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THE

DOCTRINE

OF

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

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## BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

THE doctrine of baptismal regeneration, may be traced to an early origin in the Christian church; as early as about the middle of the second century. This fact is much relied on, as evidence of its truth. But it might be adduced for this purpose, with more plausibility, if it were not notorious that even at that early period, other great corruptions had crept into the church. How this doctrine first came to be believed, we may not perhaps, at this late period, be able to determine. Dr. Doddridge accounts for it in the following manner: "In the earliest ages of the church, persons were generally baptized, as soon as they were converted to the cordial belief of Christianity, and therefore, the time of their conversion, and that of their baptism, might naturally enough be spoken of as one; and as this was a period when they did, as it were, come into a new world, it is no wonder that the action by which they testified a change so lately made, should be put for that change itself. In a word, a man by baptism, solemnly professed himself a Christian; and as it was generally the first overt act by which his believing the gospel could be publicly and generally known, and was also supposed to be very near the time of his inward conversion, they dated his regeneration, that is, his happy change, as that word used to signify even among the heathen, from that time."

In addition to these considerations, it may be remarked, that baptism was originally intended to be a sign of regeneration. The outward washing of water, was intended to represent the necessity of inward purification. As mankind are naturally prone to attach undue importance to outward forms, they began, in process of time, to confound the sign

with the thing signified, and to speak of regeneration and baptism as one and the same thing. The doctrine of transubstantiation may be traced to a similar origin. The bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, gradually came to be regarded as the real body and blood of Christ, of which they are only symbols.

A false interpretation of certain passages of Scripture, particularly John iii, 5, and Titus iii, 5, also had much influence in giving currency to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. That some of the early fathers should have mistaken the meaning of these texts, is no more wonderful, than that they should have fallen into other egregious mistakes in interpreting the Scriptures.

When we find Barnabas, one of the apostolic fathers, maintaining that Abraham and his one hundred and eighteen trained servants, signify Jesus and his cross; when we find Origen mentioning that in the account given of the destruction of the Hebrew male children in Egypt, and the deliverance of Moses, Pharaoh is the devil, Pharaoh's daughter is the church, the midwives are the Old and New Testaments, and the male and female children are the animal and rational faculties of the soul, and Moses is the law; that the three hundred foxes caught by Sampson, are teachers of heresy; and that the phrase used by the Apostle, "saved so as by fire," teaches that all the saints after the resurrection from the dead, will be purified by flames, and have the dross of sin burnt off by literal fire; when we find Jerome interpreting the controversy between the two women who came to Solomon, as a representation of the Jewish synagogue and the Christian church contending about the child Jesus—when we find

these facts, and a multitude of others like them, illustrating the exegetical wisdom of the three first centuries, we need not be surprised to find that the fathers have fallen into the mistake of supposing, that our Savior, when he said, John iii, 5, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of heaven," did teach the doctrine of baptismal regeneration.

But although the word, regeneration, in the writings of the ancient fathers, after the middle of the second century, is generally used to signify baptism or something inseparably connected with baptism, it is not used in this sense, so invariably as some have seemed to imagine. Clemens Alexandrinus uses the word, in one instance at least, to denote a change of character by true repentance. Speaking of a penitent female, he says, "that being born again by conversion, or a change in her temper and behavior, she has the regeneration of life." Chrysostom and Augustine, although they frequently used the language current in their day, admitted that many who were outwardly baptized, were not baptized virtually and spiritually by the Holy Ghost.

As true religion declined, a superstitious observance of outward rites and ceremonies, usurped the place of vital godliness; and the idea of regeneration, as an inward spiritual change of character, became almost entirely lost. For many centuries, no other regeneration was ever thought of by the great mass of Christian professors, but that which was supposed to take place in baptism. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration is still maintained, as it ever has been, by the whole Romish church. It is also maintained by the high church party in the church of England, and in the Protestant Episcopal church in the United States. By the *evangelical* party in that communion, it is entirely dis-

carded. But they meet with great embarrassment, in being obliged to make use of a liturgy, which seems most explicitly to contradict their belief. The high church party strenuously insist that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is a doctrine of the church—clearly taught in the Prayer-book; and if the language of the Prayer-book is to be understood in its most obvious meaning, they certainly have the right of the argument; while it is equally certain, that their opponents have the evidence of Scripture on their side. The English liturgy, it is well known, was compiled from the Romish; and by persons whose eyes were not fully opened to all the corruptions of Popery. It is not surprising, therefore, that it should contain some things which ought to have been excluded. Of these, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is one.

The language of the baptismal service is very explicit. The minister, after the baptism of an infant, is directed to say, "Seeing now dearly beloved, that this child *is regenerate*, and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits," &c. . . . "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee *to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit*, to receive him for thine own child, by adoption, and to incorporate him into thine own church."

At the baptism of adults, the minister is directed to say, "Mercifully look upon these thy servants; wash them, and sanctify them with the Holy Ghost; that they being delivered from thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ's church." Again, "Give thy Holy Spirit to these persons, that they *may be born again*, and be made heirs of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ." After baptism, the minister is directed to say, "Seeing now, dearly beloved, that these per-

sons are *regenerate*, and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits." The thanksgiving then follows, and after it this prayer: "Give thy Holy Spirit to these persons, that *being now born again, and made heirs of everlasting salvation*, through our Lord Jesus Christ, they may continue thy servants," &c.

In the church catechism, which all are required to learn before they offer themselves for confirmation, are the following questions and answers. "Ques. What is your name? Ans. N. or M. Ques. Who gave you that name? Ans. My sponsors in baptism, *wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.*" Such is the teaching of the Prayer-book, which all the ministers of the Episcopal church are obliged to use. While, therefore, we rejoice that there are many evangelical and pious ministers in that church, who adopt scriptural views on the subject of regeneration, we can not but regard them as objects of pity, that they are obliged to make use of formularies so utterly at variance with their doctrinal belief. In order to reconcile their principles and practice, they are under the necessity of resorting to the most unnatural interpretation of the language of the Prayer-book.

