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THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

IN TWO VOLUMES

THE SECOND VOLUME

CONTAINING

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE SECOND

BY

JOHN BURNET

FOUR LECTURES,

DELIVERED AT

WORSHIP-STREET MEETING-HOUSE,

NEAR

St. Martins Square, London,

DURING THE MONTH OF MARCH, 1826,

ON

THE HISTORY—THE SUBJECTS AND MODE—THE
PERPETUITY—AND THE PRACTICAL USES

OF

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

BY

JOHN EVANS, LL. D., EDWIN CHAPMAN,
JAMES GILCHRIST, AND DAVID EATON.

———Them who shall BELIEVE,
Baptizing in the *profuunt* stream, the sign
Of washing them from guilt of sin to life,
Pure and in mind prepar'd, if so befall,
For death like that which the Redeemer died!

MILTON.

LONDON

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1826.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE *General Baptist Committee*, appointed by THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, first suggested *these Lectures* in the autumn of 1825, and after their delivery requested their publication. With this application the PREACHERS cheerfully complied, under the hope of imparting still greater usefulness to their joint labours. The reader may be gratified to learn, that some individuals became candidates for *Baptism* at the close of *the Lectures*; and it is the fervent wish of THE COMMITTEE, that on their perusal from the Press, others may come forward in different parts of the vineyard, thus spreading far and wide the triumphs of SCRIPTURAL CHRISTIANITY! Indeed, the Volume is humbly designed, by explaining and recommending *a much-neglected rite*, to promote the glory of God, the honour of the Redeemer, and the eternal welfare of Mankind.

May 1st, 1826.

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ERRATUM.

Page 48—for 80,000, read 8,000.



INTRODUCTORY LECTURE
ON
THE HISTORY OF BAPTISM.

BY
JOHN EVANS, LL. D.

THE TRUTH,
Bestuck by slanderous darts, or
With superstitions and traditions taint,
Left only in those *written records* pure.

MILTON.





LECTURE I.

HAVING the honour of opening these Lectures with the HISTORY of BAPTISM, I beg your attention to

MATTHEW xxi. 25:

WHENCE WAS IT? FROM HEAVEN, OR OF MEN?

This interrogation concerning the origin of Baptism, recorded by no less than three of the Evangelists, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, shews the importance of the subject for the discussion of which these Lectures have been instituted. It is deserving of serious attention. No thoughtful mind can treat it with indifference. We must obey GOD rather than *man*. On the strict observance of this principle all true religion rests. Hence arises the respectability of the professors of every denomination in the present life, and hence their eternal happiness in the world to come. The dictates of conscience will be appreciated at the tribunal of Heaven.

At the same time I remark, that however important may be the subject of BAPTISM, our investigation must not be at variance with Christian charity. This circumstance is noticed because here a greater want of temper has been betrayed than in almost any other branch of theological controversy. WE

shall not, I trust, add to the number of transgressors. For myself I shall strive to preserve *the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*; and I believe it is in my power to answer for my brother Lecturers with regard to their liberality. Our opponents, the *Pædobaptists*, are an estimable body—by far the largest and most flourishing portion of Christendom. THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND has been distinguished for its *Tillotsons* and *Burnets*, its *Paleys* and *Watsons*, luminaries of erudition and piety. As to our brethren the Dissenters—the INDEPENDENTS have their *Watts* and *Doddridge*, and the PRESBYTERIANS their *Kippis* and *Rees*—their *Price* and *Priestley*, with many others, whom we hope to meet in heaven! The soul here bewildered by fanaticism or shrivelled through bigotry will there be enlightened, purified, and enlarged, throughout the interminable ages of ETERNITY!

The connexion in which my text stands is too interesting to be omitted on this occasion: *And when Christ was come into the temple the Chief Priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which, if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it?—from Heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say—From*

Heaven, he will say unto us—Why did ye not then believe in him? But if we shall say—Of men, we fear the people, for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. This is a too faithful picture of the state of religion in our days. When interrogated concerning BAPTISM—*Whence was it? from Heaven, or of men?*—the prompt reply would be, WE CANNOT TELL! Now the prime object of *these Lectures* is to banish this ignorance from among our fellow-christians, who, on other branches of religion may be well-informed. Thus will all come to a knowledge of the TRUTH, and be better instructed in *the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven.* To bear witness to the Truth was one of the ends for which Christ came into the world.

The *History of Baptism* will lead us to obey the apostolic exhortation—*Call to remembrance former days.* We must take a retrospective view of the times that are past and gone by for ever. We must look through the long vista of *Eighteen* hundred years. This will require some exertion. But our labour will be repaid by the acquisition of sacred Truth, which is to be *bought* at any price, and not to be *sold* or parted with for all the treasures of the world. The *History of Baptism* must be traced, step by step, with patient and undivided attention. A pure mind is an essential requisite in all our inquiries. This, I humbly hope, we bring

with us this evening. These LECTURES were instituted for the elucidation of *an article of Revelation* which we conceive to be neglected and even despised. Our object is good, and nothing ought to divert us from the honourable pursuit of it. May the seed be *now* sown in honest hearts, and then we may rest assured that we shall not in vain implore, as we would solemnly do, the Divine concurrence and blessing.

In furnishing *the History of Baptism*, the limits of a single discourse will bind the preacher down to the observance of the strictest brevity. I can do little more than glance at the several topics which offer themselves, selecting them with care and leaving them to make their own impression. This is mentioned to prevent expectations being raised, which, from the nature of the service, must be disappointed. Indeed, my best materials have been drawn from *the History of Baptism*, a Quarto Volume, by the late Robert Robinson, of Cambridge. It is a vast storehouse of *Facts*, illumined by genius, enriched with learning, and glowing with the lambent flame of civil and religious liberty. Of spiritual tyranny the author was the implacable foe. He deemed it an evil of the first magnitude. He saw, during his profound researches into Ecclesiastical History, that it had desolated far and wide the church of God. Alas! alas! that *domination over conscience*, under any shape and in any degree, still continues to infest any one department of

Christendom. It has hung in sack-cloth the goodly fabric of revealed religion—it augments the clamours of infidelity!*

In accomplishing the task assigned, I shall beg your attention, 1st, to the History of Baptism in the *Apostolic Age*; 2dly, during the *long period* intervening between that *age* and the REFORMATION; and, 3dly, conclude with *the History of Baptism* in our own country. This review, brief and rapid, will be sufficient to answer the *interrogation* in my text—Is BAPTISM from *Heaven*, or of *men*? The reply will, I trust, promote the interests of our common Christianity.

Before I enter on the explication of these periods a word or two shall be said on the term ANABAPTIST. It occurs in the quotations I shall have to make from the writings of our adversaries, and is always used in an obnoxious sense. An ANABAPTIST is one who is *rebaptized*, the appellation being derived from two Greek words, denoting the *being baptized over again*. The designation does not belong to us—to whom there is *one God, one Faith, one Baptism*. Deeming sprinkling in infancy no baptism at all, we baptize the individual at riper years, by immersion, on the profession of his faith, agree-

* See *Miscellaneous Works of Robert Robinson*, in Four handsome Volumes, with *Brief Memoirs of his Life and Writings*, by BENJAMIN FLOWER. These, together with his *Village Sermons* and the *Ecclesiastical Researches*, a posthumous Quarto Volume, edited by MR. WILLIAM FRIEND, the celebrated mathematician, constitute the whole of this truly original author's productions.

ably to the New Testament. Thus the appellation of *Anabaptist* has never been recognized by the Baptists, being false and reproachful, the reviling of an enemy. It is, indeed, a term little used of late years, and banished out of good company. Names are necessary and useful to mark the endless gradations of opinions in the religious world; only let them be descriptively just, conveying neither more nor less than is agreeable to truth. They have been woefully abused to the purposes of hatred and strife; they have been implements used by evil men—to the destruction of the amiable spirit and tolerant genius of Christianity. Having said thus much in justice to ourselves, I would, in the 1st place, beg your attention to *the History of Baptism* in the apostolic age.

I commence this review of the *apostolic age* with the declaration of a Pædobaptist* divine, who, when living, was at the head of the largest body of Christians in the British empire, the venerable JOHN WESLEY. His words are these: “The rites instituted by CHRIST himself were only two, and these were designed to continue to the end of his church here below, *without any variation*. These rites were BAPTISM and the *Holy Supper*, which are not to be considered as mere ceremonies, but also as ordinances accompanied with a sanctifying influence on the hearts of true Christians.”

* The term PÆDOBAPTIST conveys no reproach, and merely signifies a *Baptizer of Children*.

Of the *apostolic age* we look for its history in the New Testament alone. There we have its interesting detail. We need not travel beyond this record. Happily we have it entire in our possession. Indeed it demands our greatest attention. The want of paying it due regard has been the source of innumerable evils to the church of Christ.

The account of *baptism* thus commences in the NEW TESTAMENT: *Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, says Luke, ch. iii. 1—3, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zecharias, in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the Baptism of Repentance for the remission of sins.* John's conduct originated in a divine call. "Three of the evangelists observe, that the coming of this extraordinary man had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah, and a fourth describes him as *a man sent from God*, which is further confirmed by Jesus, who declared that the *baptism of John was from heaven and not of men.*"*

Matthew (ch. iii.) also informs us, *Then cometh Je-*

* It may be remarked that "the WILDERNESS" in which John preached "did not signify, in Judea, an *uninhabited* country, but woody, grazing lands, in distinction from arable fields, which were champaign or open, and vineyards, olive-yards, orchards, and gardens, which were inclosed. There were in the time of Joshua six cities, with their villages, in this wilderness."

Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? Jesus being a perfect character, who needed no repentance, John hesitated; but THE SAVIOUR added, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. Now mark the manner after which it was performed, and the attestation with which it was accompanied. And Jesus when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water; and lo! the heavens opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, (not in the form of a dove, as is too commonly represented, but gently hovering in its descent,) and lighting upon him; and lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

After his baptism, Jesus soon entered upon his public ministry. Having taught in Galilee, he came into the land of Judea with his disciples, many coming to his baptism. Jesus taught the people; and when any believed in him, then his disciples baptized them.

“It was for just and noble reasons, (says Mr. Robinson,) worthy of a wise and benevolent mind, that Jesus estimated John so highly as to pronounce him *as great a man as had been born of women*; to which he added, *The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he!* It was a comparison between

John and his predecessors, and John and his successors, in framing the new economy. He was greater than his *predecessors*, because he first introduced a moral assortment of Jews, *a kingdom of heaven* on earth. He was less than the apostles, his *successors*, because under the direction of Jesus they brought his plan to perfection, by assorting and incorporating Jews and Gentiles in societies expressly united for the improvement of the mind, the meliorating of the heart, and the regulation of the life, a compact practice of piety, and an uniform course of virtue, and so extending and establishing personal excellence, tending to unite all mankind in one family of *universal love*; and he who, under God, gave a sketch of a design so pure and so generous, ought to be reputed one of the first characters among mankind!"

Jesus after his resurrection assembled his followers, and thus made known to them the power he had received, Matt. xxviii. 18—20: *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* Asserting his legislative authority, he invested them with this commission, *Go ye, therefore, and teach (or disciple) all nations, baptizing (or immersing) them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.* This commission received its confirmation on the day of Pentecost, and the obedient apostles proclaimed the gospel, not to the

Jews only, but to the Gentiles, even to the most distant nations of the earth.

———The SPIRIT

Pour'd first on the Apostles whom he sends
 To evangelize the nations; then on all
Baptized, shall them with wondrous gifts endue,
 To speak all tongues, and do all miracles,
 As did their Lord before them. Thus they win
 Great numbers of each nation to receive
 With joy the tidings brought from heaven!

MILTON.

Let us now mark the labours of these original Missionaries, and the success attending them.

At Jerusalem, the capital of Judea, Peter preaching the glad tidings of great joy, many, pricked to the heart, repented, and were baptized. Acts ii. The Samaritans believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and were baptized, both men and women. Acts viii. 12. The eunuch, upon Philip's preaching to him from Esaias the prophet, believed, and was baptized. Acts viii. 35. Paul after his conversion was baptized by Ananias, at Damascus. Acts ix. 18. Cornelius and his friends believed and were baptized. Acts x. 47, 48. Lydia and her household believing in the Lord were baptized at Philippi, by Paul. Acts xvi. 14. The jailer and all his house, believing in the Lord, were baptized. Acts xvi. 33, 34. The Corinthians hearing and believing were baptized. Acts xviii. 8. The Colossians were also thus baptized. Coloss. ii. 10—12.

The believing Romans were likewise baptized. Rom. vi. 3. The Galatians believing in Christ were baptized. Gal. iii. 26, 27. The Ephesians, upon the profession of their faith, were baptized. Acts xix. 1—5. From all this it appears, that JOHN, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, their disciples, indeed all the first Christians, were BAPTISTS; that is, receiving the divine message, were admitted by immersion into the profession of the new religion. To put this fact beyond all doubt, I shall transcribe the testimonies of DR. JOHN GALE on our own side, and of GROTIUS from the opposite denomination.

The very learned DR. JOHN GALE, whose knowledge of the Greek language has never been questioned, declares in his masterly reply to Dr. Wall, Vicar of Shoreham, in Kent, that the term βαπτίζω, with all its derivatives, signifies DIPPING, with reference to the art of *dying* or *imbuing* the articles with the colours by which they are to stand characterized. The profoundly erudite Grotius says, that “BAPTISM used to be performed by *immersion*, and and not by pouring, appears both from the proper signification of the word, and the places chosen for the administration of the rite in the New Testament.”

This will lead us to say a few words of the river *Jordan*, and of ENON, near Salim, the places where immersion was chiefly administered by John, according to the New Testament. “Jordan is a considerable river, running from north to south through the land of Judea. A little below Dan, the stream

forms the lake Samachonites, anciently called Menon. Two miles after leaving the lake is a stone bridge of three arches, called Jacob's bridge, supposed to have been built before the days of Jacob. It afterwards forms the sea of Tiberias, five miles in width, and eighteen in length. Thence, at its opposite end, it again proceeds forward, and after a course of *sixty-five* miles, some part of the way through a vast desert, the rest through a fertile region, it falls into the lake Asphaltites, or the Dead Sea. On the banks of this noble river John fixed his baptismal station, not for the purpose of supplying with drink the company, with their horses, camels, and asses, as a Pædo-baptist writer has supposed, but for the conveniency of receiving repenting candidates by immersion."

ENON, near Salim, was another of John's baptismal stations. This was at least fifty miles north, up the river Jordan, from the place where John had begun to baptize. It is not so easy to describe *Enon* as Jordan, for geographers are not agreed respecting it. Some suppose it was a deep spring, others the fountain of the sun; while some have thought it an artificial reservoir, prepared by the Canaanites, who were the ancient idolatrous inhabitants of the land. Be this as it may, certain it is there was *much water*; or, as the original may be more forcibly rendered, *many waters* there; all which indicates the reason of its choice for the purpose of immersion.

With respect to the river Jordan, it is a curious

circumstance, that painters delineating the baptism of our Saviour, represent it in an absurd and ridiculous manner. Jesus and John are placed in the middle of the stream, whilst John is in the act of pouring a little water from the palm of his hand on the head of Jesus! In the painted window of the museum belonging to the Baptist Education Society at Bristol, may be seen in one of the panes the very position I have now described. I have often wondered at its being placed there: it ought to have been removed; substituting in its room a copy of the beautiful vignette of the *Baptism of Jesus* by John, in the title-page of Robinson's *History of Baptism*. John and Jesus are indeed in the middle of the stream, but John is gracefully *bending forward the head* of the illustrious candidate to receive the wave! This is in exact unison with the spirit of the New Testament, and devoid of any pictorial discrepancy.

The usual mode of *immersion* is by laying the candidate backward, but Mr. ROBINSON advocates the bending of him *forward* into the water. "This method," says he, "has more than antiquity to recommend it. It is so easy to the administrator, so perfect an immersion, so disengaged to the candidate, so free from giving pain to the spectators, a method so decent and expeditious, that it is a wonder it is not universally practised. It requires for a middle-sized person, on condition of a proper genuflexion which it is almost impossible to

avoid making in the administration, *three feet* of water, and for a very tall man *three feet and a half*. There are the remains of many ancient Baptisteries abroad, in which are various antiquities descriptive of this mode. The Bishop stood in the water, and the candidate in his Baptism bowed forward under his hand, which is the meaning of Prudentius when he speaks of baptizing the breast, and of Tertullian when he says, Christians of his time were baptized by bowing down with great simplicity, without pomp, and in few words. The Baptist churches, it may be hoped, will forgive this animadversion. It is the glory of their constitution that an individual may propose his opinion, and that nobody is obliged to adopt it." Many indications of Baptism by immersion may be seen in *the painted windows* of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury.

Such is the *history of Baptism* in the Apostolic Age, admitting the converts by immersion to the profession of Christianity. And of these individuals were composed the *primitive churches*. For "there was," says Mr. ROBINSON, "among primitive Christians an uniform belief that *Jesus was the Christ*, and a perfect harmony of affection. When congregations multiplied so that they became too numerous to assemble in one place they parted into separate companies, and so again and again, but there was no schism; on the contrary, all held a common union, and a member of one company was a member of all. If any person removed from one place to

reside at another, he received a letter of attestation which was given and taken as proof—and this custom very prudently precluded the intrusion of impostors. In this manner was framed a *Catholic or Universal Church*. One company never pretended to inspect the affairs of another, nor was there any dominion or any shadow of dominion over the consciences of any individuals. Overt acts were the only objects of censure, and censure was nothing but voting a warrant of the community.”

Here I would remark, that we are to derive the doctrines we believe, the precepts we obey, and the institutions we observe, from the New Testament. To reject its doctrines is infidelity, to neglect its precepts immorality, and to treat with indifference its institutions will incur condemnation. A modern writer has thus illustrated the subject: “A disposition to obey divine orders wherever they are discerned, either *positive* or *moral*, is part of that *holiness without which no man shall see the Lord*. I may be saved without a sacrament, but I cannot be saved without a disposition to obey God’s authority wherever I see it. A sacrament is a positive rite, and not to be compared with moral virtue; but is not a disposition to obey God’s order, moral virtue and Christian grace? Or, can there be any moral virtue or Christian grace without a disposition to obey the authority of Christ wherever I discern it? Surely obedience to God’s command is a moral excellence, though the instances of that obedience may be in

positive rites. The command to Abraham to sacrifice his son was a positive order, and a very strange one too, seemingly opposite to some moral orders given out before; and yet his disposition to obey when he was sure of a divine warrant in the case, has set him as the head of the believing world, as the hero of faith, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God! The command of sprinkling the blood of the Passover upon the door-posts of the Israelites was an external positive rite; if there had not been a disposition to obey that order it would have cost some lives. Was not the forbidden fruit, a positive instance, an external thing? Setting aside the Divine prohibition, there was nothing immoral in eating of that any more than of any other tree, but *disobedience* is an immorality let the instance be what it will. The sincerity and truth of such a disposition is best known by its being uniform and universal. The author of our religion has told us, and added his example to his word, that *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*: and so ordered himself to be baptized. BAPTISM was a positive rite, an external thing, and yet he calls it *righteousness*! Such righteousness as *became* him who was the Holy One of God, became him who had intrinsically no need of any outward ceremony, whose inward purity was perfectly divine—and if it became *him* to fulfil such sort of righteousness, it can hardly become any who pretend to be *his* followers to neglect it.” So much, my brethren, for *the History of Baptism*,

contained within the pure and unsullied pages of the New Testament.

But I now quit this hallowed ground, and, 2dly, proceed to take a survey of the long intervening period which elapsed from the Age of the Apostles down to the Reformation. This forms the greatest portion of ecclesiastical history. All I can do is to touch here and there on its more prominent parts, wherever light breaks in respecting *the history of Christian Baptism*. This shall be done with succinctness and brevity. How and what *Baptism* was in *the age of the Apostles* I have shewn, but as the great MILTON says with no less truth than poetry,

————— at length

Their Ministry perform'd and race well run,
 Their doctrine and their story written left,
 THEY die; but in their room, as they forewarn,
 Wolves shall succeed for Teachers, grievous wolves,
 Who all the sacred mysteries of Heaven
 To their own vile advantages shall turn
 Of lucre and ambition—and *the truth*
 With superstitions and traditions taint,
 Left only in those *written records* pure,
 Though not but by the Spirit understood!"

A curious and striking fact meets us on the threshold of this period—that *Infant Baptism*, which is not mentioned in the New Testament, is never heard of till nearly the expiration of the *second* century. There we learn its existence by a solemn protest against it. Hear the words of TERTULLIAN

raising his voice against an error which, apparently trifling in its origin, has darkened and degraded the Church of God. His expressions are these: "They whose duty it is to administer *Baptism* are to know, that it must not be given rashly. *Give to every one that asketh thee*, has its proper subject and relates to almsgiving. But the command rather is here to be considered, *Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine*; and *Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's faults*. Therefore, according to every one's condition and disposition, and also their age, the delaying of *Baptism* is more profitable, especially in the case of *little children*; for what need is there that the godfathers should be brought into danger—because they may either fail of their promises by death or they may be mistaken by a child's proving of wicked disposition. Our Lord says, indeed, *Forbid them not to come unto me*; therefore let them when they are grown up; let them come when they understand, when they are instructed whither it is that they come; let them be made *Christians* when *they can know CHRIST*. What need their guiltless age make such haste to the forgiveness of sins? Men will proceed more warily in worldly things, and he that should not have *earthly* goods committed to him yet shall have *HEAVENLY*; let them *know* how to *desire this salvation*, that you may appear to have given to one that asketh!" From this passage it is evident that *In-*

fant Baptism had crept into the Church, otherwise there could not have been this protest against it. But it is to be observed, that even in the days of the Apostles *the mystery of iniquity began to work*, 2 Thess. ii. 7; that before the death of John, Diotrophes aimed at the pre-eminence, and after his departure there were those who, usurping authority, were ready to corrupt the Church of Christ. The venerable John Wesley in his Ecclesiastical History speaking of this period says, “There is no institution so excellent which the corruption and folly of men will not in time alter for the worse, and load it with additions foreign to its nature and original design. Such was the fate of Christianity. In this century many unnecessary rites and ceremonies were added to the Christian worship. These changes, while they destroyed the beautiful simplicity of the gospel, were pleasing to the gross multitude, who were more delighted with the splendour of external institutions than with the native charms of rational and solid piety.”

I might here enter upon the explanation of the means used to exchange *adults* for *children*, and *sprinkling* for *immersion*, in the administration of CHRISTIAN BAPTISM. But this I must decline, because it will be the province of my immediate successor in these Lectures. He will account for it to your satisfaction. I shall only remark, that, “in 257, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, held an African Council, who supposed the *sin of Adam* was the

cause of the pollution of infants, and that BAPTISM was necessary to save them. They reasoned thus: ‘Elisha raised a dead child to life. JESUS came to save all, therefore we should do all we can to save them; besides,’ they say, ‘infants came into the world *crying* for BAPTISM!’—But to proceed with *the History of Baptism*.

The conversion of Constantine at the commencement of the fourth century, when the Church was taken under the protection of the State, was a fatal step for the purity of religion. Every thing was done to overpower and fascinate the multitude. In 370, Galates, the dying son of the Emperor Valens, was baptized by order of the monarch, who swore he would not be contradicted. AUSTIN also had propagated Infant Baptism in Africa and transplanted it into Europe. Yet it is curious that he himself was originally a Baptist, having been baptized by immersion at Milan, in the 33rd year of his age! But becoming bishop of Hippo, he wrote against the Donatists, where he says, “Infants are to be baptized who can neither believe with their hearts to justification, nor confess with their mouths to salvation.” Such are the contradiction and violence of apostacy! AUSTIN very furiously opposed all who dared to differ from him; and in the council of Mela, 416, passed this canon—“It is the pleasure of the Bishops to order, that whoever denieth that *infants newly born* of their mothers are to be baptized, or saith that baptism is to be administered for the re-

mission of their *own* sins, but not on account of original sin derived from Adam, and to be expiated by the laver of regeneration, be ACCURSED." An honest indignation rises at the sound of such tyranny. The MAHOMETAN IMPOSTURE, in 622, succeeded, a strange mixture of *Heathenism, Judaism, and Christianity*. This, for a time, swept away all kinds of Baptism as with the besom of destruction; and yet it abounds with washings and ablutions of every description.

The GREEK CHURCH, though it has changed the subjects from adults to infants, still retains the mode of immersion. Even in the cold climate of Russia the practice obtains down to the present day, and the rite is performed with great pomp and ceremony. Their interpretation of the word Βαπτίζω, (to dip or immerse,) who understand best their own language, is of more value than all that is gathered from *Grammars* and *Lexicons* on the subject. The Church of England also, in their Common Prayer-Book, orders the child to be *dipped* if it can bear it. Of this even some of their members are unapprized, a circumstance which I have more than *once* found to my astonishment. Indeed, their ancient *fonts* are made capacious enough for the purpose, and even a *baptistery*, with steps descending into it for the immersion of one *person*, I have seen in the church of Cranbrook, Kent.

The Dissenters from the Church of Rome were in every age numerous, and were characterized by

various appellations. They were named Massalians and Euchites, the one a Hebrew the other a Greek name, both signifying a people that pray, for they placed religion not in speculation, but in devotion and piety. Euchite, among the Greeks, was a general name for a Dissenter, as Waldensian was in the Latin church, and as Nonconformist is in England. Some of these, we are told, dogmatised as the Established Clergy did, becoming Manichean, Arian, and Athanasian Euchites; others were named after the countries where they most abounded, as Bulgarians, Macedonians, &c.; whilst others took their designation from some eminent teacher, as Paulicians, Novatians, and Donatists, with many more of this description. These were charged by their enemies with damnable heresies, among which was generally the denial of infant baptism. ROBINSON, speaking of Novatian, says, "Great numbers followed his example, and all over the Roman empire Puritan churches were constituted and flourished through the succeeding two hundred years. Afterwards, when penal laws obliged them to meet in corners and worship God in private, they were distinguished by a variety of names, and a succession of them continued till the Reformation."

The *Dissidents*, in SPAIN, were called in general Anabaptists, baptizing converts from Pagans and Jews, whilst they rebaptized all Catholics who came over to their communion. The PATERINES, in Italy, were a flourishing sect. The name was given them

by the enemy to signify vulgar, illiterate, low-bred, intimating that they were, as indeed was the case, of the lower order of the people. They were accused not of immorality, but of heresy. They objected vehemently against the baptism of infants, justly alleging, "that a child knew nothing of the matter—that he had no desire to be baptized—was incapable of making any confession of faith, whilst the willing and professing of *another* could be of no service to him."

We come now to the WALDENSES, on the precise period of whose origin authors are not agreed. They were, however, the oldest and most formidable opponents of the Church of Rome. They had their chief residence in the valleys of Piedmont, at the foot of the Alps, and adjacent parts of the country. They were so called from Peter Waldo, a great Reformer and wealthy merchant of Lyons, or from the valleys in which they resided. Archbishop Usher tells us, that "as the persecution about Stephen, by that dispersion, proved much for the preservation of the gospel in other parts of the world, so was it here; for those who were not so fit for the war went up and down with more freedom into most parts of Europe, insomuch that Æneas Sylvius, after Pope Pius II., confessed, 'that neither the decrees of Popes nor armies of Christians could extirpate them.'" And on the authority of Matthew Paris, of Westminster, his Grace assures us, that "the Bulgarian or *Waldensian* heresy had, about

1180, generally infected all France, Italy, and England." The *Albigenses* were a branch of this sect, and so denominated from the town of Albi, in France, where the Waldenses flourished. As to their sentiments, Rapin says, they rejected baptism; Dr. Wall tells us, they rejected infant baptism as one of the corruptions of the Church of Rome, and, renouncing it, practised only adult baptism; and Dr. Allix declares, that it is plain they were utterly against infant baptism. The fact is, that the WALDENSES were what Christians ought to be—most warmly attached to the Holy Scriptures; even peasants among them were known to recite the book of Job by heart, probably from feeling the value of patience under their persecutions; whilst others could perfectly repeat the whole New Testament. Accordingly, they derived their doctrines, precepts, and institutions, from the fountain head, and were often called to seal them with their blood.

