as practised by all the Episcopal churches.

2. *The person who must perform the rite.*—The ancient church taught that the rite must be performed by (1) the bishop; (2) The bishop was permitted to give a priest a *special* commission to perform the rite; and (3) The bishop could even give a *general* commission for this purpose.

The bishop must perform the rite, or else it must be performed by one who had his distinct authority for doing so.

The whole rite, in all its varied and changing aspects, has been much debated, and yet the Bible contains not a single word on the subject.

It will be seen from this brief notice, that as the priests exalted themselves above the people, so the prelates exalted themselves above the priests, and the Pope exalted himself above all; and thus the church became gradually a huge hierarchy, alien alike to the spirit, and the methods of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the Roman and Anglican churches only the bishop can confirm. The priest is permitted to generally manage the spiritual affairs of the parish. He can preach, teach, and prepare the candidates for confirmation, but he cannot confirm. The bishop, who knows nothing of the spiritual history of the candidates, and cannot have the same love for and interest in them, and may even differ widely from them and their spiritual guide in religious matters, he and he alone can confirm.

The man who has had all the preparatory work to do must stand aside, while a stranger comes in and confirms the candidates. No one can confirm in the Anglican church but the man who has been sent there by the prime minister of the day.

The Scripture nowhere warrants such an authority of one pastor over another. It is alien altogether to the gospel ministry.

The Greek and Lutheran churches permit the priests to confirm, and in this way preserve the ancient custom of the Christian church, which allowed all the pastors to confirm; but the bishop's authority is seen in the former of these two churches, by the arrangement that the chrism must be prepared and consecrated by the bishop alone.

By departing from the simple rite of Scripture baptism, these Episcopal churches have opened up for them-

selves fruitless controversies, and adopted barren ceremonies.

3. *The time to observe the rite.*—In ancient times the candidate, as he came out of the water, was consecrated by the bishop, who was often present, and, if not present, he confirmed the candidates as soon after their baptism as possible. The baptism and the confirmation were considered the two parts of the one rite, and were not divided by any delay, except when it could not be avoided.

The Greek church still baptises and confirms at the same time, and regards the two rites as really one.

The Roman, Lutheran, and Anglican churches purposely allow several years to intervene between the baptism and the confirmation, but the arguments which justify their doing so would equally justify their delaying the baptism itself. It is as incongruous to baptise, as to confirm the unconscious. Both ceremonies ought to be postponed, till the candidates know their import. This course would be at once scriptural and reasonable.

The Roman church alone has elevated this rite into a "sacrament." The other Episcopal churches consider the rite to be one of great importance. It is the way of entrance into the church and to the Lord's table, and those who neglected it were, at one time, severely punished; now, they are denied church fellowship.

The personal profession of faith made at confirmation, is the one that ought to be made at baptism and by baptism; but this rite of confirmation, which is oftener a collapse than a confirmation, is a ceremony which all who take the Scriptures as their rule of faith must repudiate, and fall back upon the gospel rite of baptism.

II.—THE DEFENCE OF THIS RITE.

Though Episcopalians are unwilling to defend "confirmation" from Scripture, yet they do sometimes quote a text or two which they fancy, in some way or other, will support them.

Tradition they also quote; but the voice of tradition is contradictory, and is bound to be, for one voice speaks concerning the confirmation of *believers* who have just been baptised, and the other refers to the various forms of *pædobaptism*. There is sure to be variety of practice when men allow tradition to share, in any measure, the authority which belongs alone to the Scripture.

The Episcopalians point to the evidence of three classes of texts, which they find in God's Word.

1. *The texts where the term "confirm" occurs.*

(1.) *Acts* xiv. 22. "Confirming the souls of the disciples."

There is no word here about a religious rite or ceremony; there is nothing about anointing with oil; there is nothing about the sign of the cross; nothing about the laying on of hands; nothing about the absolute necessity of a bishop confirming the disciples.

The term used (*epistērizon*) means to strengthen, to establish, to confirm. The text itself tells us the means used to secure this end; "*Exhorting* them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations, we must enter into the kingdom of God."

The converts referred to were much exposed to the sin of apostasy, and so Paul uses these spiritual means to confirm their character and to consolidate their creed.

That is the true confirmation, and these are the means of it, and they are the means which we Baptists use in every case, and must use, if we are to be truly confirmed in the faith.

(2.) *Acts* xv. 32. "And Judas and Silas being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them." These men are described as "prophets," that is, preachers, and in keeping with this they are represented as exhorting the brethren, and so confirming them. Judas and Silas used the same means as Paul, and as all Baptists used in former times, and still use.

These men were neither priests nor prelates, and yet they confirmed; and here we read, not about a ritual, but of "exhortation," with a view to a deepened spiritual life. This is confirmation.

(3.) *Acts* xv. 41. "And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." That is, in all these districts he did what has been already somewhat fully described (*Acts* xiv. 22.) He exhorted the brethren to hold fast by their principles, and to sedulously endeavour to develop their spiritual character and life.

The speeches and the letters of Paul and Peter show us the kind of exhortations the heroes of the cross gave the brethren, with a view to their being confirmed in the faith; but nowhere in the Book do we read of any rite resembling that of confirmation, as practised by the Episcopal churches.

2. *The texts where the word "unction" occurs.*

(1.) *1 John* ii. 20. "And ye have an anointing from the Holy One.

(2.) 1 John ii. 27. "The anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you." "But as His anointing teacheth you all things."

The prophets, priests, and kings of ancient Israel were anointed; and Jesus Christ, as the great Prophet, Priest, and King, was spiritually anointed. We, who are prophets, priests, and kings, in Him, are also anointed: but it is by the Holy Spirit of promise, and not by Roman, Greek, or Anglican bishops. The latter unction is a poor substitute for the former; and if we have the former, we need not the latter, which is at once useless and unscriptural. Let us, therefore, seek the "anointing of the Holy One," and reject the vain unction of the bishop.

3. *The texts where the phrase "laying on of hands" occurs.*

(1.) *Acts viii. 14—17.* "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." It seems that it was a subject of surprise to the Christians at Jerusalem that the Samaritans had so extensively received the gospel of Jesus; and so Peter and John went down to that city, at the request of the other apostles, to see what kind of spiritual work was going on. Peter and John were evidently satisfied that a work of grace had been going on in the hearts of the people; but they saw that though the Samaritan brethren were partakers of the Spirit's "grace," they had none of the Spirit's "gifts," which were so common in those days; so they prayed that the people might receive these gifts, and in answer to their prayers and laying on of hands, gifts fell on the people.

The term used, "fallen on them," seems to point to some visible outpouring of the Spirit—as on other occasions—and not merely to the invisible coming of the Spirit into the heart.

The fact that Simon Magus, a great magician, was so struck with the power of the gifts, that he offered money for it,—the fact that he thought that such power would be of supreme service to him, shows that we are here reading of the miraculous display of the Spirit's energies, and no such vain ceremony as that performed by prelates.

A bishop in any Episcopal church would be amazed beyond all utterance at any one who should be so struck with anything he gave at confirmation, as to offer money for it.

The bishop knows he gives nothing, and the confirmed know that they receive nothing. A mere mechanical

ceremony is gone through, which may or may not prove a means of grace.

The bishops go through a form, but impart no power.

(2.) *Acts* xix. 1—7. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came upon them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied." This was a similar case to the one just considered. When the hands were laid on the people, the Spirit entered their hearts and minds with miraculous power. This was soon made evident by the gifts which the converts at once displayed. When the apostles laid their hands on the people, miraculous gifts were imparted; but the bishops cannot impart these gifts, and they know it. The bishop goes through a ceremony unknown to the apostles, and he fails to do what the apostles did when he does lay on the hands. He confers no gifts nor graces, whereas the apostles did both.

(3.) *Heb.* vi. 2. "And laying on of hands."

A. Jesus laid His hands on children, but it was to "bless them," and not simply as part of a religious ceremony.

B. The apostles laid on their hands in healing the sick (*Acts* xxviii. 8), but this has nothing whatever to do with any rite of "confirmation."

C. The apostles laid on their hands in ordaining to office (*Acts* vi. 6; *1 Tim.* v. 22.)

D. The apostles laid on their hands when imparting any special gifts (*2 Tim.* i. 6.)

Patriarchs in blessing their children, penitents in offering sacrifices for their sins, priests when consecrating any person to the sacred office, laid on hands; but none of these things has anything whatever to do with the rite of confirmation.

The apostles, when they laid on hands, conferred substantial gifts, which we cannot do. Hence we have not been commanded to observe the custom; yet bishops, though they know that the power is gone, keep up the empty form! It will be time enough to use the form when God indicates His will by giving the power to impart spiritual gifts with it. Till then, our wisest course is to abolish the ceremony. It will thus be seen that the custom or rite of confirmation cannot be supported by the Scriptures, nor by common sense nor reason.

III.—THE REFUTATION OF THIS RITE.

1. *The Lord neither preached nor practised it.*—The Lord

taught substantially every Christian doctrine, and any doctrine not taught directly or indirectly by Him is not to be received by us. An institution not founded by our Lord nor by His authority, is not a Christian institution. It may be a useful ceremony; it may be wise, politic, safe, but it is not a Christian institution, and must not be so named. The Lord founded baptism and the eucharist, and taught us how to observe them; but He nowhere, directly or indirectly, says one word about confirmation, as practised among the Episcopal churches.

He says nothing about the rite itself, nor how it is to be observed, nor who are to observe it, nor who ought to officiate at it, nor what oil to use, if oil is to be used at all. Surely, it is unwise to have among our religious institutions a rite on which our Saviour said not a single word.

2. *The apostles neither preached nor practised it.*

(1.) *The apostles sometimes had hands laid on them. Acts xiii. 3.*

The apostles were sometimes the messengers of the churches. It was the church that sent Peter and John to Samaria, and it was the church which sent Paul and Barnabas on a missionary tour; and when the church at Antioch did so, she laid her hands on them.

Surely, the church was not confirming Paul and Barnabas; but, if not, then no argument on behalf of confirmation can be founded on passages of Scripture, containing a reference to the laying on of hands. Besides, the laying on of hands might be a perfectly scriptural practice, and yet the rite of confirmation be altogether unknown to the apostles.

The two things are quite distinct and different.

(2.) *The apostle tells us distinctly who it is that really confirmed, anointed, and sealed the disciples.*

“Who shall also confirm you unto the end.”—1 Cor. i. 8.

The two Greek words used in this controversy on confirmation are—

A. *Bebaioo*. This term, when applied to persons, means “to establish,” “to make steadfast.” When applied to things, it means to corroborate, ratify, establish; and hence, in both cases, really to confirm in the true sense.

B. *Episterizo*. This term means “to place firmly upon,” “to rest on,” “lean upon,” “to be supported on,” and hence, tropically, “to confirm.”

It is God that converts and confirms. He does both,

and both alike, and the one in order to the other; conversion must ever look forward to confirmation. God does both, and He does both through His ministries of the Spirit and the Word, and so we have to look up to Him, and not to prelates and priests, for both conversion and confirmation.

We must be confirmed, but it is God who confirms us. He establishes our Christian character and creed, and we co-operate with Him in this by attending to all the means of grace. Thereby do we deepen our spiritual life, quicken our spiritual instincts, and inspire our spiritual activities. Devotion and duty alike become a pleasure when we are truly confirmed. We are thus "made steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

This, and not the vain ceremony performed by a bishop, is scriptural confirmation.

3. *The early Christians neither preached nor practised it.*

We have the record of the early church in the "Acts of the Apostles," but this record never refers to the rite of confirmation. We have letters addressed to pastors, such as Timothy and Titus, and yet no mention is made of this rite. We have letters addressed to several churches, whose names are given, and yet there is not one reference, however dim, to this rite. We have letters to the scattered of many countries, and yet never once is this rite brought before us.

The believers everywhere were baptised, and the baptised were added to the church without the intervention of prelates. It was only when a pastor became a lord bishop, with priests under him, and the Christian ministry had degraded itself into an unscriptural hierarchy, that the preacher of the gospel was denied the privilege of confirming, even according to the dead ceremony. How contrary to all God's Word is the dogma that the man who has taught you, guided you, counselled you, warned you, and been the means of your conversion, and prepared you to declare yourself on the Lord's side, should be set aside; and a stranger whom, perhaps, you have never seen before and may never see again—one who cannot know you and love you as your own pastor does—should come forward, and he alone receive you into the church. Surely the one who has been your spiritual guide is the one best fitted to confirm you in the faith, and that is the only confirmation recognised in the Word of God.

All the confusion, and all the display of tyranny and

ambition in our Episcopal churches, arise from the introduction of infant baptism, and the adding to the simple ordinance of God. Let us exhort all to return to the apostolic teaching and example. We can baptise only believers, and confirm these not by a dead ceremony, but by the living words of the gospel of Christ.

LECTURE IX.

SOME SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES TO BAPTISM.

Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead?—
1 Cor. xv. 29.

In this sermon I am wishful to expound four passages of Scripture which refer to Christian baptism. Paul is regarded as the author of the whole four. There is considerable doubt about his authorship of the letter to the Hebrews; but the vast majority of scholars hold, that if the language is the language of Apollos or Luke, or a great unknown, the thoughts are the thoughts of Paul. For myself, I see no sufficient reason for forsaking the time-honored opinion, that we owe the letter to the Hebrews to the pen of the great apostle of the Gentiles. In these passages we have a few sidelights on the great question of Christian baptism: let us now examine them.

I.—WE PUT ON CHRIST BY BAPTISM.