Nearly thirty years ago, there was a protracted controversy on this subject, in England, between the high church party and the evangelical. The questions in dispute, were two. 1. Is the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, a doctrine of the Bible? 2. Is it a doctrine of the church? In the opinion of candid and distinguished judges, the result of this controversy, was victory and defeat, to both parties alike. On the first question, the evangelical party were triumphant. On the second, the high church party were equally so. Thanks be to God, that

in the discussion of this subject we have but one question to settle, viz. What is the testimony of the Scriptures? In the following remarks, we propose,

*First*, To attempt to ascertain what the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is, as maintained by high church Episcopalians, in England and in this country; and

*Second*, To show that the doctrine, so far from receiving any support from the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, is utterly opposed to the genius of Christianity, and the explicit declarations of the word of God.

What then is the doctrine of baptismal regeneration?

There has been some doubt in the minds of many as to the precise sense in which this doctrine is held by its advocates; and it is not certain that it is held by all in exactly the same sense. Of this we may perhaps be able to judge, by bringing together and comparing the statements of different individuals. Bishop Brownell of Connecticut, in his late charge to his clergy, thus states the doctrine.

"The true economy of the Christian religion, regards men as by nature children of wrath. It takes them from this state, which is called in Scripture the 'kingdom of Satan,' and transfers them by baptism into the family, household, and kingdom of the Savior—where they are called 'children of God,' 'members of Christ,' and 'heirs of the kingdom of heaven.' From adults, repentance and faith are required as qualifications for baptism; and from infants there is required a subsequent repentance and faith, which stands in the nature of a debt, and which they are bound to discharge when they come to years of discretion. After baptism, the person is regarded as in a *state of covenant relationship with God*; becomes entitled to the aids of his Holy Spirit, and through the instrumentalities provided in the church, is daily set forward in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. THIS CHANGE OF STATE, EFFECTED IN BAPTISM, IS CALLED IN SCRIPTURE, AND IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE BAPTISMAL OFFICE, REGENERATION."—p. 21.

"Let them be assured, that those who

are sacramentally baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, become by that act, (not in name only but in deed and in truth,) 'members of Christ,' 'children of God,' and 'heirs of the kingdom of heaven;' that by the renunciation of the dominion of Satan, and their adoption into the kingdom of Christ, they are restored to a state of favor with God, and brought within the sphere of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. And this is not to be regarded as a mere temporary act, but as an initiation into an abiding state. On this ground the Apostles exhorted their baptized converts to count themselves 'dead unto sin, and alive unto God.'"—p. 31.

Bishop Hobart says—

"In the sacrament of baptism, we are taken from the world, where we had no title to the favor of God, and placed in a state of salvation in the Christian church."—*Sermon on Confirmation*, p. 26.

Again, "Into this church, the body which derives life, strength, and salvation, from Christ its head, baptism was instituted as the sacred rite of admission. In this *regenerating ordinance*, fallen man is *born again* from a state of condemnation to a state of grace."—*Companion for the Altar*, p. 186.

Again, "Wherever the gospel is promulgated, the *only mode* through which we can be admitted into covenant with God, the *only mode* through which we can obtain a title to those blessings and privileges which Christ has purchased for his mystical body, the church, is the sacrament of baptism."—*Ib.* p. 189.

Tomline, Bishop of Lincoln, in his refutation of Calvinism, says:

"The word *regeneration* is in Scripture solely and exclusively applied to the one immediate effect of baptism, once administered; and is never used as synonymous to the repentance or reformation of a Christian; or to express *any operation of the Holy Ghost upon the human mind subsequent to baptism*."—2d edition, p. 86.

"Neither Scripture nor the writings of our church authorize us to call upon those who have been baptized, whether in their infancy or at a mature age, to regenerate themselves, or to expect regeneration through the workings of the Holy Ghost."—p. 92.

Dr. Mant, a distinguished advocate of this doctrine, whose writings occasioned the controversy in the church of England, to which we have

already alluded, says, (as quoted by the Christ. Obser. Vol. XV, p. 70,)

"To the proselyte from heathenism to the Jewish faith, baptism had been a death to his natural incapacities, and a new birth to the civil privileges of a Jew. To him who should be admitted to a profession of the Christian faith, and who should be 'born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,' it was a *death unto sin*, and a new birth unto those spiritual privileges which should accompany his deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

\* \* \* "Baptism is a *new birth*, by which we enter into a new world, the *new creation*, the blessings and spiritualities of the kingdom. From this time forward, we have a new principle put into us, the spirit of grace, which besides our soul and body, is a principle of action." \* \* \*

"The doctrine of regeneration by baptism is most clearly asserted by her, (the church.) She supposes, not merely that all real Christians are regenerated by God's Holy Spirit, by which I understand all those who live a Christian life, but that *those also are so regenerated, to whom baptism is rightly administered, notwithstanding by their future conduct they may forfeit the privileges of their new birth*." \* \* \* "If the work of regeneration is not effected by baptism, it is impossible for any sober man to say when and by what means it is." \* \* \* "Sanctification and purity, unspotted and unblemished holiness, are attributed to the church of Christ as the effect of the washing of water." \* \* \* "All Christians, all persons who have been baptized, are indiscriminately said to have been regenerated."

Several inquiries are suggested by the foregoing statements.

1. Do these writers mean that baptism itself is regeneration? or that regeneration is effected by baptism? or that it is an invariable concomitant of baptism? Bishop Brownell says, "This change of state effected *in baptism*, is called—regeneration." According to him, therefore, regeneration is effected *in baptism*. By what agency, we are not informed. Bishop Hobart calls baptism a "regenerating ordinance;" which seems to imply that in his view, baptism produces the change. But he says also, "*In this regenerating ordinance*, fallen man is born again," &c. This language,

while it teaches that baptism and regeneration are inseparable, leaves it uncertain by what agency the change is produced. According to Bishop Tomline, "regeneration is the one immediate effect of baptism." This seems to make baptism the cause of regeneration. Dr. Mant calls baptism "*a new birth*," and speaks of it as "a death unto sin," and a new birth unto the privileges which are conferred on God's children. This seems to make baptism and regeneration identical. It is proper, however, to remark, that none of these writers exclude the agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. They all maintain, (whether consistently or not, the reader will judge,) that this divine agent has something to do in effecting this change.