The ancient WALDENSES had an extreme aversion to the Romish clergy, who withheld the Scriptures from them, and took the following very singular mode of insinuating their religious principles into the minds of the gentry. Reinerus, an enemy, thus describes their conduct: "The Waldensian preaching pedlar thus sought out customers: 'Sir, will you please to buy any rings, beads, or trinkets? Madam, will you look at any handkerchiefs, or pieces of needle-work for veils? I can afford them cheap.' If, after a purchase, the company ask, 'Have you

any thing more?' the salesman would reply, 'O! yes; I have commodities more valuable than these, and I will make you a present of them if you will protect me from the clergy.' Security being promised, on he would go: 'The inestimable jewel I spoke of is *the word of God*, by which he communicates his mind to men, and which inflames their hearts with love to him. In the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,' and so on he would proceed to repeat the remaining part of the first chapter of Luke; or he would begin with the 13th chapter of John, and repeat the last discourse of Jesus to his disciples. If the company should seem pleased, he would proceed to repeat the 23rd chapter of Matthew; 'The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Woe unto you, ye shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men—for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, ye devour widows' houses.' 'And pray,' should one of the company say, 'against whom are these woes denounced, think you?' he would reply, 'Against the Clergy and the Monks. The doctors of the Roman Church are pompous both in their habits and their manners; they love the uppermost rooms and the chief seats in the synagogues, and to be called, Rabbi, Rabbi. For our parts we desire no such Rabbies. They are incontinent; we live in chastity each with his own wife. They are the rich and avaricious of

whom the Lord says, 'Woe unto you rich, for ye have received your consolation;' but we having food and raiment are therewith content. They are voluptuous and devour widows' houses; we eat only to be refreshed and supported. They fight and encourage war, and command the poor to be killed and burnt in defiance of the saying, 'He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword.' For our parts, they persecute us for righteousness' sake. They do nothing; they eat the bread of idleness; we work with our hands. They monopolise the giving of instruction, and woe be unto him that taketh away the key of knowledge; but among us women teach as well as men, and one disciple, as soon as he is informed, teaches another. Among them you can hardly find a doctor who can repeat three chapters by heart of the New Testament; but of us there is hardly a man or woman who doth not retain the whole: and because we are sincere believers in Christ, and all teach and enforce a holy life and conversation, these Scribes and Pharisees persecute us to death, as their predecessors did Jesus Christ.'" Father Fretzer, the first editor of the complete book of *Reinerus*, has put in the margin against the above, these words: "This is a true picture of the Heretics of our age, particularly ANABAPTISTS." Mr. Robinson adds, with his usual archness, "Happy for the *Anabaptists*, indeed, if they can affirm all that, with truth of themselves, which *the old Waldensian* preaching pedlar affirmed of himself and

his companions." So multiplied and desolating were the persecutions of those truly praise-worthy people, that it roused the muse of Milton to pour out the following fervent-prayer to Heaven :

Avenge, O LORD! thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
E'en them who kept *thy truth* so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones,
Forget not,—in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that roll'd
Mother with infant down the rocks! Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heaven! Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundred fold, who, having learn'd thy way,
Early may fly the *Babylonian* woe!

“Nor was this prayer,” says Bishop Newton, “in vain—for Cromwell exerted himself in their favour, and his behaviour in the whole transaction is greatly to his honour, even as related by historians, especially by Echard, who was, indeed, not favourable to his memory.”*

* See an *History of the Waldenses, &c.*, in Two Volumes, by WILLIAM JONES, a work of much research and industry; also, AN EXCURSION to the Mountains of Piedmont, in 1823, and Researches among the *Vaudois* or *Waldenses*, Protestant Inhabitants of the Cottian Alps, by W. S. Gilly, A. M., Rector of North Frambridge, Essex. Second Edition. At the end of the volume is a List of Subscriptions for these *poor, pious, and happy* people, commencing with 100 Guineas from HIS MAJESTY! A large sum was raised for their ancestors in the time of the Commonwealth, and a pension of £500 per annum

Nor must I pass over in silence *John Huss* and *Jerome of Prague*, the morning stars of the Reformation in Germany. Among their followers were many *Baptists*. These celebrated Reformers were (1415) destroyed by the Council of Constance with circumstances of baseness and perfidy.

I shall here just notice the *tumults* at MUNSTER, in Germany, about 1525; they have been laid to the charge of the Baptists, and proved a fertile theme of calumny against them. The fact is, that it was a civil war occasioned by the nobles and magistrates oppressing the peasantry. Crosby says, "It was begun by a Pædobaptist minister of the Lutheran persuasion, one *Bernard Rotman*, preacher at the Church of St. Maurice in that city, and carried on by him with several other Lutherans for some time before any Baptist had a hand in it. The chief occasion of their rising was the defence of their civil liberties; when they drew up a manifesto of their demands, in *twelve* heads, and presented it to the magistrates, who had promised to hear their complaints and do them justice: there is but *one* article that directly regards religion, which was, that they might have liberty to choose the ministers of their churches and depose them afterwards if they saw occasion."

granted them in the reign of William and Mary. In the late war they became subjects of France, when the pension was stopped; happily it is now about to be restored to them. These descendants of the ancient Waldenses, in number about 20,000, are the legitimate objects of Christian liberality.

MR. ROBINSON, in his *Ecclesiastical Researches*, says, "MUNSTER, a city rendered remarkable in *the History of the Baptists*, both by the censures of their enemies, and the apologies of their friends, is the capital of the bishopric so called, in the circle of Westphalia, in Germany. It is the largest of all the Westphalian bishoprics, and yields the bishop, who is a prince of the empire, 70,000 ducats a year. There are in the city five collegiate and six parish churches, a college belonging to the Jesuits, a great number of convents, and other religious houses. The chapter consists of forty noblemen, and maintains seven regiments of soldiers. It is easy to judge in what state *liberty* is even in this late age of the world in this princely episcopal domain! The condition of the peasants in Germany in 1524 was deplorable, if there be any thing to deplore in a deprivation of most of the rights and liberties of rational creatures. The *feudal system*, that execration in the eyes of every being that merits the name of man, had been established in early ages in Germany in all its rigour and horror. It had been planted with a sword reeking with human gore in the night of barbarism, when cannibals drank the warm blood of one enemy out of the skull of another; and it had shot its venomous fibres among men, rooted itself in every transaction in religion, in law, in diversions, in every thing secular and sacred; so that *the wretched rustics* had only one prospect for themselves and all their

posterity—one horrid prospect of EVERLASTING SLAVERY!”

So much for the affair of *Munster*, which has been an inexhaustible source of reproach with Pædobaptist writers, in violation of truth, and to the destruction of Christian charity.

As I have mentioned the conduct of the OPPRESSED towards their *oppressors*, you must not remain ignorant of the conduct of the PERSECUTORS towards the *persecuted*. I will adduce an instance almost unparalleled in the long and bloody scroll of persecutions. It is perhaps little known in this country, but ought to be proclaimed in every region under heaven, exciting, wherever it is heard with proper feeling, an honest and generous indignation.

“The expulsion of the BAPTISTS about this time, by *Ferdinand the Second*, agreeably to his vow made to the Lady of Loretto, for the extirpation of heresy out of his dominions, must not be passed over in silence. They were between 20 and 40,000 in number, and most exemplary members of the community. The Jesuits contrived to publish the cruel edict just before harvest and vintage came on, that they might not carry off the produce of the year. It was Autumn,” (says Mr. Robinson,) “the prospect, the pride of husbandmen. Heaven had smiled on their honest labours; their fields stood thick with corn, and the sun and the dew were improving them every moment to give them the last polish. The yellow ears

waved homage to their owners ; and the wind whistling through the stems and the russet herbage, softly said, *Put in the sickle, the HARVEST is come.* The luxuriant leaves too hung aloft by tendrils mantling over the clustering grapes, like watchful parents over their offspring. But all was fenced by an *imperial edict*, and it was instant death to approach. Without leaving one murmur upon record, in solemn, silent submission to that Power who governs the universe, and causes all things to work together for the good of his creatures, they packed up and departed. In several hundred carriages they conveyed their sick, their innocent infants, sucking at the breast of their mothers who had newly laid in, and their decrepid parents, whose work was done, and whose silvery locks told every beholder that they wanted only the favour of the grave ! At the borders they filed off, some to Hungary, others to Transylvania, some to Wallachia, others to Poland, &c., greater, far greater, for their virtue, than *Ferdinand* for all his titles, and for all his glory.”

But we now have reached the REFORMATION, that august period in Ecclesiastical History, whence we date the distinguished spiritual privileges of the present day. It resembles the *Oasis* of the desert, a verdurous spot, which refreshes and delights the eye of the traveller amidst the surrounding desolation ! Age after age rolled away in hopeless, irremediable slavery. The dense cloud of ignorance and superstition seemed incapable of dissipation. The chains

of mental bondage were apparently so riveted together, that no human arm could sever them asunder. At length Providence raised up a man of an enlightened understanding, a pure conscience, and a courageous heart. LUTHER accomplished the task assigned him by Heaven. From *him*, as from the sun, a radiance broke forth in every direction—the Christian world emerged into daylight and liberty!

It is more than suspected, that LUTHER and many of the Reformers were Baptists. *Erasmus* had sown the seeds, when he says, “It is nowhere expressed in the apostolical writings that we baptize children.” And upon Rom. vi. he adds, “Baptizing of children was not in use in St. Paul’s time; and” that “they are not to be condemned who doubt whether children’s baptism was ordained by the Apostles.” LUTHER himself thus speaks on the subject,—“Baptism is a Greek word. It may be termed a *dipping*, when we dip something in water, that it may be wholly covered with water. And although that custom be now altogether abolished among the most part, for neither do they dip the whole children, but only sprinkle them with a little water; they ought altogether nevertheless to be dipped, and presently to be drawn out again; for the etymology of the word seems to require that washing from sin is attributed to baptism. It is truly indeed attributed, but the signification is softer and slower than that it can express baptism, when it is rather a sign both of death and resurrection. Being

moved by this reason, I would have those that are baptized to be *altogether dipped* into the water, as the word doth sound, and the very sense doth signify.”

I shall only add on this head, already so very long, that at the REFORMATION, the *Scriptures* being thrown open to the people, the divine institution of Christian Baptism became diffused far and wide over the earth.

Hence BISHOP BURNET, in his *History of the Reformation* says, “ At this time, 1549, there were many *Anabaptists* in several parts of England. They were generally Germans, whom the revolutions there had forced to change their seats. Upon Luther’s first preaching in Germany there arose many, who building on some of his principles, carried things much further than he did. The chief foundation he laid down was, that the *Scripture* was to be the only *rule* of Christians. Upon this many argued that the mysteries of the Trinity, and Christ’s incarnation and suffering, of the fall of man, and the aids of grace, were indeed philosophical subtleties, and only to be pretended to be deduced from *Scripture*, as almost all opinions of religion were, and therefore they rejected them. Among these the *Baptism of Infants* was one. They held that to be no baptism, and so were rebaptized. But from this, which was most taken notice of, as being a visible thing, they carried all the general name of *Anabaptists*.”

This will be a proper place to mention the *Mennonites*, from MENNO, a celebrated Baptist, born 1505, in Friesland, and died 1561. He was ordained a Popish priest, and till 1530 was a preacher in the Roman Catholic connexion. He suspected the validity of many things in the church of Rome, and among the rest that of *infant baptism*. He became a Baptist by the study of the New Testament. During the space of twenty-five years he travelled about with his wife and children, exercising his ministry with wonderful perseverance and exertion. His labours were attended with singular success. His followers were persecuted, but at length legally tolerated by William, Prince of Orange, the founder of Belgic liberty. They are generally Arminians, and are very numerous in Holland. In Amsterdam they established a college, which they designated *The College of the Sun*, a splendid title, indicative, it is presumed, of the light of knowledge thence transmitted by their disciples throughout the Christian world! Knowledge is the parent of sound piety and morals, whilst it forms the only solid basis of civil and religious liberty.

One circumstance more must be noticed before we take leave of *the Reformation*. It is this—"Calvin" (says Robinson) "by his influence and power established a consistory at Geneva, and of course canon and penal laws for the government of his church, the prevention and punishment of heretics. Michael Servetus, a Spanish physician and *Unitarian* Bap-

tist, having occasion to pass through Geneva, was by Calvin's means arrested and thrown into prison. Calvin accused him of *heresy*, and by his influence he was sentenced to combustion by a slow fire! This sentence was executed 27th October, 1553, by using green bushes, with their leaves upon them, to burn him, and thereby prolonging his misery—a proof that there was no *reformation* in the articles of tyranny and cruelty!”

The *triennial centenary* of this Reformation, imperfect as it was, received due celebration in 1817, from Churchmen and Protestant Dissenters. Many excellent sermons were preached and published, eloquently expatiating on the inestimable value of the right of private judgment, together with the blessings of civil and religious liberty.

Such is *the History of Baptism*, from the Apostolic Age down to THE REFORMATION. The celebrated Voltaire, who thought, as the *Anabaptists* “made no figure in the world, it was not worth while to inquire” into their modern history, and who took his idea of their state at the Reformation from a superficial view of pictures drawn by their executioners, who “shewed them about in cages as wild beasts, and caused their flesh to be torn off with red hot pincers,” was so struck with what his good sense obliged him to see, that he passed unsuspected encomiums on such as he supposed the very worst of them. “The ANABAPTISTS” (said he) “laid open the dangerous truth, which is implanted in every

breast, that *mankind are all born equal*; saying, that if popes had treated princes like their subjects, princes had treated the common people like beasts. It must be acknowledged" (adds he), "that the demands made by the Anabaptists, and delivered in writing, were extremely just. The manifesto published by these savages, in the name of the men who till the earth, might have been signed by Lycurgus!" Mr. Robinson adds, "Mr. Voltaire was a well-bred man, and a lover of liberty, and he could not pass by a little shrine erected to it without bowing as he went along, but the savage worshippers *made no figure in the world!* Is it not this laying open a secret dangerous to the glory of some panegyrists, who write more for wealth and fame, than disinterestedly for the good of mankind?"

Thus I conclude this *second part* of my address, from the *Apostolic Age* down to the Reformation in Germany.

But 3dly, I shall present you with a slight sketch of the *History of Baptism* in our own Country.

In all the annals of Britain an account is given of ecclesiastical affairs. But the earliest details are so scanty, that much information cannot be derived from them. We have, however, histories of the *English* and *Welsh Baptists* at some length; and there every thing is found that can gratify curiosity on the subject. My sketch must be very slight indeed. I have already trespassed on your patience, and shall bring forward only the prominent facts

tending to illustrate the *History of Baptism* in our own country.*

With respect to the introduction of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION into this island, Bishop Newton says, "There is some probability that the gospel was preached here by Simon the apostle. There is much greater probability that it was preached by St. Paul; and there is absolute certainty that Christianity was planted here in the time of the Apostles, before the destruction of Jerusalem." The wife of Plautius, a Roman general, and Claudia Ruffina, a British lady, are supposed to be of the saints that were in Cæsar's household, mentioned by Paul, Phil. iv. 22. Fuller, in his Ecclesiastical History, says, "It is generally agreed that about the year 167, many Pagan temples in Britain had their property altered, and that they were converted into Christian churches, particularly that dedicated to Diana in London, and another near it consecrated to Apollo, in the city now called Westminster."

Fox, the Martyrologist, has this remarkable paragraph: "Out of an ancient book of the Antiquities of England we find the Epistle of Eleutherius,

* The reader may consult with advantage *Crosby's, Adam Taylor's and Ivimey's Histories of the English Baptists*. There is also an *Account of the Welsh Baptists*, by the late venerable Joshua Thomas, of Leominster; and an *History of the American Baptists*, by the Rev. David Benedict, written with good sense and liberality. Of *Robinson's History of Baptism*, this gentleman has published an abridgment.

written to Lucius, King of Britain, 169, who had written to Eleutherius for the Roman laws to govern by; in answer to which Eleutherius says, ‘ You have received, through God’s mercy, in the realm of Britanny *the law and faith of Christ*. You have with you both the parts of the Scripture; out of them, by God’s grace, with the council of the realm, take ye a law, and by that law, by God’s sufferance, rule your kingdom ! ’ ”

From the conversion of this Lucius, the first Christian king of Britain, to the time of the persecution of Dioclesian, the ecclesiastical history of this island is for the most part unknown. But Bede and Gildas suppose the progress of the Christian religion to have been considerable. It is however probable, that as the gospel of Christ came so directly into Britain, it would have been introduced in its purity; accordingly, the admission of converts upon *immersion* must have been introduced, for it was the sole practice of the New Testament. To corroborate this sentiment it shall be added, that about the year 600, when AUSTIN the monk was sent hither to convert the Britons, by Gregory VII., Bishop of Rome, among the other orders issued was this, that *ye give Christendome to your children, that is, baptism!* Does not this imply that it was a new practice? for the inhabitants deriving the gospel, not by the circuitous route of Rome, but directly from the apostles, knew nothing of this corrupt branch of Christianity.

Austin succeeded in his holy enterprise; and, con-

verting King Ethelbert and his court, he caused 10,000 to be baptized in the Swale, near the Medway in Kent. It is said, indeed, that the king was so complaisant that he soon after, bequeathing his own palace to the church, retired to Reculver, that the humble and modest monk might be more at leisure in Canterbury. He then turned his attention to the inhabitants of Wales, but they resisted, adhering to their original primitive faith and practice. This incensed the pious missionary, who said in his anger, "Sins, therefore, ye wol not receive *peace* of your brethren, ye shall have *WARRE* and *WRETCHEDNESS*." Accordingly they were massacred by thousands: such is the spirit of adulterated Christianity.

The British had already formed two large flourishing societies at *Caerleon* in South Wales, and *Bangor* in North Wales, then the principal religious stations of the Principality.*

This religion, introduced by Austin from Rome, was the established religion of England for about 1000 years: yet were the Britons often the refractory subjects of the Papal see, and our Kings occasioned much trouble to his Holiness. They loved too well the spirit of domination themselves, to

* These places are still in existence; *Bangor* being one of the Welsh bishoprics, and *Caerleon*, a poor, dilapidated town, in a state of apparent desertion. It was an *archbishopric* once, afterwards removed to *St. David's*. Indeed it was originally a Roman station; and the ground on which it stands teems with relics of antiquity.

submit patiently to the evils of a foreign jurisdiction. They relished the sweets of ecclesiastical tyranny.

In the reign of WILLIAM the CONQUEROR the *Waldenses* (noticed under the former head) began to abound in England, many of whom, at least, as I have already shewn, practised Adult Baptism. The sect wonderfully flourished both among the poor and also the higher classes of society. At length WALTER LOLLARD, a Waldensian preacher, made his appearance from Germany. Hence the *Lollards*, who rejected *infant baptism* as a needless ceremony. They multiplied in England to that extent, that the archbishop, at his palace in Lambeth, had a prison erected, called the *Lollards' tower*, still remaining, and known by that appellation to the present day. I have seen the bolts and bars of this *hideous dungeon*, with the names of the victims scrawled on its oaken pannels, and ejaculations imploring the compassion of their hard-hearted persecutors! Thank God, these times are gone by for ever, awfully characterized by a besotted ignorance and an antichristian bigotry! In 1311, WICKLIFF arose, the morning star of the Reformation. "He was," says Bishop Newton, "the honour of his own, and the admiration of all succeeding, times." The followers of Wickliff in Bohemia are thus described: "They receive no other rule than the Bible, and admit none into their communion till they are dipped in water or baptized." It is not improbable, therefore, that these sentiments were held also by his

followers in England. DR. REES' *Cyclopædia* says, "There were several who denied Infant Baptism among the Lollards and Wickliffites." WICKLIFF, according to Burnet, translated the *Bible* out of Latin into English, with a long preface before it, in which he reflected severely on the clergy, and condemned the worshipping of saints and images, and denied the corporeal presence of Christ's body in the sacrament, and exhorted all people to study the Scripture. Thomas Waldensis calls him one of the *seven heads* that came out of the *bottomless pit*, saying, that "He doth positively assert that children are not to be *sacramentally* baptized." WICKLIFF began his work in the reign of Edward III.; and, after innumerable attempts made to destroy him, died peaceably in his bed, at Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, 1385. Forty years after his death the relics of his poor corruptible body were dug up, and committed to the flames, with barbarous and relentless fury!

During the reign of the Popish-Protestant King HENRY THE EIGHTH, many, rejecting Infant Baptism, were baptized on profession of their faith. Hence Burnet says, "In 1538, there was a commission sent to Cranmer and others to inquire after *Anabaptists*, and to proceed against them." In 1539, Brandt tells us, that "There were put to death at Delft, in Holland, thirty-one Anabaptists, that fled from England, the men being beheaded, the women drowned." Many of the *Baptists* were burnt in Smithfield. Indeed, the term *Anabaptist* had be-

come so much a matter of reproach, that even THE KING himself thus singularly adverts to it: "What love and charity," says the brutal Henry, "is there among you, when one calls another *heretic* and *Anabaptist*, and he calls him Papist, Hypocrite, and Pharisee?" He adds, "Be these tokens of charity among you? I see and hear daily, that you of the clergy preach one against another, teach one contrary to another, inveigh one against another, without charity or discretion!" His MAJESTY here seems to manifest that there had broken in upon his mind some glimmerings of Christianity.

In a sermon preached by Bishop Latimer before EDWARD THE SIXTH, he says, "The *Anabaptists* that were burnt here in divers parts of England, as I heard of credible men, (I saw them not myself,) went to their death even intrepid, as ye will say, without any fear in the world, cheerfully." The celebrated JOAN BOUCHER, or Joan of Kent, who was burnt about this time, was supposed to have been a member of a General Baptist church at Canterbury. She hazarded her life by being a great disperser of the New Testament, just then translated into English, which she used to carry under her apparel to court, where she was known to many ladies of quality. Charged with holding erroneous opinions concerning the incarnation of Christ and baptism, and she being a Baptist, was condemned by Archbishop Cranmer, and the Bishops Latimer and Ridley, all of whom afterwards perished at the stake.

The young King, Edward VI., set his hand to the warrant with tears in his eyes, telling Archbishop Cranmer "That if he did wrong, since it was in submission to his authority, he should answer for it to God!" She was burnt the second of May, 1550; and suffered with the utmost constancy. WILLIAM TYNDAL also, who first translated into English the *New Testament*, and burnt in Flanders, was a Baptist. In his writings he says, "The plunging into the water signifieth that we die and are buried with Christ; and the pulling out agayn signifieth that we ryse agayn with Christ in a new life!" He speaks also of the Subjects of Baptism, "as repenting and believing, consenting, and submitting themselves to the will of God." This great man was supposed to have been born on the borders of the Principality.

QUEEN ELIZABETH did not, like bloody *Mary*, her sister and predecessor, consign many hundreds to the flames, reprieving only one who was condemned for heresy. She glutted the prisons, and peopled distant colonies, with the victims of her cruelty. Fuller speaking of her reign says, "Now began the *Anabaptists* wonderfully to increase in the land; and as we are sorry that any countrymen should be seduced by that opinion, so we are glad that the English as yet were free from that infection; for on Easter day was disclosed a congregation of *Dutch Anabaptists*, without Aldgate, in London, whereof seventy-two were taken and imprisoned, and four, bearing faggots at St. Paul's Cross, solemnly

recanted their dangerous opinions. Next month, one Dutchman and ten women were condemned, of whom, one woman was persuaded to renounce her error, six were banished the land, and two more were so obstinate that command was issued out for their burning in Smithfield!" The Queen issued a Proclamation commanding all *Anabaptists* and other heretics to leave the kingdom. Well might Neal say—"More sanguinary laws were made in her reign than in those of her predecessors. Her hands were stained with the blood of Papists and Protestants; the former were executed for denying her supremacy, and the latter for sedition or Nonconformity."

Under JAMES THE FIRST and CHARLES THE FIRST the *Baptists* suffered grievously. James, though complimented as the Solomon and Phoenix of his age, was, according to Burnet, the "scorn of his age;" and Rapin says, "that, being neither a sound Protestant nor good Catholic, he had formed a plan for uniting both churches, which must have effectually ruined the Protestant interest." In this reign, however, the *Baptists* greatly increased. *Charles the First*, by means of LAUD, with his High Commission Court and Star Chamber, harassed the *Baptists* sorely. Under *Cromwell* they had a respite, and some say he persecuted none except the pious *Biddle*, an Unitarian, who was banished to the Scilly Isles. Nay, some were elevated to posts of honour, and it is certain the *Baptists* were aug-

mented throughout the land. The Protector was the friend of *religious liberty*, but could not always follow the inclinations of his heart.

CHARLES THE SECOND was the worst of all the Stuart dynasty. In his declaration from Breda, before his return, May 29, 1660, it was said, "We do also declare a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for matters of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom." The *Act of Uniformity*, 1662, was an illustration of the sincerity of the monarch—consigning upwards of 2000 pious and learned ministers to every species of distress and poverty! At Brighthelmstone, Lewes, Dover, Calne, Bedford, and Lincoln, *the Baptists* were savagely treated. Their chief persecutor in Sussex was the man who conveyed *the virtuous monarch* to FRANCE, after his flight from the battle of Worcester, and his tomb, with a long inscription stating his blood-stained loyalty, is still seen in Brighton churchyard! From the restoration, 1660, to the revolution, only twenty-nine years, more than 60,000 Dissenters suffered for their religion, besides being plundered of *two millions* of their money! The miserable bigot, JAMES THE SECOND, succeeded, who lost his crown by attempting to introduce Popery. Had he accomplished his purpose, the former scenes of oppression and cruelty would have been renewed. It might have perpetually enslaved posterity.

The cruelties that followed the suppression of *the*

Duke of Monmouth's rebellion, in the West of England, facilitated the fall of the Stuart family. The brutal Jefferies made that part of the country, by means of executions, an *aceldema*, or field of blood! In this insurrection, occasioned by a zeal for the Protestant religion, *the Baptists* had their share, and suffered with even cheerfulness and intrepidity.

Nor must I close the bloody roll of persecution, under THE STUART FAMILY, without noticing the virtuous and learned *Thomas Delaune*, a Baptist, who suffered for defending the principles of Nonconformity. By that fiend in human shape, Judge Jefferies, he was condemned to be imprisoned in Newgate, where HE perished with his *wife* and *two small children*—the whole of his family! De Foe well observes, “The treatment which the reverend and learned author met with will for ever stand as a monument of the cruelty of the times. They who affirm that the Dissenters were never persecuted in England for their religion, will do well to tell us what name we shall give to this man of merit, than whom few greater scholars, clearer heads, or greater masters of argument, ever graced the English nation. I am sorry to say he is one of near 80 000 *Protestant Dissenters* who perished in prison in the days of that *merciful prince*, KING CHARLES II., and were stifled, I had almost said murdered, in gaols for their religion, in the days of those gentlemen's power who pretend to abhor persecution.”

These dreadful instances of religious oppression

were at last so numerous and aggravated, that they became their *own* remedy, accelerating with frightful rapidity their utter extirpation. In 1689, WILLIAM, Prince of Orange, ascended the throne of these realms, allowing toleration to every class of the religious community. A *confession of faith* was put forth soon after by the BAPTISTS; delegates from more than a hundred churches, in England and Wales, met in London for the purpose of inquiring into the state of their cause and adopting measures for their future prosperity. Hitherto they had *prophe- sied in sackcloth and ashes!* This was A RESPLEN- DENT ERA, which poured forth day-light and liberty over every department of the Christian world; each individual of every sect *sitting under his own vine and his own fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid.* May this divine freedom endure to the end of TIME!

This may, indeed, be deemed the conclusion of *the History of the Baptists.* At present they are divided into *Particular* and *General*, the former holding Special, the latter Universal Redemption. The GENERAL BAPTISTS are of two kinds—*Trinita- rian* and *Unitarian.* The PARTICULAR are far more numerous than the *General* Baptists, who are chiefly to be found in the Midland Counties as well as in Sussex and in Kent. They have not much inter- course with each other, except on public occasions, when they meet together as Protestant Dissenters. At other times, however, I trust they are not want- ing in the exercise of kindness and mutual charity.

The PARTICULAR BAPTISTS have their *annual* associations in the country, and their *monthly* meetings in the metropolis, which form a bond of union conducive to their prosperity. The GENERAL BAPTISTS have also their associations in the country as well as an ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, held on the Whitsun-Tuesday, at Worship Street, when, after a sermon is preached and the business relative to their churches finished, they dine together in the greatest harmony.