1. "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ?*"—Gal. iii. 27. The thought of the paragraph, of which the text forms a part, seems to be—before faith came we were in tutelage—the law prepared us for and led us up to Christ, but now in Christ we are *all* sons. There is no caste—no parties—no sex even, we are all one—as one man in Christ. There can be no distinction of nation—Jew or Greek; there can be no distinction of social caste, no slave and no freeman; there can be no distinction of sex, all are one. They have equal privileges, and are equally exalted into the family of God. The terrible dis-

inctions which resulted from nationalities, social status, and sex are all gone. The least of you is a son of God, and the greatest of you is no more. Although distinctions must remain in this life, yet, in the church, all must evaporate before the glorious truth of our oneness with Christ.

Now in baptism we declare all this: we "put on Christ" by our baptism; we say to the world that we appropriate it all, the sonship in Christ and the heirship with Christ. We stand towards God as Christ did; because we have put Him on, we also are sons of God. In baptism we assume our characteristic dress. All officers have their characteristic robes, and Christ is ours. We may and ought to be "clothed with humility" and "clothed with charity;" but in baptism we say that we are clothed with Christ. We have entered His service and assumed His livery, entered His kingdom and wear the national garments.

In Romans xiii. 14, we are exhorted thus, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." In our text we are reminded that we have done so, we have done so in our baptism, and we must continue to have on "the Lord Jesus."

Whoever is in Christ has, in a true sense, put on Christ, even though he has not been baptized; but he ought to declare that he is in Christ by putting on the Lord Jesus publicly by baptism. We put on Christ internally by faith; we put Him on *externally* by baptism. By belief we separate ourselves from the ungodly, but by baptism we symbolically enter the kingdom of God. The belief and the baptism ought not, therefore, to be widely separated.

The whole reasoning of the paragraph shows that only those who have faith can thus put on Christ; the deed is impossible to a child, and surely the text shows us that we do not put on Christ by the mere ceremony of sprinkling only, we declare the fact by our being plunged into the baptismal waters.

Baptism is a decisive step in our religious history, and ought to come speedily after our faith in Jesus.

II.—WE HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY.

"For in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free."—1 Cor. xii. 13.

The Spirit here is the Holy Spirit, who is frequently mentioned in connection with baptism. Not only in

John iii. 5, but also in this letter, chap. vi. 2, we see the Spirit related to baptism: "And such were some of you; but ye washed yourselves, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." The Lord Jesus procured salvation for them by His sacrifice; they were justified by faith, they were sanctified by the Spirit, and the bathing of themselves in the water was the sign that they believed themselves to be partakers of the blessings of the Gospel of God.

So also in Titus iii. 5, we have "The laver of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." The reality and its outer symbol. The baptism of the Spirit and its outward emblems. "We are cleansed by the washing of water with the word;" but it is the Spirit that cleanses, not water, and that by the word; and all this goes on that we may be presented to God faultless, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

So we are baptized into the *name* of the Spirit as well as into the name of the Father and Son. We are baptized into the name of the Father, as revealed by Jesus Christ, into the name of Jesus as the book reveals Him in His person and offices, and in the name of the Spirit so vividly revealed to us by the Lord Jesus.

We are immersed in the Spirit, and the Spirit leads us to Jesus and brings us into His church. As Stanley says, "We are plunged into the rushing blast of the divine breath."

By the Spirit we have been baptized into one body, and hence we read in Eph. iv. 4, "Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in, one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism," &c.

The Church is one body with many members; one body embracing all conditions, classes, orders of men; it is one, and we are united, made one in it notwithstanding all our moral, intellectual, and social variations. Here we are parts of a whole, we are one in Christ.

If we are real members of this body, we have been baptized in the Spirit. There is first a union in the Spirit, and then a union in and with the church.

Plunged into the Spirit first, and then, as a condition of membership, plunged into the baptismal waters.

Not the outward body only plunged in water, but the inward spirit plunged into the Spirit; we pass through the

water, and the Spirit passes through us; and not merely our being put into the water, but the Spirit is put into us, we are "made to drink of one Spirit." John the Baptist told us of this baptism. In effect, he says, "You see me plunge these bodies into water, an act which really reaches the body only, and may speak only of outward reformation; but the Christ will plunge you into the Spirit, for that is the element which he uses; not water, though that also will be used as a symbol by His disciples, and properly so: but just as they, just as I, plunge you in water, so will He plunge you into the Spirit;" and to show the real change which will thereby be effected, He adds, by way of symbol, "in fire."

First let us have the baptism of the Spirit, and then by baptism in water become members of that one body of which Christ is the living Head.

III.—WE ARE BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD.

"*Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptised for them?*" 1 Cor. xv. 29. This passage was no doubt clear to the Corinthians, though to us it is so perplexing.

Paul often makes digressions from his main argument, but he usually brings himself back to the point where he left us in such a gradual manner that we generally can see the continuity of his argument. From verse 20 to 28 he has made such a digression, but in verse 29 he somewhat abruptly brings before us a most startling statement. In verse 19, he said, "But for the resurrection we should be the most to be pitied of all men," and in verse 29 he says, in substance, that if the resurrection of Christ has not taken place as the pledge of the resurrection of all men, what is the meaning of the action of those who are baptized for the dead, and where is the sense of our incurring hourly danger and braving almost certain death for our belief in a general resurrection?

In expounding Scripture it is necessary for us to discover the clause, or phrase, or word which makes the difficulty, here it is clearly the clause, "for the dead," without that clause all would be clear enough, the passage would then read, "Else what shall they do who are baptized? If the dead are not raised, why are they baptized?" Baptism commemorates the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, and our death to sin, burial with Christ, and resurrection to a new life; but if there is,

and has been no resurrection, why should we continue to symbolize by baptism what never has been nor shall be ?

We cannot be baptized without thereby declaring our belief in the resurrection of Jesus and our own future resurrection. We can be sprinkled without declaring this, and hence one of the great evils of substituting this tradition of man for the ordinance of God.

The whole difficulty of the passage lies in the clause, "for the dead," and this has been a difficulty for over 1800 years, and has given rise to a score of different interpretations. Dean Stanley gives the following twelve. (1.) "What shall they gain who are baptized for the removal of their dead works? In baptism they profess symbolically to have had their sins washed away, to have done with dead works, and now mean to serve the living God. This statement is true, whether it explains this passage or not. (2.) What shall they gain who are baptised for the hope of the resurrection of the dead? (3.) What shall they gain who are baptised into the death of Christ? Those of you who have been baptised into Christ have been baptised into His death, &c., (Rom. v. 3, 4.) In this passage the apostle works out the great thoughts of death, burial, and resurrection. (4.) What shall they gain who are afflicted (Mark x. 38 and Luke xii. 50,) for the hope of the resurrection of the dead? (5.) What shall they gain who are baptised at the moment of death with a view to their state when dead? Alluding to death-bed baptisms.

(6.) What shall they gain who are baptised into the place of the dead martyrs ?

This is the view of Dr. Brown in his great work on "The Resurrection of the Dead," and he works it out with great eloquence. Dr. Candlish also, in his fine work, "Life is a Risen Saviour," takes the same view: he eloquently says, "The vacancies left in the ranks of the Christian army, when saints and martyrs fall asleep in Jesus, are supplied with fresh recruits, eager to be baptised as they were; and pledged by baptism to fall as they fell at the post of duty and danger. It a touching sight which the Lord's baptised host presents to view, especially in troublous times. Column after column advancing to the breach, as on a forlorn hope, in the storming of Satan's citidal of worldly pomp and power, is mowed down by the ruthless fire of persecution. But ever as one line disappears, a new band of volunteers start up,

candidates for the seal of baptism, even though in their case, as in the case of their predecessors in the deadly strife, the seal of baptism is to be the earnest of the bloody crown of martyrdom. It would seem surely to be in the line of this thought that the key to the perplexing phrase, "baptised for the dead," is to be found.

This is a beautiful and true conception, and one regarded with favour among Scotch thinkers, and it may be the true explanation of this passage. What shall they do who are coming forward to take the place of the dead who died in the faith and for the dead—taking their place—working as they worked, and dying as they died in the blessed hope of the resurrection unto life? What shall they do? shall they cease to declare themselves on the Lord's side—shall they refuse that baptism which speaks of burial and resurrection?

Shall they instead, adopt the Epicurean course, "Eat, drink, for to-morrow we die?" What shall we apostles do? Shall we give up, exposing to violence and cruel destruction the only body we shall ever have? "You see," he seems to say, "where your heresy of no resurrection would land you. It would bring our holy religion to an end, and cut off the line of holy confessors and martyrs."

(7.) What shall they gain who are baptised *into the name of the dead*—as, for instance, into the name of Jesus, or of John. If there be no resurrection, these are dead and gone. What use is there, therefore, in being baptised in their name? If Jesus has not risen, you are in your sins. He is dead; what service can it render you to be baptised for Him?

(8.) What shall they gain who are baptised *in order to convert those who are dead in sin*? Many have been thus converted in all ages, and many are so converted now. There is something very impressive in the ordinance of believers' baptism. All the Lord's ordinances are appeals to the unconverted—to the dead in sin.

(9.) What shall they gain *who are baptised only to die*? If death is an end of us, why be baptised at all? It can serve no good or wise purpose to continue a symbol, if there be no reality behind it.

(10.) What shall they gain *who are baptised over the graves of the dead*? as, for instance, over the graves of the martyrs and the murdered saints. Those who have been moved by their steadfastness and holy resignation, and have thus been led to God, and taken the place of

the slaughtered victims in the church, and thus been, as it were, baptised over their graves; or, it may be, that they were literally baptised over the graves of the saints and martyrs. What purpose can be served by this course, if the dead rise not?

(11.) What shall they gain who are baptised when dying, as a sign that their dead bodies shall be raised?

(12.) What shall they gain who are baptised for the good of the Christian dead?

That is, to hasten the day of the resurrection, by accomplishing the number of the elect. This was the view of the learned Olshausen.

Stanley does not accept any of these views himself, but expounds one which finds as much favour among Episcopal expositors, as the view indicated above, and numbered 6, finds favour among Presbyterian expositors.

Their ideas of church government, of course, have nothing whatever to do with their views of this passage; but it is a fact that the Episcopalians, for the most part, believe the passage to refer to a very ancient custom of putting a living man under the bed containing a dead catechumen, who died unbaptised. The dead man is asked if he desires to be baptised, &c., and the living man answers for the dead man, and is literally baptised for him, in his place and stead.

We are told that this was done, lest in the resurrection of the dead, the deceased catechumen should be punished for having not been baptised. Some feared that the unbaptised should not rise at all, or rise to evil, and the survivor resolved to complete the work which untimely death interrupted. From love to the dead, and devotion to the Lord Jesus, they took the place of the deceased, and were baptised for him.

No doubt there was a custom of this kind during the first three centuries, which, with modifications, may have been borrowed either from the Jews or the Greeks, or it may have been suggested by this very passage—thinking that such must be the meaning. Some of the early Christians instituted this practice. I barely think that such a custom existed in the Corinthian church in Paul's time, though it is quite possible, and the apostle may here be using the *argumentum ad hominem*; for great disorders existed in that church, and great heresies too, as this very chapter, and, indeed, the whole epistle proves. Mr. Teignmouth Shore accepts Dean Stanley's position (see Commentary for English Readers, *ad. loc.*) The question

then would mean, why do you continue to baptise for the dead, if the dead rise not? Why observe the custom any longer?

The second of the twelve opinions here given seems to have much in its favour. Mr. F. W. Robertson thinks it an opinion well worth mentioning. The sentence, it is contended, is elliptical; expanded, it would run thus: "When baptised, you made a profession of belief in the resurrection, why then were ye baptised into the faith of a resurrection if there be none? Your very baptism in water was a burial and resurrection. Why go through this rite at all, if there be no resurrection of the dead? You have been baptised into the confidence and expectation of a resurrection of the dead, but surely there was no need for this, if the dead rise not?"

The evidently impassioned mood of the speaker would express itself most naturally and readily in ellipses.

This interpretation need not exclude all the others. It is possible that several of them were seeking expression at the same time, and that Paul has used a phrase which gives most of them utterance.

(1.) He may have thought of the symbolic meaning of baptism, the washing away of our dead works.

(2.) He may have thought of our profession of belief, and hope in the resurrection, which we make in baptism.

(3.) He may have thought of the afflictions of some for the hope of the resurrection of the dead.

(4.) He may have thought of our being baptised into the death of Christ.

(5.) He may have thought of those who were baptised at the moment of death, so confident was their hope of the resurrection.

(6.) He may have thought of those who nobly came forward to take the place of the martyrs now gone to heaven.

(7.) He may have thought of those baptised into the name of the dead—even Jesus, and how vain the ceremony of baptism must be if He were really now dead.

(8.) He may have thought of the impression which baptism makes on those still dead in sin.

(9.) He may have thought of the folly of being baptised at all, if we are to die, and have no resurrection.

(10.) He may have thought of the ardent soldiers of the cross, who were baptised over the graves of the martyrs.

(11.) He may have thought of the completing the

number of the elect—the gathering of all the people of God together, following the general resurrection.

All these thoughts may have seethed in his great mind. The apostle in this verse returned to the subject left off at verse 19, and no doubt before resuming his pen, all these thoughts may have turned themselves over and over again in his mind. I protest against finding only one idea associated with given parts of the book. If *I* may have several thoughts working simultaneously in my mind when writing a sentence, so, also, may an *apostle*; and as I may have many thoughts in reading what the apostles wrote, so he may have had several thoughts while writing this sentence, and hence all these twelve ideas may have been present to the mind of Paul, and he may even have thought of the custom of baptising for dead persons, if such custom was known at that time in Corinth, and other thoughts also may have been present when he wrote the perplexing sentence. All these interpretations may be harmonised thus—they are not antagonistic—one does not necessarily exclude all the others. They may well be parts of the explanation—the full explanation we may never know while in the flesh.