2. Does regeneration in the view of these writers, denote a change of state merely, or does it denote also a change of character?

On this point, their representations do not seem to be entirely consistent. From some things which they affirm, it would seem that they mean by it only a change of state. They speak of it as "a change of state," and never, in so many words, as a change of character. Bishop Brownell most explicitly discards the idea that regeneration denotes "a change of heart." But how can there be any change of moral character, without a change of heart? He also discards, as New Light theology, the idea of a "sudden change of heart by the operation of the Holy Ghost." But if there is a change of character wrought by the Holy Ghost at the moment of baptism, it must be a "sudden change of heart." Besides, Bishop Brownell says, "From adults, repentance and faith are required as qualifications for baptism; and from infants there is required a subsequent repentance and faith." This language seems to imply, that no change of character is expected at the time of

baptism, and consequently that regeneration in the view of Bishop Brownell denotes no change of character. If adults possess the qualifications required; that is, if they are the subjects of repentance and faith, they have already experienced a change of character. They are penitent believers before baptism. What more are they, so far as moral character is concerned, after baptism?

But here difficulties crowd upon us in a mass. If no change of character is effected in regeneration, what does the Holy Spirit do? All these writers, and all who sympathize with them, maintain that those who are regenerated, are born of the Spirit, as well as of water. In the baptismal service they say, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant *with thy Holy Spirit*." But what does the Holy Spirit do in regeneration, if he does not change the heart? Besides, many of the expressions used by these writers, seem to imply that regeneration denotes a change of character. Dr. Mant calls it "a death unto sin." He says also, "From this time forth, we have a new principle put into us, . . . which . . . is a principle of action." And again, "Sanctification and purity, unspotted and unblemished holiness are attributed to the church of Christ, as the effect of the washing of water." Bishop Brownell speaks of baptized persons as "dead unto sin, and alive unto God." This language would seem to imply an inward spiritual change. How persons who are "by nature children of wrath," can become "dead unto sin, and alive unto God," and become the subjects of "sanctification and purity, and unspotted and unblemished holiness," without any change of moral character, is to us inconceivable.

But still greater difficulties press upon us. According to all these wri-

ters, regeneration denotes a change of state in relation to man's immortal interests—a change from a state of condemnation to a state of reconciliation and favor with God. Bishop Hobart says, "In the sacrament of baptism, we are taken *from the world, where we had no title to the favor of God*, and placed in a *state of salvation* in the Christian church." "In this regenerating ordinance, fallen man is born again from a *state of condemnation* to a *state of grace*." Bishop Brownell says, "The true economy of the Christian religion, regards men as by nature children of wrath. It takes them from this state, which is called in Scripture the kingdom of Satan, and transfers them *by baptism*, into the family, household, and kingdom of the Savior, where they are called 'children of God,' 'members of Christ,' and 'heirs of the kingdom of heaven.'"

Now is it true that such a change takes place in man's spiritual condition, without any change of moral character? Are those who are "children of wrath," "in a state of condemnation," "in the kingdom of Satan," "where they have no title to the favor of God," transferred into "the family, household, and kingdom of the Savior," and made in very deed "children of God, members of Christ, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven," without the least change of moral character? Does the unchangeable Jehovah, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, look upon an individual as a "child of wrath" one moment, and as an "heir of heaven" the next moment, while his character remains precisely the same? Is baptism the only dividing line between the heirs of heaven and the heirs of hell? Is character nothing in the sight of God?

Again, according to Bishop Brownell, men are "by nature children of wrath." And how are they delivered from this state? By baptism.

Consequently, whatever change may be wrought in their moral character, they continue to be children of wrath, until they are baptized. No matter how deep and genuine may be their repentance, how cordial may be their faith in Christ, how fervent may be their love to God, and how unreserved their consecration of themselves to his service; these things will avail nothing towards securing an interest in the divine favor. Repentance and faith, Bishop Brownell informs us, are qualifications for baptism in adults. Suppose them to possess these qualifications. This change of character, it seems, effects no change in their spiritual condition. Let them possess the faith of Abraham, the humility of Job, and the holy zeal of David; still, they are "children of wrath," in "the kingdom of Satan," and heirs of hell, until they receive baptism. According to the principles laid down by these writers, God regards the outward observance of this ordinance as of infinitely greater consequence than any change of character whatever. It is the condition of salvation. Without it, however holy we may be in heart and life, we have no title to the favor of God. Bishop Hobart says expressly, "Wherever the Gospel is promulgated, the *only mode* through which we can be admitted into covenant with God; the *only mode* through which we can obtain a title to those privileges which Christ has purchased for his mystical body, the church, is the sacrament of baptism." He says again, "Repentance, faith and obedience will not, of themselves, be effectual to our salvation. We may sincerely repent of our sins, we may heartily believe the Gospel, we may walk in the paths of holy obedience, but until we enter into covenant with God by baptism, and ratifying our vows of allegiance and duty at the holy sacrament of the supper, commemorate the mysterious sacrifice of Christ,

*we can not assert any claim to salvation.*"\* But what saith the Scripture? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

3. Another inquiry suggested by the statements above given, is, Are all who are baptized by persons duly authorized, regenerated, whatever may be their character and motives? Suppose a person hypocritically to profess repentance and faith, and to apply for baptism, for the purpose of accomplishing some base design; and suppose the ordinance to be administered in due form, and by a person duly authorized; is he regenerated? On this point, we are inclined to believe there is not an entire agreement among the advocates of baptismal regeneration. Dr. Mant, if we understand him, strenuously maintains the affirmative of this question. He says, "All persons who have been baptized, are indiscriminately said to have been regenerated." He maintains that Simon Magus was regenerated; for he asks, "When was Simon Magus admonished of the necessity of undergoing another new birth?" The Bishop of Lincoln seems to have been of the same opinion. He says, "The word regeneration is, in Scripture, solely and exclusively applied to the one immediate effect of baptism, once administered." He says, also, "Neither Scripture, nor the writings of our church, authorize us to call upon those who have been baptized, to regenerate themselves, or to expect regeneration through the workings of the Holy Spirit." And is it so? Is the veriest hypocrite, whose heart is full of enmity to God, and hatred of holiness, translated by baptism, without any change of character, from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and made a child of God and heir of the kingdom of heaven? But as we said, we are inclined to believe, that this ground

is not taken by all the advocates of this doctrine.