The *Particular* and *General* Baptists have to boast of two names distinguished for their genius and piety—JOHN BUNYAN, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and JOHN MILTON, the author of *Paradise Lost*. BUNYAN was always known to have been a Calvinist Baptist, and were it only that he first introduced *free communion* amongst his own body, I should venerate his memory. When abused for it, his singular reply was, that “he would abide by his faith and practice till *moss should grow on his eye-brows!*” This was an incontrovertible proof of his integrity. On account of his intellectual, moral, and religious qualities, he is held in *everlasting remembrance!* MILTON was not known to have been a *General Baptist* till very recently, by his *Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, found after it was lost for upwards of a century, and most liberally published by order of his Majesty. Of BAPTISM he thus speaks—“Under the Gospel the first of the sacraments so called is *baptism*, wherein the bodies of believers,

who engage themselves to pureness of life, are immersed in *running* water to signify their regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and their union with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection." Indeed, MILTON, were he now living, might join himself to *the General Baptists* in perfect consistency with his leading religious sentiments. There he would be admitted into free and full communion, indulging unreserved love and charity towards all the other professors of Christianity. Pardon my honest enthusiasm. Methinks I behold this venerable man—this distinguished advocate of *civil and of religious liberty*, sitting down along with us around THE LORD'S TABLE, and though bereft of bodily sight, yet "inly irradiate," ruminating on the blessed truths of the Christian revelation, whose beams light him onward in his darkling path to the regions of eternal day! Of JOHN MILTON, who, by his late publication, has taken his rank amongst us, we are justly proud; for, as his biographer, *Dr. Symmons*, eloquently remarks, "He was a man in whom were illustriously combined all the qualities that could adorn or elevate the nature to which he belonged—a man who at once possessed beauty of countenance, symmetry of form, elegance of manners, benevolence of temper, magnanimity and loftiness of soul, the brightest illumination of intellect, knowledge the most various, and extended virtue that never loitered in her career nor deviated from her course—a man who, if he had been delegated as the representative of his species to

one of the superior worlds, would have suggested a grand idea of *the human race*, as of beings affluent with moral and intellectual treasure, who were raised and distinguished in the universe as the favourites and heirs of Heaven."

The declaration of MILTON respecting *Baptism* is agreeable to his lines in *Paradise Lost* :

—————Them who shall believe,
 Baptizing in the *profluent* stream, the sign
 Of washing from the guilt of sin to life,
 Pure and in mind prepared, if so befall,
 For death like that which the Redeemer died !

By *profluent* or *running water*, MILTON evidently meant its greater purity, *Baptism* being originally administered in the *rivers* and *brooks* of Judea. This practice I have often seen performed with great decorum in the *profluent* streams of my native Principality. It is, however, generally administered, both throughout England and Wales, in BAPTISTERIES, made for that purpose, in places of public worship. Thus was your PREACHER baptized by his late much-respected relative, DR. CALEB EVANS, in conjunction with twenty-six others. The spectacle was most interesting. In his usual perspicuous and impassioned manner, he preached for an hour from Matt. iii. 15, *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.* The candidates, an equal number of men and women, all dressed in white, were ranged along the middle aisle, from the baptistery near the pulpit. The administrator was *twenty* minutes in

the water. About 1000 spectators looked on with the profoundest attention! I feel grateful that I am thus spared, at the distance of upwards of forty years, to bear public testimony to the seriousness and solemnity of that day. It was *no other than the house of God—the gate of Heaven!* Nor will I conceal the fact, that in *the Baptistery* of this chapel I have, during my ministry of *thirty-five* years amongst you, immersed many a happy convert on *the profession of his faith*, who thus exhibited the edifying spectacle of being *buried with Christ in Baptism, and rising to newness of life!* At one time the late Dr. Samuel Stennet and the late Abraham Booth repaired hither, as also do many other ministers, even to the present day, to administer the ordinance with an impressive effect. Thus within our walls most frequently have been witnessed those primitive scenes which originated with Christ and his Apostles in the land of Judea.

I have mentioned that a *confession of faith* was put forth soon after the Revolution of 1688; there was also a **DECLARATION**, published in 1646, whose conclusion is so descriptive of the principles and spirit of *the Baptists* in former times, that it must not be omitted on this occasion :

“ Thus **WE** desire to give unto **CHRIST** that which is *his*, and unto all lawful authority that which is their due, and to owe nothing to any man but love; to live quietly and peaceably as it becometh saints, endeavouring in all things to keep *a good conscience,*

and to do unto every man (of what judgment soever) as we would they should do unto us, that as our practice is, so it may prove us to be a conscionable, quiet, and harmless people (no ways dangerous or troublesome to human society); and to labour and work with our hands that we may not be chargeable to any, but to give to him that needeth, both friends and enemies, accounting it more excellent *to give than to receive*. Also, we confess that *we know but in part*, and that we are ignorant of many things which we desire and seek to know, and if any shall do us that friendly part, to shew us, from *the word of God*, that we see not, we shall have cause to be thankful to God and them; but if any man shall impose upon us any thing that we see not to be commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ, we should, in his strength, rather embrace all reproaches and tortures of men, to be stripped of all outward comforts, and, if it were possible, *to die a thousand deaths* rather than do any thing against the *least tittle* of the truth of God, or against the light of our own consciences! And if any shall call what we have said HERESY, then do we, with the apostle, acknowledge, that *after the way they call Heresy, so worship we the God of our Fathers*, disclaiming all heresies, (rightly so called,) because they are against Christ; and to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in obedience to Christ, as *knowing, our labour shall not be vain in the Lord.*"

AN EPITAPH shall be here subjoined of an emi-

nent *General Baptist Minister*, who suffered in the cause of God and truth. The following *Memorial*, in golden capitals, is to this day hung up in the Meeting-house belonging to the General Baptists, in the Priory of the White Friars, St. James, Norwich:

“ A MEMORIAL,

Dedicated to the singular merits of a faithful confessor and laborious servant of Christ, who, with Christian fortitude, endured persecution through many perils, the loss of friends and substance, and *ten* persecutions for conscience' sake—a man endowed with every Christian grace and virtue—the REV. THOMAS GRANTHAM, a learned minister of the Baptized Churches and pious Founder of this Church of Baptized Believers, who delivered to *King Charles II.* our Declaration of Faith, and afterwards presented to him a Remonstrance against Persecution; both were kindly received, and redress of Grievances promised. HE died Jan. 17, 1692, aged 58 years, and to prevent indecencies threatened to his corpse, was interred before the west door, in the middle aisle of St. Stephen's Church, in this City, through the interest and much to the credit of the *Rev. John Connould*, by whom, with many sighs and tears, the burial service was read to a crowded audience, when, in closing his book, he added, *This day is a very great man fallen in our Israel*; for, after their Epistolary Dispute, in Sixty Letters, ended, that very learned Vicar retained the highest esteem and friend-

ship for him whilst living, and was, at his own request, buried by him.—That MR. GRANTHAM was a very great man appears in those Letters and in numerous printed works ; also when engaged in public disputations, successfully displaying the well-accomplished logician ; for to such exercises of skill and literature he was often called in that disputing age. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, yea, saith the spirit, they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.*”

But I must close this Epitome of the *History of Baptism* with the declaration of ROBERT ROBINSON :

“ *Infant Baptism* is not of divine appointment, and CHRISTIANITY is not, in this institute, openly or covertly inimical to the birth-rights of mankind. On the contrary, by requiring *personal* knowledge and virtue, it is the best friend of a good system of civil government and deserves well of mankind ; it removes ignorance, the bane of virtue, and, by educating the world, teaches mankind at once to be both rational and religious, fit *members* of CIVIL SOCIETY, and *meet to be partakers of an inheritance of the saints in light.*”

By way of IMPROVEMENT I observe, that from this survey of the *History of Baptism* three inferences may be drawn—that THE BAPTISTS are an *ancient* people, a *respectable* people, and a *conscientious* people.

1st. The BAPTISTS are an *ancient* people : to them

may be applied the language of Isaiah ii. 7, *Whose antiquity is of ancient days*. In examining the origin of sects in the religious world we find many of them of recent date. Some are of mere ephemeral distinction, starting into notice to-day and to-morrow disappearing in the gulf of oblivion. This cannot be alleged of THE BAPTISTS. *Immersion on a profession of faith* was the practice of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. From that period it has been traced down to the present day. We may make a similar reply with the Protestant who, when asked by a Catholic Priest where his religion was before the time of *Luther*, answered, "MY RELIGION was where yours is not to be found—in the *New Testament!*" Time, indeed, I confess, sometimes renders error venerable, and hence it has been held with greater tenacity. But BAPTISTS trace up their characteristic ordinance to the fountain-head, whence *truth* emanates in all her purity. "BAPTISM," says Mr. Robinson, "arose pure in the East; it rolled westward, diminished in lustre, often beclouded with mists, and sometimes under a total eclipse; at length it escaped the eye and was lost among attenuated particles, shades, non-entities, and monsters; then it took a contrary direction, and, probably, in time it will emerge from every depression and shine forth in its original excellence and simplicity!" *Despise not then the day of small things*. The little band of Christians that met in *an upper chamber* at Jerusalem, were the honoured instruments of wafting the

glad-tidings of great joy throughout the earth! The grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; yet, when it is grown, is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

ADULT BAPTISM is no antichristian novelty. It is a divine institution, having within its bosom the energies of resuscitation. Venerable for its years, no man can turn away from it with contempt. It has been overlooked, but never forgotten. It has retained its own hallowed features, unimpaired by the revolution of ages. On its front are inscribed, in conspicuous characters—*Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed!* In a word, ADULT BAPTISM, having introduced the dispensation of THE MESSIAH in the land of Judea, will regain its primeval honours—gracing and enriching, by its emblematical significancy, those final triumphs of the Redeemer's kingdom, which constitute the *Millennial* glory!

Of such a RITE we must not be ashamed. Its origin is divine; its means simple, employing the purest element of nature; and its tendency admirably adapted to the purposes of practical piety. ADULT BAPTISM, by recognizing the obligations of *personal religion*, empowers the happy candidate to *put on Christ* with all the virtues and graces which can embellish humanity. By making Religion the subject of a calm and deliberate choice, it stimulates, in

conjunction with the social ordinance of *the Lord's Supper*, to higher degrees of knowledge and purity, thus shedding an auspicious influence upon the destinies of AN ETERNAL WORLD!

2. THE BAPTISTS are a *respectable* people. *Respectability* arises from number, education, and good conduct. As to *number*, though far exceeded by Pædobaptists, yet they are an increasing body in this country. By zeal and exertion they are surmounting the obstacles daily, which have impeded their progress. Prejudices are abating, and the reasons assigned by them for their peculiar practice excite greater attention. They only want to be heard respecting their principles, which are reflected from the broad and unsullied mirror of the New Testament! The BAPTISTS, also, are every where the friends of *education*. Like other denominations, they have seminaries for the instruction of their young men training up for the ministry. Among their defenders the PARTICULAR BAPTISTS boast of the names of *Gill, Stennet, Booth, and Ryland*, whilst the GENERAL BAPTISTS claim the names of *Gale, Foot, Robinson, Toulmin, and Richards*, men of talents, learning, and piety. As to *good conduct* the BAPTISTS vie with their fellow-subjects in obedience to the laws of the realm. In religious concerns, *one is their master*—even CHRIST! And in civil affairs they are to be ranked amongst the admirers of the British Constitution—to be enrolled among the best friends of their Country. Nor are they behind their

brethren with regard to acts of *benevolence* or deeds of *piety*. At home they are amongst the foremost to support charitable institutions; and abroad they are active in promoting measures of general philanthropy. They yield to none in their ardour for the conversion of the Heathen in foreign lands. There, to their immortal honour, the *Particular Baptists* have devoted their efforts to the translation of the HOLY SCRIPTURES. One class of the *General Baptists* has also a Missionary Society in the East Indies, whilst another class supports the Unitarian Fund in propagating views which they deem consentaneous to the New Testament. Indeed, it is a remarkable fact, that the missionaries of this latter society have almost to a man been *Baptist* ministers of distinguished zeal and activity; and one of these gentlemen has presented *Missionary Memoirs* to the world.*

With satisfaction we adduce, in behalf of the *respectability* of the BAPTISTS, the testimony of *Richard Baxter*, the most distinguished of the Puritan clergy. He bore them, for many years, a decided hostility. He traduced their principles and denounced their practice, holding them up to the derision of the world! With age came superior wisdom and a portion of Christian charity. Relaxing his enmity towards the close of life, his words are these: "For the *Anabaptists* themselves, as I

* See WRIGHT'S *Memoirs of his Missionary Life*, where the duties of a *Missionary* are well portrayed.

found that most of them were persons of zeal for religion, so many of them were *sober, godly* people, and differed from others in the point of *Infant Baptism*, or at most, in the points of Predestination, Free Will, and Perseverance." Such is the testimony of *Richard Baxter*, the greatest controversial and practical writer of his age. The principal blemish in his character was the abuse of the BAPTISTS, though he may have had some provocation, for intolerance was the vice of the period in which he lived. In other respects he was amongst the brightest ornaments of Christianity.

3. The BAPTISTS are a *conscientious* people.

Mistake not this declaration. Go not away with the idea that I am extolling my own sect at the expense of others. Those who know the preacher best will be the last to suspect him of it. Nor is he holding up the perfection of THE BAPTISTS. Like their fellow-christians, they are men subject to the failings and infirmities of humanity. In their efforts to disseminate what they conceive to be *truth*, their zeal may outstep the bounds of prudence, and their hearts be found incrustated with bigotry. But this is not peculiar to any *one* sect; it is common to ALL! By THE BAPTISTS being a conscientious people, I mean, that their characteristic article of faith has been adopted from strict principle, from a rigid adherence to the New Testament. This has been done contrary to custom, fashion, and interest, which exercise an imperious controul over even the religious

affairs of mankind. Hence obloquy, reproach, and sufferings, of the bitterest description. *Two Baptists*, William Sawtre and Edmund Wightman, were the *first* and the *last* in the British empire to earn the crown of martyrdom! The latter suffered at Lichfield and the former in Smithfield. It is neither conceit nor obstinacy—neither pertinacity of opinion nor love of singularity that has prompted THE BAPTISTS to differ from their brethren. A strong line of demarcation has been drawn by the great Head of the Church, among his disciples, which they dare not obliterate. They are *a light shining in a dark place*; woe be to them if they suffer, either from want of courage or of integrity, that heavenly lamp to be extinguished! At all times, and on all occasions, the authoritative voice of conscience must be obeyed. Instances of self-denial are in themselves painful. It is not every individual that will practise them. Let us HOLD *fast our profession to the end*. Inadequate is the most costly compensation for unprincipled apostacy! Let these divine accents vibrate in our ears—*No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*.

Finally, from the survey taken of *the History of Baptism*, it is evident that, in every age, THE BAPTISTS have had their full share of persecution. The strangulating cord, the devouring flames, and the decapitating axe, streaming with the blood of its victims, bore witness to their conscious innocence!

Covered with the broad shield of integrity, HE alone that *sits in the seat of the scorner* can deride their principles or revile their conduct. They command respect, though they may not ensure veneration. Not, indeed, of the *divinely-appointed* ordinance of BAPTISM, but of the beggarly elements of the Jewish dispensation, Paul exclaimed, (1 Cor. xiii. 11,) *When I was a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* Our faith must be apportioned to the several periods of the Church. The ways of Heaven towards man are gradual and progressive. The dawn glimmering along the horizon, is, notwithstanding its feeble commencement, destined to light up and introduce the full blaze of meridian day. The disciples of CHRIST, realizing the apostolic definition, that *Baptism is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God*, have peace within themselves and are safe for eternity!

I conclude in the words of the first Baptist writer of the day, the *Rev. Robert Hall*, containing a sentiment which, lying at the foundation of natural and revealed religion, ought to be reverberated from the Equator to the Poles: “Inculcate the obligation and inspire a love of that RECTITUDE, that *eternal rectitude*, which was with GOD before time began, was embodied in the person of his *Son*, and in its lower communication will survive every sublunary change, emerge in the dissolution of all things, and be impressed in refulgent characters on *the new*

Heavens and the new Earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE! Amen.

POSTSCRIPT.

PUBLIC BAPTISMS in *rivers* frequently occur throughout the immense territory of the United States of America. Of this fact the author of the preceding sermon has been assured by the *Rev. Mr. Elton*, at present on a visit to this country. This gentleman is Classical Professor at *Brown University*, Rhode Island, over which respectable Baptist institution the writer's worthy friend, DR. ASA MESSER, has long presided, with credit to himself, and with advantage to the religious transatlantic community. The reader will also be gratified to learn, that the truly Christian practice of FREE COMMUNION is, as the Americans term it, "progressing" among them. This has been aided by the republication of *the Rev. Robert Hall's Tract* on the subject, breathing a spirit of diffusive benevolence, and a generous piety! Surely no good reason can be assigned for any one class of Christians standing aloof here on earth from the wise and good of every other sect, whom they hope to meet in HEAVEN. Indeed, Adult BAPTISM, winnowing *the chaff from the wheat*, severs the unbelieving and immoral from the church, whilst the LORD'S SUPPER binds *the brethren of every faith* together in the delightful bands of Christian charity.

THE PROPER SUBJECTS
OF
Christian Baptism,
AND THE
SCRIPTURAL MODE OF ADMINISTERING THAT RITE.

BY EDWIN CHAPMAN,

MINISTER OF THE GENERAL BAPTIST CHURCH AT DEPTFORD.

“ If the force of custom, simple and separate, be great, the force of custom, copulate and conjoined and collegiate, is far greater; for their example teacheth, company comforteth, emulation quickeneth, glory raiseth; so as, in such places, the force of custom is in its exaltation.”

LORD BACON.

The Author of the following Discourse lays not any claim to originality. He has, without scruple, availed himself of the labours and researches of others. He has presented anew arguments and proofs, which have before been handled with far greater power and skill, only from a conviction that the most obvious truths need continual iteration, that they may not fade from men's memories and affections.

LECTURE II.

Matthew xv. 3:

“WHY DO YE ALSO TRANSGRESS THE COMMANDMENT
OF GOD BY YOUR TRADITIONS?”

As strenuous as were the Jews for the traditions of the Elders, are some in the present day for the traditions of the Church; insisting upon them with as much earnestness, desiring as zealously to bind them upon men's consciences, declaring that they possess an authority equal, if not superior, to that of the Scriptures. And this they do, having before them the warning example of God's ancient people; who, when they had wearied themselves with open and severely-expiated revolts from the service of the Most High, having drained to the very dregs the cup of their idolatries, sought out a new way of disobedience, by making void his law, while they professed a zealous regard for its excellency and a devoted obedience to its requirements: this they do, notwithstanding the fatal witness borne by the Church of Rome against such a practice; which, by adding tradition to tradition, accumulated the follies, extravagancies, and impieties, of successive Fathers, Councils, and Popes, until there was built up that vast fabric of superstition and religious tyranny which, though shaken, yet stands in great strength:

this they do, though our Saviour so directly, and with such strong marks of indignation, blamed the Jews for their conduct in this particular, and which should have been a warning to the latest posterity.

An extraordinary position has been taken by a modern and learned advocate of Infant Baptism.

“ We produce no explicit precept from the New Testament enjoining the Baptism of Infants; but we go higher still, we produce the very same kind of evidence upon which the genuineness and authority of the books of the New Testament are themselves established; the uniform, the universal, the undisputed testimony of the primitive Church. Deny Infant Baptism, and we do not say that you deny the obligation of a precept formally expressed in holy writ: but you deny that upon which the authority of holy writ is founded, you subvert the credibility of the Christian Scriptures.”*

Could we agree to this, we must lay aside the Scriptures in this inquiry, deny or dispute their evidence, and consider the cloud of witnesses which they bring, as only a morning mist which has long been dispersed by the sun of tradition; that glorious luminary which has shone with such fertilizing beams upon the world of priestcraft, superstition, and immorality! But this position having been taken by so distinguished a defender of pure Christianity, himself so excellent a Christian, and so far raised above all suspicion of seeking any thing but

* Belsham's Plea for Infant Baptism, p. 13.

truth ; it has been thought right to examine it, before proceeding to establish the propriety of Believers' Baptism upon the authority of the New Testament : for, if it be correct, that there is an authority superior to that of the Scriptures, to the command and example of Christ, and to the recorded obedience of the Apostles, we must then only make use of the Scriptures as confirmatory, not as primary evidence ; and the noble declaration of the Reformed Churches must no longer be triumphantly set forth in speech and writing—"The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants."

We deny, however, that we receive the Scriptures of the New Testament solely on the authority of the primitive church. To the testimony of the early fathers we add the testimony of some who, as early, opposed Christianity. But more than on any other, we receive them on the internal evidence which they afford ; and, without which we could not receive them, though they were attested by all the fathers whose writings are yet extant. We do not despise their testimony. It is highly valuable in its place : yet the simple narratives, the pure and sublime doctrines, the holy precepts, the evidently unvarnished truth of the gospel writings, are what fix our belief. It is the suitableness of the Christian scheme to human nature, its present wants, its power of unlimited advancement, and its aspiring hopes, which gives us the strongest assurance that, in receiving the word, we are not beguiled by the fables of men, are not

led away by the arts of priestcraft, are not blind followers of those whom superstition did aforetime blind. It is the manifest and incontestible superiority of the gospel to every other religion which has appeared in the world, to the brightest and noblest pictures of religion, drawn by the master hands of the wisest philosophers who adorned Heathen antiquity, which gives it its chief authority in our eyes, and convinces us, that it is, as it professes to be, a revelation from on high, and that its miracles, especially the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which is so inseparably connected with its whole economy, were indeed performed, and are not the marvellous falsehoods of designing men.

Any one need only examine the Apocryphal Books of the New Testament, republished some time since, and containing a pretended history of our Saviour's childhood, to be convinced how mainly his belief depends on the internal evidence which the Scriptures yield; for, he will find therein recorded such ridiculous and unmeaning transactions as he could not believe on any testimony.

Again, since Christianity is intended for the multitude, and not merely for the studious, for those who have leisure and ability to search into antiquity, to weigh conflicting testimonies, to seek century by century for the truth, amid the mistakes, the corruptions, the folly and superstition, of their fellowmen; its doctrines and ordinances are surely to be learned otherwise than by such laborious research.

To afford this facility, it would certainly appear, that the books of the New Testament were written, and have been kept in a state of comparative purity by the jealousy of conflicting sects, until, by the glorious invention of printing, they are now placed within the reach of the humblest inquirer after truth.

Is there any thing since the mission of Jesus Christ himself and the labours of his Apostles, for which men are so bound to be thankful as for the writings of the Evangelists, whereby we may know the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed? But which, if the position in question be correct, should not be circulated without the opinions of the fathers attached; nay, which perhaps it would be better with the Romanists to withhold from the unlearned, lest simple men should take them for their best guide, and should, upon their authority, reject the traditions of the Elders.

Since, however, the Scriptures do not so helplessly depend for their character upon external testimony, but contain that within themselves which is of greatly superior value; if the Fathers, even up to St. Polycarp, owned Infant Baptism as the Church's nursling, much as it would undoubtedly weaken our cause, yet do we not deem that, by denying it, we should "deny that upon the authority of which holy writ is founded;" that we should "subvert the credibility of the Christian Scriptures." There might

be presumption in our pretending to understand the commands of Jesus better than the immediate successors of the Apostles; but it would still be no more than asserting the right of private judgment; we should only be found imitating that conduct which, in the Bereans, was called "noble." And, do those who contend most earnestly for the authority of the primitive church, on the subject of Baptism, receive implicitly all that the early Fathers have handed down? Do they not rather bring their opinions and practices to the test of Scripture and reason, trying them as belonging to fallible men? Do they not bring them to this united judgment without imagining that they are undermining the very foundation of Christianity? What they do on other subjects, we claim to do also on the subject of Baptism. We can perceive no reason for making a distinction, and feel confident that a substantial reason cannot be found.

Having vindicated our right of making a primary appeal to the Scriptures of the New Testament, respecting Christian Baptism, we will first notice the Baptism of John, since it is indivisibly connected with that of Christ. "The word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness, and he came into all the country round about Jordan, preaching the Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of

vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance.”*

Of John's Baptism infants were not proper subjects, for they can neither “repent” nor “bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.”

Jesus himself submitted to the Baptism of John, overruling the objections of the Baptist with these remarkable words: “Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”† The Baptism of our Saviour took not place until he was about to enter on his sacred mission, and was a voluntary act. His example, therefore, is completely at variance with the practice of Infant Baptism, and in agreement with the Baptism of those who have arrived at an age to understand the nature of religious obligations, and who feel desirous to walk in the ways of the Most High.

We will next advert to the Baptismal commission. It is thus recorded by Matthew: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”‡ Mark has thus recorded our Saviour's words: “And he said, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”§ There is a slight difference between the

* Luke iii. 2, 3, 6, 7.

† Matt. iii. 15.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

§ Luke xvi. 15, 16.

words of the two Evangelists: but it will easily be perceived, that the sense is the same in both; and, that they particularly agree in stating, that teaching and belief must precede Baptism. An infant, it will be confessed, is incapable either of being taught or of believing; consequently, is incapable of receiving Christian Baptism as it was ordained by him who is “head over all things to the church.”

Attempts have indeed been made to support the practice of Infant Baptism, by rendering the word *μαθητευω*, “to disciple,” and then affirming, that Baptism is the means of that discipling. Such an exposition, however, is not only quite incompatible with the language of Mark; but *μαθητευω* is also found, on examination of both sacred and profane authors, invariably to include the idea of instruction. It signifies to make disciples by means of instruction.* Nor does it appear credible, that our Saviour would have made use of an ambiguous term, of one that could be so widely mistaken, as it has been by Mark, if this modern interpretation be correct.

In agreement with the command of Christ do we find his own practice to have been—“the Pharisees heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John.”† In this passage the making of disciples, and their baptism, are so conjoined, as effectually to preclude all possibility of infants having been among the number baptized.

* Gale, Lett. vii. pp. 259, &c.; Lett. viii.

† John iv. 1.

The Apostles also are recorded to have baptized believers, and believers only. On the day of Pentecost, "they that gladly received the word were baptized, and that same day there were added unto the church about three thousand souls; and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."* Among these we must feel certain that there were not any infants; for, they could neither receive the word with gladness, nor continue steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship.

The answer of Philip to the Eunuch, when he said, "Lo, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest,"†—also teaches us in what sense the Apostles understood the command of Christ, what was required of them who came to be baptized, and which requirement, infants, by reason of their tender age, could not perform.

From the testimony of John downwards, we perceive, that the witness of Scripture, in regard to baptism, is unwavering; and is so far from giving countenance to Infant Baptism, that it is completely opposed to such a practice. It becomes our fellow-christians, who differ from us, therefore, to bring forward the most undeniable reasons for departure from that which, in candour, they are obliged to confess, was the practice of Christ and his Apostles.

The learned author, before quoted, objects—"It

* Acts ii. 41, 42.

† Acts viii. 36, 37.

is not enough to state that our Lord's direction is, Teach, or make disciples, and baptize; this, strictly speaking, only enjoins proselyte baptism. It is in vain to allege, that in every case recorded in the New Testament profession was made before baptism was administered; for every such case was the baptism of a proselyte.* We agree that these were all necessarily cases of proselyte baptism, for there were none but proselytes at that period to be baptized; but as this part of the subject belongs to the next Lecture, we shall dismiss this attempt at a collateral support of Infant Baptism, by conceding more than will suit the objector's purpose; that if the Perpetuity of Baptism cannot be shewn by fair inference from Scripture, as well as from the practice of the Fathers, it must, in every form and mode, be discontinued as of no authority.

So convinced of this have some Pædobaptists† been, that they have attempted to bring Scripture to the aid of Infant Baptism; though it must be obvious to every one acquainted with the New Testament, that there is nothing contained therein of that clear and decisive nature which is necessary to its support as a Christian practice. The words of our Saviour, when his disciples would have prevented the approach of children, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God,"‡ have been adduced to prove

* Belsham's Plea, p. 54.

† Wall, Towgood, Elliott.