Whatever be the meaning of the words, no one seeks to teach baby sprinkling from them, but it is pretty generally admitted that the persons here were immersed at their own voluntary request. The passage supports our contention, that we ought to be immersed on a profession of our faith in Jesus.

IV.—WE HAVE THE TEACHING OF BAPTISMS.

“The teaching of baptism,” Heb. vi. 2. This is a difficult clause to translate. The Greek seems to make it “baptisms of doctrines,” and some have so rendered it. Others suggest that it ought to be “baptisms,” “doctrines,” but our best scholars and our recent revisers translate it “The teaching of baptisms.”

The word here rendered “baptisms” is used only once in this connection, and there it is in the singular (Col. ii. 12.) It is usually applied to Jewish ablutions or washings, and hence our revisers have put washings in the margin.

It was most necessary to have teaching of baptisms. The Jew, for instance, had his many ablutions, and the disciples of John had his baptism; but Christian baptism differed from all these. It was not a Jewish rite, neither was it a dipping pledging us to repentance, but a solemn

dipping into the name of the Triune Jehovah, by which we put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Apollos, for instance, needed to be taught the way of the Lord more perfectly on this very subject, and no doubt all the Jewish converts were thus taught.

The Greeks also required to be taught the great difference between this rite and their former heathen ablutions.

The nature, design, and importance of baptism would be taught them. There is no less need now to lay this subject before our people in all its bearings, and if we do so it is sure to throw much light upon both Testaments. We need to be told, not so much about baptism itself, as its teaching, and this teaching will show us the importance of observing the rite of baptism, as it is given us in the Book.

All these references to baptism which we have just examined, go to establish the exposition of the doctrine of Christian baptism, adopted by the Baptist denomination.

LECTURE X.

THE STUDY OF BAPTISM.

Preached Lord's-day Morning, November 6th, 1881.

“Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death?”—Rom. vi. 3.

WE cannot neglect the study of any part of God's book without suffering for it. He has given it all, and he has given it all for our meditation, and all Scripture is profitable for instruction and correction; and so, as far as we can, we must make ourselves familiar with the sacred page, and resolutely determine to be true to its teaching.

No one of the Christian institutions can be slighted or overlooked without our suffering in some way for it. The institution of baptism cannot be neglected with impunity, nor should we as Christians ever desire to slight this ordinance. In order to aid us in the study of this important subject, we will now consider three things.

I.—THE REASONS WHY WE OUGHT TO STUDY THIS SUBJECT.

1. *It is a Christian institution.* All the allusions to it show that it is so, and that it is of great importance.

“Are ye ignorant that all we who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death?”

Are words of such solemn significance to be overlooked? Are we to refuse to be baptised, and so profess our dependence, or trust in His death as the ground of all our confidence and hope?

“For as many of you as were baptised into Christ did put on Christ.” We declared that He was our Leader—that His person was our Substitute, and is all our plea; that we are now clothed in Him. Shall any believer refuse to declare all this?

“Buried with Him in baptism.” Do we refuse this burial? Do we refuse to go with Him into the watery tomb? We ought to have a powerful reason for this refusal.

“Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”

The Lord considered it to be needful and proper in His own case, and it cannot be less so in ours. Why should we hold aloof from an institution observed by Him, and which He has commanded us to observe?

We must never permit ourselves to say, “This is not essential,” or “That is not essential.” The question is, “What has Jesus commanded?” and let us resolve to do that, not because it is essential to salvation or otherwise; but simply because it is His will that we obey. It is not for us to throw barriers in our own way, or to trifle with any command of His. It is ours simply to do His will.

2. *It is an institution which concerns all believers.*—What was the order of procedure in the apostolic days?

The preacher in the first instance declared the gospel to all, and freely and earnestly urged salvation on all.

The penitents were then asked to believe—only believe—to trust in the life and death of Jesus.

The believers were taken to the baptismal waters and there made to put on the Lord Jesus—be baptised into His death—be buried with Him in baptism.

The baptised were then “added unto the church.” They were expected to join—were delighted to join—and required no pressure, no urgent appeals, to join the Christian church.

There was no hindrance put in their way by the preacher, and they put none in their own way.

There was no procrastination on the part of the baptised.
They gladly received the word :

They were baptised :

They were added to the church.

This order we Baptists adopt, and are amazed and grieved that people require so much pressure, not so much to do a duty, though it is also that, but to enjoy the blessings of the church of Christ.

Every believer ought to be baptised, and join the church.

3. *It is an institution full of spiritual significance.*—All admit this, even the Pædobaptists admit that the ordinance is full of spiritual significance—that it symbolizes most precious truths. We, as a denomination, have all along taught this, and taught what these special truths are.

The book above us insists upon this. All the references to baptism in the epistles point to its spiritual teaching. We have no reference to the simple *fact* of baptism, but always to the blessed truths connected with it.

Now what are these? You ought to know them—search the book for them—make baptism a study. Not for the sake of the *act* of baptism, that is nothing; but this specific act is rich in teaching. We make nothing of the act itself, the Baptists make little of the mere act itself; but we make much, and cannot make too much of the doctrine of baptism, and we insist that the doctrine in part is connected with the act of immersing.

For these and other sufficient reasons we ought to study this subject and our duty in relation to it.

II.—THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE OUGHT TO STUDY THIS SUBJECT.

1. *It is a spirit of earnestness.*—To trifle here is often to trifle in all the other spheres of life's activities.

To be earnest at all times we must trifle at no time. We must suffer in many ways for all frivolity, and most of all must we suffer *for religious frivolity*.

With what interest *you* study a letter from a friend at a distance. It will be carefully scanned, and weighed over, and valued. Now this book is at least a letter from a friend: study it as such.

With what interest we study a *business* communication; every line is carefully weighed and an answer of some kind is prepared and sent. This is, at least, a business communication; and God expects an answer.

With what interest we read a *will*, or hear it read: every word is narrowly watched, and the correct interpretation eagerly sought. This is at least a *will*, and so in the spirit of deathless earnestness we ought to know the contents of this revelation.

2. *It is a spirit of candour.*—Those who sought office among the Romans dressed themselves in a gown of unusual whiteness, and hence were called “candidates,” that is, “dressed in white.” The purity of the garment indicated the purity of their motives and purposes. Our word “candour” is from the same term “*candere*.” To study this subject with a pure mind—a mind filled with the pure purpose of knowing simply what God says, and with a fixed resolution to do it, is to be “candid.”

Candour has several persistent foes, such as, (1) Want of inclination, a refusing to do anything for the sole reason that we are not disposed to do it. (2.) Carelessness, not giving the subject serious thought, not treating it as if it were a matter of first importance. (3.) Ignorance, sheer ignorance, not knowing what God has commanded, and no serious taking steps to know. It is being ignorant and taking the best course to remain so. (4.) Pride: we have a native pride which hinders our earnestly, and with purpose of heart, seeking to do God’s will. Even believers may be smitten with this leprosy, and it may hinder their doing what is evidently their duty. (5.) Prejudice: how much there is of this! It prevents many from studying this subject afresh. They have wrong ideas, and have their minds set against being better informed.

Be candid—offer no paltry excuses, no petty reasons for not doing your duty; but do it.

3.—*It is a spirit of solemnity.*—We cannot regard this matter too solemnly, and in the spirit of seriousness and solemnity let us study it.

This is a matter that deeply concerns me, let each believer say, I have a personal, a profound, an important interest in it, and must study it accordingly.

This is a matter brought before me by God himself. This is no device of man; no theory of politics, or of music—it is a religious matter urged upon me by God, who expects me to obey.

This is a matter which affects my peace and usefulness here. By not attending to this I throw a barrier in my own way, I throw a barrier in the way of others; and why should I in any way mar my own usefulness? My disobedience may affect my status hereafter. If I know my

Master's will, and do it not; if I am ashamed of Christ before men, if I follow afar off, how can I expect to get the same rich reward as others who have followed the Lamb whithersoever He goeth?

Whatever be our ultimate conclusion we must know that the rite of Christian baptism is a most solemn observance.

4. *It is a spirit of prayerfulness.*—This gives us the right posture of mind, the right state of heart; our great workers have been men of prayer, and so have our great thinkers; and if we are to understand this book to any true purpose we must daily pray over it. This exercise secures for us the calm, receptive, expectant, clear mind; it prepares the soil of the heart for the heavenly seed; it disperses the clouds that hinder the heavenly rays from illuminating our minds.

In the study of the book we require sanctified scholarship; but the most ignorant may easily ascertain their duty by humble persevering prayer.

God will aid us from on high; let us ask the aid of heavenly power.

Thus must we study this important subject.

III.—THE DIFFICULTIES THAT BESET THE STUDY OF THIS SUBJECT.

1. *It is difficult to understand the position of Pædobaptists.*

(1.) They all seem to occupy different positions. Baptists ask them—

Why do you baptise at all? Why baptise an infant? What does the ceremony do for either child or parent? Why do you baptise *now* and not then?—why baptise first and then wait for a profession of faith? why not have the profession first?

(2.) They all defend their practice differently.

You can get few works by Pædobaptists that lay down the same lines of defence—each man has a different defence. Truth is one, and it needs but a statement of its evidence; but in this case each man is seeking to find out excuses such as please himself, for a practice which is obviously unscriptural. Why is it that they cannot agree in a given line of defence?

We are often astounded at the fact that smaller men among the Pædobaptists forget the concessions of the greater men among themselves. Our position is practically conceded, yet the Pædobaptist masses argue, and speak, and write as if it were still an open question. They

puzzle themselves, and us, and others by this line of conduct. You cannot be sure that any two Pædobaptists occupy the same position.

2. *It is difficult to understand the mode of argument adopted by Pædobaptists.*—They endeavour to prove one thing though they act on another. They seek to show, for instance, that the word “baptize” means wash. We reply, “Well, but you never wash:” if it means wash, why don’t you wash? It means to “dye,” say some. “Very well, but you never dye.” It means “that the body is to be covered with water all over, no matter how it is done.” Very well, we reply; but you never do that when you profess to baptise.

They find a great many meanings for the term “baptizo,” but they act on not one of them. No lexicon gives sprinkle, and yet that is the act which they perform and call baptism.

All their arguments point one way, and their whole practice another. Take any of their works on baptism, no matter whose it is, it will endeavour to prove one thing and yet the practice of their church is another.

We say that the word means dip, and so we dip—it is dip, and never sprinkle. If it means to “wash” in any instance, that word gives us not the act but the spiritual effect in symbol.

In baptism we express symbolically that we have been and so now are washed.

The immersing in water is the symbol of our immersion in the Spirit.

3. *It is difficult to understand the objections of the Pædobaptists.*

(1.) They point to the scarcity of water, and yet all the allusions to baptism point to rivers and streams, and to houses where baths were common. There was plenty of water to our knowledge, and if we did not know, the term “baptizo” is enough for us.

(2.) They point to the *modesty of Eastern women*, and yet they know that these go by hundreds every year with hundreds of males and immerse themselves again and again in the Jordan at the anniversary of their baptism. Our missionaries baptise many females in the nearest rivers.

(3.) They object to the many baptised in one day, and yet in a work published in Madras, a few months ago (1881), by the Rev. W. B. Bogg, M.A., of the American Telugu Mission, entitled, “The Baptists,” he states that at Vellimpilly, ten miles north of Ongole, in the Madras Pre-

sidency, there were in July, 1878, 2,222 persons immersed in one day. There were only six missionaries present, and two only officiated at a time, and the whole service did not take nine hours: and yet on the day of Pentecost there were 120 disciples present, and at the same rate the service on that great day need not have lasted more than half an hour.

(4.) They object that baptism is a universal command, and so cannot be immersion; for we cannot immerse everywhere. We can. We have done so wherever we have gone; but where baptism is impossible God does not require it at our hands, and we must offer Him nothing else in its stead. If I cannot keep God's command, I will not render it of non-effect by human traditions, I will wait till I can keep it. I will not allow anything to take its place and usurp its name.

(5.) They object that we cannot give Scripture for everything which we practise. For instance, there is no record and no command for female communion at the table of the Lord. In this the Pædobaptists forget that "in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female." The Scriptural rule is, "they that gladly, &c.," "continued in the apostles' doctrines, &c." We know the baptised not as males or females, but as believers. We are never in these matters addressed as male or female, but as disciples.

We must and can give Scripture for all our religious ordinances, and we can for baptism.

All these Pædobaptist pleas are painful and dangerous in the extreme, and if they were adopted in other spheres of investigation they would bring all things into a state of doubt and disquiet.

4. *It is difficult to understand the consistency of Pædobaptists.*—Let us bear in mind that baptism is a *positive* command, it is not a moral precept, like, "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" it is positive—it is a command not right, or wrong in itself considered, but right only and solely because He has commanded it.

Let us also bear in mind that it is a specific act—it does not admit of variations, it is one thing or another; not anything, but one thing, and that one thing is immersion.

The Pædobaptists admit that the word means "dipping," and they admit that Scripture is not clear on infant baptism; they know our side is the safe side, and say so: and yet, though they say dipping is Scripture baptism, they sprinkle and never dip; and though the book says

nothing about infant baptism they baptise infants. I cannot explain such inconsistency: I admire the honesty which says we are right, though I would admire still more the consistency which follows our example.

I have no sympathy with the endeavour to find an excuse or excuses for sprinkling infants, and all Pædobaptist arguments are just that. They are not arguments, but a ransacking all history and usage of words to wriggle out an excuse or palliation for sprinkling an unconscious babe.

Our works on baptism are open and honest. The Scriptures are fairly dealt with in them, and hence we are gradually permeating intelligent society. Pædobaptism among Protestants will die out, and the way will thus be open for the union of all religious bodies; till then it cannot be done.

I beseech all true believers to "put on the Lord Jesus" by baptism.

LECTURE XI.