Bishop Brownell says, "The sacrament of baptism, as well as that of the Lord's supper, will always prove efficacious, unless hindered by the unworthiness of the receiver." This language seems to imply, that its efficacy may be hindered; that is, that persons may be baptized, and not be regenerated. But this view of the subject is not free from difficulty. Suppose a person to be duly baptized, but not possessing the requisite qualifications, to fail of regeneration; how is it possible for that individual to be saved? Christ has declared, that "except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." This individual has been baptized, but he has not been regenerated; and if there is no regeneration but that which is effected in baptism, how can he be saved, unless he shall be rebaptized? And do the high church Episcopalians deem it necessary to rebaptize all those, whose unworthiness, they have reason to fear, hindered the efficacy of the ordinance when first administered?

4. What, in the view of the high church party, is essential to the validity and efficacy of baptism? On this point, so far as we know, there is an entire harmony of views among them; and they are correctly expressed in the following declarations of Bishop Hobart.

"In order to be effectual, to be acknowledged by God, and accompanied by his power, they [the sacraments] must be administered by those who have received a commission for the purpose, from him." "None can possess authority to administer the sacraments, but those who have received a commission from the bishops of the church."†

It is here most explicitly affirmed, that none but those who have been episcopally ordained, have any right

\* Companion for the Altar, p. 190.

† Companion for the Altar, pp. 193, 200.

to administer baptism; and that when professedly administered by others, it is not acknowledged by God, nor accompanied by his power. In other words, regeneration never takes place except in connection with baptism administered by an Episcopal clergyman. Consequently, all the members of non-episcopal churches, whatever may be their character, are in an unregenerate state. They are, of course, according to the foregoing statements, "children of wrath," "in the kingdom of Satan," "under condemnation," without "any title to the favor of God." The legitimate inference is, that they can not possibly be saved. This inference, we are aware, they do not admit, in its full extent. They admit, nay, they strenuously maintain, that none but those who have been duly baptized, have "a covenanted title to salvation;" but they express the charitable hope, that some of them may, in some way, they know not what, through the uncovenanted mercies of God, finally escape the sorrows of the second death. But it is easy to prove, that none but those who have "a covenanted title to salvation," can possibly be saved. A covenanted title, is a title secured by promise.

Now to whom is salvation promised? It is promised to all true believers; John v, 24. It is promised to those who repent; Ezek. xviii, 30. It is promised to all who love God; James i, 12. It is promised to the righteous; Psalm lviii, 11. It is promised to the godly; 1 Tim. iv, 8. It is promised to the just; Prov. iv, 18. It is promised to the merciful; Matt. v, 7. It is promised to the meek; Psalm cxlix, 4. It is promised to the upright; Psalm vii, 10. It is promised to the pure in heart; Matt. v, 8. It is promised to them that fear the Lord; Psalm cxiii, 17. It is promised to those that call upon the Lord; Rom. x, 12, 13. It is promised to all in every nation, who

fear God and work righteousness; Acts x, 34, 35. Thus we see to whom salvation is secured by promise; in other words, who have a "covenanted title to salvation." The question now is, can any who do not possess some one or all of the above traits of character, be saved? Can any who do not believe be saved? What saith the Scripture? "He that believeth not shall be damned;" Mark xvi, 16. Can any who do not repent, be saved? "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" Luke xiii, 8. Can any who do not love God, be saved? "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha;" 1 Cor. xvi, 22. Can any who are not righteous be saved? "Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" 1 Cor. vi, 9. Can any that are not godly be saved? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly, and the sinner appear?" 1 Pet. iv, 18. Can any that are not just be saved? "The hope of unjust men perisheth;" Prov. xi, 7. Can any that are not merciful be saved? "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy;" James ii, 13. It is needless to search any further. Nothing can be plainer from the Bible, than that the promises and threatenings include all descriptions of people. In other words, all to whom salvation is not promised, are under condemnation. Every man is a believer or an unbeliever, penitent or impenitent, righteous or unrighteous, godly or ungodly, just or unjust, merciful or unmerciful. Now to the believer, to the penitent, to the righteous, &c. salvation is secured by promise. But the unbeliever, the impenitent, the unrighteous, &c. are under condemnation, and dying in this state, must be lost. No man, therefore, can possibly be saved, who does not come within the pale of the covenant. If then, none but those who have been baptized by persons episcopally or-



dained, have "a covenanted title to salvation," all others must inevitably perish.

Such then, is the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, as maintained by its advocates. Although it is difficult to ascertain their precise meaning on some points; and although there may be some slight difference of views among them; yet on the following points, which are sufficiently plain, they are, it is believed, perfectly agreed,—

1. That there is no regeneration except in connection with baptism administered by a clergyman episcopally ordained.\*

2. That when baptism is administered to a proper subject, and by a person duly authorized, regeneration always takes place.

3. That the regeneration which takes place in baptism, denotes a change in man's spiritual state, so that from a child of wrath, he be-

comes a child of God, and an heir of heaven.

4. That every person duly baptized, does by that act obtain a title to heaven, and will finally be saved, unless he apostatizes, and loses the grace given at his baptism.

5. That no unbaptized person has any covenanted title to salvation; that is, any interest in the promises of the Gospel.

We now proceed, as was proposed, to show that this doctrine, so far from receiving any support from the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, is utterly opposed to the genius of Christianity, and to the express declarations of the word of God.