‡ Luke xviii. 16.

that they may become members of the Church of Christ; and it has thence been argued, that they must be baptized, since Baptism is the only mode of entrance into the church :* but, if such had been the meaning of our Saviour, why did he not straightway command them to be baptized? for, that they were children of believers can scarcely be questioned. So far, however, was our Saviour from doing this, that he simply “took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them;” † without giving a single hint that they were to be baptized; without making any reference to that future Infant Baptism which, it is argued, he had in view; at the same time, also, explaining what he meant by the expression “of such is the kingdom of God,” saying, “Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” † And he who should affirm, that the children of believers, who pay a conscientious regard to the education of their offspring, cannot be more easily instructed in the truths of Christianity, and engaged in the performance of its duties, than those who have grown up to maturity as Jews or Heathens, must wage war against the experience of all ages.

Again, if the meaning attributed to this saying of our Saviour be correct, is it not strange that we should have no intimation from the Apostles that they so understood his words? Is it not still more

* Belsham's Plea, pp. 81, 82.

† Mark x. 15, 16.

strange that St. Paul, who “received not the gospel of men, neither was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ,”* and who gave such minute directions concerning matters of infinitely less importance, should be altogether silent upon this subject, even when he had occasion to speak of the children of believers? for the passage from his First Epistle to the Corinthians, which is considered so powerful a support of Infant Baptism,† says not a word upon the subject, and can only be quoted by Pædobaptists, if they first undeniably prove that infants must be baptized. The following is the passage in question: “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.”‡ “That is,” say they, “your children would be Heathens, unqualified for baptism.”§ So it might mean, if it were distinctly proved, on other grounds, that Infant Baptism is a Christian ordinance: but to bring this passage forward as an argument, must surely expose their poverty of scriptural proofs. If we examine the context we find that the reasoning of St. Paul is not concerning Baptism, or any Christian ordinance, but about the lawfulness of putting away a wife or husband because of unbelief: from such a question another naturally arose respecting the legitimacy of children; for, if conversion to Christianity re-

* Gal. i. 12.

† Belsham’s Plea, p. 83; Towgood in loco.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 14.

§ Belsham’s Plea, p. 83.

quired the separation of husband and wife, their children, in a Christian's estimation, must be illegitimate. St. Paul wisely and humanely decided, as our Saviour had before done, that a natural connexion, a connexion which was before all law, and all religion, should not be broken by religion; and rightly imagined, that if there were, according to the Jewish notion, any ceremonial uncleanness in the unbelieving husband or wife, it was more than compensated by the holiness of the believing partner; and, that the children of such union were perfectly legitimate. He justly considered the marriage tie too sacred to be divided by any thing save guilt; and, that only by guilt could children be rendered unholy or illegitimate. The passage evidently, therefore, contains not any allusion to the words of our Saviour quoted above, and our questions remain unanswered.

The language spoken by our Saviour to Nicodemus has been alleged as proof that infants must be baptized, and thus made members of the Christian Church,—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”* The word *τις*, rendered “a man,” it is very properly said, signifies any one, without reference to sex or age: † but unless Pædobaptists could prove that infants are born of the Spirit, as well as of water, they have no right to force an entrance for them into the church;

* John iii. 5.

† Belsham's Plea, p. 82.

nor will it avail them to say, that we cannot tell, if those adults who present themselves for baptism are moved by a spirit of true devotion. That is a question which their own consciences alone are capable of answering, which their own consciences must answer. If they have any sinister end to gain, if there be any hypocrisy in their professions, the sin rests upon their own heads. It is quite different with regard to infants: they are brought to baptism at a time when there was never witnessed in any one either ordinary or extraordinary operations of the Holy Spirit; when they are totally unconscious of the act which is performed upon them; when, consequently, there can be to them only that ritual birth, which is the outward and visible sign of that inward birth which Christ declares imperative. Moreover, are Pædobaptists prepared to go the whole length of their assumption? Will they permit infants, or children, to exercise the privileges of church membership? Will they admit them to the Lord's table as soon as they are baptized? The elder church did this also, and in so doing was more consistent than its modern imitators; just as Calvin's own fearful and stupendous doctrines were more consistent than those doctrines as they have been softened among the great majority of those who now call themselves by his name.

The 38th ver. of the 2d chap. of the Acts of the Apostles has been brought forward by Pædobaptists as favouring their cause: "Then Peter said unto

them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you into the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; for the promise is to you and to your children.”* It is sufficient on this to remark, that children in such a connexion evidently mean posterity, and that the conjunction of repentance with baptism clearly points out to what description of persons these words were addressed by Peter; and, as far as regards them, sufficiently indicates the nature of the rite. Whether their descendants were to be baptized is left undecided by this passage, and must therefore be otherwise determined.

An argument, which at most only amounts to probability, and, therefore, is insufficient to prove a Christian obligation, has been drawn from the circumstance of whole households having been baptized, as is related in the following account: “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul; and when she was baptized and her household,” &c.† This circumstance standing alone would not be of any importance to either side of the controversy, since children are not mentioned; but if it were allowable to reason from probabilities, we should say, the probability is, that Lydia was an unmarried woman. However, since such kind of reasoning must ever be of the smallest possible weight with every man of

* Belsham's Plea, p. 82.

† Acts xvi. 14, 15.

candid mind, the fair way to judge of this narrative is, by comparing it with similar narratives, connected with which there may be circumstances that will determine to which side of the controversy the evidence from the baptizing of Lydia's household inclines.

A remarkable circumstance happened to Paul and Silas in the prison at Philippi, which roused the attention of the jailer, and caused him to come trembling, and to fall down before them, saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straightway; and when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."* If there were infants in the house of the jailer, it is manifest that they were not in the number of those mentioned; for to infants the Apostles would not have preached, neither could they have "rejoiced, believing in God."

St. Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians, i. 16, "I baptized also the household of Stephanas." That infants were not therein included is shewn by what he writes in the 16th chapter of the same epistle: "Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is

* Acts xvi. 30—34.

the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." Certainly infants had not so addicted themselves; on the contrary, they need the most careful and tender administering unto. The evidence from the baptizing of households is, therefore, in favour of Believers' Baptism.

These are the principal proofs which are attempted to be drawn from scripture in favour of Infant Baptism: how powerless they are we have seen. Manifestly failing in these, our opponents have recourse to other arguments, the chief of which we will proceed to examine, as briefly as is consistent with truth and candour.

"The rite of circumcision," it is urged, "being appointed to infants among the Jews, as a symbol of their admission into the congregation of the chosen people, and the privileges of the holy nation, this institution countenances an expectation that some rite might be appointed under the new covenant, by which infants might be admitted into the holy community which is now distinguished as the chosen people, the kingdom of God and of Christ."* Admitting this, though we cannot perceive the justness of the parallel, the two dispensations being so essentially different in their constitution and purpose; yet, admitting this to have been a natural expectation, in what words of Christ, or of his Apostles, do we find it fulfilled?—In what language is the com-

* Belsham's Plea, p. 80.

parison drawn?—Where are the plain directions for infant baptism which answer to the open command for circumcision? They are not to be found; and, therefore, from the premises laid down upon which to prove the propriety of Infant Baptism, the fair inference is, that baptism is not instead of circumcision, but is quite unconnected with it; that the purposes to be answered by it are essentially different: for is it credible, that Christ and his Apostles should have substituted one rite for another, without noticing the substitution by a single word—without once putting them in opposition? It does not appear credible; especially when we remember, that our Saviour was accustomed to mark any change with peculiar precision; as, when he declared, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love your enemies.”* Yet a passage from one of Paul’s epistles has been supposed to countenance this idea: “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, being buried with him in baptism.”† But is baptism a circumcision made without hands; and especially the baptism of infants?—Not any more than the Jewish circumcision was performed without hands. And we may learn what St. Paul meant by this expression, when he calls it “the putting off the body of the sins of the

* Matt. vi. 43, 44. † Col. ii. 11, 12. Belsham’s Pl. p. 81.

flesh ;” and when in his epistle to the Romans he says, “ Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.” This inward circumcision answers, we perceive, to the new birth, of which our Saviour spoke ; and “ being buried with Christ in baptism,” is subsequent to that inward change, and cannot be confounded with it, or render it unnecessary.

For want of that one solid foundation, which, if it were a Christian ordinance, would surely be found in the plain declarations of Scripture, the advocates of Infant Baptism are accustomed to trace it to more than one source ; though this appears a strange way of pleading for its authority. We have already seen them vainly urging inferences from passages of Scripture, and pressing upon our notice the circumcision of the Jews. We have now to examine another position equally fallacious. The Jews, it is said, baptized proselytes to Judaism together with their infants. The ceremony of baptism was therefore borrowed by our Saviour from the Jews. He gave no directions for departing from their practice in regard to infants, therefore infants born of baptized persons ought to be baptized.* Supposing that the Jews did thus baptize, though strong and reasonable doubts are entertained by many upon that point, it would still be a very remarkable circumstance if Christian baptism were at once the substitute of circumcision, and the adoption of that

* Wall ; Belsham’s Plea, p. 3.

Jewish baptism which it is said was administered after circumcision; that it should answer to the former standing ordinance among God's ancient people, and should also be an extension of that latter ordinance which applied only to proselytes and their children! And if the argument from the supposed initiatory baptism of the Jews be any thing worth, its testimony is in favour of Anti-baptists; for it is only pretended to have been the baptism of proselytes and their children who were born at the time—a purification from the defilement of Hea-thenism. Pædobaptists cannot, therefore, make use of this weapon of controversy without turning its point into their own bosoms.

Their strong hold, if indeed it be strong, is what they deem “the undisputed testimony of the primitive church;”* but which testimony we deem neither undisputed nor in their favour.

It is acknowledged,† that the first writer who speaks plainly of the baptism of children is Tertullian, a presbyter of the church at Carthage, about the year 200, and that he only speaks of it in order to blame the practice. His words are thus translated: “Therefore, according to every one's condition and disposition, and also their age, the delaying of baptism is more profitable, especially in the case of little children; for what occasion is there, except in case of necessity, that the sponsors should be brought into danger? Our Lord, indeed, said,

* Belsham's Plea, p. 13.

† Idem, p. 14.

Do not forbid them to come to me, therefore let them come when they are grown up ; let them come when they understand, when they are instructed whither it is that they come. Let them be made Christians when they can know Christ. Why need their guiltless age to make such haste to the forgiveness of sins?" "Observe," writes the distinguished author of the 'Plea for Infant Baptism,' "for it is a very material circumstance in the case, that Tertullian mentions Infant Baptism incidentally, as a fact which happened to come in his way, as a case illustrative of the doctrine which he was endeavouring to establish. He was not treating the subject professionally, as I am now. It was not an immediate object with him either to exaggerate or to extenuate the fact. He merely takes notice of it as a general, or rather an universal practice ; which every one who knew any thing of the state of Christianity, or who might read his works, were well acquainted with, as what no one would think of calling in question, and as a practice not peculiar to Carthage, or to the churches of Africa, but which obtained through the whole Christian world."* We should certainly imagine from this paragraph that the passage in question was transcribed from some work of Tertullian's of a general nature, a Catholic epistle, or a treatise of Christian doctrine ; but it is found in a small tract written against the Montanists, a sect which had arisen at Peputza, in Asia Minor. Tertullian is, moreover,

* Belsham's Plea, pp. 14—16.

treating the subject of Baptism professedly, and treating of it in opposition to the opinions of the Montanists, that all should be baptized who could ask to have that ordinance performed.* Also, if we may argue from Tertullian's manner, supposing that the baptism of little ones, for he speaks not of infants, were in his time the universal practice of the Church, is it not strange that with so great freedom, and without any apology or appeal to ancient authority, he should oppose this universal practice?—that he should set forth his individual opinion, as though it were a commonly-received opinion?—that if he knew it to be a practice derived from Apostolical authority, he should so boldly attack it as unreasonable and unscriptural? Thus, supposition and appeal to probabilities would serve our cause equally with that of our opponents; but in reality they cannot serve either; for, to conjectures there will be found no end, or the liveliest imagination would gain the victory. The most that can be proved from Tertullian is, that the baptism of children was practised in his time. So also were the sign of the cross in baptism, anointing the baptized, and giving them milk and honey. How widely the baptism of children had obtained does not appear; and we cannot be silenced by assumption without proof.

It is freely allowed that after the time of Tertullian, and as the doctrine of Original Sin gained strength

* Robinson's Hist. Bap. pp. 170, 174—176; Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. Vol. I. p. 236.

and consistency in men's minds, the practice of children's baptism made rapid strides; and we shrink not to confess, soon, and without much opposition, became the general practice of the Church; and in the time of Cyprian was still farther reduced to the baptism of infants of eight days old; or at least in an assembly held at Carthage, over which he presided, it was agreed that such should be the practice of the African church.*

And that the change from Believers' Baptism to Infant Baptism should have been effected with so little controversy, so easily, so quickly, † is sufficiently accounted for by the prevalence beforehand of the doctrine of Original Sin, and of the notion that baptism was necessary and sufficient to its cleansing. We are not to imagine, however, that Infant Baptism, or even Children's Baptism, was practised without discrimination immediately on their being acknowledged as valid. They were at first used only when death was apprehended, and eternal salvation thereby endangered. ‡ The exception by degrees became the rule, in an age when ignorance and superstition spread their dark clouds over the Christian horizon. § That the practice of Infant Baptism should follow the doctrine of Original Sin, since baptism, it was asserted, could alone cleanse it, must be considered a necessary, a natural, a certain step; a step demanded by the best feelings, and closest

* Robinson's Hist. Bap. pp. 196, 197. † Belsham's Plea, p. 23.

‡ Tertullian.

§ Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. Vol. I. p. 259.

ties of human nature; lest those miserable little ones, who might be cut off in their infancy, should be doomed to the anguish which dieth not, to the torment which never ceaseth.

We scarcely need mention Origen, who lived ten years after Tertullian, since his commentary upon the Romans is only extant in a confessedly infamous translation by Rufinus,* and his commentary on Luke, in a translation by him whom Mosheim denominates "The foul-mouthed Jerom." And if we were to argue from these translations, they would prove just as much for Original Sin as for the baptism of children, "parvuli:" for Origen says, or is made to say, "For this also it was that the Church had a tradition, or order from the Apostles, to give baptism even unto little ones." And again, "Little ones are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? Or when have they sinned? It is because by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that little ones are baptized."† They who will depend upon Rufinus and Jerom, and urge Origen's testimony, must take with them such a load of other matter, that we may well leave them to groan under their self-imposed burden.

Justin Martyr and Irenæus, writers who flourished in the second century, the former forty, the latter sixty years after the Apostolic Age,‡ have been ap-

* Gale, Lett. xiii. pp. 526, 527; Belsham's Plea, p. 29.

† Idem.

‡ Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. Vol. I. pp. 161, 181.

pealed to, not as speaking plainly of Infant Baptism, but as evidently referring to it.* In regard to the first of these writers, you will be able to judge how little he supports the practice, nay, how fully he supports the practice of Believers' Baptism by a quotation from his celebrated Apology addressed to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.†

“ I will shew you how we dedicated ourselves to God, when we were made new in Christ, that I may not seem to do wrong by omitting anything. As many as are persuaded, and do believe that those things which are taught and spoken by us are true, and engage to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and implore of God, with fasting, the forgiveness of past sins, we praying and fasting together with them. They are then led to a place where there is water, and they are regenerated, with the same kind of regeneration with which we were regenerated; for in the name of God, the Father and Lord of all, and of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they are then washed in water; for also Christ has said, ‘ Except ye be regenerated, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ We learned the reason of this from the Apostles, that since we were born at first without our knowledge, by necessity, and brought up in wicked customs, we should not continue children of necessity and ignorance, but of choice and knowledge, and receive forgiveness of our former sins by water.”‡

* Belsham's Plea, pp. 14, 15; Towgood.

† Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 161. ‡ Justin's Apology, I. ad finem.

This paragraph is not only without mention of Infant Baptism, but contains direct evidence that such was not the practice in Justin's time. He speaks of "choice and knowledge," of "being persuaded and believing," before baptism was administered. He is careful to inform the Emperor precisely how they dedicated themselves to God, that he might not "do wrong by omitting any thing." If Infant Baptism had been their practice, if they had thus dedicated infants to God, he would therefore have mentioned it, and not have presented a garbled statement. And if they had been thus accustomed by baptism to make infants members of the Church, there was abundant reason for mentioning it to the Emperor, since the Christians were charged with barbarous and inhuman practices towards them, of murdering them, and making some impious use of their blood;* which calumny, the mention of Infant Baptism, and the consequences following thereon, would have been amply sufficient to refute; and we can only account for Justin Martyr's silence on the subject by supposing him altogether ignorant of such a practice; especially when he speaks so plainly of the baptism of Believers.

Irenæus was Bishop of Lyons in the latter part of the second century. He was in his youth the disciple of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. Irenæus had therefore great opportunities of learning the truth; and if

* Gale, Lett. xii. p. 455.

he had left any testimony in favour of Infant Baptism, it must have been very powerful: but all the evidence which is adduced from him is a passage, doubtful both as to its genuineness and its meaning: "He came to save all persons by himself; all persons I say who are by him regenerated unto God: infants and little ones, and children, and youths and elder persons."* In the first place this is quoted from a Latin translation out of the Greek of Irenæus, by an unknown writer, whom the learned agree to have taken great liberties with the text.† There is one book of Irenæus yet extant in the original Greek,‡ upon comparing which, with the translation, the numerous faults which have been committed, the liberties which have been taken with the sense, and the changes which have been made in the meaning of the author, do most clearly appear.§ So that it is by no means certain, if this passage, in its present state, was written by Irenæus.

2. The latter part of the chapter from which it is taken contradicts the former. It is first said, that Christ was baptized at the age of thirty, and that he suffered in the third passover following; which would make him thirty-three years of age at the time of his crucifixion; and then it is afterwards stated, that he lived to about fifty years. Irenæus can hardly be charged with this contradiction when he had such good opportunity of knowing the pre-

* Belsham's Plea, p. 14.

† Gale, Lett. xii. p. 465.

‡ Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 181.

§ Gale, Lett. xii. p. 465.

cise truth from St. Polycarp, and when, by no calculation, worthy of credit, can the term of our Saviour's life be protracted later than his thirty-fifth year.*

3. If we suppose this passage to be a faithful translation, it is a begging of the question to assume that by regeneration is meant baptism, and indeed we think the contrary may be proved by another passage of the translation, wherein it is said, speaking of the Holy Spirit, "For God promised to pour him out upon his servants and handmaids in the latter days, that they might prophesy: wherefore he descended upon the Son of God, when he became the Son of man, accustoming himself in him to dwell among mankind, and to rest in men, and to dwell in the creatures of God; working in them the will of the Father, and of old, making them new," or regenerating them, "in Christ." † It is manifest from this passage, that by "regeneration" Irenæus understood that inward change which our Saviour signified when he said, "Except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." He also, in another place, speaks of "the baptism of regeneration," ‡ John came preaching "the baptism of repentance." It will not be imagined that baptism and repentance are the same thing; so neither can we suppose that, by a precisely similar expression, Irenæus permits us to believe that he esteemed baptism and regeneration as the same.

* Gale, Lett. xii. p. 465. † Ibid, p. 495. ‡ Ibid. p. 496.

4. If Irenæus wrote, “infants, little ones, children, youths, and elder persons,” a question arises, what ages are signified thereby? Were they infants literally from their inability to articulate, or infants in a wider sense? From some expressions concerning the young men, and the elder persons, it is conjectured that Irenæus assigns ten years to each of the several stages which he mentions.* If so, the age of infants will reach to ten, before which age children are capable of instruction, of having that seed sown within them, which shall thereafter spring up and display, “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” And now, having seen what was the opinion of Irenæus concerning regeneration, all that can be learned from this much boasted passage is, that Christ came to make holy persons of all ages, leaving the question of baptism to be determined by other authority.

The Fathers of the second century so far, therefore, from giving countenance to the practice of Infant Baptism, are opposed to it, so far as we are able to learn their opinions. Whatever credit, then, we may be disposed to give the Church of that period for faithfully preserving the institutions of the Apostles, is so much added to the cause of Believers' Baptism; and, confirms us in the continuation of that ordinance as it was performed by John, as it was submitted to and practised by Christ and his Apostles, as it was commanded to be observed by our

* Gale, Lett. xii. p. 501.

Master when he was about to leave the scene of his arduous labours, of his death, and of his resurrection from the dead.

In considering the *MODE* of performing Christian Baptism, the first thing which claims our attention, is the meaning of the word βαπτίζω, as it is used by Greek writers. On this point, however, we must, for want of leisure and opportunity, content ourselves with stating the conclusion to which Gale arrives after a laborious research among them. It is, that the word invariably signifies to dip, immerse, plunge, or cover, either literally or metaphorically.* We the more readily content ourselves with giving the result of another's inquiry, since they who practise aspersion do themselves confess that such is the primitive meaning of the word; though they contend that it also signifies affusion and aspersion.† This we shall not deny; but must at the same time call to their remembrance that, when it does thus signify, it is spoken of things which, from their nature, admit not of dipping or plunging; as, when the sea-coast is said to be baptized by the waves, a fleece to be baptized in dew, or a man to be baptized in sorrows. As, however, for the reasons above stated, we decline any personal inquiry among the Greek writers, we shall claim no more than the admission of our fellow-christians, that the primitive

* Gale, Lett. iii.

† Belsham's Plea, pp. 61—63; Wall; Towgood, in verbo.

meaning of βαπτίζω is to immerse; supporting that admission, however, by the authority of the few lexicographers within our reach.

Hedericus gives the various words by which it may be rendered in the following order: “1, to immerse, to cover with water, or, to overwhelm in water: 2, to wash clean, wash away or purify, to wash.”* It is this secondary meaning of Βαπτίζω upon which Pædobaptists chiefly formed their argument for aspersion: but since the primitive meaning of the word is to immerse, or cover with water, and since washing clean, or washing away, can unquestionably be best performed by immersion, there is no reason to suppose that the secondary meaning excludes the primary, but rather, that the latter is included in the former.

3. Hedericus says, Βαπτίζω is rendered “to baptize,” when it signifies the sacred rite; † which, as it is merely changing Greek for Roman characters, yields us not any evidence: but we cannot fail to remark, that if the word had never been either Latinized or Anglicised, the probability, nay, almost the certainty, is, that the present part of our inquiry would not have been needed.

Schrevelius renders Βαπτίζω by the following arrangement of words: “To baptize, to immerse, to wash.” ‡ Pasor, in the succeeding order: “To immerse, to wash clean or purify, to baptize.” The

* “1, *mergo, immergo, aquâ obruo*; 2, *abluo, lavo*.”

† “*Baptizo, significatu sacro*.” ‡ “*Baptizo, mergo, lavo*.”

same remarks will apply to these two lexicographers as to Hedericus, and you perceive that they all agree in giving immersion as the primary sense.

Parkhurst writes thus: “*Βαπτίζω* from *Βαπτω*, to dip. 1, To *dip, immerse, or plunge* in water. 2, *Βαπτίζομαι*,* (Mid. and Pas.,) to wash one’s self, be washed, wash, i. e. the hands, by immersion or dipping in water. The LXX. use *Βαπτίζομαι* (Mid.) for washing one’s self by immersion. 3, To baptize, to immerse, to wash with water in token of purification from sin, and from spiritual pollution. 4, To baptize as the Israelites were unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 5, In a figurative sense, to baptize with the Holy Ghost. 6, Figuratively, to be immersed, or plunged in a flood or sea, as it were, of grievous afflictions and sufferings.”

Here, not only is immersion given as the primary sense, but it is kept in view through all the secondary senses.

Lastly, and of highest authority, Schleusner thus renders *Βαπτίζω*—“1, Properly, to immerse and dye, to plunge in water.† 2, To wash away, to wash, to cleanse by water.‡ 3, Hence it is transferred to the solemn rite of baptism, by which Christ ordained, that all who had been instructed in the fundamentals of the Christian religion, and who should desire to embrace and profess it, should be

* “*Immergo, abluo, baptizo.*”

† “*Proprie, immergo ac intingo, in aquam mergo.*”

‡ “*Abluo, lavo, aqua purgo.*”

initiated, Matt. xxviii. 19; so that βαπτίζω may be rendered, To baptize, to administer baptism, to perform the act of baptism, or, to bind any one to the profession of the Christian religion by the rite of baptism.* He afterwards gives some metaphorical meanings, which, of course, for our present purpose it is unnecessary to quote.

This powerful testimony from various lexicographers our Pædobaptist brethren do not attempt to deny, and yet contend, not only for the lawfulness of affusion and aspersion on particular emergencies, but as a general practice. We would ask them, however, if it be not a rule, and a rule necessary to secure us from a world of fancies, both in translation and interpretation, to employ the primitive sense of a word invariably, unless there be some circumstances connected with it, which plainly point out a different use, or which render its employment impossible? Since then our fellow-christians allow, that immersion is the primitive sense of βαπτίζω, it becomes them to shew the reasons which render it impossible or improper to be followed in the performance of the Christian ordinance: why they do not even asperse so as to cover the whole body, but only with a few drops from the fingers, or at most, with as much as

* “Hinc transfertur ad *baptismi ritum solemnem*, quem, ut, quicumque essent instituti religionis Christianæ initiis eamque amplecti et profiteri vellent, initiarentur, Christus instituit. Matt. xxviii. 19. Ita, ut βαπτίζω sit, *baptizo, baptismum administro, actum baptismi exerceo*, seu, *baptismi ritu obstringo aliquem professioni religionis Christianæ.*”

the hollow of the hand will hold. It is in fact the minister's hand which is baptized.

Also, if they still contend that, by the use of a word with various significations, we are left at liberty to choose a secondary meaning, according to our conveniency or caprice, when there is not any obstacle in the way of our taking the primary meaning; if the matter be thus perfectly indifferent, and our own inclination is to be the sole guide, why do they always asperse the face? Why not the hand, or the foot, which would be far less *inconvenient* to the infant, and would not call forth those shrill expressions of dissatisfaction which are sometimes heard above the solemn voice of the minister? They will pardon this, even though it should bear to them the appearance of ridicule. It is not so meant. It is only said to shew how open to every species of attack is such a latitudinarian mode of interpretation; to what distance from the original mode of administering the ordinance it will permit us to go, even until the very act itself shall become senseless and ridiculous.

We turn now to the argument for immersion which is contained in Scripture. The word baptize is found twice in the Old Testament, and twice in the Apocrypha. Arguments drawn from apocryphal books we must decline for ourselves and refuse to others. One of the passages from the Old Testament is affirmed to be mistranslated by the LXX.*

* Belsham's Plea, p. 69.

We shall, therefore, confine our remarks to the only remaining passage, which occurs in the Second Book of Kings v. 14: "Then went Naaman down, and baptized himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God," or, as it is rendered in the received version, "and dipped himself," &c. This passage appears clearly in our favour, especially when we recollect that immersion is the primitive sense of baptism. The direction of Elisha was, "Go and *wash* thyself seven times in Jordan," and hence it is argued, that washing and baptizing are the same.* In this case they undoubtedly were, but we have seen that washing is not opposed to immersion, but may include it. The use of the word baptize, to express the act which Naaman performed, appears, therefore, clearly to point out what kind of washing Elisha prescribed, and Naaman submitted to—that it was washing by immersion. But, "by the law in Leviticus," it is said, "water was to be applied in two modes to the recovering leper. In one form it was to be applied seven times, that was by sprinkling; in the other form only once, and that was bathing. But as the order to Naaman was to wash seven times, it was probably intended that the water should be applied only to the infected part." † The prophet only ordered the Syrian to apply water in one form: so that the law in Leviticus was broken through, and therefore can afford us no light on the matter; unless we suppose that Elisha joined the

* Belsham's Plea, p. 68.

† Idem.

two modes together, taking the number of times from one, and immersion from the other. We have, however, before disclaimed mere hypothetical reasonings. Leaving, therefore, the case of Naaman to make its due impression in our favour, we will proceed to the New Testament.

“Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”*
 “And John also was baptizing in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there.” †
 Why John should have chosen places where there was much water for the purpose of baptizing, except he baptized in the primitive sense of the word, it is difficult to conjecture. But “Let it be considered,” says Towgood, “how valuable and scarce water was in those parts, how hot the climate, how numerous the crowds who flocked to John’s baptism, from what distant parts they came, how long they tarried to hear his doctrine and instructions: let these be considered, and there will appear sundry good reasons for his choosing this well-watered and fruitful country, for the place of his preaching, without any regard had to the convenience of dipping.” ‡
 But John did come “preaching in the *wilderness* of Judæa,” § in “that desert and barren region, that dry and thirsty land,” where our author thinks he certainly would not have entered upon his ministrations, and

* Matt. iii. 5, 6.

† John iii. 23.