WHAT HINDERS YOU FROM BEING BAPTISED?

Preached Lord's-day Morning, August 7th, 1881.

"What doth hinder me to be baptised?"—Acts viii. 36.

THERE is, I much fear in these days, a great want of stern, yet kind and loving adherence to principle. Men act so often from the love of ease, from mere inclination, or whim, or convenience, act so often simply to please others; from a fear of looking odd, singular, bigoted, that even when they think they are acting from principle, some lower force is constraining them.

Our practice, to be of value, must be based on principle. It must be based on nothing less, and it can be based on nothing higher or better. We must, therefore, know the true principles, and let our conduct and our course express them. All must bow to principle, and if we, as a body, acted yet more on this rule, what a mighty moral force we would become!

See the poor excuses urged by many in our congrega-

tions for neglecting their duty to be baptised. I speak not of sinners unsaved, but of those who are saved, but from one excuse or another are without the pale of the church—they are of us, yet not altogether with us. They are at the camp, yet not in the camp; at the threshold, but not in the family circle; they are in our congregations, but not in our churches. Now, the question is, what hinders them from being baptised? What are their excuses?

I.—SOME SAY THEY ARE TOO YOUNG.

But, my young friend, this cannot be so; if you are not too young to believe, you are not too young to be baptised. If you are not too young to be saved, you are not too young to put on Christ, by a public profession in baptism. If you are not too young to have the baptism in the spirit, you are not too young to have the baptism in water. No one more needs baptism than you, and none should be more welcomed to the baptistery.

The gardener is especially careful of the young plants, so the great Husbandman will specially care for you.

The shepherd is very solicitous about the lambs, and so the great Shepherd will carry you tenderly in His bosom.

The parent is very watchful over the young and feeble, so the great Father will enrich you with His special providence. The plants, young and fragile, need the hot-house—the lambs especially need the shelter of the fold, and the little one all the protection of home. So the young Christian, above all, should seek the fellowship of the saints, and enter the household of God. They ought to claim the care of their fellow-Christians, and seek a place in the visible church, and ask God to lead them ever onwards and upwards.

My young friend, the church will be a protection to you; union with us will hinder you in sin, and help you in holiness.

The Book fixes no age when you are to join the church—it does not teach adult baptism, but believers' baptism; and we are to blame very much for allowing the idea to spread that we teach adult baptism; we ought always to be careful to correct this misapprehension.

We have neglected our very young converts—looked upon their conversion with suspicion, and allowed them to linger on, year after year, before we brought their duty of confessing Christ before them.

We must and do encourage the young believer to be baptised.

II.—SOME SAY THEY ARE TOO OLD.

Many have felt and said, and many still feel and say that they are too old to be baptised, and doubtless many shall so feel, and so say to the end of time. This should be a warning to the young, who promise themselves that in future years they will be baptised and join the church; for as they advance in years, they in fact become less and less disposed to join the church, and thousands go to heaven who have neglected this duty all their days. It will be true of them for ever that they persistently refused to confess Christ before men. Nothing in eternity can destroy this fact. If we do not join the church before we die, for ever is it true that we slighted both baptism and the fellowship of the church. Now, are we prepared for this issue? Have we, in the sight of God, made up our minds to neglect one of His commands and one of His gracious ordinances? If not, then there is no time to lose. When we allow the days of our youth to pass and neglect baptism, we have lost the best time—the most favourable period for our baptism has passed away, and that thought is sufficiently solemn, without our allowing shame, age, or procrastination to rob us altogether of the divine ordinance.

Thank God, you are never too old to be baptised, if there be the Christian brother to perform the rite, and the water in which it may be performed; but the older you get your opportunities become fewer and fewer, and your chances of being baptized become less and less. But the fact that you have disobeyed so long is no reason for living longer in rebellion—the past negligences need not necessitate future negligence—let the past suffice for rebellion, disobedience, and neglect. Grieve from the very depth of your heart that you have shown the world such an evil example; that your family and kindred have had such a stumbling-block thrown in their way, and that Jesus has been so long dishonoured by you, and then embrace the earliest opportunity of confessing that Saviour who is your true Sovereign.

III.—SOME SAY THEY CAN GET TO HEAVEN WITHOUT IT.

“I can be saved without baptism” say many, and yet it is not a question as to whether we can be saved without baptism or otherwise. No Christian person has any right to ask the question, “Can I not be saved without baptism?”

There is always something wrong with either our hearts or our heads when we put such a question. It is altogether improper. If we must ask a question, why not ask, "Can I be saved without obedience?" "Can I regard myself as a Christian if I persistently refuse to obey a plain and simple command of the Lord Jesus?"

To know that Jesus has commanded us to be baptised, and yet to neglect the ordinance; to know that he has said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," and yet to live in disobedience to one of them for years; to seek to evade the force of His command, by pointing to the thief on the cross, when we ourselves are not thieves on a cross; to urge the case of one where baptism was a physical impossibility, in defence of one whose only hindrance to baptism is his own will, is not logical, consistent, wise, becoming, or even safe.

As a rule, those who try thus to get to heaven in the cheapest way possible, often fail to get there; and if they do, they are sent to the meanest place in it.

What would we think of a workman who studied to do the least he could for his master, without losing his situation? What would we think of the child who studied to obey as few as possible of his parent's commands? What would we think of the wife who endeavoured to meet as few of her loving husband's wishes as possible, and who actually pondered over the marriage service, to see how little it is possible to do for her husband, and yet not altogether lose him?

We must have a very low opinion of such persons, and yet that is what tens of thousands of Christians are doing. They are saved without baptism, and, therefore, they will slight the Lord's ordinance.

"I can be saved without baptism," say others. Certainly you can, and if you are not saved you have no right to baptism at all; but if you are a sincere believer in the Lord Jesus you ought to be baptised, because He has commanded it. Though you can be saved without baptism, remember, you cannot be baptised without baptism, and you ought to be baptised. You can be saved without being charitable, hospitable, kind, patriotic, brave—but are you to neglect these duties because you can be saved without them! Surely not.

You can be saved without doing a great many things that are comely, proper, and are commanded of God; but that is no reason why you should neglect them. It is because I am saved that I should hasten to render

unto Him the fullest obedience possible—hasten to “keep His words.” The grace of God in my salvation must not be turned into lasciviousness, but ought to constrain me to full and loving obedience.

It may be said by others, “I still have my fears and doubts.” Yes, and probably many will have these fears even to the end of their days. We have and always have had “fearful saints,” to whom God kindly and tenderly says, “fear not.” We have “timid ones,” but God says to them, “put on a stout courage,” and brethren in Christ, add “To doubts and fears give thou no heed.” We are baptised, not because we have no fears, but because our Lord has commanded it. We place our fears at His feet, and on Him we lay the responsibility of our act, for we are baptised at His instance. My fears can never excuse my disobedience.

It is said by many “I will think about it.” Many seem to regard this commandment as grievous, and so postpone the joyous day of baptism, as if it were a day of gloom and sadness. How many baptised believers would gladly go through the ceremony again, if it were God’s will. Those only who have never been baptised think of the day with misgivings and disquiet; those who have been baptised regard the day as one full of joy.

Now is the time to be baptised—delays are dangerous. Alas! how many say on their dying-bed, if I am but restored I will be baptised, but God takes them home, and they are unbaptised for ever. We have no time to lose.

“’Tis not for man to trifle! life is brief,
And sin is here;
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
The dropping of a tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours,
All must be earnest in a world like ours.”

IV.—SOME SAY THEY DO NOT SEE ITS IMPORTANCE.

1. *We see its importance in the very example the Lord has set us.*—I do not enter into the meaning of John’s baptism, nor seek to explain now the significance of our Lord’s words to John, when the Baptist hesitated to baptise the Saviour of men. I merely point to the fact that Jesus travelled many miles in order to be baptised. Jesus insisted on being baptised, and overcame the scruples of the great preacher, by saying, “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” Let us bear in mind that the

servant is not greater than his master, and if Jesus submitted to, yea, insisted on baptism, do not let us delay, hesitate, or disobey any longer, but follow our Lord even into the waters of baptism.

Some lightly and even insincerely urge that they were baptised in infancy. But they had nothing to do with the performance of this ceremony; it was no act of theirs—no dedication to God on their part—no service offered to God by them; if it was worship at all, the parents only were the worshippers; the child had no conscious part or lot in it, except simply having its face sprinkled with water. How sad to make this an excuse for neglecting their duty! The worship of your parents is no excuse for your withholding personal worship. They are responsible for the service they had performed on you, but you are responsible for not being baptised.

Mary had a ceremony performed on Jesus in His infancy, but that did not hinder His coming to be baptised of John. Follow His example.

2. *We see its importance in the practice which the Lord adopted.*—We often piously feel that we should like to know what the Lord Jesus would do were He here, and what He would have us do; yet we need not wonder as far as baptism is concerned, we know what He would do by what He did. Jesus made and baptised disciples. He made them disciples first, and when and not before they were converts, disciples, followers, they were baptised. We know of no deviation from this rule and practice. He insisted upon all His converts being baptised.

This we know to have been our Lord's practice; now why should we hesitate to do what we know He would have us to do? Why delay in doing what we know to be well pleasing in His sight? We surely incur needless responsibility in neglecting one of our Lord's solemn commands—a command emphasised by His own practice; for by the hands of His apostles His converts were baptised.

3. *We see its importance in the commands the Lord has left us.*—(1) *The commands of the Lord Jesus are perpetual.* The command, "Go ye and disciple all nations," &c., is perpetual. It has never been recalled, cancelled, abrogated, superseded.

Nothing is said in the book to lead us to believe that after a time believers' baptism, will come to an end. A Divine command is always obligatory until abrogated by God, and this has not yet been done in the case before us. Baptism serves now the very same purpose it ever

served—it has lost none of its primitive features or importance; it is just as much required now as in the apostolic age, and hence nearly all Christians practise it. Quakers think that the baptism of the Spirit supersedes the necessity for baptism in water; Peter, however, had a large company baptised, *after* they received the Holy Spirit, and said, “Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we.” It is strange that what an inspired man urged as a reason for the observance of a rite some men now urge as a reason for its neglect. The commission is—all disciples and all nations are to be and ought to be baptised.

2. *The commands of the Lord Jesus are unchangeable.*—It requires as much authority from God to change a religious rite as to establish one. God has threatened severe judgment on those who dare to change any of His institutions without His authority. What a responsibility the Church of Rome has incurred in deliberately and avowedly changing baptism both in the act itself and the persons to be baptised, and she scornfully taunts all *Pædobaptists* with following her example and accepting her traditions on this subject.

I have no more authority to change the command of believers' baptism than I have to change any other command of the Lord Jesus. The command is left with us, and we can do as we like with it, only we shall be held responsible for our conduct. God has not authorised us to say which of His commands we shall keep and which we shall neglect. Love suggests the keeping of all His commands, this one among the rest. We ought to take a pleasure in obeying all His precepts, and none but the unworthy seek to evade or avoid any of them.

To say that baptism is not clearly commanded is a most serious statement to make, for what commandment is more clearly given than this? No duty can be more clearly revealed or proved than this, and the very arguments which support disobedience to this commandment would warrant disobedience to all the commands of God.

Men see this to be so, and yet they will not say it; they see it and say it, and yet will not act according to their knowledge. Jesus has shown the way we ought to go if we care to take it; He has given us the clear command if we care to keep it.

4. *We see its importance by the teaching and the example of the apostles.*—We have seen the solemn commission

given to the apostles by our Lord, and the question is, "Did they act on His instruction?" "Were they obedient to the heavenly voice?" Yes, in every particular; and so we find that when the converts consisted of *single individuals*—such as the Eunuch, Gaius, Simon Magus, Saul, there was no waiting for more candidates, but at once these were baptised on a profession of their faith. There was no waiting then and there need be no waiting now, as and when you sincerely believe you ought to be baptised.

If the converts consisted of *whole households*, such as those of Lydia—the jailor, Stephanus, Crispus—they were baptised. What an impressive sight to see a whole family give itself up to God in His own appointed way!

If the converts consisted of *groups or multitudes*, such as those of Samaria, Cæsarea, Ephesus, Corinth, Jerusalem, they were all baptised. Persons, families, multitudes, all on their eagerly receiving the word were baptised.

Paul addressed the churches as baptised believers, and makes their baptism illustrate their Christian position and duty. The churches consisted of baptised believers. Much is uncertain concerning the primitive church, and hence there is room for a large margin of divergence of theory and practice; but all is clear as noonday on baptism. We know what they taught and practised.

The believer who remains unbaptised does so in clear and direct violation of the example, practice and command of our Lord and His inspired apostles.

"He that knoweth his Master's will and doeth it not shall be beaten with many stripes;" we need not thus incur our Master's displeasure.

V.—SOME SAY THEY DO NOT SEE THAT IT CAN DO THEM OR OTHERS ANY GOOD.

But it does good to all.

1. *We show others an example of obedience to our Lord.*—By my baptism I invite all unbaptised believers to obey their Lord. I show them the way—set them the example—I preach to them by my practice—I exhibit to them a consistency that ought to be impressive.

While man is constituted as he is, example will always exercise a mighty influence for good or evil, and every one is so far forth his brother's keeper, and in a large measure responsible for him, and so we must take every stumbling-block out of his way, as far as we can; the principle is, "If meat maketh my brother to offend, I

will eat no meat while the world lasteth," I will show him "the more excellent way.

The unbaptised in high circles can have little idea how completely they block the way of others as with outspread arms, as with an unyielding barrier, and hinder *their* baptism, and so their obedience for years. It is a pity that we have such weak brethren as these, but there they are, and our wealthy and cultured friends must take the responsibility as well as the advantages of their position. For the sake of others, *they* especially ought to be baptised.