The argument from ecclesiastical history, we pass over as of no weight; because, if we were to collect all the testimony of the fathers on this subject, we should find it very contradictory.† We know also, that great corruptions crept into the church at an early age. The opinions of the fathers, therefore, are not to be relied on, any farther than they are found to agree with the word of God. "To the law and to the testimony." What saith the Scripture?

when, previous to his confirmation, it was true that he never had been regenerated? Or was he regenerated at the time of his confirmation. We would ask then, what becomes of the doctrine of BAPTISMAL REGENERATION? Where, in the Bible, or in the Prayer-book, or in the writings of the fathers, is confirmation styled a "*regenerating ordinance*?" Bishop Brownell tells us, that it is by *baptism* we are taken from the kingdom of Satan, and transferred into the kingdom of Christ. So says Bishop Hobart. And so say all the theologians of this class. Let these tell, then, if they can, when those among them, who have never had any but Presbyterian or Congregational baptism, were regenerated.

† The conductors of the London Christian Observer (themselves Episcopalians) say, "The opinions of the early Christian fathers are scarcely to be deemed good authority on this subject; if for no other reason, at least for this, that it is extremely difficult to get at their meaning at all; and that, when obtained by long research, it is often found very contradictory." Vol. XV, p. 228.

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\* There is an inconsistency in the practice of high church Episcopalians in reference to this point. While they strenuously maintain the principle above stated, yet in receiving members from other denominations, they do not generally rebaptize them. The consequence is, that many of the members of their church, and not a few of their clergy, (bishops not excepted,) have never received any but Congregational or Presbyterian baptism. Now it is a very serious question, whether these persons have ever been regenerated. If they have, when did their regeneration take place? Not when they were baptized; for according to Bishop Hobart, their baptism was "not acknowledged by God," nor "accompanied by his power." Now it is strenuously maintained, that there is no regeneration but that which takes place in baptism. But these persons were not regenerated when they were baptized; consequently, they never have been regenerated.

To obviate this difficulty, it has been lately said, that *confirmation* supersedes the necessity of rebaptizing those who have received none but lay-baptism. But how? Suppose a person, who was baptized by a Congregational clergyman twenty years ago, should be confirmed by the bishop to-day. Is he regenerated? If he is, when did his regeneration take place? Did his confirmation to-day, make it true that he was regenerated twenty years ago,

The only passages of Scripture which have been adduced with any plausibility, in support of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, are John iii, 5, and Titus iii, 5. The first reads thus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Here it is said, we are explicitly taught, that baptism is essential to regeneration—just as essential as the operation of the Holy Spirit—that without the application of water to the outward man, as well as of the Spirit to the inward man, there can be no scriptural regeneration. This, at first view, is quite plausible. But upon close examination, it will appear not to be conclusive. What does our Savior mean by the phrase "born of water?" Does he mean water-baptism? That he does, is not to our mind, certain: for

1. Baptism is not mentioned in the passage. It is said, "except a man *be born of water*;" but it is not said, except a man *be baptized with water*. To assert that these phrases are synonymous, is a mere assumption.

2. There are no parallel texts which support this interpretation. There are many passages in the New Testament which teach the necessity of regeneration, which represent it as the work of God, and which describe its nature and effects; but there is none in which baptism is mentioned as constituting any part of it. Now if baptism is an essential part of this saving change, would there not have been some explicit declaration to this effect, especially since regeneration is so often brought into view in the Scriptures, and represented as absolutely necessary to salvation? We know that other texts are referred to by those who adopt the interpretation in question. But no one has been adduced more unequivocal than the one we are considering. The one principally relied on is Titus iii, 5: "According to his mer-

cy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." But it will be observed that *baptism* is not mentioned in this passage. To affirm that by "*the washing of regeneration*" the ordinance of baptism is intended, is again taking for granted what needs to be proved. It is equally doubtful, to say the least, whether this phrase means baptism, or whether the phrase "born of water" has this meaning; and it is a gross departure from all the rules of sound interpretation to explain one doubtful passage by another equally doubtful.

3. At the time of our Lord's conference with Nicodemus, Christian baptism was not instituted.\* The old dispensation had not yet ceased. Christian baptism was not instituted, until after Christ's resurrection. The first account we have of it is in the commission given to the Apostles, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Previously to this, we have no account that Christ ever enjoined baptism.† In all his preaching, so far as we can learn,

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\* This so far as we know, is admitted by all who adopt the interpretation here opposed. Dr. Mant says, "Our Savior was alluding by anticipation to the sacrament of baptism which he meant to ordain."—*Tracts*, p. 8.

† It is true that the disciples of Christ did baptize, probably with his approbation, at least with his permission. But it does not appear that he ever enjoined baptism as a duty upon any whom he addressed. "On this subject, the truth seems to be that our Lord, on entering upon his ministry, permitted the continuance of John's baptism, as harmonizing with his own designs. The import of this rite was the same, whether administered by John himself, or by the disciples of Jesus. In either case, it implied the profession of repentance, and a consecration to the kingdom of heaven. To this baptism none but Jews were admitted, to whom the ministry of John was wholly restricted. The introduction of *Christian baptism*, strictly so called, was immediately consequent upon our Lord's ascen-

he said nothing on this subject. To many a penitent sinner he said, "Go in peace;" but to what one did he ever say, Go, be baptized? No such case is recorded; and the reason is obvious. The time had not yet come, for baptism which was to be an ordinance of the new dispensation, to be instituted. Now is it credible, that our Savior in his conference with Nicodemus, should refer to an ordinance which had not been instituted? Especially is it credible that he should declare it to be essential to that new birth, without which he had just informed Nicodemus, he could not see the kingdom of God?

4. If by the phrase, "born of water," baptism is intended, we see not that any without baptism, can possibly be saved.\* The declaration of our Lord is absolute. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he can not enter into the kingdom of heaven." But did Christ declare baptism to be essential to salvation, and with the same lips afterwards promise to the unbaptized thief, that he should be with him in paradise? If, to evade this difficulty, it should be said, that by "the kingdom of heaven," the visible church only is intended, there is an insuperable objection to this explanation. It would make the passage teach that no man can enter the visible church without being born of the Spirit. But is this impossible? Is it impossible to make

sion, and the most important commission for receiving it as an universal ordinance of the church, is given in Matt. xxviii, 19."—*Coleman's Christian Antiquities*, pp. 256, 257.