‡ Towgood on Infant Baptism, p. 82.

§ Matt. iii. 1.

it was afterwards that he baptized in Jordan and at Ænon. Since then he did *preach* where no water was, and in the passage before us it is stated, that he *baptized* in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there, we must still prefer the reason given by the Evangelist to Pædobaptist objections.

It is said again, "If these multitudes were all dipped, how was it done? Were they naked? This modesty forbids. Had they all change of raiment, to undress, and put on dry apparel when they came out of the water? This the vastness of the multitudes, the openness of the country, and the great distance whence they came, will not easily admit; and, that they stood in their wet garments, and hearkened to John's doctrine, or travelled in them many miles to their homes, seems equally improbable."* These are merely captious objections. Does any one attribute indecency to the Hindoos, because they every day, in great numbers, dip themselves naked in the Ganges? Or are we to try the customs of other countries by those of our own? And in Eastern regions public baths are not only a luxury, but a necessary of life, to which people, without scruple, resort. Whether John's disciples were baptized naked, or partially clothed, is equally unimportant. The force of the word, and of the reason given by the Evangelist for baptizing in Ænon, cannot thus be set aside.

Concerning the Baptism of Jesus it is said, "And

* Towgood, pp. 102, 103.

Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.”* Respecting that of the Ethiopian Eunuch, “And they went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him: and when they were come up out of the water,”† &c. To evade the evidence from these passages, it is said, “As waters run in the valleys, they might go down from the chariot (*εἰς*) to or unto the rivulet, (for geographers find but little streams there,) and Philip baptize by pouring water on him: and from thence go up to the chariot again, in the most perfect consistence with this account of the matter.”‡ If pouring or sprinkling were the primitive sense of the word baptize, we “might” admit this forced interpretation sooner than abandon it; but as immersion is the primitive sense, we prefer a plain to a conjectural rendering, the general testimony of the learned, to a partial criticism.

Mr. Belsham moreover allows, “There is, upon the whole, reason to believe that the prevailing practice in the Apostolic and succeeding ages, was to baptize by immersion, though it cannot be proved that this was the universal rule, and some cases are mentioned in the New Testament in which it has been thought most probable that baptism was administered by affusion.”§ Does not this admission supply an ample argument against the propriety of aspersion as the general practice, even if it should be

* Matt. iii. 16.

† Acts viii. 38, 39.

‡ Towgood, p. 106.

§ Belsham's Plea, pp. 73, 74.

admitted in particular cases? It is confessed that immersion was the prevailing practice; but it cannot be proved that pouring was not used. To prove a negative is indeed difficult; but want of power to prove a negative will not, by a reasoner so logical as Mr. Belsham, be held a valid argument against that which is positive. The question should rather stand in the following form: Immersion is the mode spoken of and practised; can it be proved that any other was made use of? The answer is, "There are some cases mentioned in the New Testament in which it has been thought most probable that baptism was administered by affusion." But allowing the full weight of this probability, of what avail is it against a positive fact? How can it give countenance to the general forsaking of an Apostolical practice? Nay, even granting the exceptions to have been proved, instead of being only probable; why is the exception made the rule, and the rule scarcely allowed to hold the place even of an exception? This needs strong defence; no less strong than an impossibility to comply with the rule. This defence cannot, and will not be pleaded.

Towgood takes great pains to prove, that under the Jewish dispensation there were various ceremonies of sprinkling, washing, pouring, and immersion; and that they are all indiscriminately called baptisms: in proof of which he cites Heb. ix. 10, "Meats, and drinks, and divers baptisms." To

shorten the argument, we will allow all that is here demanded; but of what consequence is it? Because under the Jewish dispensation there were various sorts of baptism applied to different purposes, will it follow, that Christian baptism, which is expressly called "one baptism," may be performed in all these different modes? Let it first be proved that these various baptisms were interchangeable, before any argument be drawn from thence; and even then, we cannot perceive how their case would be made out in opposition to the primitive sense of the word, and the acknowledged practice of the Apostolic age.

The defenders of aspersion further allow, that immersion was the practice of the primitive church;* and to support this admission, we may, in passing, call to remembrance the size of various ancient baptisteries and fonts which are still in existence, and which could only have been formed for the purpose of immersion.

But the lawfulness of aspersion is argued because "baptism by affusion, especially in cases of sickness and supposed danger, was practised by the Church in a very early age."† It is, however, further acknowledged, that "this mode of baptism was disapproved, except where it was believed to be indispensable;" and, that persons so baptized were judged incapable of holding any office in the Church.‡ To prove the exception is not, as we have before argued,

* Belsham's Plea, p. 74.

† Idem.

‡ Idem.

to establish it as the rule. It rather renders the rule more imperative, when the occasions of the exception are considered; viz. sickness, the being bed-ridden, and danger of death.*

The first administration of baptism by sprinkling of which we have any account, took place in Africa, in the third century; † a place and age fruitful in corruptions of Christianity. Gennadius, Bishop of Marseilles, at the end of the fifth century, speaks of pouring and immersion being indifferently made use of. But, even in the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, though they speak of affusion and sprinkling as not uncommon, prefer immersion as the more general and the safer practice. In the Rubric of King Edward VI., (1449,) the order is to dip the child in water thrice, so it be discreetly and warily done; but if the child be weakly, it shall suffice to pour water. In the Common Prayer-Book, after the Restoration (1662), the order is, if the godfathers do certify that the child may well endure it, to dip it into the water discreetly and warily; but if they certify that the child is weak, it shall suffice to pour water upon it. ‡ We lay not much stress upon these testimonies, but they serve to shew by what slow degrees that practice was admitted which is now followed by the great majority of the Christian world.

We have set forth our reasons for immersion; we

* Robinson's Hist. of Baptism, pp. 440, &c.

† Idem. p. 449.

‡ Belsham's Plea, pp. 14, 15.

have endeavoured satisfactorily to answer objections : and, until it can be shewn that immersion is not the primitive and common meaning of the word βαπτισμα, and was not the practice of Christ and his Apostles ; or, that there are circumstances which totally prevent or render improper the immersion of Believers, we must hold our cause good, our practice unimpeachable.



THE

PERPETUITY OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

MAINTAINED.

By JAMES GILCHRIST.

[The text in this block is extremely faint and illegible due to the low quality of the scan. It appears to be a dense block of text, possibly a list or a series of entries, but no specific words or numbers can be discerned.]

LECTURE III.

Matthew xxviii. 18—20:

“AND JESUS CAME AND SPAKE UNTO THEM, SAYING, ALL POWER IS GIVEN UNTO ME IN HEAVEN AND IN EARTH. GO YE, THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST. TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU: AND, LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD. AMEN.”

THE subject of the present Lecture is the Perpetuity of Christian Baptism. That is, we have to consider whether it be a permanent rite of Christianity. But, before entering directly on the subject, a few preliminary observations seem necessary. Though we meditate all due fairness and the greatest possible brevity, we must bespeak a candid and patient attention. We would not wilfully offend against Christian charity in treating of what we deem a Christian Institution; nor would we intentionally make unreasonable demands upon your time and patience. But our subject is austere, controversial and peculiarly uninviting or repulsive to those minds which are already in a state of in-

difference or disinclination ; for it must be addressed exclusively to the understanding and the conscience, both of which are usually (at least in persons of reflection) more inert respecting positive than respecting moral duties. Rhetorical ability, if we possessed it or wished to employ it, would not be available on this occasion ; for our subject is one which can neither captivate the imagination nor rouse the passions. We have, therefore, no allurements to hold out—no attractions to present ; we rely for *effect* solely on plain statement and fair argument.

The object of this Lecture is to prove the permanent obligation of Christian Baptism. But to prevent all misunderstanding it may be proper to define our meaning. Christian Baptism is, in our conscientious belief, the immersion of adults making a profession of *repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*. Infant Sprinkling is, in our humble, fallible judgment, not Christian Baptism ; but a complete perversion of the original institution. This part of the controversy has been already disposed of ; and we recur to it merely for the sake of explicitness in what remains to be stated in this Lecture : for, we might seem to make common cause with those of our Christian brethren who advocate and practise *infant sprinkling*, if we did not guard against misapprehension. But nothing can be farther from our design or less connected with our reasoning. If we prove the perpetuity of a Divine Institution, will it follow that a perversion

of that Institution ought to be perpetuated? As well might it be argued that, by establishing the immutable truth and unrivalled excellence of Christianity, we perpetuate all its corruptions. What never had a Divine origin for its authority never can have a Divine sanction for its perpetuity: much less, if less be possible in such a case, that which is a spurious copy of the heavenly original,—a counterfeit representation of the genuine ordinance. If we had no choice but between *Pædobaptism* and *Anti-baptism*, that is, between sprinkling infants and no ritual practice with water whatever, we should not hesitate to decide for the latter; inasmuch as no ceremony is preferable to an unscriptural ceremony, and still more to a perversion or abuse of a Divine ordinance. On this ground we, as Protestants, disallow the unscriptural rites and ceremonies of the Church of Rome; on this ground we would conscientiously omit the observance of the Sacred Supper containing the commemorative symbols of our Lord and Saviour, rather than receive them in the form of Transubstantiation, or as desecrated and profaned into a qualification for a civil office.

It is sufficiently evident, then, that in advocating the *perpetuity* of the right in question, we do not make common cause with Pædobaptists. There is one view, however, in which they may be considered as uniting in auxiliary alliance with us. They hold the perpetuity of what they conscientiously deem *Baptism*. But on what ground do they hold

it? Their main ground of reliance, the very rock of their defence, is the authority of the Fathers—the theological writers who lived comparatively near to the times of the Apostles. From the writings of some of these Fathers it is sufficiently evident, that as early as the latter part of the second or beginning of the third century, *Infant Baptism*, as well as *Infant Communion*, was practised, at least in some churches. This we are willing to admit as a historical fact: for whatever our opinion of the Fathers may be, we are not disposed, with the ingenious Robert Robinson, to question or disallow their *testimony*, at least in a case of this description. Whether the *fact* can sanction the *practice*; whether the practice be of Divine authority merely because it existed in the time of the Fathers; whether they have supplied a *precedent* that bars all remoter search or interdicts all higher appeal; whether, in short, the authority of the Fathers can decide the question respecting Christian Baptism, is matter of controversy; and many are the controversies which have been written on the subject: in which, as we humbly conceive, the arguments for Infant Sprinkling have been most triumphantly refuted.

There is one thing, however, incontrovertibly evident from the history and from the writings of the Fathers; which is, that they held the *Perpetuity* of Baptism. In this, and in this alone, they give the “unanimous voice of Christian antiquity” concerning the present question. In this they all agreed,

though they differed much respecting the nature, the design, the administration of Baptism. They had, evidently, no idea that it was of temporary obligation, or of *proselyte* origin and intention. They give no intimation that it was merely to grace the arrival of the Gospel and usher in the New Dispensation, or that it was exclusively connected with the introduction and planting of Christianity. They were strangers to the notion of its being intended to initiate Christianity into the world; or to initiate a family, a tribe, a race, a nation, or the whole world of human beings as an aggregate or collective *proselyte*, into Christianity. Here, if we were satisfied with the kind of evidence and reasoning which satisfy some inquirers, we might take our stand on the firm foundation or vantage-ground of "Christian antiquity."

But after all, we lay so little stress on the authority of "Christian antiquity," that we would not have even alluded to it had it not been for the purpose of refuting an argument employed against us. By disallowing the authority of the Fathers in support of *Pædobaptism*, we destroy (it is urged) the very foundation on which the Perpetuity of Baptism rests; for (it is alleged) we have no evidence, except from the writings of the Fathers, that it was to continue in full force as a Christian rite: but they prove (it is further urged), that infants were baptized in their time; therefore, if we refuse Baptism to

Infants, we ought, in consistency, to reject it altogether.*

If this sort of reasoning deserve any notice, it is not for any intrinsic merit. But some persons confidently receive mere statements on the high authority of great names; and many have neither leisure nor aptitude for analyzing arguments or for ascending to first principles.

Had all the records of "Christian antiquity" (im-

* The argument does not stop here; and we must sincerely confess that the length to which it is pushed has occasioned us deep concern. "It is upon this evidence *alone* [the testimony of the Fathers] that we admit the Scriptures as genuine. You cannot, *consistently*, reject this rite [Infant Baptism] without, at the same time, *rejecting* those inestimable records which contain the charter of our immortal hopes. In fact, there is no book of that collection which forms the New Testament, the evidence of which can be compared in clearness and decision with that which establishes the Apostolic origin of Infant Baptism."

We speak *the words of truth and soberness*, when we say, that these and similar statements (for they are often reiterated) astounded us: and the time has been when they might have completely annihilated our weak and wavering faith. We may yet complain

———— hospitio prohibemur arenæ :

Bella cient, primâque vetant consistere terrâ.

We merely record here our humble protest against a wanton exposure of "those inestimable records which contain the charter of our immortal hopes" to unmerited suspicion: but from the present workings of our mind, it is probable that we shall not be able to satisfy our conscience without speaking very fully and very explicitly on such subjects. Nam et priùs, quàm incipias, consulto, et, ubi consulueris, maturè factò opus est.

posing as the sound is) perished; had all the writings of the Fathers been buried with them in the earth; Christianity, with all its doctrines, and duties, and immortal hopes, would have remained entire: and if we had no better evidence or surer guide than they supply respecting any question whatever, we must either rely solely on our own reason, or blindly follow that blind guide, Tradition, through all the frightful labyrinth, or intellectual and moral wilderness, of Popish error, absurdity, and superstition. They were the fathers of Popery;* and in no other

* We have just as little deference for the *cant* of candour as for any other *cant*; and we have no affection for that unmeaning appellation *Catholicism*; nor have we any inclination to confer a goodly name upon one of the worst hierarchies that ever intralld the souls and bodies of men, and spread around it intellectual and moral desolation in the earth. And notwithstanding the modish sentimentality about the merits of the Monks and the Medici, the profound learning, holy charity, and virgin purity of cloisters; the *imposing* pomp, and solemn grandeur of Catholic worship; which are all no doubt very fine, and romantic, and picturesque, though a little fretted with the grotesque to heighten the *effect*; still (as poor persecuted Galileo said, when he came forth from the dungeon of the Inquisition to the light of day) still our opinion is unchanged. Popery, though somewhat mollified by age, and much shorn of its malefic potency, is still so radically and essentially bad, that we despair of its amendment; and perhaps this intolerable nuisance, like many other evils, will remain for many centuries on the earth as a mystery of Providence, to exercise the faith and patience of the righteous; though it may supply reckless reasoners and empty wits with food to their levity, or with a plea for their impiety. But let not the reader suppose that we are capable of bigoted antipathy to Catholic Claims or Catholic Emancipation, or that we could

sense are they worthy of a paternal appellation : but the Bible, the Bible alone, without any addition, ally, or auxiliary, is the guide of our faith and practice as Protestants and Christians.

We have only to bring the argument founded on "Christian antiquity" to the test of one undeniable fact, to prove its absolute nullity. We disallow *infant communion*, or the admission of mere children to the sacred supper, containing the commemorative symbols of our Divine Lord, our heavenly Saviour, though it was practised and sanctioned by the Fathers—does it follow that we ought in consistency to reject the ordinance altogether? Or would it be fair to argue that by rejecting the errors of the Fathers, the absurd opinions of "Christian antiquity," we give up the doctrines of the Gospel, and the truth of Christianity? The one mode of reasoning would be just as fair and reasonable as the other. The writings of the Fathers prove that the early Chris-

possibly join in the vulgar hue and cry of No Popery. We hold it to be as unjust and as unchristian as it is impolitic, to inflict any civil disability or disadvantage on any man, be he Catholic, Pagan, Turk, Jew, or Infidel, merely for his religion or irreligion—merely for his modes of worship, and of faith, or of opinion. And we receive it as a token for good, we hail it as an auspicious sign of the times, bad as in some respects they are, that even the gross and daring *charlatanerie* in impiety of Christian-Evidence Society Men, receives the only condign punishment it merits at the hands of man, contemptuous impunity: and surely such men can never be counted *worthy of suffering persecution*; nor can any sound reasoner ever deign to accept their *bravading* challenges.

tians (and alas! such Christians many of them were—so devoid of *primitive* simplicity and purity!) had received Baptism and the Lord's Supper as abiding ordinances of the Christian dispensation; but they prove nothing more: they cannot give a valid sanction to any perversions or abuses of divine doctrines and ordinances. These perversions, these abuses, can be traced to their origin, and satisfactorily accounted for; but whether they could be accounted for or not, the abuse of any thing can never be turned into a fair argument against its legitimate use; and it carries absurdity on the very face of it to endeavour to prove that a superstitious perversion of an institution ought to supersede the institution itself in its pristine purity, or that a spurious copy is to be preferred to the genuine original.

Having adverted thus much to the mode of defending Infant Baptism by the authority of "Christian antiquity," we dismiss it with one remark. To our mind it fully proves one thing; that is, the essential weakness and utter defencelessness of the Pædobaptist cause: for if it possessed any latent principles—any inherent energies or capabilities, it must have acquired strength in the hands of so many able advocates.

It seems not irrelevant to our subject, before proceeding directly to the question of *perpetuity*, to devote a few remarks to its opponents, the Anti-baptists. And the first remark which occurs is, that they are, and always have been, few in number. We

can only enumerate Faustus Socinus, and a few who embraced his opinion in Poland, and Thomas Emlyn, and a few others, in England; and though their number seems on the increase, it is still very small; and so far as we know, there is not a single church or congregation anywhere existing avowedly Anti-baptist. We must not omit to mention the Quakers, the most consistent of all the rejectors of baptism. They are not, however, so properly Anti-baptists as *Anti-institutionists*. They reject Baptism as a carnal ordinance, and for the same reason they reject the Lord's Supper.

Anti-baptism may be considered as of recent origin; for so far as we have been able to ascertain, Socinus was the first person of any intellectual distinction who adopted it.* In his disputation concerning the Bap-

* The reports of "Christian antiquity" respecting the few visionary mystics who were accused of rejecting *water baptism* altogether, like the Quakers, are so unsatisfactory, as to be hardly worthy of notice. Perhaps Dr. John Jones may be able to throw some light on this dark subject in the Monthly Repository. The Valentinians are accused of substituting various superstitions of their own for baptism; and the Manicheans are charged by Austin with saying, that Water Baptism does nobody any good: but Cyril of Alexandria reports that they had a substitute for it. A lady at Carthage, of the name of Quintilla, and the female *Ranter* of her day, seems to have obtained some notoriety as an Anti-baptist: for good Tertullian conferred importance upon her, by writing a treatise on Baptism. It is difficult to treat such subjects with becoming gravity; but the example of Robert Robinson warns us to beware. It becomes us to imitate Heraclitus rather than Democritus, at least with such follies as are in any way united to religion.

tism of Water,* he supposes an opponent to say, Do you wish to be another Novatus, and to abolish the baptism of Water? From this we were at first disposed to infer that Novatus had set the example of rejecting baptism; and we should not have been much surprised at this or any thing else in such a priest of Carthage; but by recurring to his history we were soon convinced that this was not the fact, and that the allusion had respect to a false accusation brought against him, because he held (at least in one part of his priestly career), that persons who had apostatized from Christianity to Paganism ought not to receive baptism again, or be admitted into the church: for he maintained with Novatian, another intriguing, factious priest, that baptism ought not to be repeated in the same person; and yet that none could be received directly from idolatry into the church without being baptized; and therefore that such as had gone over from Christianity to Heathenism, were debarred from both for ever after.

Though the Anti-baptists be of small number, and recent origin, they are truly respectable when tried by a mental and moral standard. This acknowledgment is due to them, and it is cheerfully awarded by us. For if it be a proud sentiment in the bosom of ambitious warriors to encounter foes of renown, it must be a nobler, because a purer satisfaction, in fair

* De Baptismo Aquæ Disputatio, Caput xvii. Quid igitur? Dixerit fortasse quispiam, Num tu alter Novatus esse vis, et aquæ baptismum abrogare? Minime gentium, &c.

and honourable controversy, to contend with illustrious opponents. And who can think of such men as Faustus Socinus, and Thomas Emlyn, and Robert Barclay, without respect? All of them distinguished by purity of mind, simplicity of life, and energy of character, and all of them persecuted for their honest love of what they deemed truth, and of freedom of speech in professing their opinions.

There is one remark more in reference to the Anti-baptists. They make in general common cause with us on the Pædobaptist controversy. They hold that the only Christian baptism is that of the immersion of Adults making a profession of faith in Christ. In this indeed they merely agree with many of the most enlightened and candid critics of all *persuasions*, when not writing under the influence of party prejudice and feeling. Socinus rejected Infant Baptism as a manifest error, which had no countenance from Scripture or from reason, and which produced many bad effects, and was associated with great errors. He thought nothing was more clear than that faith and repentance ought to precede baptism, if administered at all. See his life by Toulmin, and Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches.

Equally express to the same purpose is the language of Barclay, the accredited organ and able advocate of that respectable body of people commonly called Quakers. His words are, "As to the baptism of infants, it is a mere human tradition, for which neither precept nor practice is to be found in

all the Scripture." The same is the opinion of our contemporary Anti-baptists. It is indeed a remarkable fact, that the most eminent of them actually were Baptists before they renounced the rite in question, and became advocates for its non-perpetuity. This accounts, perhaps, for the ungracious manner and scornful spirit of some of them towards the Baptists; for the renouncers of a party or of a principle are usually its least generous opponents. We might, if we chose, apply the *argumentum ad hominem* with some effect to our *quondam* Baptist brethren. We might urge, that we have a special claim on the score of relationship, if not to their forbearance and generosity, at least to their justice and candour. We might say to them, It will seem to betray some soreness of feeling—some troublesomeness of conscience—some sense of shame, in reference to your dereliction of Baptism, and your desertion of the Baptists, if you shew an ungracious spirit towards them; and if, instead of taking up a neutral position, you transfer all your favour to their Pædobaptist opponents.

There is but one remark more which I will allow myself to make before proceeding to the ultimate question; and it is in reference to the chief motive avowed for opposing the perpetuity of baptism. That motive, as set forth by Socinus, and Emlyn, and others, is the laudable desire of promoting the peace of the Christian church, by rooting out of it a vexatious controversy. But if the object could be at-

tained, this is such a desperate remedy for the disorder, as amputating a limb for some inconsiderable ailment: In this spirit of peace-making we might reject the perpetuity of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper: we might reject the doctrines of the gospel and Christianity altogether to get rid of stormy controversies; which after all may, like the storms which rage in the atmosphere around our dwellings, do more good than harm.

But the proposed remedy, supposing it could take effect, is not only worse than the disorder, but it possesses no remedial virtue: it has no efficacy as an antidote. Instead of removing or abating, it only aggravates the evil, by adding a new controversy. It is not peace, but more war: it is not a principle of harmony, but another apple of discord. What Anti-baptist of common sense, and common observation and reflection, can reasonably hope to persuade all Christians into his opinion? But unless he can do this, his *anti-controversial* invention or discovery is a useless nostrum; and by his weakness or his quackery, he only increases the disorder of the Church, and leaves it in a more controversial condition than he found it. Where there was but one schism in reference to Baptism, there must be now two schisms: where there were only two contending parties, there must be henceforth three. In addition to the *sects* or *factions* of Baptist and Pædo-baptist, there must be the Anti-baptist sect or faction in the Church of Christ, which should be as

entire as the seamless robe he wore, when he supplicated with such intense earnestness, affectionate tenderness, and holy fervor, *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

Whatever may be thought of the motive just adverted to, there is another which hardly any would care to avow, but which we fear has no small influence, and that is, disinclination to inconvenience and reproach, or to incur disadvantage and odium for *conscience' sake*. There is some inconvenience, and there is not a little odium connected with Believers' Baptism, at least under certain circumstances. And to speak plainly what we think, this is the most stubborn, the most formidable objection to its *perpetuity* that we have to contend with. This is the only argument that we have any dread of, or despair of successfully combating. Many persons may be met with who profess themselves *convinced* on the subject, but who cannot encounter the opposition presented to their imagination, or overcome their own *reluctance*, so as to submit to what they believe to be a divine command. When such persons are pursued every where, and haunted night and day with troublesome convictions, it cannot be surprising if they should be ready to take refuge, and find peace, in the doctrine of Anti-baptism. And this particular case has only to be *generalized* to give the same motive a wider range.

It must also be confessed (and why should we not employ the most unreserved explicitness?), that the conduct of some Baptists has caused offence, and created disaffection. They have laid undue stress upon baptism. They have employed it as a weapon of uncharitableness. Some have made it essential to salvation, and many have made it a prerequisite to Christian fellowship, which is in effect to desecrate a peaceful ordinance of Christ into an unholy instrument of hostility against his own body.* Ignorant,

* It gives us inexpressible satisfaction to find amongst our Baptist brethren such an advocate for Christian liberality on this point (technically termed *free communion*) as the eloquent Robert Hall; for by this designation he is known far and wide in the earth; and by this designation he will be known in the remotest times of successive generations yet to come. His eloquence is not the *ad captandum vulgus* of gaudy show, empty pomp, or fantastic singularity, (the cheap and common substitute for *originality*); for it is as substantially intellectual as it is exquisitely classical. In an age of meretricious rhetoric and mock eloquence; when a sound reasoner dreads as an imputation what was once a distinction; when every unthinking or half-reasoning speaker and writer must figure and flourish as a rhetorician, it is some consolation that there is yet a Hall amongst us. We most sincerely rejoice to find that the sublime mind of an author, who delighted and instructed us in our youth, is not *sicuti effæta parente*. Would that we could add in his own words, "Like a prolific mother exulted in her *numerous offspring*!" For if by any possibility of Divine decree, or of mental error, we must hereafter dwell far apart in the opposite extremes of infinite existence, we wish to have at least as much as possible of the luxurious delight of communing with his pure and sublime intellect here on earth. Our purest delight, indeed, in this imperfect state, has often some alloy; and after rapturously enjoying the glorious victory over the *strict communionists*, we had the mortification of

incapable, and rash men too (as if they could have a *right* or a *call* to injure a good and sacred cause) have clamourously declaimed (might we not say have raved and railed?) when, had they been wise, grave, and discreet persons, well instructed into the kingdom of heaven, they would have soberly reasoned, and mildly persuaded, out of the Scriptures. Sometimes also the unseemly manner of some of our brethren in performing the rite has given a rude shock to inveterate prejudice, and created much disgust or aversion. They have too much affected public exhibition, without any regard to circumstances, or to individual temperament. There are persons of weak

seeing the hero who achieved it delivering up his armour to the vanquished opponent for the sake of certain *fundamentals*; as if in pity or scorn for their weakness he would encourage them to renew the contest against him when he no longer possessed either weapon or shield. The British tar, who with such romantic generosity gave a cutlass to his disarmed foe, prudently retained one for himself. We have not seen Mr. Kinghorn's reply to "Terms of Communion," and perhaps never shall see it; but he must be a weak controvertist indeed if he cannot make a stout resistance to his too bravely generous, though mighty, opponent. We would fain address a few words to Mr. Hall on the subject; and sure we are that they would have nothing of the *odium theologicum* in them: for proceeding from deep-seated deference, they could not be asperously controversial, but gently and submissively expostulatory; and if our arguments should receive refutation from such a distinguished opponent, (*veteran* was in our *mind*, but it awakened a tender, and perhaps selfish, regret,) our defeat would not be inglorious; though we trust none but some higher and holier motive than ambition shall ever move us to controversy, especially with one who consecrates his supereminent endowments to the glory of God, and to the good of

nerves, and much hysterical excitability ; and there are some who possess, so to speak, a kind of *hydrophobic* timidity. Why should such persons, or indeed any persons, be made the subjects of a public spectacle to a staring (perhaps a profane) multitude? What is there in the New Testament to warrant this? Did Philip first collect a multitude around the Ethiopian nobleman before he baptized him? Did the Apostles and Evangelists purposely collect a multitude around any one of the many persons they baptized? Is there a single intimation that they

men. We now feel indeed that we are doing violence to our deference by saying what may offend the modesty and piety of that very mind which is the object of our admiration ; but we have been insensibly led on, without having any intention of writing a eulogium ; and now that it is written, we have not sufficient sternness of purpose to destroy this last work of our hand, and creation of our mind.