This, of course, is not a sufficient reason of itself for your baptism—the sufficient reason is the command of the Master who expects prompt and loving obedience at our hands: but the good of others is a reason, and a serious reason, why with eagerness and urgency we should be baptised. Your conduct will assuredly affect that of others, and for this you are responsible.

2. *We must know that obedience cannot but do us good.*—Obedience to one command always enables us the more easily to keep another—obedience develops my moral nature as exercise does my muscular—to obey ends in obedience being a delight, and this delight is matured in spiritual strength. We are strong and we grow in grace only as we conscientiously obey the Master's will. Disobedience always weakens character, and a weakened character always finds obedience trying and irksome.

Every act of disobedience is to thrust a dagger into our moral nature, and the wound thus given often becomes a sad sore; and if we live in wilful disobedience of a clear command of the Lord Jesus we shall cripple ourselves and our influence, and if we do not see this, and feel it, we have reached the alarming stage when the patient has ceased to feel the workings of that disease which wastes his life.

We have so many things *in us—about us—beneath us* to hinder our growth in grace, that we need not deliberately choose another hindrance; but we do hinder ourselves in our heavenly course by neglecting baptism.

The Lord Jesus Christ was publicly baptised in the open air; He has given you an example worthy of imitation, for He was baptised under the most unfavourable conditions; and surely you need not hesitate to do His command, for obedience must prove a blessing to you.

3. *We profess our death, burial and resurrection in Christ Jesus.*—Every outward ordinance of religion must have

an inward meaning. There must be both a sign and the thing signified—an emblem and its reality. This is true of baptism—if I am a true believer in ~~the Lord Jesus~~ ^{the Lord Jesus}, it tells me of my baptism in the Spirit, ~~but it also declares~~ to all that (1) *I am dead to sin*. As we stand by the baptismal pool—at our open grave, we profess to have done with sin as a state and a reigning power within us—we are no longer “dead in sin,” we are now “dead to it,” but alive to God. The former life is done with, and a new life has begun.

This is our ideal—this is what we aim at, not what we have in fact attained to, but what we strive after and what we mean to reach. We do not defer our baptism till all this is a fact, else we shall never be baptised on earth at all: we are baptised when this holy life is our aim and end. I here renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, with all its sin, vanity, hypocrisy and show.

(2.) *I am buried with Christ in baptism*.—We descend into the water and are buried with our Lord. So complete is our death to sin that we are buried—hid beneath the baptismal waters from all around; our eyes are closed to, and our bodies hid from the world; we are done with its evil principle and its revolt against God.

(3.) *I am raised up to newness of life*.—As I emerge from the water all things are new to me, I have been made a partaker of the first resurrection, and must henceforth live a resurrection life. I must walk in “newness of life.” All life is now full of new meaning—new hopes—new prospects.

Here we have the whole gospel in symbols. Here we have a symbolic service, beautiful and impressive. Here is a gospel which every believer is expected to preach—A testimony for Jesus every disciple is expected to raise. Here is a solemn proclamation to the world of the reality of the gospel of Jesus, and yet every unbaptised brother refuses to raise it.

In my baptism I express my devotion to Christ. We say in our baptism that we have accepted Him as our Saviour and Friend, our portion and trust for time and eternity. We declare that we now fight under His banner—that we belong to the army of the living God, and hope to be “good soldiers of Jesus Christ.”

We have renounced all allegiance to Satan, sin, and worldly pleasures, and have forsaken all trust in ourselves.

We here “put on the Lord Jesus,” assume His livery and call ourselves by His name.

Here I accept the sign of forgiveness. This washing in the baptismal waters expresses to me, in symbol, the fact that I have had the washing of regeneration.

This being born of the water recalls the fact that I have been born of the Spirit. The washing tells me that my sins, which were many, are all washed away.

The act of baptism impresses all this on my mind, and also on the minds of others. It is no arbitrary act, but an act full of meaning, and one which always serves a high moral purpose.

Our baptism—the commandment urged by the Lord Jesus—the immersion of believers alone, teaches all this, and hence we urge on all believers their duty to be baptised at once.

In April, 1830, an Independent minister visited Sidmouth, where he was to preach. Three females conversed on baptism in his presence, and at length appealed to him for his opinion. He stated, “I do not need to be baptised again.” One of the females responded, “But have you been baptised?” “Yes,” said the minister, “in infancy.” He was urged to “read and pray over the subject,” which he did, and soon discovered that Christian baptism is the immersion of the believer in the Lord Jesus. The minister graphically describes his conflict with himself and Satan: Satan suggested to him,

(a) Holy and enlightened men differ on this subject, so no satisfactory conclusion can be reached.

(b) Your friends will all turn their backs on you.

(c) You will lose one half of your income if you are baptised.

(d) People will call you a Baptist, and you hate party names.

(e) You have been preaching for some years, and you will have to confess publicly that you have been in error.

(f) Even if it were right, it is too late to attend to it, for you ought to have been baptised when you believed.

He overcame all these suggestions of the evil one. He was baptised, and found abundant peace of mind in the act, and now; though it is fifty years ago, he has never regretted his obedience.

This man of God adds for the comfort of others:—

1. That no truth is more clearly revealed than this.
2. That not one of his true friends turned his back on him, and almost all of them have been baptised since.
3. That he lost but little, and what he did lose has been

more than made up to him. This minister is no other than that holy man of God, George Müller, of Bristol, the founder of the large Orphan Homes at Clifton. He has baptised nearly two thousand persons since his own baptism.

We must not be satisfied with belonging to the Lord Jesus, we must declare ourselves to be His in His own appointed way.

LECTURE XI.

WAVERING OR WITNESSING.

Delivered Lord's-day Morning, October 2, 1881.

“Let each man be fully assured in his own mind.”—Rom. xiv. 5.

ALL denominations have their waverers and their witnessers—those who are true to their principles and professions, and are doing their utmost for the spread of truth; and others who give no emphasis to truth and no consistency to their practice. The waverers are an obstruction in the path of the witnessers, and the witnessers cannot always move the waverers in the right direction; and yet it is our duty to support the weak—not in his weakness—but to help him out of it.

Who are the waverers among us, and wherein do they waver? Who are the witnessers, and to what do they witness? These two questions we will now endeavour to answer.

I.—THE WAVERING.

1. *They waver in speaking lightly of the ordinance of Christian baptism.*

Pædobaptists are of two kinds, one makes too much of baptism, maintaining that it is essential to salvation, and that we cannot be saved without it. The other professes to make light of it—speaks of it as if it were of no importance, and that it is not worth while to divide the church over it. The former class for the most part consists of Romanists and Ritualists, the latter of Protestant Dissenters.

If baptism is the small matter that these latter men say it is, why do they not join the Baptists, the oldest and

one of the strongest of the religious bodies?* They admit we are right and that baptism ought not to divide us, and yet they will not join the body they know to be right.

They make light of baptism; and instead of their uniting with us, they wish us to join them.

If baptism is a small matter, they incur a great responsibility in holding aloof from us.

We have waverers among *ourselves* who speak slightly of an ordinance observed, practised, and commanded by both our Lord and His apostles; a command faithfully kept by the church for over two hundred years; an ordinance which has occasioned discussion in every age of the Christian era, and one much discussed in this age, and a discussion of which must do good.

It is a most serious and even sinful thing to speak disparagingly of that ordinance that justifies our denominational existence, and which is the only excuse for the Independents not joining us. We must refer to baptism in terms befitting an ordinance of divine appointment.

2. *They waver in delaying their own baptism.*

To delay our baptism after God has saved our souls, is to impeach in the most emphatic way our own principles; it is practically a crusade against our own creed; to hesitate even is to accuse either our character or our creed; we have but a faltering faith in our principles, or we are of a fearful, procrastinating turn of mind.

We show our faith in our principles by acting on them, and promptitude is the only conduct that befits the case.

We are not to be baptised for reasons of our own, but because of the command of the Lord Jesus. Merely personal reasons may give dispatch to, or they may delay our baptism; but these must find no place: it is enough for me that I am commanded to be baptised, and in obedience to that command I am immersed.

When we delay our baptism year after year, there is something wrong; either we are not saved at all—and this ought to fill our souls with the deepest concern, and we ought to give ourselves no rest till we have peace in believing—or though we are saved we are rebellious, self-willed, defiant, and this is a state of mind altogether against our best interests.

We wrong ourselves unspeakably by delaying our bap-

* There are about 9,000,000 Baptists in the world. Nearly one-ninth of the whole English-speaking population of the world are Baptists.

tism; we have everything to lose and nothing to gain by delay, and we have everything to gain and nothing to lose by immediate obedience.

We wrong others by our delay. Mr. May, one of our missionaries in Jamaica, had a baptismal service that led to the conversion of a hundred persons. The service always proves a means of grace,* leading some to the Saviour, and many to the baptistery.

3. *They waver in not instructing their children in the ways of God.*

There are Baptist homes that never see any of our periodical literature; never see any of those papers devoted to a discussion of our principles and the recording of our operations. They do not know the strength of our denomination, nor the work it is doing at home and abroad, nor the great importance of our witness for Christ.

They have few Baptist works on their book shelves; their children can see works by any author but one of our own body; they even think that because they do this they are free from bigotry, whereas there is no bigotry so stupid as this. It is the worst bigotry to send our children into the world ignorant of our principles, practices, and history.

This ignorance exposes them to the fascination of merely fashionable churches,—of worldly congregations,—and worldly society. The uninformed soon become the misinformed, and the ignorant soon know and love what wisdom would have spurned from it. They soon become the victims of show and sense, because they are not rooted and grounded in the truth.

All this is cruelty to our children, to the church, to the denomination, to the Lord Jesus; it is even a cruelty to the world itself, for it robs it of many witnesses against its spirit and aim.

Let our children know the truth, that they may love it.

4. *They waver in allowing their children to be married at church.*

There are some places where it would seem that there was no other course open; but where it is possible to be married in one of our own places of worship, we should

* Many who recently gave their hearts to Jesus, and who have been baptised in our chapel, date their first religious impression from witnessing the solemn service of believers' baptism.

not hesitate for one moment. We must have the firmness and the integrity of principle to be married at the place where we worship God. To do otherwise is to slight our own church, denomination, minister, and principles, and to say practically that they are of no consequence.

We invite our children to so far forth encourage a church that teaches baptismal regeneration, priestly absolution, and sacramental confession; a church which is sowing the seeds of popery throughout the land. We so far forth countenance the right of the State to govern the church of Christ, dictating to her her creed, her rubrics, and her duties.

It is a serious sacrifice of principle for a dissenter to marry at church. If the church were free from the State and her rubrics protestant, it would not be so bad; but as it is to marry in church is to be to that extent a partaker of her sins.

Many a father has had bitterly to lament his ever giving his consent to his family being married at church—such a marriage is sure to bring trouble.

I do not blame church people for being church people; I blame Baptists for acting as if they were churchmen.

We must not waver here, we must be steadfast.

5. *They waver in joining Pædobaptist churches.*

There are very few Pædobaptist's churches throughout the whole land that have not several Baptist members, and in many cases a large number of Baptist members; and we may well address to them the words, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" If these Baptists were to come forth, what an exodus we would have! what an army with banners!

They are of little value to the Pædobaptists among whom they sojourn, because they cannot but disseminate our principles, and so weaken the church with which they are connected, and this may in part, at least, account for the fact that infant baptism is so little practised either here or in America, for it would almost seem as if infant baptism will die out for the want of infants to be baptised.*

The Baptists in Pædobaptist churches are undermining the churches, and cannot but do the several religious

* Recent American statistics show how abundantly this is true of both Methodist and Presbyterian churches. In this country the custom is dying out, not slowly, but surely. This fact is a summons to us to be steadfast.

bodies harm. I know that some of our friends desire this state of things to continue, for we must gain by it in the long run; but I would prefer an exodus of this Israel; I would have them to enrol themselves under our banner.

Why is it so? Well, in some places we are weak, and some are driven from us in consequence; instead of being drawn to us; they avoid us, instead of numbering themselves with us, they unite with the stronger church. But surely it is more manly, besides being more Christian, to support the weak. We must shun no cause because it is weak. There must be a stern adherence to principle, and whatever others may say to us, we cannot help thinking that convenience or pride has as much as principle to do with this objectionable course of conduct.

Some go because of the better society,—the worldly position of the Pædobaptist communion in some districts where we are weak and poor is high and imposing. It is deplorable in the extreme to desert our own proper place of worship for the sake of fashionable society. How will such conduct appear in the light of eternity? How would it appear after one hour of serious and honest prayer, even now and here?

When Knibb, the great missionary, was over in this country, he always worshipped in the Baptist chapel in the district where he was sojourning, and encouraged the Baptist minister.

We may well go to other places occasionally; but we must be on our guard against a roving disposition.

Lord Justice Lush,* when on circuit, always sought out the Baptist chapel, and no matter how humble the place, and no matter how indifferent the ability of the preacher he would worship there.

Now when we go from home, to the Lake districts, to the watering places, or to the rural retreats, let us seek out the Baptist minister, encourage his heart, support his hands; be a source of joy and strength to him in his arduous struggle with sin and indifference.

The ministers battling in country places need all the encouragement and help we can give them.

Let us have some principle in this matter, and see that we join a Baptist church, if there be one within a reasonable distance from our home.

6. *They waver because of a capricious dread of being thought bigoted.*

* Alas! now gone home: his name is as ointment poured forth to all who love consistency and a firm adherence to principle.

No religious body has less of bigotry than our own ; we have been admittedly identified with all the great movements for the public good, and yet one principle has guided us in all our operations. We are ever ready to co-operate with all religious bodies. We have, it is true, a Bible Translation Society of our own ; yes, but that is because the British and Foreign Bible Society ceased to circulate a proper translation of God's book ; ceased to circulate the translation they circulated so long, and substituted in its place a translation that left a blank, or a Greek word untranslated where baptism was referred to. They departed from us and their own former practice, we did not depart from them.