\* "If our Lord, in his discourse with Nicodemus, intended thus solemnly to declare that except a man be *baptized* he can not see, can not enter into the kingdom of heaven, then must the multitudes in all ages, (for the primitive times of Christianity must not be excluded,) who have lived and died without baptism, whatever may have been their knowledge of Christian doctrine, or their practice of Christian duties, be peremptorily excluded from heaven, and perish in their sins."—*Chris. Obscr.*, Vol. XI, p. 367.

a hypocritical profession of religion? Is every man who joins the church, let his motives be ever so base, born of the Spirit? Was this true of Simon Magus? Is it true of those to whom Christ will say at the judgment, "*I never knew you?*"

5. To suppose that the phrase "born of water," means baptism, is to ascribe to this ordinance an importance which is no where else given to it in the Scriptures. According to this interpretation, to be baptized is just as essential to salvation as to be born of the Spirit. But no such importance is elsewhere given to baptism. It is written, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned," but it is not said, he that is not baptized shall be damned. Nor is it any where said, unless it be in the passage under consideration, that except a man be baptized he can not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

6. That our Lord did not mean baptism by the phrase "born of water," may be inferred from the reprimand which he gave to Nicodemus. "Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?" But what means had he of knowing these things, if baptism is an essential part of the new birth? Where could he have learned this doctrine? Not from the Old Testament, for no such doctrine is there inculcated. Not from the mere custom among the Jews, (a custom of human origin,) of baptizing Gentile proselytes; for he certainly could not be expected to infer the necessity of baptism to himself, being a Jew, from such a practice. Not from the New Testament, for the New Testament was not then written. How, then, could Nicodemus have known these things? And how could he be criminal for his ignorance? If Christ inculcated simply a change of heart, this is a truth abundantly taught in the law and prophets; a truth, of course, which Nicodemus ought to

have well understood. In this view of the subject, we can see the utmost propriety in the reprimand which he received. But if baptism is essential to the new birth, and to salvation, and if this is what our Savior inculcated, Nicodemus was quite excusable for his ignorance of this truth; for it is a truth which had never before been revealed.\*

But if the phrase "born of water," does not mean baptism, what does it mean? We are inclined to think with Calvin, and others, that the term water in this passage, is used not in a literal, but in a figurative sense. If this view is correct, to be born of water, and of the Spirit, are but different modes of expression to signify the same thing. The one, however, may be designed to point out the nature of the effect produced, and the other, the agent by whom it is produced. The passage is thus paraphrased by Dr. Scott. "*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit—except his heart be purified by that inward washing of the Holy Spirit, of which water hath been the constant emblem, he can not enter into the kingdom of God.*" It is well known that the term water is often used in the Scriptures as the emblem of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus said, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water; this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." When it is said, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean;" there can be no doubt that the influences of the Spirit are intended. Why, then, may we not suppose, that the term water is used in the same emblematical sense, in the passage under consideration?

Should it be objected that the form

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\* The writer does not consider himself justly liable to the charge of plagiarism, for having made free use of the thoughts in a comment on this passage, published in the first volume of the Christian Spectator.

of expression, "born of water and of the Spirit," clearly imports that two distinct things are intended, we would reply, that similar phraseology is often used to describe, not two distinct things, but what in the sense above supposed, is one and the same thing. Take the following texts as examples. "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit." "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." What is the difference between a new heart and a new spirit? "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." In this passage, water and the Spirit evidently denote the same thing. The promise expressed in figurative language in the first part of the passage, is repeated in literal language in the last part. John the Baptist, speaking of Christ, said, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." That by fire, is here intended the application of literal fire, no one will pretend.\* The meaning as commonly expounded is, that Christ should baptize with the Holy Ghost, "which has the energy and efficacy of fire to refine us from our dross and corruptions." So in the passage under consideration, to be "born of water and of the Spirit" is, to be renewed by the Holy Spirit, which, like water, purifies us from the pollutions of sin.

We are aware that many who discard the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, differ from the opinion we have given as to the meaning of this text. Dr. Doddridge, while he

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\* There may be an allusion in this passage to the miracle on the day of Pentecost. But still no one supposes that the "cloven tongues like as of fire," were tongues of literal fire. If then, we should admit that there is an allusion to baptism in John iii, 5, it would not be necessary to suppose that the term water is used in a literal sense. It may be used in the sense expressed by Dr. Scott in the paraphrase given above.

speaks of the interpretation above given as one that may be true; rather inclines to the opinion that baptism is referred to, and gives the following paraphrase of the text. "Whosoever would become a regular member of the kingdom of God, must *not only* be baptized, but as ever he desires to share in its spiritual and eternal blessings, must experience the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit on his soul, to cleanse it from the power of corruption, and to animate and quicken it to a spiritual and divine life." The difficulty attending this interpretation is, that it seems not to be consistent with the unqualified language of our Savior. Christ does not say, except a man be born *not only* of water, but of the Spirit, &c.; but "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit," &c. In the face of so positive a declaration, we can not explain the phrase "born of water," to mean any thing without which a man can enter into the kingdom of heaven. If we admit that the phrase "born of water," does mean baptism, it is not easy to avoid the conclusion, that every unbaptized person must be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. But if we mistake not, it has been shown, that we are not obliged so to understand it, any more than we are obliged to believe, that the Apostles were baptized with literal fire.

It has been said, "Baptism is an open profession of religion. Nicodemus was probably one of the rulers, who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. What is more probable than that Jesus would require of so timid a character, an open profession of his religion?" This does not remove the difficulty; for the declaration of our Lord is not restricted in its application to Nicodemus. He did not say, except you, Nicodemus, be born of water, &c., but except a man be born, &c. His language is unrestricted in its application. It is applicable

to all men, in all ages, and is left on the sacred record, as a part of that gospel which is to be preached to every creature.