We cannot quit this note without saying that a religious denomination, distinguished by its Halls, its Robinsons, and its Fosters, (and here the plural term is literally appropriate,) has no reason to shrink from an intellectual comparison with any other denomination. The Presbyterian and the Independent denominations are highly respectable, and could produce many names fit to rank with or to rank above that of a Gale or a Gill ; but we know not what names they have to rank above those we have indicated. And if we point to native genius and talent, where shall we find a match for a Bunyan, a Booth, or a Fuller ? Indeed the ingenious and highly gifted Robinson belongs to this class rather than to any other. When I look at the supereminent development of native genius and talent in the Baptist Denomination, I cannot but infer that the very *peculiar*ity which is so obnoxious to some persons, has a kind of natural attraction or affinity for great minds.

made Baptism a part of social and public worship? There is a wide difference between timidly shunning and importunately or ostentatiously courting public notice or wonder; and I entertain no doubt whatever that the public exhibition which has been so much affected, both in adult immersion and in infant sprinkling, (which in my native country is performed in the face of the whole congregation,) is a part of that Popish love of spectacle which commenced in the time of those very Fathers who are so much venerated by some as high and sacred authorities.

Perhaps these remarks will be as unwelcome to some Baptists as my remarks in general will be to their opponents. I do not, however, stand up here to please a party, but to advocate truth, and to speak without disguise or reserve my sincere opinions and honest convictions. And I am not sorry that an opportunity has occurred of proving, that I have no slavish fears or fetters upon my mind; for this is at least some guarantee that I speak what I think, and mean what I say. I am wholly incapable of being either the organ or the tool of a party; and that party, or those persons, who do not wish my unconditional, my unfettered co-operation, may easily contrive to do without it.

But it is now more than time to come to the question at issue. And here we shall endeavour, with as much brevity as possible, first to combat the objections made to the Perpetuity of Baptism, and then to

state the evidence on the authority of which we maintain its permanent nature or perpetual obligation.

The objections may be ranged under three heads, or rather they may be resolved into three distinct objections. The first is that of the Quakers: the second is founded on the supposed *proselyting* character of the rite, as if intended merely to initiate Jews and Gentiles into Christianity: and the third is founded on the supposition, that it was intended merely for the introduction of Christianity, and exclusively connected with the apostolic or miraculous age of the church.

The first of these objections, though the most plausible of all the three, will not detain us long; for we do not hope to make converts of Quakers to our opinions by *convincement*; and no other controvertists are likely to take up their position, or adopt their mode of argumentation. Indeed, their reasonings are so very spiritual in their essence, and have so little of tangible substance, that it is hardly possible to lay hold of them, or to embody them in a sensible form. But we have the illuminating guidance, the admirable simplicity and ingenuity of their venerable oracle, Barclay; and their doctrine, as stated by him, is this: that there are two baptisms spoken of in the New Testament; the one carnal, the other spiritual; the one the baptism of water—the other the baptism of the Spirit; the one the baptism of John—the other the baptism

of Christ; the former the figure of the latter, and therefore commanded for a time, but not to continue for ever, being intended to give place to that which it figured.

To omit all other considerations, the whole history of the Apostles and Evangelists presents a most insurmountable objection to this theory. For how was it that Water Baptism did not give place to the Baptism of the Spirit? Why did the Apostles and Evangelists employ the carnal ordinance of water long after they had received the true, the antitypical, the spiritual baptism? Why did they ever baptize at all with water in the name of Christ their Lord and Saviour?

On this point even the ingenuity of Robert Barclay is sadly at fault; and he meets the difficulty with a very lame sort of argument, and in a very faltering manner. "As to the insinuated absurdity (he writes) that the Apostles baptized with water without a *commission*, it is none at all; for *they may have done it by a permission*, as being in use before Christ's death, and because the people, nursed up with outward ceremonies, could not be weaned wholly from them." This has at least the merit of honest frankness and amiable simplicity, which are always infinitely preferable to subtle sophistry or artful mystification. Such a modest apology for argument as "*they may have done it by a permission*," merits gentle treatment, and therefore we will not inflict

upon it any cross-examination, or put it to the torture of logical scrutiny.

But the grand difficulty of the Quaker theory is Christ's commission to his Apostles to *teach all nations, baptizing them*. And how does Robert Barclay solve it? As Alexander undid the Gordian knot. He cuts it asunder at once, by resolutely denying that Water Baptism is meant, and by earnestly interposing his mere affirmation that it was the spiritual ordinance, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles were commanded to administer to all nations. But even the affirmation of a Quaker, though a very respectable substitute for an *affidavit*, is wholly inadmissible in lieu of *proof*. There is one remark of Barclay so singularly curious as to merit quotation. "Though (he says) in reason it be sufficient on our part to deny that it is by water, [the Apostles are commissioned to baptize,] yet I shall premise some reasons why we do so. The first is a reason yielded to by all, that we ought not to go from the *literal signification* of the text, except some urgent necessity force us thereunto." Must we believe, then, that to give the Holy Spirit, or any thing of this nature whatever that may be, (for we do not pretend to know what a Quaker may mean by the Apostles administering spiritual baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,) is the literal meaning of the word baptize? The fact seems to be, that the mind of Robert Barclay

was by this time so completely under the force of theoretic habit—was so possessed with the idea of Water Baptism being a *figurative* matter—that he was entirely off his guard (for nothing is more common than for *habit* or force of custom to produce some extraordinary blunder or glaring absurdity) when he wrote the above sentence; so that he did not perceive it to be directly subversive of his own reasoning, and a clear testimony, a positive proof, against his own theory. The other reasons he adduces have as little reason or scriptural evidence in them: in fact they are wholly irrelevant to the question at issue. But we will now release you from the Quakers. They are *Anti-institutionists*. The founders of the sect had an “urgent necessity forcing them thereunto,” and constraining them to depart from the literal meaning of certain passages of scripture. Their object was to get rid of religious institutions as carnal ceremonies. Their aim was to strip religion of all externals, that piety might depend wholly on the inward illuminations and movements of the Spirit. Nor is it unintelligible or inexplicable that men so highly moved and agitated, as to be denominated *Quakers*, (as others have been more recently denominated *Shakers*,) should fall into this error.

We come now to the Proselyte objection. And here we have to examine not the amusing fancies and ingenious theories of a heated imagination in the form of fanaticism, but the dull and doubtful legends

of Tradition, in the last stage of baldness and deformity. Even the mythology and fabulous history of Heathen antiquity possess some redeeming qualities as objects of our curiosity ; but the legendary lore of the Jewish Rabbins is a mass of mere absurdity, not only devoid of all authenticity and credibility, but without a single ray of genius to enliven its darkness, or to relieve its dulness. It is not a little surprising, after the manner in which our Divine Teacher, Jesus, the Lord and Lawgiver of Christians, has spoken of the traditions of the Elders, and concerning the Scribes and Pharisees, that any Protestant theologians should appeal to their successors of subsequent centuries as authorities in matters of religion. But the authority of the Rabbis, like that of the Fathers, was wanted for a purpose ; and sure enough Rabbi Maimonides is a fit compeer for Father Augustine.

Dr. Wall and his coadjutors, in their eagerness to fortify a weak cause by foreign auxiliaries, did not exercise sufficient sagacity to perceive, that if they could prove any thing by Rabbinical authority, they would prove too much for their purpose ; and that instead of establishing Infant Baptism, they would only supply arguments for setting aside Baptism altogether, except as a mere proselyting rite, to initiate a whole family, tribe, or *race* of human beings into Christianity, and never to be repeated in any of their descendants. Accordingly Emlyn, Wakefield, and other scholastic reasoners of the

same description, were inspired with the hope of an easy triumph; (and without a cheap victory all triumph was hopeless;) for they thought they had only to adopt the notion of Proselyte Baptism as having existed among the Jews, to argue against the perpetuity of Baptism as a Christian ordinance.

But the question resolves itself simply into this: First, is it certain that Proselyte Baptism existed among the Jews at and previously to the time of John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ and his Apostles? Secondly, if it did exist at and previously to that time, will this prove or disprove any thing whatever respecting Christian Baptism?

As to the first question, we have no hesitation in replying to it by a most decided and unqualified negation. Some who have taken part in this controversy are very strenuous in their assertions, and very eager to have the matter admitted or taken for granted; but they have never yet produced any clear or positive proof: and all that the more modest and guarded friends of the opinion insist on is, its high probability. Dr. Rees,* for example, in his Cyclopaedia, under the article Baptism, thus writes: “ Dr. Wall has made it highly probable, to say the least, from many testimonies of the Jewish writers, *who without one dissenting voice*, [this is rather hardy in the Doctor, but he was only saying after

* We have supposed the Doctor to be the writer of the article; but even if he did not write it, it is his by virtue of his Editorial office.

many more confident men ; and even the most cautious are emboldened by numbers,] *allow the fact*, that the practice of Jewish Baptism obtained, *before and at*, as well as after, our Saviour's time." The Doctor then, with all his Pædobaptist bias, with all his diligent inquiry, critical sagacity, and advantage of the labours, and services, and suggestions of others, (and *during* his *Editorialship* he must have been a kind of Consul or Dictator in the Republic of Letters,) was not prepared to venture more than a claim to *high probability* for Jewish Baptism.

Though the opinion in question was got up, or eagerly laid hold of, for a particular purpose, yet many of the ablest Pædobaptist critics and theological antiquaries reject it : as, for example, Dr. Owen, Jennings, the author of Jewish Antiquities, and (not to mention more, for he is a host in himself) that able advocate of Christianity, at whose feet Paley sat ; that patient, diligent, and candid inquirer, Dr. Lardner, who thus writes in his Letters to Doddridge : " As for the Baptism of Proselytes, I take it to be a mere *fiction* of the Rabbins, by whom we have suffered ourselves too often to be imposed upon." If we must bow our understandings to the high authority of great names, here is an authority mightier far than a whole army of mere scholastic men, who endeavour by confidence to make up for lack of qualification to give an opinion. Dr. Benson, too, who was inclined to take the matter for granted, before he had fully inquired into it, says, " I cannot find that

the Jews do at present practise any such thing as that of baptizing the Proselytes that go over to them, though they are said to make them wash themselves. [And without controversy they have always had *divers washings*—if these must be called *baptisms*.*] Where is there any intimation of such a practice among the Jews before the coming of our Lord? If any one could produce any clear testimony of that kind from the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, Josephus, or Philo, that would be of great moment.” Paraphrase on the Epistles of Paul, p. 641.

Honestly and nobly spoken by a Pædobaptist, who was a candid and diligent inquirer! The fact is, that the Old and New Testaments, and even the Apocrypha, are wholly silent respecting the existence of any Jewish Baptism; and Josephus, the Jewish historian and antiquary, and Philo, the Jewish Plato (as he has been styled), are equally silent on the subject; though they mention proselytes and circumcision as applied to them. Nor have we even any Rabbinical authority for the opinion earlier than the Babylonian Talmud, (a very appropriate

* We have been not a little amused, in the small quantum of *research* deemed sufficient for our purpose, to find that many remarks in the casual controversy of cursory conversation, to which we had given some credit for originality and spontaneity, were after all a bundle of chips out of the Common-place Book; which is, no doubt, a rich mine of intellectual treasure—an exhaustless armory of mighty talents—a well-furnished wardrobe for all occasions of pompous show and fine display.

appellation,) or a Collection of Jewish Traditions and Comments on the Law, published at the beginning of the sixth century of the Christian era.

We have spent more time on this Jewish question than it deserves; and we cheerfully dismiss it by referring those who desire fuller and minuter evidence to a Review of the Authorities for the existence of Jewish Proselyte Baptism, appended to the last edition of Dr. Gale's Reflections on Dr. Wall's History of Infant Baptism. We should be glad to see that Appendix published as a pamphlet for the benefit of those who have any curiosity concerning the question; but who have not time or inclination to rummage a musty library. Dr. Gale, like Dr. Gill, and a good many other good Doctors, may be considered as gone by; for the fashion of controversy, like that of the world, passeth away. Indeed we should deem it quite a work of supererogation to write a single sentence on the *subjects* and *mode* of Baptism; and it is a task to which the humblest description of logical ability is fully competent. The English, the Scotch, and the American Baptists, have all, in the most supererogatory manner, settled the question as completely as scripture and reason can settle any question whatever. And we desire no other Counsel in the cause than the Pædobaptist advocates themselves, with all persons who will be at the trouble to think, and who can analyse statements and arguments; provided always that they sincerely wish to know and do their duty,

and are not seeking to find a plausible plea or decent apology for avoiding inconvenience and odium, or for soothing their own *reluctance*.

We had intended to notice the *reasonings* (for such we term them in courtesy) of Emlyn and the Anti-baptists in favour of Jewish Proselyte Baptism. But, on close inspection, we found them too weak to merit review or refutation. Take a specimen from Emlyn's Previous Question: "I think, (says Emlyn,) impartially, that Mr. Wall, [he had not then received his Doctoral distinction,] after others, has made it highly probable at least, from very many testimonies of the Jewish writers, who, by what I can find, [more modest than even Dr. Rees,] without any one dissenting voice, allow the fact. And it is hard to be denied that there is a *broad intimation*, even in the Gospel itself, of such a known practice among the Jews in John the Baptist's time, in that question of the Pharisees: *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, nor a Prophet?* They wondered not at *proselyting* [observe the word employed] by baptism; for they asked not, What meanest thou by this action? as they had probably done had it been a novel and strange ceremony; but only they demand by what authority he thus made *Proselytes*, [*Proselyte* again without ceremony,] i. e. among the Jews, who were already of the *true church and faith*; and, therefore, without some new dispensation, he could have no authority to baptize or *proselyte* [is to bap-

tize identical with to proselyte?] among the Jews. They speak as if they knew such baptism to be of that great importance that none but one authorized to introduce a new state of religion might authorize this practice of it. How come they to esteem it of so much more signification than other ceremonies which they scrupled not to admit upon less authority than that of a great Prophet? I *suppose* it was because they had been accustomed to such a solemn use of it as that of *proselyting* persons to the true religion. I *own* this is not *expressly* nor *demonstratively* to be shown from the text; but I see no sense of it so fair and natural as this?"

We put it to every person of even common apprehension, whether such a crude mass of hypothetical verbiage, erected on the basis of a *broad intimation*, can be worthy of logical dissection. Mr. Emlyn is supposed to have convinced Mr. Gilbert Wakefield and other learned persons. All we will say is, that whoever are convinced by the statements of Mr. Emlyn's Previous Question must have an extraordinary faculty for easy convincement; for it would be difficult to find, in the whole compass of literature, any thing more clumsy and bungling, we say not as argument or reasoning, but as mere theory.

We have now disposed of the question respecting Jewish Proselyte Baptism. And what is the result? Plainly this: that nothing can be inferred from it or established by it respecting any subject whatever: for that which itself requires to be proved cannot be

an admissible witness or valid proof concerning any question at issue: and to attempt to settle a dispute or terminate a controversy by disputable or controvertible evidence, is manifestly as absurd and vain as to endeavour to raise a superstructure or erect a building without a foundation. But granting it to be firmly established or clearly proved, that there was such an ancient Jewish practice;—nay, more, that it was an essential rite of the Mosaic Dispensation or Divinely appointed in the Jewish Religion;—granting all this, (and as we can afford to be liberal of concessions, and as our opponents beg the question with so much importunity, we are willing to bestow it upon them as a small gratuity, merely for the sake of argument,) what benefit will the concession impart? What will it establish? Will it prove that a Jewish Baptism and Christian Baptism are identical? Or, that the one is to be administered for the same purposes and to the same description of persons as the other? You might as well attempt to prove, that Christianity and Judaism, or that Jesus and Moses, are identical. The two persons are not more distinct and dissimilar than their respective Dispensations. The one was essentially national and earthly,—the only consistent and *exclusive* Church Establishment that ever existed in the world,—being *part* and *parcel* (if we may disfigure the language of our reasoning with such a barbarism, though sanctioned by high authority) of the Civil Polity, or rather, Theocracy of the Jews: the

other is essentially intellectual, and moral, and heavenly; and, in reality, embraces none but such as individually receive its sublime truths and comply with its moral requirements. If any sort of Baptism was employed to *proselyte* or *initiate* a family, a tribe, a *race* into Judaism; will it or can it perform the same office as to Christianity? If a whole people, young and old, ignorant and informed, virtuous and vicious, (including in them, too, successive generations,) could be received into the Jewish Church, or rather, Jewish Nation; does it follow, that such either can be or ought to be received into the Christian—we mean the real, the pure Christian Church, or Church of Christ—that Church of which He, and He alone, without vicegerent, partner or rival, is the sole Head, the only Lord? If Baptism could make mere infants Jews, can Baptism make mere infants Christians, in the proper acceptance of the *name* or designation? It may be said, by a common abuse of words, (than which no *entities* are more abused,) that new-born infants are *christened*, and that they receive their *christian* name by a ceremony with water, be it immersion, affusion, or sprinkling: but will this ceremony—can this ceremony—constitute the poor, passive, unconscious babes, real or living members of that intellectual, moral, and spiritual Church, which is spoken of in the New Testament as the *body* of Christ, because he is its intellectual and moral and spiritual *Head*? But we now feel as if we were lavishing argument upon a worthless

theme. If men would think clearly, no reasoning would be necessary on such a question; and unless they will think clearly, all our reasoning must be useless or unavailing.

Much use has been made of the words *Proselyte* and *Initiate* in this controversy; but it may be necessary to examine their import—for no words are so much abused as those which are most frequently employed, or with which *changes are rung* most incessantly in our ears—for, to use the Quaker expression, there is usually “some urgent necessity forcing thereunto.” A Proselyte is one that has come from strangers or foreigners and joined some particular people, so as henceforth to submit to their laws and customs, and to share in their fortunes; that is, if theologically considered, he is a *convert*. To *proselyte*, therefore, is to make a convert of, or to admit as a convert. To *initiate* is to cause to enter, or to introduce. Now, the question as to the Christian Religion is this: What description of human beings can be received or introduced as proselytes into a profession of it, the enjoyment of its privileges, and the discharge of its duties? To this, individual conviction and choice and compliance are necessary. It necessarily follows, therefore, that there cannot be an aggregate proselyte or convert to the religion of Jesus Christ. A family, in its collective character, or tribe, or *race*, cannot be initiated into it. Nor can the introduction of progenitors into the religion

of the gospel, or into the kingdom of Christ, be a patent of Christian Nobility to entail upon their descendants hereditary possession of its titles and privileges.

Some of our Anti-baptist, as well as Pædobaptist Christian brethren, employ very inexplicable statement and phraseology in reference to the present question. Mr. Frend, in his Letters to Bishop Prettyman, thus writes: "Compared with the Jews, all the Heathens were impure; and if any one, sensible of his errors and impurities, became a convert to the Jewish worship, baptism was the ceremony previous to his initiation." [There is here a full assurance of faith in Rabbinical authority, which Dr. Rees, Mr. Emlyn, and others, never attained; or, which at least they never had courage to confess before the world.] "The Heathen, who was introduced into the *congregation* of the Jews, became *holy* like his new brethren, and there was no subsequent baptism to *initiate* his now *holy offspring* into the father's religion. They were all born *holy* in the *holy religion*; and if the first-fruits [*root* we believe it is, if intended as a quotation] were holy, so were the branches. In the same manner the Apostles, on converting any individuals among the Heathen, *purified* them from the *impure mass* by baptism: they were set apart as a peculiar people; and their offspring required no new *purification*, since they were not born, like their fathers, in *impurity*."

So far as we comprehend this statement, (for per-

haps there is some hidden *sense* which we know not how to find out,) we have already disposed of it. And being in some uncertainty about the meaning, we are unwilling to institute any verbal scrutiny or logical analyzation. We shall, therefore, only very humbly submit whether the whole statement be not rather too theoretic and somewhat too darkly adumbrated in ambiguous phraseology for plain, *uncollegian* understandings. The learned Mr. Gilbert Wakefield advocated the same sort of theory, and endeavoured to fortify it by an inexplicable kind of argument about correlative, derivative, and hereditary *holiness*, drawn from two of the passages of Paul's Epistles, which *are hard to be understood*; and which even the *learned* (alas! they are usually the authors of civil discord in the kingdom of God) are apt to *wrest to the destruction* of all that is best in the religion of that peaceful Jesus who prayed so fervently for the union of his disciples. For if there be a passage more obscure than another in that sacred book, which, though our only guide to happiness and heaven, must contain many *things hard to be understood*, it is sure to be made a theme of controversy; or, what is not better, and manifestly more unreasonable, it is brought in as a witness, or rather as a judge, to settle the dispute; though, in the very nature of things, it can serve only to darken what was already obscure enough to cause difference of opinion—to render confusion worse confounded, and to aggravate and perpetuate the contention of

Christian brethren. O! happy state, where they shall see eye to eye; and have no such worthless things as the *words* of earthly language, that imperfect medium of intercommunication, as causes of discord among them!! The very prospect of it gives some refreshing rest from the ungrateful toils of controversy, in which it is so difficult to engage safely to ourselves and profitably to others. But we are forgetting our task.

In our younger and Pædobaptist days we were exceedingly perplexed concerning the intelligible nature and legitimate use of the argument founded on correlative, derivate, and hereditary holiness;*

* This perplexity did not arise from want of such assistance as the learned Gilbert Wakefield could afford; for the Old Testament in the Hebrew, and the New Testament in the Greek, were the subjects of our intense and often (unhappily for our health) intemperate study: and the labours of most of the learned critics were as familiar to us as the pages of popular authors. And if we have long ceased to give our days and nights to them, the sole reason was, that they did us more harm than good. For one doubt or difficulty they solved, they involved us in the most tormenting perplexities. We never had any doubt about the main thing of all, till they inflicted it on our understanding; and therefore we were glad to remove them from our sight as destroying angels to our peace. Different minds require different regimen and remedies. To some, much critical study or *reading* is, no doubt, a salutary regimen; and to others it is a sort of necessary remedy for the defects of nature. A few philosophic critics like Dr. Campbell would be worth having; but as for mere *verbal* men, (who have been, somewhat too wittily perhaps, compared to *mites*,) whether for the Sacred Scriptures, or for the Ancient Classics, they may be very safely dispensed with: a moderate portion of sound sense and sound philology is worth a whole library of them. And

and it was in reality the cause of our disruption from our first congregation, almost immediately after having preached three long sermons in defence of Infant Baptism, which convinced all the *hearers*, but which, by the reaction produced, destroyed all *convincement* in the mind of the preacher.

It is now time to advance to the objection on which some of the ablest Anti-baptists chiefly rely; for they consider the theory of Jewish Baptism as only a kind of out-post, or *sham fortress*, that may offer some resistance before they retreat to the citadel: and some of them have given it up as wholly untenable. In "Particulars of the Life of a Dissenting Minister, written by Himself,"* the author says, unless our memory be much at fault, we would just as soon take Dr. Geddes, or Mr. Wakefield, or even Mr. Bellamy, for our critical guide to the understanding of the Sacred Scriptures as any of the English or German enlighteners of our darkness. There must surely be enough for all the purposes of faith and hope and piety and virtue that has no dependence on new versions and improved renderings and better texts and emendations, &c. Alas! if our faith and edification must rest on or be adjusted by such means. There is an objectionable mode of speaking of Scripture as a *dead letter*: but I know of nothing so much calculated to reduce it to a mere mass of verbiage as the constant intermeddling and altering and trimming of mazy, metaphysical, half-reasoning men: to say nothing of rash and indecent liberties with a book so sacred as the Bible.

* If we quote this unamiable and querulous author, it is because *necessity is laid upon us*. If Anti-baptists of a better spirit had thought proper to *commit* themselves with the *Public* through the *Press*, we would not have conferred the distinction of notice on one who has been at so much pains and expense to obtain splenetic notoriety and the nickname of *The Discontented Minister*.

“The conclusion of Emlyn now appeared just; [a just conclusion from false, alias, *unjust* premises!] but I inferred it from premises that seemed to me *more legitimate*. I do not yet see sufficient grounds for his *data*. Nor am I affected by the *reasonings* of the Rev. Gilbert Wakefield, which involve one of the most monstrous of religious positions. Besides, I am satisfied, that he has totally misinterpreted some passages of the Scriptures, especially 1 Cor. vii. 14. See Monthly Repos. Vol. IV. p. 444.”

The objection to the *Perpetuity* of Baptism, on which this author and other Anti-baptists rely, is, that it was appointed exclusively for the Apostolic age in connexion with miracles, and to terminate when these ceased. His words are: “It is clear that Baptism is included in the commission of the Apostles, and was a part of their office, and a rite to be performed by them alone, [hold there, and we shall have firm footing,] *or*, [fie upon *or*, as one said of *but*,] at *most*, by such as should *witness*, *or* [another *or*!] *hope* to witness, the *signs* which are promised in respect to those that should believe. [Admirably cautious statement, no doubt for *more legitimate premises*!] The command extends only so far as to include those whom the *signs* should follow. This *reasoning* [how the very name of the poor thing is abused!] appears to me so *conclusive*, that *I hesitate* [why should a brave logician be irresolute?] not to *confine* Baptism within the Apostolic age. [It deserved to be confined where miracles

were at hand—it is not fit to be at large in the Gospel Dispensation.] Whatever were the reasons for the institution of a rite of temporary obligation, the fitness of it to the time, and the *specific* nature of the words in which it is commanded, which describe *exclusively such circumstances as could then only take place*, [whether is this inadvertence or courageous assertion?] are to me *irrefragable arguments* for considering Baptism as of temporary obligation and of peculiar design.”

This, then, is the whole case—the entire amount of *irrefragable* argument for the non-perpetuity of Christian Baptism. If the Dissenting Ministers of the Anti-baptist Persuasion be dissatisfied with the special pleading or irrefragable arguments of their Discontented Brother, they should move a new trial. If he has been suffered to mismanage or to betray their cause, it is entirely their own blame. They have had sufficient time to prepare and to appear, and cannot complain if they suffer judgment by default. Their silence virtually renders him their accredited organ—their sole and responsible advocate. We should be glad to have more statement from them, for we feel quite sure that the more they *print*, the better for our purpose. Our duty would be easier, and the discharge of it more satisfactory, if we had a better hold of them. Nor is the Dissenting Minister to be considered an incapable advocate. He prides himself not a little on his *learning*; and he is much superior to Mr. Wakefield, Mr. Emlyn, &c., as a

thinker. He does not make a long statement or argument, and we have no doubt the sole reason was, that he had sagacity enough to perceive many words would not mend the matter. He has perhaps done, essentially, as much justice to the theory as could be done to it by any Anti-baptist.

With all who know how to institute a logical scrutiny, or to analyze argument, we might safely leave the statement of the Dissenting Minister, with the *italics* we have introduced and the few words we have inclosed within brackets; for, like a false witness on cross-examination, it either speaks what is manifestly untrue, as in saying, “the specific nature of the words which describe *exclusively* such circumstances as could then *only* take place;” or it prevaricates, as in first saying Baptism was a part of the office of the Apostles, and a rite to be performed by them *alone*; yet, allowing in the same breath, that it might be performed by others, provided they should witness miracles; then prevaricating from that, by saying, others than either the Apostles or those who witnessed miracles, might perform the rite, provided only they *hoped* to witness them: and then, like a false witness, it concludes the whole testimony with the effrontery of affirming the evidence to be undeniable—the *arguments irrefragable*.

It may be asked, what could tempt the author to give such a *shuffling* statement? But it should rather be asked, what could tempt him to make a statement at all of an unsound theory? for, having once

yielded to that temptation, the other followed of necessity, (as the prevarication of a witness, who has not a true but a fabricated story to tell,) for he soon found it would not do to say, that because the commission was given to the Apostles, they only were to perform the rite of Baptism: for he recollected that others besides the Apostles baptized, even in Apostolic times, and with Apostolic approbation too: so that he was obliged to shift his ground and abandon the very position which he had taken up as the basis of *non-perpetuity*; viz. that "Baptism was a part of the office of the Apostles, and a rite to be performed by them alone:" in short, he was obliged to do that as a theorist, which is, in a witness, prevarication and self-contradiction: for a fictitious theory, and a fictitious or false story, differ from one another only as the intellectual differs from the moral. People, who catch at any twig of apparent argument, may say the *eleven* apostles only were commanded and authorized to baptize, and, therefore, that no others ought to baptize. Thus far the position seems fair and goodly: but those who adopt it must not, cannot consistently, stop here. They must be prepared to maintain that all besides the Apostles who baptized, invaded the Apostolic office, infringed upon the commission given to the Apostles, and set at nought the authority of Christ. Nor is this all—they must be prepared to charge the Apostles with the guilt of aiding and abetting in this invasion of the Apostolic office—this infringement on

the commission given by Christ, and this contempt of his authority; for those persons who, though not Apostles, baptized in the Apostolic Age, did so with the perfect knowledge of the Apostles themselves; and moreover there is not the slightest intimation that the Apostles disapproved, rebuked, or punished, them in any manner for so doing. In short, the Quaker position, that the Apostles and all the rest *may have baptized by a permission*, is less untenable than this.