We unite in the Sunday School Union, though the Wesleyans would not, and formed a society for themselves ; the Church would not, and they also have a society of their own. We adhere to the Union, and still adhere to it, though in all their tales sprinkling, and sprinkling only, is represented as baptism, and in some of their publications there are statements which we cannot endorse which are in favour of infant baptism.

We co-operate, unite, combine as far as it is possible, and we must not fear the word "bigot," if it is hurled at us because of strict adherence to principle.

Many in their fear of being thought bigots, have trampled upon most sacred principles, and this fear is a menace and a danger to many of our number.

7. *They waver by speaking of babes and little ones as lambs of the fold.*

These are lambs of "no fold;" for though they have been sprinkled, they are members of no church. Like the unbaptised, they must come forward to join the church if ever they are to be members of it. They are not in the fold, and they may never be in the fold. They are neither counted as members, nor treated as members.

Nor are they "lambs" in this sense, for they have not been converted. They are addressed as unconverted, and the duty of conversion is urged upon them. So they are not in the fold, and may never be in it ; they are not lambs, and may never be the lambs of the fold.

We must be careful in our language, and so not bewilder ourselves, the parents, nor the children.

The lambs of the fold are young converts ; they are lambs, for they now follow in their youth the good Shepherd ; and they are in the fold, for they have joined the church.

The "little ones" are "little ones that believe in Me." These are the lambs and no other.

In these and many other ways some of our number waver; would that they wavered less and witnessed more!

II.—THE WITNESSING.

1. *They witness to the supreme authority of the Scriptures.*—We bow to this Book only. Tradition and expediency have little force with us. We close the door against all rivals, such as "The Spirit of the Age," "Critical Com-motions," "Theological Unsettlements," "Religious Doubts." We stand or fall by the Book, and to the law, and to the testimony, we bring all claimants on our faith and love. We look in this Book in vain for infant bap-tism; we find here believers' immersion, and so we prac-tise this.

Some amuse or entangle themselves by referring to the impossibility of carrying out our views in some parts—as, for instance, Iceland, Greenland, and places where there is no water. Well, where baptism is not possible, God does not require it of us; but we have no authority to substitute anything in its place, and call that baptism. Where I cannot keep the command, it is not binding; it did not bind the thief on the cross; but I ought to be prepared to make great sacrifices, even to the taking of a long journey in order to be baptised. Jesus Himself walked many miles for this very purpose.

We Baptists have not found this difficulty yet, and a cause must be far gone that needs this popular line of defence. For the most part the believer can there and then be baptised; and wherever we have gone, we have been able to act on our own principles.

We witness on behalf of the perfect and all-sufficiency of the Scriptures. It is our only rule of faith and practice.

2. *They witness to the Kingship of Jesus.*—He is the only Legislator, Ruler, authoritative Sovereign of the hearts and lives of men. None can make laws for His kingdom, no parliament, pope, priest. They have no authority in matters of conscience. We take the laws from the lips of Jesus, and all men are as grasshoppers before Him. This is a most important principle to maintain.

3. *They witness to the spirituality of Christ's kingdom.*—Religion with us is personal, not proximal; it is the soul's own approach to God, not the parents' in its name. The

soul itself, and for itself, renounces Satan and accepts Christ. It vows to serve Him itself, and not through another. Religion is not the act of an unconscious babe, having a religious ceremony performed over it, without its request or even its consent. We emphasise the fact that religion in the first instance, is intensely personal.

Religion is spiritual, not ritualistic; it is moral, not mechanical. It is not a rite, but a right state of heart. The church consists of believers, and all the ordinances of the church are for these alone, and these alone can appreciate and enjoy them.

All here is spiritual—the King, the subjects, the laws, the weapons, the aim, and the end.

We conserve this truth—all other communions must and do compromise it; we defend it, the others defile it.

4. *They witness to the great distinction between the church and the world.*—All other systems break down this distinction. Infant baptism breaks down the middle wall, for they give a Christian rite to a babe that is not, and may never be, a Christian; and they argue as if it were a member of the church, and yet behave as if the child were still out of the church, to the confusion of child, parent, and the church; and this opens the door to State churchism—to regard all the members of the State as also members of the church.

There could have been no State churchism till there was infant baptism. This rite falls in with any theory of a State church; and hence all State churchmen are Pædobaptists, and the vast majority of Pædobaptists are State churchmen. Adopt our principles, and you strike dumb and dead every theory of church and State, and make the practice of State churchism impossible. Infant baptism is the corner-stone of this system; remove this, and the edifice falls to the ground.

Hence, the overwhelming importance of our witness for Christ. We witness on the behalf of the Christianity of the church, the purity of the sacraments, the separation of the church from the world.

Pædobaptists are getting nearer to us, and are doing a noble work; but infant baptism shears them of their locks.

5. *They witness to the Protestantism of our common Christianity.*—There could have been no Popery till the advent of infant baptism. It is as Dr. Gill puts it, “a part and pillar of Popery”—remove it even now, and Popery becomes an impossibility; and while Protestants continue

it, they expose themselves to the taunts and jeers of Rome; for this being the corner-stone of the system of the Vatican, it can smile at the efforts of Pædobaptists to overthrow Popery, while they hold by this. Our friends have done good work in assailing Rome; but she can and does turn all their arguments on themselves, for the arguments used to defend infant baptism are, in principle, for the most part the arguments used by Rome to defend her general position.

Rome comes and finds nothing in us; we utterly reject all services performed on the unconscious and unconsenting. All must think for themselves, believe for themselves, request baptism for themselves, and the general reception of this position is the overthrow of Rome.

Rome feels impotent in our hands, and must acknowledge the strength of our position. The Bible—and the Bible alone—is the religion of the Baptists; and this position arrests the advent and the advance of worldliness and Popery, and we must do our best to win the churches to it, for it is of the first importance that our principles be generally accepted. Let us be true to ourselves—the future is ours if we are but true and energetic; and every one who is solemnly baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, on a sincere profession of faith in Him, is hastening the advent of a better day.

LECTURE XII.

WHY NOT JOIN THE CHURCH?

Delivered Lord's-day Morning, June 29th, 1879.

“I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.”—1 Cor. x. 16.

I MUST urge this question on all who are really trusting in the Lord Jesus. Though it is the pressing and immediate duty of every baptised believer to join the church, yet many remain on the outside, and do not seem to see or feel the importance of confessing Christ before men. These persons are often eminent for piety and good works. They give largely of their substance to the cause of God, and are often willing workers in the vineyard; but the better they are, the more potent is their

example for evil; for the inconsiderate and timid point to these and say, that those on the outside are as good as those within, which may be true, but they are not so good in this one particular of confessing Christ before men in Christ's own appointed way.

Let me consider the obstacles to joining the church, which you throw in your own way, and then point out a few of the duties and benefits of church membership.

I.—THE OBSTACLES WHICH HINDER YOUR JOINING THE CHURCH.

Those who delay their joining the church, or who decline to join the church, give us—if not reasons—excuses, for their conduct, and the following seem to be substantially what one or other of them urge.

1. *You plead that you can be saved without being a member of a Christian church.*—That is very true, and you have no right to be a member of a Christian church unless you are saved. Only those who are saved—who have gladly received the Word and been baptised, ought to be added to the church; but then those who have thus acted, ought to be in the church; as surely as the unconverted ought to be on the outside, the converted ought to be within. Your place no longer is among the outsiders; you ought to be enrolled among the members. It is because we believe that you have given your heart to Jesus, that we ask you to join us.

It is always a dangerous course to pursue, to keep as few of the Lord's commands as possible, and especially to keep those only which seem to us essential to our being Christians at all. When we are in a healthy spiritual condition, we do not ask, can I be saved without obedience to this commandment? but Does the Lord Jesus command or expect me to do this? Did the holy apostles practise and teach this? If so, I will do it, not because I cannot be saved without it, but simply because it is my Master's will. It is my duty, and I hasten to perform it.

2. *You plead that you can be as useful in the outside, as you could be as a member of the church.*—Supposing this position were true, it would be no valid reason for not joining a church, and if it were it would apply to every combination of men having a definite object in view. It would close up nearly all our good institutions. I can help the sick in their own homes, therefore I will not become a subscriber to the infirmary. If members of

Parliament were to act on this principle, the houses of legislature would be empty. It would collapse every society in the land. We ought not to identify ourselves with such a principle as that.

We ought not to put the question of usefulness first; because that is a huge problem which few can solve, for none can understand all the parts of it. We must ask, "what is my duty?" and do that, and if we so act, usefulness will see to itself.

But the plea is not true; you can be useful in the outside. Thank God, in His goodness He has provided for that. You can serve Him in the outside, but you can serve Him far more abundantly from the inside.

There are duties and forms of usefulness, possible only to those who attend church meetings and are church members. The highest forms of spiritual usefulness you cannot render, simply because you are in the outside. If you wish to be most useful, join the church.

3. *You plead that you do not see a necessity to be baptised, and without baptism you cannot be a member of the church.*—How came you by this conclusion? Analyse your feelings, motives, thoughts—be faithful and searching with yourselves, and you will be amazed at the process of reasoning by which you have arrived at this conclusion. That examination, if thorough, will show that you are neither manly nor honest in this particular.

Baptism is a command of the Lord Jesus, not because you see the necessity for it; but you ought to see the necessity for it, because it is commanded by Him.

It is not a question as to whether you see the necessity for baptism, or even whether there be any necessity for it at all; but the question is, "Is it commanded?" and few will dare to say that it is not; and if commanded, Jesus expects obedience. I am baptised, not because I wish to be baptised, not because the act in itself is beautiful or otherwise, not because I see any human necessity for it, and I must not import these thoughts into the discussion of the question. I am baptised because Jesus, who knows all about it, has commanded it.

4. *You plead that you do not like to be baptised by yourself, and many have to be so who join the church.*—This feeling arises from "the pride of life," it has no higher origin and source. It really means being ashamed of Jesus before men. The Lord Jesus, as far as we can gather, was baptised alone—so was the apostle Paul, so was the Ethiopian Eunuch: and who are we that we dare to make

a stumbling-block of such a matter as being baptised alone? If I do not refuse to be saved alone, I need not refuse to be baptised alone. We really must overcome all feelings of pride, shame, diffidence, and obey at once the command of the Lord Jesus, whether others are to be baptised at the same time or not. Although, of course, you need not be baptised alone, if you cannot overcome your prejudice against it.

5. *You plead that you do not like to be baptised publicly, and yet that is how most candidates for church fellowship are baptised.*—Perhaps you do not, and you need not, you can be baptised with closed doors, and none present but those who are to wait on you and the deacons and the pastor;* you can be baptised at the week-night meeting. You can be baptised when you choose, and almost where you choose. We can and do accommodate ourselves to all your wishes, preferences, and even whims; and in proportion as we do so, in that proportion is the guilt of your procrastination increased.

We can baptise publicly or privately, — in a river, or in a chapel, with all its appliances and conveniences. It is baptism—immersion that is commanded, and that we see to in the way most pleasant to ourselves. The most delicate and the most robust may with safety be baptised in these days of creature comforts.

We do not thus add to the ordinances—the ordinance is the immersion of the believer in the name of the Holy Trinity: all else are but the amenities of public order and propriety.

The Lord Jesus was publicly baptized, and in an open river, and walked many miles to the scene of His baptism; and we ought to follow His example in being publicly baptized, unless there are sufficient and even pressing reasons for acting otherwise.

6. *You plead that you have been brought up a Pædobaptist, and that you have been sufficiently baptized already.*—The Lord Jesus could have pleaded that He was brought up a Jew, and that the national ordinance was already performed on Him; but, notwithstanding this, He was baptized. Paul could have urged the same plea, for he was “circumcised the eighth day.” But though his parents had this rite performed on him in his infancy, it did not hinder his baptism when he became a believer in the Lord Jesus.

* Pædobaptists often baptise in private houses, and under special circumstances we can do the same.

Your plea is altogether unsound. You have not been a partaker of Christian baptism; for (1.) The ceremony performed on you was a rhanising—a sprinkling, not a baptism—an immersion: and (2.) You were not a Christian, and hence it was not Christian baptism which is simply the baptism of a Christian.

I plead for Christian baptism; you may call your ceremony the dedication, or consecration of your child to God, but it was not the baptism of a Christian. But now that you are a Christian you ought to be baptised; and to refuse baptism now is simply to rebel against the Lord. You do not mean it to be this, I know, for you wish to do your Master's will as sincerely as any Baptist can; but notwithstanding, here is a plain command which as yet you have refused to obey.

You say you are a "Wesleyan," or "Methodist New Connection," "Methodist Free Church," "Independent," "Churchman," "Presbyterian," &c. Just so, but that need not hinder your being baptised on a profession of your faith in Jesus; many of the body to which you belong have been baptised, and many even have joined our "body." The members of our Baptist churches must profess to be Christians and be baptised; but we allow them a wide margin of doctrinal divergence. We freely accept members of all the Evangelical churches. They may even keep up their subscriptions to their old ecclesiastical homes. With open arms we receive into our fellowship all baptised believers, and we urge on all Christian Pædobaptists the duty of being baptised according to the Scriptures.

7. *You plead that you do not like to come before the church to narrate your Christian experience.*

Why? may I ask. What is a Church meeting? It is a meeting of few Christian persons who are your well-wishers and your friends. They are usually presided over by the minister—if they have one—and he asks you a few simple questions, such as: "When did you first take a deep interest in spiritual things?" "Under what circumstances were you led to trust in the Lord Jesus?" "Do you see baptism to be a command of the Lord Jesus, which it is His will you should keep?" "What are your reasons for wishing to join the church?"