We have dwelt the longer on this passage, because, so far as the Scriptures are concerned, those who contend for the doctrine in question, regard this text as their strong hold.

Another text on which they place much reliance, and which we have already mentioned, is Titus iii, 5. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Baptism, as we have already had occasion to remark, is not mentioned in this passage, and to affirm that the phrase "washing of regeneration" means baptism, is taking for granted what needs to be proved. But if it could be proved that it does mean baptism, this would not prove that baptism is regeneration. Regeneration itself, and the washing of regeneration, may be entirely distinct. Baptism may be called the washing of regeneration, as being the emblem of regeneration. It is the outward visible sign of an inward spiritual change of heart, which the Scriptures denominate regeneration. But to us it seems more reasonable to believe that baptism is not referred to in this passage. The washing of regeneration, probably denotes that inward purification which is effected by the operations of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Doddridge thinks that the last clause of the verse is exegetical of the first, and that the passage would be correctly translated if it should read "by the washing of regeneration, even the regeneration of the Holy Ghost."

We do not deem it necessary to spend time in examining other passages which have been adduced in support of this doctrine; for as we have said, these two are the only texts from which any thing like a plausible argument has been derived.

We proceed now to show from the

Bible that the doctrine can not be true.

1. It is opposed to the whole spirit and genius of the Christian religion. The religion of the Gospel is a spiritual religion—not a religion of forms, but a religion of the heart. “God is a spirit, and he seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth.” Mankind have ever been prone to place undue reliance upon the observance of outward forms. This was true of God’s ancient people. They were punctilious in their observances of the rites and ceremonies enjoined in their law. But in this they placed the essence of religion. Hence God reprobated their services as vain oblations. “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I can not away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.” The Jews in the days of our Savior, were also very strict in the observance of outward forms. They tithed mint, anise and cumin, but they omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith. “God looketh on the heart.” “He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.” With equal truth it may be said, “He is not a Christian who is one outwardly, neither is that baptism which is outward in the flesh,” &c. “For in Christ Jesus, neither

*worketh by love.*” Again, “For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, *but a new creature.*” Thus we see how little stress the Scriptures lay on the externals of religion, when compared with those inward feelings of the heart, which constitute the essence of holy obedience. We must possess that faith which *worketh by love*, and thus become new creatures, in order to be interested in the divine favor. To suppose that baptism is regeneration, or constitutes an essential part of it, is to give to it an importance which is not given to the outward observance of *any* religious rite in the Scriptures, and is utterly inconsistent with the genius of Christianity, which is “a religion not of forms, but of realities; not of shadows, but of substance; not of words, but of things.”

2. That regeneration denotes an internal, spiritual change, may be inferred from the literal signification of the word. What is it to be regenerated? It is to be begotten again; which is the same as to become *a new creature*; and this, according to the representations of Scripture, denotes not merely a change of state, but a radical change of character. It is to have “a new heart, and a new spirit”—to be “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Regeneration is the work of God. Those who are regenerated, are “born of God;” or as it is in the original Greek, *have been begotten of God*. It is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit; and what does the Holy Spirit do in regeneration? “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” In regeneration, these Christian graces are wrought in the soul. To be born of the Spirit is, in a moral sense, to become a new creature. It is to experience a transformation of moral character. The sinner is raised from the death of sin, to spiritual life. He is

brought to love what before he hated ; and to choose what before he refused. The whole current of his moral feelings is changed. This, according to the Scriptures, is regeneration. But how widely different is this view of the subject, from that which supposes regeneration to be a mere change of state effected by the reception of an outward ordinance.

3. Those who have been regenerated are children of God. This is admitted by the advocates of baptismal regeneration. Bishop Brownell says, "Those who are sacramentally baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, become *by that act*, (not in name, only, but in deed, and truth,) members of Christ, *children of God*, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven." But how according to the Scriptures, do persons become children of God? Is it by baptism? Where do we find any such doctrine taught in the Bible? The Apostle says, Gal. iii, 26, "Ye are all the children of God *by faith in Jesus Christ*." Again, it is written, John i, 12, 13, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Here we are explicitly taught that persons become the children of God by faith. Those who receive Christ, or who believe on his name, are the sons of God, and are born of God. Nothing is said of their being regenerated in baptism. Again, it is written, Rom. viii, 14, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Not, as many as are baptized—but, as many as are renewed by the agency of the Holy Ghost, and are under his influence and guidance. And how, according to the Scriptures, are we to ascertain whether we are the children of God? If we become children of God by baptism, all that is necessary is,

to enquire whether we have been duly baptized. But the Apostle says, "The Spirit itself, beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." Again, the Apostle says, Phil. ii, 14, 15, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." Here a holy life is represented as evidence that persons are sons of God. Nothing is said about their becoming such in baptism. Nor is there a text in the Bible in which it is affirmed that persons become children of God by baptism.

4. If baptism is regeneration, or a necessary and constituent part of it, then those who are regenerated, are born of the will of man, contrary to the express testimony of the Scriptures. In regard to adults, it depends on their own will, and that of the officiating clergyman, whether they shall be born again or not. However sincerely a person may repent and believe in Christ, and however faithfully he may walk in the paths of holy obedience; unless he believes it to be his duty to be baptized by one who has been episcopally ordained, and consents to be thus baptized; and unless some such clergyman will consent to baptize him, he can not be regenerated. In regard to infants, it depends on the will of their parents, the minister, and the sponsors, whether they shall be regenerated or not. We are aware that Bishop Brownell denies this inference. He says, "The true doctrine of the church is, that the regeneration of the infant is not effected by any arbitrary decree of election, nor does it depend on the faith, or the prayers, or the *intention* of the minister, or of the sponsors; but on the *positive institution and promises of Christ*." But we ask, suppose the parents refuse to offer their child in baptism—or

suppose the minister refuses to baptize it—or suppose no individuals can be found to act the part of sponsors—can that child be regenerated? If it can, then the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is not true. If it can not, then it does depend on the will of man whether that child shall be regenerated, “*the positive institution and promises of Christ*” notwithstanding.

5. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration virtually sets aside the great doctrine of justification by faith, the doctrine which Luther called “*articulus stantis, vel cadentis ecclesie*,” and which has ever been regarded by Protestants, as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel.

Bishop Brownell says, “The true economy of the Christian religion, regards men as by nature the children of wrath.” And how are they delivered from this state of condemnation, and brought into a state of favor with God? He tells us, “It takes them from this state, which is called in Scripture, ‘the kingdom of Satan,’ and transfers them *by baptism* into the family, household, and kingdom of the Savior.”—“After baptism, the person is regarded as in a state of *covenant-relationship with God*.” Bishop Hobart says, “In this regenerating ordinance, fallen man is born again from a state of condemnation to a state of grace.” According to these divines, therefore, it is by baptism that sinners are brought from a state of condemnation to a state of favor with God. They are *justified* not by *faith*, but by *baptism*. No matter how sincerely they may believe in Christ, they are still in a state of condemnation, till they are taken from this state by baptism. Bishop Hobart says expressly, “Repentance, faith, and obedience, will not of themselves be effectual to our salvation. We may sincerely repent of our sins, we may heartily believe the Gospel, we may walk in

the paths of holy obedience, but *until we enter into covenant with God by baptism*, and ratifying our vows of allegiance at the holy sacrament of the supper, commemorate the mysterious sacrifice of Christ, we can not assert any claim to salvation.”

But what is the testimony of the Scriptures on this subject. The Apostle Paul says, Rom. iii, 21—26, “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is *by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them who believe*; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God:—*being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ*; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation *through faith in his blood*, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of *him that believeth in Jesus*.” We are here taught, that the only meritorious ground of the sinner’s justification is the righteousness of Christ; and that it is by faith in Christ, that the sinner is justified. “The true economy of the Christian religion,” according to this Apostle is, “that men are transferred from “the kingdom of Satan,” into “the family, household, and kingdom of the Savior,” not by *baptism*, but by faith. The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is “*unto all and upon all them who BELIEVE*.” The moment the sinner truly believes in Christ, whether he has been baptized or not, he is delivered from condemnation, and is in a state of favor with God. This idea is abundantly taught in the Scriptures. Acts x, 43, “To him give all the prophets witness, that *through his name, whosoever believeth on him,*



*shall receive remission of sins.*" Eph. ii, 8, "By grace are ye saved, *through faith,*" not through baptism. Luke vii, 50, "And he said unto the woman, *thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.*" See also Luke xxiii, 42. When did the Lord ever say, Go in peace, thy baptism hath saved thee? John iii, 14, 15, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that *whosoever believeth in him,* should not perish, but have eternal life." See also ver. 16, 18, 36. John vi, 35, 40; xi, 25, 26. Rom. i, 16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation *to every one that believeth.*" Rom. x, 4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness *to every one that believeth.*" Compare these declarations with that of Bishop Hobart, given in the extract above.

We see from these texts, (and many others of similar import might be added,) the importance which the Scriptures attach to faith. It is that which unites the soul to Christ, and brings it into a state of favor with God. We are assured in the most explicit manner, and in a great multitude of instances, that *all* true believers, (not excepting those who are unbaptized,) are justified—in other words, are in a state of favor with God, and have a "covenanted title to salvation." To maintain, therefore, that men are taken from a state of condemnation by *baptism*, and made by that act, "in deed and in truth," "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven," is to subvert "in deed and in truth," one of the most important doctrines of the Gospel.

6. If baptism is regeneration, then circumcision was regeneration, under the ancient dispensation. But is circumcision ever thus spoken of in the Scriptures? Are we any where taught, that those who were by nature children of wrath,

were taken from this state, and *transferred by circumcision,* "into the family, household, and kingdom of the Savior?" Observe what the Apostle Paul says on this subject, Rom. iv, 6—11, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works; saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness, then, upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned unto Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? *Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.* And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised." Here we are assured, that the blessing of pardon under the ancient dispensation, was bestowed upon all true believers, whether they had been circumcised or not; for even Abraham himself was justified by faith before he was circumcised. So under the Christian dispensation, this blessedness, cometh not upon the *baptized* only, but upon the *unbaptized* also, if they are true believers in Christ.

7. If baptism is essential to regeneration, it will follow, that no unbaptized person can be the subject of evangelical love, faith or obedience. It is written, 1 John iv, 7, "Every one that loveth, is born of God." Again, 1 John v, 1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Again, 1 John ii, 29, "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."

The argument on this point stands thus.

Every one that loveth is born of God; but no unbaptized person is born of God; therefore, no unbaptized person loveth.

Again, Whosoever believeth that

Jesus is the Christ, is born of God ; but no unbaptized person is born of God ; therefore, no unbaptized person believeth that Jesus is the Christ.

Again, Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him, (God) ; but no unbaptized person is born of God ; therefore, no unbaptized person doeth righteousness.

And is it so ? Must a person be baptized before he can love, or believe, or do righteousness ? Does not Bishop Brownell say, that "from adults, repentance and *faith* are required as qualifications for baptism ?" Does not Bishop Hobart plainly intimate that persons may "sincerely repent of their sins, *heartily believe* the Gospel, and walk in the paths of holy obedience," while unbaptized ? If these things are so, it is evident from the texts above quoted, that persons may be regenerated while unbaptized. Indeed from adults, regeneration is required as a qualification for baptism. Besides, was not the dying thief a believer ? Was not Cornelius a devout man, and one that

feared God, and one that had received the Holy Ghost, previous to his baptism ? Did not the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, receive the word with joy, and, of course, believe, before they were baptized ? But the case of the eunuch is decisive. "The eunuch said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized ? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Mayest what ? Mayest be baptized, i. e. regenerated, according to the doctrine under examination. But "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." If then the eunuch did believe with all his heart, he was already regenerated ; yet this was required as the condition on which he was entitled to receive baptism. The ordinance of baptism, therefore, is not regeneration, nor has it any necessary connection with regeneration. On the contrary, no adult person possesses the requisite qualification for baptism, till he has been already regenerated.







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