The theory of the non-perpetuity of Baptism then is not supported by the supposition that it was part of the office of the Apostles, and a rite to be performed by them alone. But the theorist affirms it was to continue only as long as miracles remained: for when Jesus Christ gave the commission to his Apostles, he added, *And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils: they shall speak with tongues, &c.*

If this prediction or promise (for it may be considered as either or both) of miracles warrant any argument at all, it is not against the perpetuity of baptism, but against the perpetuity of faith. It proves not the former, but the latter, to be of temporary nature and obligation. Had the language been differently worded; had it not been expressed, *these signs shall follow them that believe*, but these signs shall follow them that are *baptized*, then perhaps there might have been some show of evidence or appearance of force in the argument; though even

in that case it would have been merely an appearance and not a reality : but as the case stands, there is not even a plausible pretence made out, unless any kind of mere juxta-position be admitted as demonstration.

In short, according to the mode of argumentation which we are now combating, it might be attempted to prove not only the non-perpetuity of Baptism, but the non-perpetuity of the Lord's Supper, and Christian worship, and Christian union : nor these merely, but the non-perpetuity of every thing peculiar to the gospel—of Christian faith, and profession, and obedience, and in fact of Christianity. Miracles were (and of necessity must be, if they were to exist at all, and we are not now reasoning with those who deny their existence) concomitant for a time with Baptism, and with every thing else in Christianity. But does it necessarily follow as a legitimate inference, that they were inseparably conjoined, or absolutely coexistent? Will any Christian man, who pretends to be a reasoner, (and we would not reason with any other description of man on the subject,) argue that the one must terminate with the other? Or that when miracles ceased, Christ's commands and institutions became null and void?

Here we feel that we securely stand, not only on the firm foundation of explicit Scripture, but on the vantage-ground of reason. Give us plain statement in the name of argument, and we rejoice to meet it, because we know how to deal with it. Our sole aversion is to mere *special pleading* of advocates,

whose main talent is quibbling and mystification, and who in fact (for it is oftener the result of incapacity than of tortuous design) can neither think logically, nor express their thoughts clearly and definitely. And it cannot also surely be wrong in itself, or offensive to God, and to wise and good men, to possess an unconquerable antipathy to carping contention about the writings and authority of such blind guides as the Popish Fathers and Jewish Rabbins, and to inexplicable *argufications* (for we want some strange name for such unaccountable entities) about derivative and hereditary holiness, and to petty criticisms founded on obscure and detached texts, like that of Mr. George Dyer (now, we believe, a confirmed and able-minded Deist); as if the apostolic expression, *as many of you as were baptized*, must, by right or by wrong, necessarily imply that some of the members of the apostolic churches were never baptized, and of course that said implication must go as a legitimate premise to assist the *broad intimation* of good Mr. Emlyn, as the foundation of an *irrefragable* theory to overthrow a divine ordinance. When Titan and the Titanides war against the gods, and strive to hurl Jupiter from his throne, there is at least some sublimity in the spectacle; but when a pigmy race of intellectual beings mock the thunder of reason with the rattling of empty words, this subdues our logical antipathies,—it is too much for our gravity.

It is necessary that your patience should be speedily

released ; but one thing more must be noted before leaving this branch of the subject. It is the inconsistent, incompatible, self-contradictory, and mutually destructive nature of the objections and arguments employed against the perpetuity of Christian Baptism. They not only cannot form an efficient alliance ; they not only cannot coalesce and co-operate, but they cannot co-exist as logical entities : the one destroys the other. The argument drawn from miracles is incompatible with that founded on Jewish practice, or Rabbinical authority. According to the one, Baptism was to initiate Jews and Gentiles into the Christian religion : according to the other, that was not its office at all—no part of its use or design ; for it was to usher in the Christian religion to the world. According to the one, Baptism is a proselyting rite, to be applied to Jews and Heathens, whenever Jews and Heathens are converted, or shall be converted to Christianity, even to the end of time : according to the other, Baptism was a sign or seal of conversion by miracles, and to terminate when they ceased. Now these two theories are not only as different in their logical, as an acid and an alkali are in their physical nature, but they have similar relations or affinities ; and if they be united, the one must neutralize or destroy the properties of the other. And those who do unite and hold them together in their compound theory, stand convicted either of logical fatuity, or of intentional quackery. They are welcome to their choice in this dilemma ;

but no cant of candour and charity shall make me falsify at once the plain dictates of my reason and my conscience.

What then do the *Anti-baptist* reasonings (for such we call them in courtesy) prove, but their own invalidity, or rather logical nullity? Do they not force us upon this one conclusion, that Christian Baptism was *disliked*, and that being disliked, (no matter for what reason,) it was to be got rid of, if possible, under some plausible pretext or decent apology? And such men as think they are at liberty to take counsel of human policy in such a case, and that they may *conscientiously* abandon Adult immersion, and (lest religion should be stript too bare of *externals*) betake themselves to *Infant sprinkling*, or *Infant dedication*, as a harmless and useful superstition, for which they allege no scriptural sanction or divine warrant, will never be at a loss for pretexts and apologies. No wonder, then, that Christian Baptism has been silently renounced, or clandestinely abandoned; for hardly any of the *Anti-baptists* have come manfully forward to publish their recantation, or to shew cause and justification for the dereliction. And our chief difficulty in putting them on their trial was to find *documents—written evidence*—to produce against them. For though they have been secretly and busily engaged in forming an *Anti-baptist* faction, they have been very cautious of committing themselves by publishing any thing in the shape of a manifesto.

Mr. Thomas Emlyn has thrown together a few crude doubts and conjectures: Mr. Gilbert Wakefield, Mr. William Frend, and Mr. George Dyer, have given curious specimens of the intellectual emanations which may proceed from learned men who have enjoyed all the advantages of Cambridge. The author of *Particulars of the Life of a Dissenting Minister*, also we believe a very learned man, for he boasts of his learning, has given a statement which has at least the merit of being plain and intelligible. And there is a Dr. Walker, of Dublin, who we believe has written something on the subject; but though we have not been able to procure a sight of that something, whatever it is, we feel a kind of moral certainty (for we know the Doctor's caliber well enough), that it contains nothing worthy of notice.

But we have a right to challenge our Anti-baptist opponents to come forth in full array of scripture and reason. Let them not lurk in ambush to fall upon the weak and the unwary, who have not leisure to study, or aptitude to defend, a controversial question. Let them not skirmish in secret with mere logical tyros, who are apt to mistake banter for argument, an overbearing manner for overpowering reasoning, and a triumphant air for an actual ovation. Let them not carry on a petty war of interminable controversy with doubtful positions and useless quibblings, instead of fair and manly reasoning: but let them come to some *open and decisive*

engagement with us ; and if they can achieve the victory, they shall have all the honours of a triumph ; for we will not only peacefully surrender, but we will unite with them in alliance as auxiliary forces, with all the intellectual weapons and moral power we may possess, to aid in extending their conquests. We have no wedded affection for immersion, abstractedly considered, for it is attended with some inconvenience, and frequently with not a little odium : and if it be not an ordinance of Christ of perpetual obligation, but a worn-out, foolish superstition, whoever can satisfy our reason and ease our conscience on the subject, will confer an obligation which shall be gratefully received. But if, as we sincerely believe, it is not a foolish superstition, but a divine ordinance, it is our duty to vindicate, with all the ability God hath given us, its divine dignity in the Church, and to clothe the scorner of it with shame, and *to stop the mouth of the gainsayer*. If we cannot induce our opponents to the open plain of fair and honourable controversy, or to acknowledge a defeat ; if we cannot subdue their reason by our arguments, or conquer their *antipathy* by our persuasions, we shall at least have the satisfaction of abating their pretensions. And such a satisfaction is not, we trust, in a sacred cause inconsistent with true piety or Christian humility. We love not controversy, nor would we glory in polemical might or prowess ; but it is our duty to be *valiant for the truth*. It is impossible to be weak and irresolute in

a strong cause, and when trebly armed with scripture, reason, and a *good conscience*.

One remark more, and that is, the manifest inconsistency of rejecting or abandoning one institution of Christ, and receiving or retaining another. If to parry the charge of inconsistency it be said, there is more evidence for the one institution than for the other, I deny the allegation; and a mere denial is as valid and good as a mere assertion. But I will do more; I will undertake, if the opponents require it, to make out as strong a case for the non-perpetuity of the ordinance of the Supper as ever they have yet made out for the non-perpetuity of Baptism. Unbelievers consistently reject Christian institutions, for they reject Christianity. Quakers consistently reject Baptism, for they also reject the sacred Supper. Even the Freethinking Christians, (as they designate themselves, for the purpose, no doubt, of a *broad intimation*,) who have, if we may believe them, the only true church of God upon earth in the outward form of a debating society, have consistency, inasmuch as they reject Baptism, together with the sacred Supper and Public Worship, and all the outward symbols and signs of religion. But with what consistency can any persons reject Baptism who observe the Lord's Supper? With what decency can they set at nought (not to say *scorn* and *ridicule*) the former as *unnecessary*, *unreasonable*, and *useless*, whilst they profess to reverence the latter? They ought either to hold

both or abandon both: the two stand or fall together. Both rest on the same foundation: they have both equally the sanction of the same authority.

We have now neither time nor physical strength left for going much at large into what remains of the subject. But if we have been successful thus far, we have, in reality, nothing more to do. Our task is fully performed; our case is completely made out. The *onus probandi* — the burden of proof, lies on our opponents. It is for them to make their defence. It is for them to shew cause and make justification (if they can) for deserting Apostolic practice, and for rejecting an institution of Christ. We cannot be justly arraigned, or fairly put to proof, for remaining true to our duty and faithful in our allegiance to the authority of our Divine Lord, the Christian Lawgiver. To that authority we submit as immutably imperative upon our conscience. We hold it to be our sacred duty to reverence and obey all the edicts of that authority: and where there is no limitation or restriction as to *time, place, or practicability*,* we hold that

* I was applied to, about two years ago, to baptize a young relative of an eminently intellectual friend, now, alas! no more, for she sank rapidly under one of those awful maladies to which the human frame is liable in this state of imperfection. I declined compliance with the application on the ground of *impracticability* on my part, from the state of my health and peculiar nature of my complaint at the time: though it would have afforded me much pleasure to officiate had the state of my health permitted: for seldom has the rite of Baptism

they are, and must be by their very nature, of permanent obligation. The New Testament is the sole authentic record of the authority of Christ, and, consequently, of Christian faith and practice; for it is not only the sacred depository of Christian truth and the charter of Christian privilege, but the sole rule—the exclusive directory of Christian duty. This authentic directory of Christian duty contains both explicit precept and abundant example for Baptism as an institution of Christ: for, it is incontrovertibly evident, that it was commanded by Him, sanctioned by his accredited ministers or ambassadors to the world, and practised in all the primitive churches. In proof of this we might quote not a few, but many passages; and these not obscure or doubtful; but clear and certain. This, however, is the less necessary, as you have the record in your possession and can inspect it at your leisure.

The command of Jesus is, *Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them*: and what is thus express in the imperative is equally express in the declara-

been more graced with youth, beauty, amiableness, and accomplishment, united to intelligence, purity of mind, and unsullied character, or to comprehend all that I could have desired in a fit subject of Christian Baptism—Christian piety and virtue. May she be *steadfast* and *immovable*, and *endure to the end*. If any one can reasonably and conscientiously plead impracticability as a *subject* of Baptism, on account of health, we should hold the plea valid, as establishing *exemption* from obligation, so long as the plea remained good: so also in *non-attendance* in public worship—non-observance of the Sacred Supper, &c.

tive form; for the words of our Lord are, *He that believeth and is baptized*. Teaching and baptizing are conjunct in the authoritative command; and believing and being baptized are conjunct in the authoritative declaration of the Christian Lawgiver. If, then, every person should submit to be taught Christian truth (for this is correlative with the obligation to teach it; and that too, not only on the Apostles, but on every Christian, so far as he himself knows it); every one who does so submit, ought to submit also to be baptized. If it is the duty of every reasonable being, to whom the Gospel is addressed, to believe Christ's doctrine; it is equally the duty of every believer to be baptized in obedience to Christ's authority. For the same reason, that the one (the duty of believing) is of perpetual obligation; the other (the duty of being baptized) is also of perpetual obligation. They are inseparably concomitant—they are absolutely co-existent. They are indissolubly conjoined by the immutable authority of the Christian Dispensation.*

* I have just received a well-written letter, containing doubts and inquiries, from a young friend who heard the Lecture delivered. It gives me sincere pleasure to find him taking a conscientious interest in religious subjects now that he is left without an earthly parent: and I cannot persuade myself that the influence, which is now in operation upon his mind, will be as the *early dew*; when, as I believe, he knows that his excellent mother, after being long tossed about in the restless element of skepticism, was glad to find refuge and rest, where only refuge and rest can be found. The only particular in my young friend's letter, which I have left untouched in

When a law is made absolute, i. e. when it is given without an express limitation or restriction as to *time* or *circumstance*, it is, by its very nature, of perpetual obligation, if not repealed by the same authority which enacted it. Unless, therefore, it can be proved, that Baptism is impracticable, or that it has been repealed by Divine authority, or that it was expressly temporary, it must be by the very nature of

writing this Lecture out for the press, is the declaration of Paul : *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.* If he reconsider the matter he will be convinced, I think, that the above declaration is subversive of his own argument : for it proves that others besides the *eleven* apostles might baptize : for Paul, though not sent (or specially commanded by Jesus) to baptize, did baptize several persons. As to others, besides the *eleven*, being *permitted*, (the Quaker mode of doing away with water baptism altogether,) I am persuaded my young friend will abandon it as wholly untenable. I refer him, and others who have the same doubt, to what I have said on the topic in another place. If we reject any part of Christianity on such slight grounds, we shall be carried much farther (if we be consistent) than we are at first aware. The expression of Paul means nothing more, in fairness of interpretation or construction, than that the main object of his mission was to preach the gospel. And a Baptist Missionary to the Hindoos might, with perfect propriety, employ the same language. The Apostle might have said, that he was sent not to work miracles, but to preach the Gospel ; not to organize churches, exhort the brethren, &c. &c., but to preach the Gospel. The negative is, in such a case, not an absolute negation, but a kind of idiomatic *comparative*, which may be found in many places of the Old and New Testament : as *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*, &c. &c. I had intended to allot a part in the Lecture for passages that had been, or might probably be, raised up as *objections* : but it afterwards occurred, that any thing of the kind I had seen was, when closely inspected, too frivolous to merit such distinction.

the case of permanent obligation. But Baptism is not impracticable; it has not been repealed by Divine authority; and it is not expressly temporary, i. e. it is enjoined *absolutely*: therefore, Baptism is of perpetual obligation—it is a permanent institution of the Christian Dispensation.

The only plausible ground for doubt, concerning this question, is the presumption of temporary intention on the part of Him by whom the command is given—the institution is appointed. But what reason is there for this presumption? How can we know the intention of the Lawgiver but from the law itself? What right have any, who profess to reverence and obey the authority of Christ, to presume that he had a temporary intention in the appointment of Baptism? Would they not have just as much right to presume temporary design in every other appointment or command? Might they not find some plausible warrant for this latitude of presumption in mere theory founded on Rabbinical authority, or on the circumstance of miracles? Has Jesus Christ given any intimation of temporary intention in the enactment, or of its being of temporary obligation? Or, have any of his Apostles, the accredited organs and interpreters of his intentions, given the least intimation of temporary design or temporary obligation?

But enough,—instead of prolonging the argument I ought to apologize for trespassing upon your patience; but I was willing to pursue the exhaustive

mode to the utmost with the subject ; that a question, which is yet new, might be settled once for all, before it shall have become inveterate by duration ; and before the unsound opinion shall have become the badge of faction in the kingdom of Christ, (for there is no Anti-baptist Denomination yet,) or the war-whoop of a powerful party.

Grant me your indulgence one moment longer, whilst I conclude with a description of argument so plain and popular that it must come with some force to the understanding of every common-sense, unscholastic inquirer. What would be your own conclusion, respecting the rite in question, if you had nothing to judge by, or to reason from, but the New Testament? What was your opinion, so long as you formed an opinion for yourselves, solely from this sacred record of Christian faith and practice? Did you ever doubt—did you ever suppose or suspect that the Perpetuity of Baptism could be brought into doubt by a believer in Divine Revelation before you found it was actually doubted or denied by persons around you? But with whom did the doubt and denial originate? Not with plain, common-sense Christians; but with a few Quaker fanatics (the *Shakers* of that day) on the one extreme; and with a few scholastic theologians on the other; who whiled away their learned leisure in musty libraries with dreamy theories founded on Rabbinical authority: and who were not remarkable for strong sense, sound reasoning, or clear and comprehensive views.

Any principle whatever may be doubted and denied; for nothing is easier than doubt and negation. But it is your privilege and your duty to judge for yourselves directly by the Scriptures, concerning both moral and positive precept. Our parting request is, exercise your own understanding in humble dependence on the *Father of lights*. Call no man master on earth in matters of religion. Suffer no man to tyrannise over your reason or your conscience; and, least of all, suffer any man to banter or ridicule you out of your convictions, or into the neglect or dereliction of your duties: for, in the solemn day of final retribution, it will be no valid or availing plea, at the tribunal of Christ, that some of your fellow-men had sufficient influence over your mind to make you disregard His instructions and commands.



THE PRACTICAL USES

OF

Christian Baptism.

BY DAVID EATON.

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LECTURE IV.

Gal. iii. 27 :

FOR AS MANY OF YOU AS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO
CHRIST, HAVE PUT ON CHRIST.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHERN,

THREE Lectures have been delivered in this place on The History of Baptism, on The proper Subjects and the Scriptural Mode of administering that Rite, and on its Perpetuity ; in which it is presumed, that sufficient argument and evidence have been adduced from Scripture, from history and reason, to demonstrate that *baptism by immersion* was the primitive mode, and that the proper and only objects of it were those who were capable of instruction, of judging, and of choosing for themselves,—persons who had real repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord was himself baptized, and he commanded that all those who believed in his name should be baptized. His Apostles, who were appointed to teach men the way of salvation, were Baptist ministers ; the first churches of Christ which they planted were Baptist churches : and had all who professed the Christian name faithfully adhered to the truth and simplicity of Apostolic times, the same order, faith, and practice which they established, would have continued without interruption to the present hour.

It will be allowed, that nothing can alter a divine

law but the same authority by which it was enacted ; and as no alteration of this kind is even pretended to have taken place, it follows, that the law of Christian Baptism is of perpetual obligation. These several particulars, however, having been discussed at large, and with such ability and research as have, we trust, produced conviction in your minds, it is now my duty, by way of closing these Lectures, to point out some of its practical uses. Were we to look at Baptism in the abstract, as a mere external rite, then we freely confess it might be difficult to point out its practical uses beyond that of conscientiously obeying a divine command. Bathing the body in water, either for health or pleasure, may be useful or otherwise, and be perfectly indifferent in itself. But simple as the mere act may be, it is no longer a matter of indifference, but of serious duty, when enforced by a divine command. With the view, then, of abating prejudice and of removing mistakes, we shall allow that Baptism of itself may be unimportant, and even that all outward ceremonies, or mere bodily services of any kind, are in the same abstract sense of no positive value. Whether they consist in being immersed in water, in the eating or abstaining from certain kinds of food, in observing any particular days or customs, in assembling together to eat bread or drink wine, to pray, to sing hymns, to read the scriptures, or to hear sermons, the mere outward observance of these things will not, and cannot, impart holiness and insure salvation. No, "the kingdom of heaven consisteth not in meats and in drinks,"

in names or in ceremonies, “but in righteousness and peace, in a holy spirit.” But although this concession is made, what Christian will say, that all the outward means of grace, or of religious improvement above enumerated, because they have no inherent value, no certain influence, may all be safely discarded? But if this would shock his mind, and he would retain some of them for the sake of their evident utility, then we ask, Do those which he would retain stand on any better or firmer ground than those of positive command? This surely will not be pretended. The whole ritual law of Moses was a positive appointment, consisting in outward ceremonies. But what Jew on that account could neglect them without incurring the high displeasure of Almighty God? Surely, then, for the sake of consistency, we ought no longer to hear, by way of objection, of useless bodily service, mere outward ceremony, and the like, when speaking of Christian Baptism. It is surely any thing but argument to contend, that because the means of acquiring religious knowledge and virtue, or indeed any kind of knowledge, do not exert a sort of magic influence over the mind, they are therefore to be neglected.

Allow me to remind you, that religious knowledge and habits are acquired just in the same way as any other knowledge or habits—by the diligent use of means. Religion is social in its nature, and of benevolent tendency in all its appointments. And if we assemble ourselves together in conformity

with its dictates and spirit, whether to pray unto God, to sing his praises, and to speak of his goodness, to read the Scriptures, to hear sermons, or to observe acts of religious duty ; if these are regularly and seriously used, though only as means to an end, are they not subservient to virtue? Do they not tend to form our characters and habits? Do they not exhibit our sense of dependence and of moral obligation? Do they not openly express our belief of those religious principles which we cherish in our hearts, and which so seriously influence our minds and conduct? It is upon this broad ground, and in this enlarged sense, that we now bespeak your candor, and solicit your attention. Having thus explained ourselves, and in some measure cleared the ground, we may now proceed to consider Baptism in connexion with the economy of the gospel, of which it forms a part.

To some persons, indeed, our labour here would appear altogether unnecessary. They would ask, Did Christ come forth from God ; was he the divinely appointed Saviour of the world ; and did he command all who received his gospel to be baptized in his name? Having ascertained these facts they would conclude, As God does nothing in vain, Baptism must answer some good purpose ; it must have a moral tendency. There must be far greater safety and satisfaction in obeying this divine command, than in relying on any doubtful criticisms respecting either the mode of its observance, or the perpetuity of its obligation.

We shall, however, endeavour to explain and illustrate the subject by inquiring *first*, into the nature and constitution of a Christian church.—The gospel is a religion from heaven, complete in all its parts, and cannot be improved by any human sagacity. Its design was to enlighten, to bless, and to save mankind, by calling them out from the world and forming them into a spiritual church or temple, holy unto the Lord. In the words of the great Mr. LOCKE, “A Christian church is a voluntary society of men joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the worshipping of Almighty God in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls. It is a free and voluntary society. Nobody is born a member of any church; otherwise the religion of parents would descend unto children by the same right of inheritance as their temporal estates, and every one would hold his faith by the same tenure he does his lands—than which nothing can be more absurd.”

A Christian church, according to the New Testament, was a religious assembly selected and called out of the world, by the doctrines and preaching of the Gospel, to the true worship of God in Christ Jesus. All the members of it were to be equal, and all of them who were qualified might teach and exhort each other to their mutual edification. But order and discipline were to be impartially observed; and the members, however ignorant on their ini-

tiation, were to be instructed and trained up in the principles of truth, piety, and virtue. A church so constructed could have no connexion with the dark, corrupt, and wicked world from which it had been separated. It was to be the depository of divine truth, and was to shine as a light in a dark place. It was to enlighten by its rays all within the sphere of its influence, and to send forth sounds only of glad tidings, of peace and salvation, to all people. This church is represented as the body of Christ, as being in spiritual union with him, and with one another as its members. They were to put away from amongst them all malice, guile, and evil-speaking; they were to crucify the flesh with its evil affections and desires; they were to be holy, harmless, and undefiled; to love as brethren, to bear each others' burthens, and to be helpers of each others' joy; they were to keep themselves in the love of God, to exhort each other, and to build each other up in their most holy faith, having their affections fixed on things above, and their conversation in heaven, from whence they looked for the Saviour, for the promised mercy of God in Christ Jesus, unto eternal life. This, to the first Christians, was the glorious object of all their hopes, and enabled them to exhibit those noble examples of patience and long-suffering, of self-denial and resignation, of piety and devotion, those deeds of mercy and labours of love, which have embalmed their memories and immortalized their names. Amidst all the dangers and vicissitudes of their Christian

course, they had an eye steadily fixed on the great recompence of reward. Such were their love to Christ and devotion to his cause, that they cared for no labours or sufferings; they counted not their lives dear to them if they could but win Christ, and be found of him in peace, and be counted worthy to share in his resurrection.

Such was primitive Christianity, and such were its pure spirit and benevolent effects. Its light and its benefits were to be extended far and wide. As Christ tasted death for every man, the Gospel was to be preached to every creature. All were invited to partake of its blessings; and the only qualifications necessary for sharing in its hopes and its joys, were repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whatever clime or colour, character or condition, they had been, all who sincerely repented and embraced the Gospel, all who turned to the service and worship of the one only God, with full purpose of heart henceforth to walk in newness of life, were assured of the Divine favour; "their sins were forgiven them;" "they were justified by their faith;" they were entitled to all the privileges of the Gospel, and had "access to all that fulness of grace wherein they stood."

But liberal and gracious as the preaching of the Gospel was, wide as stood the gates of mercy and of the Christian Church, they were closed against the wicked, they were inaccessible to the worldly-minded and insincere; and if any such found an entrance

there, and continued to be perverse and impenitent, they were excluded: nor could they, or any member who might act an immoral or unworthy part, be again admitted, until, by repentance and reformation, the sin committed, or the cause of scandal, was removed and done away. Those laws which were given by the Head of the Church to preserve its purity and moral order, provided alike for the admission and exclusion of its members. Hence the door of admission was open to those converts only, who believed and were baptized; to those who were not ashamed of Christ. It was not sufficient for men to receive the Gospel, and from fear, or some unworthy motive, to conceal their faith. Such persons had no share in its promises and consolations. Had this cautious policy been allowed, it would have greatly interfered with the spread of the Gospel, and have deprived us of what, at this day, is one of the strongest evidences of its truth—namely, the bold and fearless zeal of the Apostles and first Christians in the cause of Christ. Converts were to enter the Church by Baptism openly and in the face of the world, and to witness a good confession before men. Cheerful submission to this ordinance was at once the test of their sincerity and obedience. For, be it remembered, that to be baptized and openly to profess the Christian name was attended, in those days, with no inconsiderable risk and danger. The disciples being thus separated from the world and united together in the bonds of faith and love, ob-

-serving the ordinances of the Gospel, worshipping God, and walking uprightly before him, became the visible church of Christ, holding forth the word of life.

The laws and discipline of the Church were wisely intended to preserve the purity of its character, doctrines, and institutions, and proved effectual for the purpose so long as they were strictly adhered to. The wisdom of their appointment is abundantly evident from the great confusion, corruption, and error, which resulted from their neglect, even to the utter disgrace of the Christian name. Indeed, the constitution and discipline of national churches, by their use and abuse of worldly power, form a lamentable contrast with those founded by the Apostles. Nor are some Dissenting churches entirely free from blame in paying so little regard to church-order and discipline.* They seem to have exchanged the word church for that of congregation, in which any person taking a seat becomes a member of it, whatever may be his opinions or conduct; in which the congregation attend the discourses of the minister with little more of religious intercourse with him, or with one an-

* By church-order and discipline we do not mean that officious and vexatious intermeddling with trifles in private life, respecting dress, taste, amusements, &c., which has justly fallen into disrepute; far less do we mean to recommend defamation on account of a difference of opinion, or coercion in violation of the rights of conscience. Our views are directed solely to the purity of religious principles and worship—and to the moral rectitude of the members of a Christian church.

other, with a few exceptions, than if they attended lectures on chemistry, or any other branch of science. This, however, applies more immediately to London and to large cities. No doubt due allowance must be made for difference of times and change of circumstances. This mode of conducting religious societies may, perhaps, have its advantages. But we own, it appears to us cold and heartless, and but a meagre substitute for the cordial religious fellowship, “the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” the warmth of affection, which pervaded and so greatly distinguished the primitive churches.