This does not seem a very formidable ordeal for you to pass through. Many who have thus joined the church have both got good and done good. We have often a most blessed season when candidates are before the

church, who can in their own language tell us the story of their conversion.

But you need not come before the church if you prefer to send in a written statement, or get the pastor or one of the deacons to bring your name before the church—the matter will be settled without your personal attendance. We suit ourselves to your feelings and convenience. We allow no forms or human ceremonies to be a stumbling block in the way of any sincere follower of the Lord Jesus.

If you can surmount your fears and fancies, do so, and come before the church; but if this cannot be done, still do your duty by joining the church.

8. *You plead that you are unworthy to become a member of a Christian church.*

This is true of the best of us. We did not join the church because we were worthy. Our worthiness just now is in Another. "We are accepted in the Beloved;" God sees us in Him, and treats us accordingly. You entertain and are kind to a child who has many faults, for its father's sake; it deserves little, but he was worthy; so God takes us into all the privileges of His kingdom, for Christ's sake. We are not worthy, but we desire to be; and one way of helping us on to it, is to join a Christian church.

With all our faults we are trusting exclusively to the merits of Jesus Christ for our salvation, and in obedience to His command we unite ourselves in fellowship with the Christian church.

Do not wait till you are worthy, else you will die without the pale of the visible church.

Never allow the term "worthy," or "unworthy," to influence you in deciding a matter of such importance as this. Take Jesus as your Saviour, and then join His disciples, and thus declare yourself with all your deficiencies and delinquencies to be on the Lord's side.

9. *You plead that you fear a future falling away from Christ on your part.*

This is a most dangerous principle to act upon, and if we allowed it to determine our conduct in other spheres, it would land us in ruin. Shall I refuse to enter into business because it is possible I may yet fail? Shall I refuse to marry, because I may yet prove unfaithful? Shall I refuse to form a friendship, for fear I may yet prove treacherous? Shall I refuse to speak, for fear my own words may con-

damn me? This principle, if generally acted upon, would bring the world to a stand-still.

The Christ who saves, keeps; He who begins the good work carries it on; and just as I have trusted Him for my salvation, I trust Him for my preservation.

If I am His, I may fall; but there is still open to me the fountain for sin and uncleanness—he will heal my backslidings.

We must not be deterred from doing our duty by the failure of others, or the possible backsliding of ourselves. I will do His will, and leave the future with Him.

10. *You plead,—the members of Christian churches are often very inconsistent.*

This is a dangerous principle to shape our conduct by. Because some husbands are cruel, therefore, I will never marry; because some teachers are incompetent, therefore I will send my children to no school; because some cloth is but shoddy, therefore, I will go naked; because some coins are base, therefore, I will have nothing to do with money; because some travellers are dishonest, therefore, I will look at the samples of none; because some manufacturers are untrustworthy, therefore, I will have dealings with none, &c.

Such a principle as this, if generally acted upon, would bring all things to a stand-still; it would shut up all our mills and shops, and make an end of all homes. It is most unwise to adopt such a principle in religion.

You must do your duty, and aid to the best of your ability others to do theirs; but because you think that they do wrong, is no reason why you should leave right undone.

The misconduct of others, is no excuse for your negligence. Each person must answer for himself, and you will have enough to answer for without adding this wrong among the rest—a refusal to join God's church.

The censorious spirit ill becomes any Christian, and it is well to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "Judge not lest ye be judged." To find fault with others, will rid us of no dark spot; and therefore it is better for you to do your duty and join the church, and show all the others "a more excellent way" by the holiness of your life.

11. *You plead that you will join the church some other time.*

This plea of procrastination is a very painful one. A very large proportion of Christians die unconnected with

any church. They have been Christians for years and years, and they have often thought of joining the church, and at last they die without ever having confessed Jesus before men, or having joined His church on earth.

Alas! the world is full of troubles brought on by this same spirit of procrastination; it is a bad principle, and means evil and only evil in religion.

Here, day by day, you disobey the clear and oft repeated command of Jesus, to be baptised and join His church. You refuse our fellowship and the breaking of bread. Let me urge on you with all affection this duty, which you have so long slighted. When do you really mean to bring this procrastination to an end? What day, or week, or month, or year, have you fixed? Why wait till then? Why not obey now? The best time to join the church is *now*.

12. *You plead that you are not sure that you are saved.*

This plea depends on the meaning you attach to the word "sure." If you mean that you have no clear mathematical-like demonstration of your salvation, then we reply, that the realm of mind is not susceptible of this kind of proof. You ought and may be morally certain. If you mean that you still have doubts and fears; we answer, You are sure to have, for no faith is perfect; it grows like all other living things, and has its seasons of decay and weakness.

If you are trusting alone in the Lord Jesus for salvation—for acceptance with God, and are seeking to keep His commandments, you are saved.

Surely you can say whether you are saved or no; whether you are trusting in the finished work of Jesus, or no. If you have any doubt about it, get your doubts resolved at once—you have no time to delay—this stupendous matter cannot be decided too soon.

This plea is usually the most dishonest of all; it is often a wicked excuse for neglecting a duty which you have no real desire to perform.

All these excuses ought to be cast away at once, and with eager delight you should keep the command of the Lord.

II.—THE DUTY OF JOINING THE CHURCH.

1. *You have the practice of the Lord Jesus.*—The Saviour united the believers, not only to Himself, but to one another. He did not leave them to their own inclinations—He did not leave them to wander at will. He had

them baptised, and numbered among His followers. These formed the visible church, and they were to meet as best they could for divine worship. A company of them met here, and some there, to do the business of the kingdom. Some met in Jerusalem, and appointed a successor to Judas, and also assembled themselves together to receive the outpouring of the Spirit.

Jesus meant His disciples to be a company—a fold and a flock; a flock, not a few scattered sheep, and we must be true to the idea of a “flock,” but this can be realised only as men join the church.

2. *You have the practice of the apostles everywhere.*—They preached, they baptised the converts, and united them all in church fellowship; and so churches were formed at Jerusalem, Antioch, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, Thyatira, Sardis, Laodicea, Philadelphia, &c. No doubt, then, as in our mission fields now, many were converted and baptised, though there was no church formed in the district. That could not and cannot be helped. These converts would unite in time—there, or somewhere else. God’s people would seek one another out, and enter into Christian fellowship. Conversion led to baptism, and baptism led to church-membership.

They met in private houses, and there would be “the church of thy household” formed. They met in synagogues, public buildings, and by the river or mountain side. The converts were not left as individuals—endeavours were always made to form them into a family.

This was the invariable practice of the apostles.

3. *You have the practice of believers in all ages.*—All along, the faithful have banded together, and thus there always has been a visible church, whether it met in mansion, cathedral, or assembled in the mountain cave; whether it embraced the crowned heads, or the outcasts of society. In all ages the believers united when possible, and forsook not the “assembling of themselves together.” We seek to prolong the line of holy succession.

Why should we not profess our union with the Lord’s people? Why refuse to join the church? Why withhold ourselves from this true apostolic succession?

If everyone were to act on this principle of isolation, there would be no church to join, and surely we ought not to take upon ourselves to defend, by our actions, a principle which, if universally acted on, would obliterate the visible church of Christ on earth.

We have no right to follow Jesus so far off. We have

no right and ought to have no disposition to refuse to join the encampment of the just. We have no right to so far forth deceive the world, by appearing to belong to it; no right to hide from the people, the side on which we mean to live and die. We ought to tell out "whose we are and whom we serve."

This army of the living God, like all other armies, loses many by desertion, death, distance; and every believer ought to come forward and fill up the ever-recurring gaps. Let us keep up the holy line of succession, and not break with the best traditions of the church, and ignore our plain and truly important duty.

III.—THE BENEFITS OF JOINING THE CHURCH.

1. *You have a consciousness of having done your duty.*—The approval of one's own conscience is surely not a little matter, and yet few appraise this factor at its true worth. We ought to be on the best terms with our own conscience—it will help us unspeakably if we are so; but if we trifle with it, silence it, drug it, neglect it, the consequences are sure to be serious. Let us seek for its "well done;" let us seek for a gleam of joy from its smile, and we can secure these by humbly doing what we are so often commanded to do—viz., to be "added to the church."

2. *You have a participation in all the privileges of the church.*—There is nothing withheld from the baptised believer that the church can give, or has any authority to give. You get all that Jesus promised to His "flock," His "church," His "body." You are permitted to proclaim your death to sin. You are buried with Christ in baptism. You commemorate the sacrifice of our Lord. You have the communion of the saints. You are permitted to help all the affairs of the church by your counsel and practical support.

Why should all these high privileges be regarded as light matters? Jesus and His apostles laid great stress on them, and we must not treat them slightly.

We need all that church membership can secure to us, and we ought to see that we get it, by joining the church.

3. *You have given a dutiful and impressive example to all unbaptised believers.*—It often happens that the unbaptised wait on one another; each waits to see who will be the first to come forward to "put on Christ," and if some one does not assume the lead, all keep back, and as no

one likes to be first, all remain disobedient for a long time, some even for life; but surely, the noble course is to come forward, from a deep consciousness of duty and a fixed purpose, to obey the Lord Jesus and join His church. Whatever others may do, you at least will obey; will show an impressive and eloquent example of keeping the Lord's commands.

Your conduct, your consistency, will preach more effectively than words, however beautiful.

To every believer I would say, "Come in, ye beloved of the Lord; wherefore stand ye without." "Cast in your lot with us, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning us." "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good."

Have fellowship with us in believers' baptism; have fellowship with us in church membership; have fellowship with us at the Lord's Supper.

Come and receive the status of a church member; assume the responsibilities of a church member; enjoy the privileges of a church member, and do the work of a church member. Amen.

LECTURE XIV.

THE HISTORICAL NAMES OF BAPTISM.

Delivered on Wednesday evening, January 3, 1883,

Mr. MELLOR CALVERLEY in the Chair.

GOD has ordained a very simple mode of worship for the Christian era. We are to worship Him in spirit and in truth, and we are to have no more external ritual than He has commanded. But man loves the ornate, the elaborate—the sensuous in worship; hence the huge sensuousness of the worship observed in the Greek, Roman and Anglican communions. Baptism, of course, has not escaped from this tendency of human nature. Men have tampered with it as much as with any branch of dogma and ritual. History shows us all too clearly how far men have departed from the Christian baptism revealed in the New Testament, even in the very names given to this ordinance.

Dr. Bingham, to whom I owe many of the facts contained in this lecture, tells us that the names of baptism

have been determined by the alleged spiritual effects of it, by the nature of it; by the condition in order to its reception, and by the rites connected with it. I will now examine these statements in the order just given.

I.—IT IS NAMED ACCORDING TO THE SPIRITUAL EFFECTS ASCRIBED TO IT.

These names are at least four in number.

1. *It is named "Indulgence."*—That is "Absolution," "The forgiveness of sins," "The remission of sins." The candidates were baptised for "the remission of sins." Baptised, that is, that their sins may be pardoned. At first the baptism was not forgiveness in itself, not either the act or the fact of forgiveness, but only the "sacrament" of it. Baptism was regarded as the sacrament at which sins were remitted. By and by, baptism was considered to be *essential* to pardon. Then it was ultimately believed to be the rite which really removed our sins.

At first it was but a symbol of gracious realities; but men soon confounded what was at best but a beautiful symbol with a great reality. Nearly all controversies about sacraments arise from this confusion, this pushing symbols beyond their first intention and legitimate scope. It is here where the Campbellites err. They push the doubtful reference to baptism in John iii. 5, to an absurd extent. The text represents us as being begotten by the Spirit, which is quite true, and as being born of the water, which is true as John puts it; but the "disciples" of Campbell say, that the unbaptised believer is begotten but not born, and may never be born. They do not teach baptismal regeneration exactly, but that we are not born again till we are baptised. All this is pushing simple figures of speech into literalities not contemplated by the sacred writers.

At first baptism was but a symbol of the fact of our salvation. It was the profession that we had accepted the Divine forgiveness in Christ Jesus, that we had experienced redemption through His blood. That we believed ourselves to be restored to the Divine favour. As pride seized the priesthood, and the spirit of servitude the people, the simple rite of believer's baptism was degraded into a phase of legerdemain. But even then the ceremony had to be fenced somewhat; hence many spoke of it, and still speak of it, as "the sacrament of forgiveness;" and they teach that its observance will work

no change in a bad man. It must be received becomingly. This is the true ground to assume with regard to the whole controversy—let those only be baptised who receive it in faith.

But even these sincere ones can get no good of the rite if the officiating Roman priest does not intend that they should derive benefit from it. Many persons have been concerned to know how infants receive it, on what grounds, in what manner, and for what purpose do they receive it?

Much controversy has raged around these questions, and to-day they are still unanswered.

Nearly all the Fathers, from the days of Augustine, have held that there was no salvation for infants if they died unbaptised; and the fifth Council of Carthage anathematized the thought and all who held it, that, even in one of the many mansions of our Father's house, room would be found for an unbaptised infant! All the Episcopal churches of all ages have held the dismal dogma of baptismal regeneration.

Dean Stanley very properly demands of all who hold that dogma, "Do they, or do they not, believe that immersion is essential to the efficacy of baptism?" This is a searching question, for this was the baptism which the fathers held to be essential to salvation; and yet it is the baptism unknown, for the most part, in the Roman and Anglican communions.

The doctrine that at baptism sins are really remitted has given rise to strange speculations, such as, (1) Are the effects of baptism *indelible*, or can they pass away? (2) If baptism really remits sins, how is it that magistrates can and are permitted to punish us for the commission of those very sins thus remitted?

Wandering from the simple baptismal rite and doctrine committed to our trust by God has landed the various sections of the Church of Christ into strange, profitless, and often silly controversies.

2. *It is named "regeneration"*—The believer, by his baptism, declared himself regenerate. The act of baptism did not regenerate him, nor were they regenerated as the act was being performed. Baptism and regeneration did not stand related as cause and effect, nor as concurrent acts. The act of baptism declared to a gainsaying world that the baptised was regenerated; and because regenerated he sought in the way appointed by God himself to declare his discipleship to Christ.

By and by, baptism was called "the sacrament of regeneration." Devout men spoke and wrote of baptism

in moments of ecstasy and holy delight as if the act of baptism was the act of regeneration; and then, at length, many came to believe that men were really regenerated at the moment when they were baptised, and that without baptism there was no regeneration. This, as we have seen in former discourses, is the dogma of many churches to-day.

All these churches rely mainly on John iii. 5 for their dark dogma, and the verse is freely quoted in their several liturgies; but this is but a slender basis for such a terrible superstructure. It seems to me to be the height of folly to build up such an unreasonable and unnatural, and as far as other parts of God's book are concerned, unscriptural dogma on a mere figure of speech. In the exposition of this passage several things ought to be borne in mind. (1) That it is not sound exegesis to build a dogma upon a mere figure used once only, and in an obscure way, if, indeed, it be used once. (2) That baptism is in no other part of Scripture referred to as a birth. (3) That the act of baptism points not to birth but to death and burial. Many able men contend that the passage makes not the slightest reference to baptism. Nicodemus is simply told that if he is to be a member of the kingdom about to be set up, he must not only be "born out of water," (his natural birth from his mother's womb), which is sufficient for membership in Israel; he must be "born of the Spirit," "born from above"—have altogether a fresh birth—he must be "born again."

This explanation is at once simple and reasonable. It seems also thoroughly in keeping with the context; and if it is correct, then the whole superstructure of baptismal regeneration falls to the ground. Whatever explanation of these words we accept, the one which forces baptismal regeneration into the text is to be utterly rejected as condemned by reason, common sense, and Scripture.

3. *It is named "Illumination."*—We, the saved of the Lord, declare in our baptism, that we have "passed from darkness to light," that "the Sun of righteousness has arisen upon us;" that we are "children of the light," and that our dark past is gone and done with. The darkness of ignorance and pollution which was once ours has been displaced by the light of knowledge, and the rays of grace which now fill our hearts. We have seen "the Light of the world," and have been illumined by Him. We declare these things by our baptism. All this is scriptural; but after a while baptism was called the "sacrament of

illumination;" and ultimately it was affirmed that baptism illumined, and this is the position held by the episcopal churches to-day with very few exceptions.

Baptism is really (1) a symbolical statement that we have broken with the past. It is a declaration that we have started on a new moral course altogether. (2). It is a declaration of a creed: creeds were prepared expressly for the candidates for baptism. These creeds were the symbols, the badges of the Christian army, and the believer declared his acceptance of them by his baptism.

Baptism does not illumine us, but in it we declare that the Holy Spirit of God has illumined our minds.

4. *It is named "Salvation."*—The believer in his baptism declared that he had eagerly received the word, that he was a saved man, that he was a disciple of Christ, and so he sought in the appointed way to tell the world that Christ now was his Lord and Master. By and by, the rite was called the "sacrament of salvation;" and though in a sense this name could be used with propriety, there was a risk in using it, hence it would have been better not to have so spoken of baptism. The rite at length was named "salvation," and it was declared to be necessary to salvation: without it even the new-born babe could not be saved, far less those who are grown up.

But baptism does not save, and it never was meant to save. In the first instance, and in order to salvation, the apostles never baptised. They never baptised first, and then sought for faith. They first preached and declared each believer a saved man; and because saved and "in Christ," believers were asked to declare the fact in baptism. Baptism in itself, and while it is being performed, works no spiritual change of any kind. The rite is for those only who already possess the spiritual qualifications; and these, and these alone, find baptism a means of grace—a blessed service—a helpful confession of Christ.

It is folly to speak of baptism as some churches do under the names of "The Water of Life;" "The Divine Fountain;" "Holy Baptism;" "The Layman's Priesthood, because in this service he becomes a priest and king."

Baptists believe in the *means* of grace, but they have no confidence in the *grace* of the means.

II. IT IS NAMED ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF IT.

1. *It is named "mystery," "sacrament," "seal," "seal of the Lord."*—There would be no great harm in our calling baptism by these names were it not for the danger strong and continuous of regarding words of strong

emotion, religious fervour, holy excitement, as scientific and exact statements of dogma.

If we are to be exact in our terms, then baptism is not a *mystery* at all. It is never called so in God's book, and we have no right to say that it is a mystery. Nothing can be simpler than the rite of Christian baptism. It is because it is so simple that nearly all the churches have endeavoured in their theologies and rituals to make it as mysterious as possible.

I am not sure that we ought to call baptism a *sacrament*. It is never called by this name in the Book, nor is the idea of sacrament ever suggested. In baptism we take no oath. We declare in this symbolical rite our allegiance to the Lord Jesus. We publicly declare that we have put on the "uniform" of His service, and now belong to His army. In this sense we may call baptism a sacrament, but it will be seen that this is using the word somewhat freely. It is not a *seal*. We are sealed not by baptism, but by "the Holy Spirit of promise." We are sealed by no outward rite but by God Himself, which is surely far better. It is not the *seal of the Lord*, nor is it ever so called in God's book. The church taught for many years that though the outward seal (baptism) was given to all, only those who rightly received baptism had the inward seal of the Spirit. This of course is the true position so far, but we ought to give the outward seal (baptism) to those only who profess to have received the inward seal; (the renewing of the Spirit.) Like Peter, we should baptize those who have "received the Holy Spirit as well as we," but no others. The church at length departed from this high position and made everything of the sacrament itself.

2. It is named the "*signature of faith*," "*the covenant of the Lord*," "*the gift of the Lord*," and "*the great circumcision*."—It is the signature of faith. Faith here declares (1) That having been regenerated, we proclaim the fact by the divinely appointed symbol. (2.) That having put on Christ spiritually we put him on externally in baptism. (3.) That having the response of a good conscience towards God, we make the fact known in our baptism. (4.) That having died, been buried, and raised again in spirit and in reality, we seek to tell out the fact by our being buried with Christ in baptism, and being raised again to newness of life.

We have the salvation first, as a blessed experience, and the symbol of it afterwards. Baptism does not save us, but it impressively declares the fact of our salvation

to the world. We have first the process of discipleship, then the recognition of discipleship—belief, and then baptism.

Baptism is not the *covenant of the Lord*, and it is never so-called in God's Book. In baptism we declare our conviction that we are in the covenant, and in a sense we declare that we have covenanted to be the Lord's. Even in this very free use of the term, baptism only symbolises the fact of the covenant, already made in our own hearts.

Baptism is not *the gift of God*. It is not a gift at all. There is nothing given by God in baptism; there is something rendered by us—viz., obedience.

Baptism is not the great *circumcision*. The great circumcision is the "circumcision of our hearts," which is something far higher—something belonging to another order of things altogether. It is a degradation of the true circumcision, which is a yielding of our whole hearts to God, and not simply a few inches of mere flesh, to make it but a synonym with baptism.

3. *It is named "royal mark" and "character of the Lord."*—In baptism the believer is sensibly distinguished from other men. He here receives the "royal mark." Heaven's Majesty sets apart His servants, His soldiers, and His sons in baptism, as being wholly His own.

The believer in baptism declares that he is of the same character, and seeks to have the same general characteristics as his Sovereign.

The act of a day, of an hour, of a moment; the act of faith enables the believer to break with the past its religion, its relations, its hopes, and to enter into a new set of opinions, enter into a new life, and new hopes; and he thankfully and exultantly felt as his teacher felt before him, that no name was too full, too great, too far reaching to express the change which had taken place; but then it must be remembered that the change was not wrought by the baptism on which the name was allowed to rest, but through the faith by which the sinner laid hold of Christ. "By grace are ye saved, through faith."

We declare in our baptism the great change which has been wrought in us; but the baptism itself is merely declarative. It effects nothing. Its changes nothing; but only symbolizes effects and changes produced by another agency.

Some devout persons saw in baptism:—

- (a.) The earnest of future good.
- (b.) The type of the resurrection.

- (c.) The communication of our Lord's passion.
- (d.) The garment of salvation.
- (e.) Clothing of joy.
- (f.) The garment of light.

Some persons on the other hand did not value baptism as a religious rite at all. They regarded it as something which was good for the body, for healing its distempers, &c. The Saracens compelled the Christian clergy, where they had the power, to baptise their children previously to their circumcision; for they thought that the rite would do the child good physically. If ever these children were converted they had to be baptised, for this service forced from the clergy for such a purpose was not, and could not be, regarded as Christian baptism.

Stanley assures us that not only the name of baptism, but the terms expressive of the efficacy of baptism—the terms declaring the moral effects of it have changed and crumbled through the ages, and are changing and crumbling now. They must do so, for they have no basis in truth.

The efficacy of baptism is a sad enigma, a perennial puzzle, a continued conundrum, to the Pædobaptist. Does baptism regenerate? Does baptism secure remission of sins? If so, what sins? Is there no salvation without baptism? Why baptise an infant? Pædobaptists do not and cannot agree in their answers to these questions. All hope of agreement among them is gone for ever.

Justin Martyr calls baptism “a dedication of *ourselves* to God,” not a dedication, be it observed, of unconscious babes, but of *ourselves*. In baptism, by our own act, we dedicate ourselves to God.

III.—IT IS NAMED ACCORDING TO THE CONDITION IN ORDER TO IT.

1. *It is named the “Sacrament of faith.”*—Faith must precede the baptism. It is necessary in order to it. Without faith there should be no baptism. This is the doctrine of Scripture, and this was the practice of the church for years; and even when sections of the church wandered from God they still held that faith was necessary in order to baptism; hence, when an infant was baptised some one had either, (1) To answer directly in the name of the child; or (2) To become surety or sponsor for the child. All baptismal services are founded on the ancient practice of demanding faith from every candidate for

baptism. Some of our more Protestant churches foolishly retain the baptism of the infants without asking any one to either personate the child, or to undertake that it will continue a Christian. They retain a ceremony after having emptied it of all meaning. This we regard as a prelude to its abolition altogether.

2. *It is named the "Sacrament of repentance."*—The apostles exhorted men to "repent and be baptised." There could be no baptism till the candidates professed to deeply repent their sinful past—to repent towards God, to be "pricked in their hearts." Baptism was for the believing penitent. It was so in the case of John the Baptist. It was the case on the day of Pentecost. Dean Stanley says, "The context of those passages, the words employed, the belief of the earlier Greek fathers, the state of theological controversy at the time, all not only do not enjoin, but almost forbid the extension of the phrase (as originally intended) from the baptism of adults to that of infants." The only child that was baptised was the penitent child. Unless it is argued that Peter addressed the word "repent" to babes, it is folly to apply to them the other word of the same sentence, "be baptised." Those who were exhorted to "repent," and those only, were the persons told to be "baptised." Both words, and both alike, were addressed to the same persons.

3. *It is named the "Sacrament of initiation."*—We declare in this act of baptism that we have been initiated into the divine family, service, life; and that we seek to be initiated into the Church of Christ on earth. So long as we refuse baptism, so long do we refuse this initiation into church life.

We Baptists give instruction to the young, and we plead for early conversions and early baptisms. We teach the young with a view to their immediate decision for Christ. We offer salvation in the name of Christ to the youngest of them. We exhort them to join the church. We do not fear their fellowship nor their co-operation at our church meetings. Trouble seldom arises from the lambs of the fold. It is not only the right thing to seek fellowship with God's people while we are young, but it really seems dreadful to refuse baptism till Christ threatens to exclude us from heaven for our disobedience. Many have regretted in their dying moments that they had not been baptised, or if baptised, baptised so recently; but no one ever regretted that he had been baptised, or that he had been baptized while he was of such tender years.

These three names kept alive the ancient—the apostolic—the right conception of Christian baptism.

IV.—IT IS NAMED ACCORDING TO THE RITES CONNECTED WITH IT.

1. *It is named "Baptism."*—It is so called because of the "act" itself, which is immersion. This is at once the natural and scriptural name of the rite; and to this name we ought rigidly to adhere; and had men done this aforesaid it would have saved the church from many an error. By our continued witness for this simple name, and by exposing the follies called "baptism," in some of the popular churches, we have modified even the Roman Catholic and Anglican rites of baptism. We have reduced Protestant Pædobaptism to a mere name and an empty show, the next stage of which is to give up the ceremony altogether.

2. *It is named "laver."*—It was so-called because of the tank or vessel in which many persons were immersed. Just as we speak of "the cup," when we mean the wine that is in it, so we speak of the "laver," because of its contents. The term is scriptural. "The laver of regeneration,"—that is, the laver in which we declare our regeneration—our renewing in the Holy Spirit.

3. *It is named "tinction."*—When we put anything into a vessel containing water or any other liquid, it will be tintured by it more or less; so some of the ancients spoke of baptism as a "tinction." The reason given for the use of this name is foolish in the extreme.

4. *It is named "unction."*—The candidates were, and in some churches still are, anointed with oil, both before and after their baptism. Sacred and royal persons were thus anointed at their coronation and consecration, so it was argued should the baptised be anointed, for they were being, by the act of baptism, crowned kings and ordained priests to God; hence this anointing with oil, and hence, also, this name of baptism—"unction," or "anointing."

Other names were given to the rite, such as "viaticum," &c.; but all these names merely showed how far the church had wandered from the simplicity of the service entrusted to her by Christ.

We Baptists have a splendid mission in urging, as we do, the whole of Christendom to return to the baptism introduced by Christ, which was, and is, the immersion of every believer in the Lord Jesus, into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.