II. We shall now review those impressive passages of Scripture which are connected with *the Practical Uses of Baptism*.—The sacred writers so frequently and solemnly introduce this Rite in connexion with the duties and hopes of Christians, that they appear to have regarded it as calculated to exert a highly moral and religious influence on the mind and character. They connect it with repentance and remission of sins—with faith in the Messiah and an open profession of his religion—with the death and resurrection of Christ—and with salvation. It will not be denied that much of the moral merit of actions depends on the motives by which men are influenced: and however unimportant some actions may appear, yet if they are performed from a sense of duty, of reverence, and of obedience, to God, though only to the extent of giving a cup of cold water, such services will not lose their reward.

1st. Baptism is connected with repentance and the remission of sins. John the Baptist commenced his ministry by preaching “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”* Our Lord began his ministry, by calling on the Jews to “Repent; for the kingdom of heaven” was “at hand.”† And we are informed, that “Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John.”‡ Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, “said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins.”§ Ananias exhorted Paul, on his conversion, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.”|| Whether a man had been a persecutor like Paul, or an idolater, a Jew, or a Heathen, on his repenting and becoming a Christian, all that he had been before was, by baptism, washed away; he became a new creature; he now had new principles, new hopes, new motives, new duties, and a new character.

2dly. It is connected with faith in Christ and an open profession of the Gospel. “For ye are all the children of God by faith; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” As if the Apostle had said, You are his; you have espoused his cause and professed his name; you have thus declared your belief in his Divine Mission and doctrines, and are therefore bound to obey his com-

* Mark i. 4.

† Matt. iv. 17.

‡ John iv. 1.

§ Acts ii. 38.

|| Acts xxii. 16.

mands. The Apostle reasons on the same principle with the Galatians, who were for adding to the Gospel the ceremonial law: "I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." In like manner we observe, every one that is baptized lays himself, by that act, under an obligation to obey all the laws of Christ.

3dly. Baptism is connected with the death and resurrection of Christ. "Know ye not, that so many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."* Again; "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."† This language is no doubt figurative, and is to be considered as emblematical of our death unto sin, and of our resurrection unto a life of righteousness; it is language, however, which is very impressive, and very significant to a Baptist; but which we conceive no Pædobaptist or Anti-baptist can use with strict propriety. It cannot belong to their views; and when the language of Scripture does not expressly and fairly support any doctrine or practice, it is surely a

* Rom. vi. 3—5.

† Col. ii. 12. See also 1 Cor. xv. 29.

strong presumption against its truth and usefulness.

4thly. Baptism is connected with salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."* "The like figure whereunto baptism doth now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."† By referring to these passages, we do not wish to be understood, that because we say, Baptism is connected with salvation, we think a mere ceremonial observance of the rite will ensure future happiness, or that those who, from early instruction and the circumstances of life, have been led to overlook its importance, or, after having conscientiously investigated the Scriptures, have not been able to satisfy their minds that they are bound to submit to immersion—cannot be saved. We think our Lord and his Apostle intended only to teach, that by sincere repentance and submission to this solemn rite, believers were assured of the remission of their past sins, were thus reconciled to God, and put into a state of privilege and safety. Jesus Christ and his Apostles uniformly taught, that it is only by persevering in a course of well-doing believers can assure themselves of final acceptance with God.

We shall mention another moral purpose of this rite. It is represented as the bond of love and union to Christians, who have but "one Lord, one faith,

* Mark xvi. 16.

† 1 Peter iii. 21.

one baptism."* "For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body."† All other distinctions are to be laid aside; there is henceforth to be among you "Neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus:"‡ one body, one family, one kingdom, of which Christ is both Lord and head. Water is a symbol of moral purity. It is at once simple and significant, wholly unconnected with superstition or parade; fitly representing our dying unto sin and our rising to newness of life. Some Christians would strip the Gospel of all external ordinances, and others, religious worship of every outward form, and would consign it to the silent meditation of the mind. Do such persons understand human nature? Or do they forget that the Gospel was intended for the poor—more for the million than for the philosopher? How would they improve the condition and provide for the wants and weaknesses of man without using the means which religion authorizes or prescribes? How would they instruct the ignorant, rouse and fix their attention? How would they feed the hopes and strengthen the faith of the Christian, and excite him to a patient continuance in well-doing, without periodical instruction? Why, truly, by stripping religion of those very means which Divine Wisdom had provided to engage the attention and to meet the frailty of our condition. Christians were to teach, and to exhort each other, and to build each other up; to

* Ephes. iv. 5.

† 1 Cor. xii. 13.

‡ Gal. iii. 28.

aid and assist the young, the weak, and the wavering. The Gospel, however, is too spiritual in its nature to employ many ceremonies, and none which are not significant and useful. It has only two positive rites—Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and these are standing evidences of its truth and divine origin, as we can trace the observance of them by Christians through a long series of ages to its very beginning. By the first, we make an open profession of faith in Christ. By the second, we renew, from time to time, our sense of gratitude to God, our love to Christ and to his cause, and thereby “shew forth his death until he shall come,” a second time, “without sin unto salvation.” The opposition of certain persons to the use of means, it is to be feared, arises from some obliquity of mind, or from some dislike or prejudice which they have fostered, rather than from their want of evident utility. But Believers' Baptism is far from being, we conceive, a mere ceremony. Does it not enter into the association of our moral and religious feelings as connected with the order of the Church and the public profession of Christ? Does not its utility here evidently recommend it? Is it not at once a sign of faith in his Divine mission and of our voluntary obedience to his laws? By publicly confessing him before men, do we not manifest our love and obedience to him, and evince our attachment to his cause? Indeed, it seems hard to conceive, after attentively considering the Scriptures above quoted,

and the principles, the hopes and prospects which they hold out, how Baptism can produce any other than a moral influence on the character of him who thus, by a solemn and public act, devotes himself to the service of Almighty God in the Gospel of his Son.

III. Baptism is favourable to free inquiry, and to the personality of Religion.

As all men must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, so all men should inquire and judge for themselves. No man can be a Christian by proxy, any more than he can be wise and good by proxy, or than he can be saved by proxy. He ought not, then, to take his religion upon trust, or profess the Christian religion, or any form of it, as a matter of course, and be this or that, merely because his parents or instructors were so before him. To do so is disgraceful to his rational nature as a man, and unsafe for him as a Christian. If he would prefer any just claim to personal religion and virtue, he must inquire; and, with the Christian name, practise the Christian virtues. To do this, he must store his mind with the lessons of divine truth and goodness. He must receive the Gospel in the love of it. He must "hear the word of God and keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." If he be "wise, he must be wise for himself," and "be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him." But amidst the customs and pleasures, and multifarious pursuits of life, if great care have not been taken to "train up the child in the way he should go," how very difficult is

it to induce persons to examine closely, and to think seriously on religious subjects; and how many professing Christians are there, who have never inquired into the grounds and reasons of their faith, and who know not what are its peculiar principles, duties, and obligations! All these things, however, come of necessity under the serious consideration of a consistent Baptist. He cannot otherwise be admitted as a member of the Church.* His merely taking a seat or a pew will not be deemed sufficient. He must inquire and be satisfied before he acts, and thus be able to render a reason for his conduct. And what could stimulate the mind of man more, or be better calculated to induce him to serious examination into the evidences and obligations of religion, as well as to impress upon him a deep sense of its importance, than a solemnity which brings all his inquiries and resolutions to a point; which makes them terminate in a distinct and solemn act; which

* Whilst fairly discussing a subject, or examining a principle, no one will be so uncandid as to imagine that we would deny the name of Christian to, or exclude from our Christian communion, those who might conscientiously dissent from our view of the primitive constitution of a Christian Church. We pretend not to infallibility. "Let every man judge for himself; for to his own master he must stand or fall." Though satisfied that our views are correct, we yet allow that charity is better than faith; it is the very "bond of perfection." Instead of widening the differences, therefore, between sincere Christians, we would rather say, without one iota of principle being given up on either side, "Let us love as brethren, and what we know not now, we shall know hereafter." "As far as we have attained, let us hold fast the same things, and walk by the same rule."

places him in new and singular circumstances ; which imposes upon him a new name and a new line of duty ; and which often exposes him, by ignorant and prejudiced people, to ridicule, if not to great loss and suffering ? But, like a wise man, he has previously counted the cost, and is determined, at all hazards, to follow his Master through evil and through good report ; to learn of him ; to imitate his example, and thus to fulfil all righteousness. Baptism, then, far from being an unmeaning rite, is, we repeat it, associated in the mind with the most interesting and important considerations. It forms a pause in life. It presents a period to which the thoughts may be turned back with advantage. Baptists can recollect the time when, with holy resolutions, they devoted themselves to the service of God. They can examine the progress that has been made ; or, if otherwise, may be led to serious reflection, to contrition, to salutary resolves, and to new exertions. It also lays a just foundation for our being addressed on our duties and prospects, and on the errors of our lives, or the defects in our Christian character. An erring brother, on our principles, might reasonably be addressed thus : “ You have, after due deliberation, solemnly professed yourself a Christian. You can, therefore, have no plea of ignorance, or excuse for habitual levity and sin. Remember your Baptismal vows, and your awful accountability. Contrast the bad example which you are now setting, with the holy

resolutions which then employed your thoughts; when, by 'being baptized into Christ you put on Christ;' what piety and religious joy then engaged and delighted your mind; how fervent were your hopes; how bright were your prospects! Your heart may indeed be perverted, and your thoughts be changed by the delusions of the world, but there is no change in God or in truth. Heaven and eternity are still the same. It is still true, that human life is short and uncertain, and that 'the fashion of this world passeth away.' My brother, bethink yourself; it is not too late; the gates of mercy are never shut; retrace your steps; repent, and God will forgive you. 'Return to your first love,' and be, as in days passed, determined 'to live soberly, righteously, and piously, in the present world;' to live as one who is 'looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.'"

In these several respects, then, Baptism is an intelligible rite. It is an act of the judgment; it expresses the feelings and convictions of the mind. These are all personal acts of religion, and of course must have a moral tendency. We shall conclude our line of argument under this head, in the words of the late venerable and pious Dr. Toulmin: "Baptism is a solemn rite, by which is made a voluntary declaration of becoming the disciples of Christ. It is a voluntary declaration, because it is a personal

profession of faith. It is a solemn one, because it is made in obedience to a divine command.”*

IV. *Baptism is connected with religious liberty and the rights of conscience.*

It is our boast that no class of Christians has more highly valued, or better understood, these all-important subjects, suffered more for them, or more zealously contended for them, than the Baptists. Without religious liberty no liberty is complete. No true dignity or elevation of character can be acquired. Truth itself can have no fair chance of displaying its power, or of being duly considered. When God condescends to speak, all should hear; when He commands, all should obey. Has he graciously revealed his will unto men, and in all that appertains to faith and practice, is it plain and level to their common understandings? What presumption, then, for any man, or any class of men, whatever high-sounding titles they may bear, to come officiously between me and my Maker, and to say, “God designed not his revelation for you; he has not spoken to your understanding but to mine; and I must be to you the interpreter of his will, and you must believe my explanation of it, or be damned!” Were I to admit the bold assumption, and to receive my faith dictated in this arbitrary manner from another, the Scriptures would be as no-

* See his *Four Discourses on Baptism*, a work well worth the perusal of a serious and inquiring mind.

thing to me, and my religion could not be pleasing to God. Where shall I find the scriptural proof that God will require an account of my faith and religious conduct of another, and not of me? Or, if the State provide me with religion, where can I read that the State will answer for me at the bar of Christ? If this can never be true, nor can ever be done, but I must give an account for myself, and by my own conduct stand or fall, what less can be allowed than that I should have the liberty to read and think, and, with such helps as I can get, exercise my own understanding, and decide for myself? I cannot judge for you, neither can you judge for me. I cannot worship by *your* creed, any more than you can worship by *mine*. To our "own Master we must stand or fall;" and to him alone, as the King of Christians, and the only lawgiver to his church, are we accountable for the use of the powers and means afforded us; and woe be to that church or to those men who shall maintain and enforce the contrary. Implicit faith and passive obedience are beneath the dignity of a rational being. They induce that mental slavery and oppression which artful priests have but too successfully entailed upon the Christian world.

As General Baptists we disclaim all human authority in matters purely religious. We have no Master in religion but Christ, and no creed but the Bible. In all that concerns the service and worship of our Maker, his laws are our only guide. No human authority can be admitted. Conscience belongs to

God alone, and is far beyond both the power and the capacity of the civil magistrate. But the right which we claim for ourselves we most cheerfully allow to all others, however much they may differ from us. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." No one who is a real friend to truth, and to the perfectibility of man, who believes in God and in the sure word of prophecy, who looks forward to the time when knowledge shall cover the earth, and when all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest, but will promote, by every means in his power, the extension of religious liberty to all men of all opinions; for truth has nothing to fear. We rejoice that this noble and liberal spirit is by no means confined to our own denomination; far from it: but we do unhesitatingly affirm, that religious liberty, the right of private judgment, and the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures, are sentiments essential to the very existence of a General Baptist Church; and when the Baptists fail practically to observe these principles, they must forfeit all claim to virtue and consistency. The law of Baptism, indeed, authorizes them to initiate converts into the Christian church, and to train them up to Christian excellence, but not to make creeds for them, or to domineer over their faith. "Stand fast, therefore, brethren, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free." May you never have reason to know its value by its loss. Forget not the sufferings and labours of those worthies who, in former days, strug-

gled so nobly against spiritual tyranny in high places, who braved every danger, and made the most costly sacrifices for religious liberty and the rights of conscience; and then, without going through the same painful process, you will benefit by their labours and experience; more especially if you estimate it, as you ought to do, as next in value to religion itself. For surely liberty, civil and religious, is amongst the most precious of the gifts of God. It is of such vital importance, that without its light and heat we droop and die. If there be aught desirable in this lower world; if any thing can ennoble human nature; if there be any thing truly "lovely and of good report;" if there be any thing glorious in virtue, or praiseworthy in man, not to say precious in the sight of God, it must consist in the wide range of intellectual freedom, wisely directed, and duly improved; in the unfettered contemplation of the mind on truth and virtue, on the evidences and principles of natural and revealed religion, and, above all, on the character and perfections of Almighty God. These great subjects of reflection, exerting their pure and benevolent influence on the heart, will fill it with love to God and love to man, and mould the character to purity and righteousness. This is true religion; this is real piety; which, mingling with our emotions of homage and devotion, shall ascend, sweet as the evening sacrifice, and surround with acceptable praise, and with grateful incense, the throne of God.

V. We cannot do justice to our subject without noticing Infant Baptism, and the many evils with which it is connected. We do not, indeed, allow it to be Baptism at all ; but owing to its extensive use, and for the sake of distinction, we shall speak of it as such. It is far, however, from our wish to indulge in uncharitable feelings, or in uncandid remarks, towards those who from conviction differ from us. Those who sincerely believe it to be sanctioned by divine authority, act consistently in the observance of it ; and among them we cheerfully admit are to be found many of the wisest and best of men and of Christians. Notwithstanding which, and we trust they will pardon our great plainness of speech, the practice appears to us so unauthorized by Scripture, so utterly puerile in itself, so incapable of all benefit to the child to whom it is administered, that our wonder is, that it should have obtained so long and so widely. That it should still do so, especially in the present enlightened state of the world, presents, we think, one of those problems which will admit of no satisfactory solution. None, we believe, pretend to say that there is any direct precept for, or example of, it in the New Testament. However sanctioned, then, by tradition, it can be only matter of inference and deduction. Nor is there any direct historical evidence of its observance till several centuries after the introduction of Christianity. It most probably came in with the doctrine of Original Sin: it was fit that the bane and the antidote should come to-

gether. Those who introduced it had possibly some superstitious ideas relative to the saving power of Baptism, independently of its moral influence on the mind. For, we find that it became a practice with many as early as the beginning of the fourth century to put off their baptism till near their death, that having no opportunity of sinning after it, they might, through its saving efficacy, triumphantly enter heaven. Need we add, that this was a superstitious and gross perversion of the rite?—A babe, in the nature of things, cannot be the subject of law, or of moral obligation. How then stands the case? When a child is baptized, a solemn religious service is performed; but whom does such service concern? Not the child, surely, who knows nothing about it. It may, indeed, religiously affect the parents, the sponsors, or those who are present; but the child it cannot affect. As far as it is concerned, personal religion, choice, and benefit, are entirely out of the question.

In the next place, what are the moral effects which this ceremony produces on the minds of those who are concerned in it? In most cases, instead of attending to it from pure religious feeling, they seem to attend to it in mere compliance with law and custom—as a sort of merry-making, and oftentimes a very intemperate one—rather than to discharge a religious duty. On such occasions the sponsors promise and vow three things in the child's name: and how do they in general perform their vows thus solemnly made? In most cases by taking

no farther notice of them, and in some by never seeing the child again, and but seldom in any by discharging in a proper manner the moral obligation which they have incurred. What can any thinking man designate this kind of religious farce and perjury, but a practice highly discreditably to religion, and injurious to all concerned in it? We readily allow, that many of our observations will not equally apply to the Dissenters, who practise this rite with seriousness and religious feeling. The ceremony, however, is equally unscriptural in both.

But further: we contend, this practice does great injury to the child; for with a *name a creed* is imposed on the infant, while it is incapable of judging for itself "what is right." As the child grows up, its young mind is impressed with a sense of the sacred obligation which it contracted in infancy, and that no less than the favour of God, and the hopes of heaven depend on his holding fast the doctrines of his creed or his church. Thus the mind is early prejudiced, and becomes enslaved to certain opinions and practices; and its early prepossessions too generally forestall all due exertion of the understanding, and incapacitate the future man for fair inquiry and impartial examination. By this process you may indeed make Roman Catholics or Protestants, Churchmen or Dissenters; but you will never make rational, enlightened, Bible Christians. Far better were it to have *no baptism* than a *spurious one*—a ceremony not only void of utility, but preg-

nant with evil—one which entirely reverses the apostolic plan; which was, first to teach, to disciple, and then *to baptize*; not first to *baptize*, and disciple and teach afterwards. Our Lord declared, that his kingdom was not of this world. What, then, shall we say to a practice which confounds the world and the church together; which converts the gospel into a mere geographical term, so that if a child happen to be born in what is called a *Christian* country, he is of course born a Christian! But it would seem like insulting common sense to offer proof that men, wherever born, are no more born Christians than they are born lawyers or physicians. Every national church, however, must be established on the principle that all who are born in the nation are born members of it; that it provides for them the best religious instruction, and takes effectual care for the salvation of all its members. But how does a national (mis-named *Christian*) church do this? Why thus:—Its members are said to be all born in sin, and to deserve God's wrath and condemnation; but are made, by Infant Baptism, to pass through the laver of regeneration; and, aided by the words of the priest, are purified from their corrupt nature, the curse and evil of Original Sin are removed, and they thus become members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Thus all are made Christians in their infancy; and when they die, however infamous their lives may have been, they are declared to be,

by the same authority, all dearly beloved brethren, departed “in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection”!

Look at the moral state of society, in which believers and unbelievers, the most vicious and the most virtuous, are all mixed together, and yet all are considered as the Christian Church. If this were the case, we must reverse our Lord's words, and say, “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth unto life, and many there be who go in thereat.” These are only a few of the revolting consequences and absurdities which result from Infant Baptism and a National Church, and from confounding the church and the world together. To say nothing of that long black list of crimes and calamities which has afflicted the world under the pretext of religion, what evils and spiritual oppression has not priestcraft, armed with the civil power, produced? Survey, with the aid of ecclesiastical history, the monstrous assumptions of power and the structures of tyranny which it has raised;—hierarchies grasping the sceptre of heaven and earth, with popes of infallible pretensions, with cardinals, bishops, and archbishops, together with priests innumerable, of every grade and description, who, uniting their unhallowed power in conclaves, councils, and inquisitions, in convocations, star-chambers, and spiritual courts, committed all sorts of enormities for the good of souls and the glory of God. Pious kings, too, uniting their temporal power and

right divine to a holy zeal for religion, gloried in having destroyed or converted millions of men for the good of the Church! And how were they converted? Why, according to the barbarous custom of those savage times, Christian kings were thought to be justified in putting the people of a conquered army or province to the sword, unless they professed to become Christians, and submitted to be baptized. The latter alternative was of course preferred; and this wholesale way of making Christians was gloried in as a great triumph of religion. This mode of making converts, however it might suit the Mahomedan religion, is truly abhorrent to the spirit of the Gospel. On all such occasions, baptism by *sprinkling*, without individual consent or choice, and contrary, as it plainly is, to the very genius of Christianity, has ever been a ready and convenient auxiliary of oppression and injustice.

That this mode of initiation has been abused when it has been adopted to countenance the most arbitrary and atrocious measures, we do not dispute; but this does not affect our argument, that the evils above-mentioned are the natural consequence of making the world *Christian* without its possessing either the knowledge or spirit of Christianity. But had the church continued in its primitive state, and, according to its true intent, been a congregation of faithful men, acting from virtuous deliberation and choice, observing the ordinances of the Gospel, and the order therein laid down, such evils could

never have existed. To us it is evident, that no national church, even the best of the Reformed, could long exist without the conscription law of *Infant Baptism*, and the worldly interests by which it is upheld. No other method would keep up its members. Dismiss this unscriptural ceremony; take away the groundless doctrine of Original Sin; take away the tithes and preferments, the worldly motives and honours; let its ministers cease to "raise their mitred fronts in courts and parliaments;" leave it to stand alone, and to exist, like other sects, by its own merits, and we venture to predict, that at no great distance of time every national church would be reduced to comparatively little more than the mere shadow of its former greatness. What applies to one national establishment, holds equally true of them all. They are all equally inimical to pure and unadulterated Christianity. We are aware that we are treading on tender ground; but we fearlessly express our own most serious conviction, that until the unnatural union, wherever subsisting, between Church and State be dissolved, and until all penal statutes and restraints on conscience be removed, all interests against the truth be done away, till then it never can have fair play: Divine truth and goodness cannot prevail; they cannot spread themselves over the earth; they cannot run and be glorified. All we ask is, that religion may be left to itself. It made the greatest progress, not only when unaided by, and unconnected with, the civil power,

but even when opposed by it. Restore moral order and discipline. Revert to the simplicity of primitive times. Let there be now, as at the first, a complete separation between the Church and the world: "For what concord hath Christ with Belial?" Let all its votaries honestly "strive together for the faith of the Gospel." Let its pure, benevolent, and liberal spirit pervade the earth. Then all injustice, all war and slavery, those worst of human ills, will cease to outrage religion and to oppress the world. These, however, can now exist, and rage, and be carried on by most religious kings, by a pious priesthood, and by National Churches: but none of these abominations could receive countenance from truly Christian Churches, constituted according to Gospel order. Theirs is a spurious Christianity, consisting of creeds and articles of human invention, and imbodyed into a political church for political purposes, in which religion is converted into an engine of state rather than regarded as the rule and motive to virtue.—"If Christian nations were nations of Christians," war and slavery could not exist; righteousness and truth, Christian love and mercy, would triumph, and the Gospel would be found now, as in primitive times, glad-tidings to all people, and the power of God unto salvation. "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say."

Lastly. Not longer to trespass upon your patience, we shall conclude our argument by briefly recapitulating the topics which we have discussed.

We have observed, that Baptism was a solemn rite instituted and sanctioned by Jesus Christ, and enjoined upon all who should receive his gospel; that the Apostles were *Baptist* ministers, and the first churches of Christ *Baptist* churches; and that had all who professed the Gospel, continued faithfully to hold the same faith and practice and order which the Apostles did, all Christian churches would now exactly resemble theirs. We have observed, that Baptism is connected with an open profession of Christ, with repentance and the forgiveness of sins, with the death and resurrection of Christ, with personal religion and the rights of conscience, and with the answer of a good conscience towards God: that by Baptism Christians were called out of and entirely separated from the world, and by which separation they became the visible Church of Christ. Had they multiplied and spread themselves over the earth, maintaining their pure principles and benevolent character, what sufferings would have been spared to mankind; what scandal would have been avoided; and what extensive blessings would have been enjoyed! We have contended, that many and great evils have resulted from the practice of *infant baptism*; “that infants are mere machines and utterly incapable of every *requisite* to Baptism; that it subverts the very base of the Christian church, by giving those the name who have not the thing, and by transferring the whole cause of Christianity from the wise and pious few, to the ignorant multi-

tude, who, being supposed Christians, interfere in religion, derange the community, invade the offices, and convert the whole into a worldly corporation.”*

To our apprehension, if the New Testament be our rule, no line of argument can be more plain and conclusive than that which has been pursued in these Lectures; but to some persons something more is necessary to conviction than reason and demonstration. He that would hear must have a willing ear; and he that would be delighted with seeing the truth must have a single eye. We allow, indeed, that our peculiar rite is very unfashionable, for fashion in our day affects religion as well as every other thing: hence many dislike it and are ashamed of it, rather than that they have any thing valid to object to it. If it were generally practised, they would then be Baptists; they would go with the multitude: but on this ground what become of their principles and integrity? All should bear in mind the solemn declaration of our Lord, “He that is ashamed of me, and of my words, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and his holy angels;” while his humble and despised followers should feel encouraged by his gracious declaration, that “who-soever confesseth me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven.” Our numbers, it is true, are not great, nor is our cause popular. And because the arguments of our opponents fail to convince us, we are scoffed at, and that often by those from whom we might reasonably ex-

* Robinson's Hist. of Baptism.

pect better things. But if we be true to our principles, no disproportion of numbers or depression of circumstances will prevent us from zealously contending for truth, and for what we judge involves our duty to God, and thus the present and future welfare of our souls. We may be “troubled, but we are not distressed. We may be cast down, but we are not destroyed. We may be perplexed, but we are not in despair.”

Call to mind the former days; recollect the trying circumstances of the Apostles and first Christians, and take them for an example of persevering zeal and fortitude. Their religion was not fashionable, nor were their numbers great. Fierce and numerous were their enemies, and perilous were their times and condition. They were surrounded with dangers; yet how firm was their faith, how great were their zeal and their virtue! But if they had been dismayed by opposition and dangers, had they not stood their ground in the hour of trial, had they not persevered through evil and through good report, had they not gloried in witnessing a good confession for the name of Christ,—all the invaluable blessings of his Gospel had been lost to the world. If they had only consulted their ease and their safety; if they had shrunk from observation and dreaded the charge of singularity; if one had gone to his farm, and another to his merchandise, and had cared for none of these things—the Gospel had never reached our ears, enlightened our minds, or comforted our hearts: it would never have soothed and cheered the

chamber of affliction, or gilded with hope the cell of despair; it would never have illumined or smoothed the bed of death, or have enabled the expiring saint to point with exultation to the joys of heaven. Let us then, my brethren, not be discouraged by the difficulties which may be in our way. Let us manfully bear our testimony to what we believe to be truth, and to what we judge to be right; knowing, that true wisdom consists in maintaining the rectitude of our lives and the integrity of our hearts.

If we have expressed ourselves strongly, with the warmth and frankness of honest conviction, it has yet been done with perfect good-will towards all men. Our zeal, we trust, will never transport us beyond the bounds of Christian candour and charity. Where we cannot agree with others, we would, with kindly feelings, agree to differ. Far from quarreling with our fellow-christians, who have the same right to judge for themselves that we have, on disputed points of faith and practice, we fondly cherish the hope, that good men of all parties and of all opinions, will hereafter join "the general assembly and church of the first-born—and the spirits of just men made perfect;" when all error and imperfection will be done away; "when we shall know even as we are known;" and when, no longer subject to ordinances, to darkened minds and to a divided faith, we shall enter, in that world of light and joy, upon an endless career of ever-increasing knowledge and happiness, and God be all in all. Amen.

DR. EVANS'S
EXTEMPORANEOUS ADDRESS

At the Conclusion of the Lectures.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

HAVING had the honour of opening these *Lectures* on BAPTISM, permit me to say a few words by way of conclusion. In my own name, and in that of my colleagues, I thank you for your constant and full attendance—your kind and patient attention. May any good impressions made prove not like *the morning cloud, and the early dew which goeth away!* May the subject that has engaged your attention be the theme of meditation and of prayer. God grant you *courage* and *integrity* to follow the honest conviction of your hearts!

What CONSCIENCE dictates to be done,
Or warns us not to do;
This teach us more than HELL to shun,
That more than HEAVEN pursue!

Remember the words of our SAVIOUR: *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* Yielding obedience to the great Head of the Christian Church, you will be happy in your progress through *life*, happy in *death*, and happy through the countless ages of ETERNITY. Amen.







