

A
VIEW
OF THE
EVIDENCES
OF
BELIEVERS BAPTISM.

IN FOUR PARTS,

By JOHN MARTIN.

I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT WITHIN YOU, AND CAUSE YOU TO WALK IN MY
STATUTES. EZEK. xxxvi. 27.

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PREFACE.

IT is said, that the Jews at Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, to see whether those things were so. Acts 17:11.

The things spoken of, were those things which Paul had preached at Thessalonica; where, as his manner was, he went into a synagogue of the Jews, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures; opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead. Acts 17: 2, 3.

Some at Thessalonica believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; but the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar. Acts 17:4,5.

On this account, the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea; who coming thither, went into another synagogue of the Jews. Acts 17:10.

Here they met with due respect: and the noble, and ingenuous behaviour of the Jews at Berea, has justly obtained the applause of all parties that have heard of their becoming conduct.

To receive the word with all readiness of mind, to be cautious what we retain of human expositions, and to search the scriptures daily, to see whether things are so as they were stated to us, argues an excellent disposition : and of this temper, (a temper which very few at that time possessed) the Bereans gave a fine example.

It is said, therefore, many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few. Acts17:12.

But, let it be remembered, that the preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord. Prov. 16:1. Otherwise the Jews at Berea, would have been as perverse as those at Thessalonica : and this, I doubt not, the noble Bereans often acknowledged, and gave to God the glory of their conversion.

From what has been said of them, it appears that the doctrine of preachers must be judged of by the scriptures, and that it is the duty of all men, who have that book in their possession, to search the scriptures for themselves.

Whatever objections may be raised against this practice, or whatever inconvenience may occasionally be connected with it, if, on any pretence, it is given up, or laid aside, nothing will countervail the damage.

But ministers of the gospel should not only search the scriptures for themselves, but for others also: and when they have done this, in the fear of God, and to the best of their ability, they are allowed to say, Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know it for your good. Job 5: 27.

I have long been engaged in this service; and of late, have once more turned my attention to an unpopular subject: I mean believers baptism. For that practice, without entering into any local dispute, I have collected a body of evidence chiefly from the New Testament; such as is not every day produced.

This I have been advised to publish: and if those who read the following pages, will do what the Bereans did, perhaps, they will reap some advantage from this production.

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**VIEW
OF THE
EVIDENCES
OF
BELIEVERS BAPTISM.**

PART I.

ON THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.

JOHN was the son of a certain priest named Zacharias: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Luke 5. John was born in the days of Herod the king of Judea; and both his parents were righteous before God; walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Luke 1:5, 6.

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, 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. Luke 3:1, 2, 3.

The baptism of John, was from heaven, and not of men. Matt. 21:25. The chief priests and elders could not deny that fact. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and Lawyers, rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. Luke 7: 29, 30.

Before John baptized he preached, saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. John thus preached, not only in Judea, but to the children of Abraham, saying unto them, Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance : and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father : for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Matt. 3: 2-9.

From such courage, and conduct in John, we may conclude, that he would not baptize them that rejected his ministry, nor them that did not believe his testimony of Jesus Christ, nor them, whoever they were, that refused to make

a serious profession of their faith.

John baptized in Jordan, in Bethabara beyond Jordan, and in AEnon, near unto Salem, because there was much water there. Matt. 3:6. John 1:28. John 3:23.

John had but one way of baptizing, to which even Jesus himself submitted. He came from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. Matt. 3: 13, 14, 15.

The number of John's disciples must have been great: for there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. Matt. iii. 3, 6.

John's disciples were not brought to him as children are brought to a paedobaptist minister, nor were they any of them, dumb in his presence: no, they went out to John of their own accord, and before they were baptized, they made a confession of their sins. Matt. 3: 5, 6.

The Jews were not offended with John for his baptizing in the river Jordan nor at the manner in which he baptized his disciples: but John being only a Levite, they questioned his authority to baptize, and thought him too severe when he required of them fruits meet for repentance, and when he rejected their favourite plea, We have Abraham to our father. Matt. 3: 8, 9.

John obtained a new name from his baptizing in Judea. This shews, that to baptize in water, as John baptized, was a new thing in that country; and that what he did was not done in conformity to any established, or previous custom in the land of promise.

John, however, was not called JOHN THE BAPTIST, only because he had a commission from heaven to baptize ; but chiefly, because his baptism immediately preceded the kingdom of God, and was very closely connected with it. Isa. 40. compared with Matt. 3.

John the Baptist was a friend to the civil government, and to the civil governors of Judea ; though in his days, the sceptre had departed from Judea,

and they who then presided over the Jews were extremely corrupt. Luke 3:2.

The temper, prudence, and fidelity of John, on popular questions, often appeared, and always much to his credit, and to the repute of his peculiar mission.

When an oppressed and turbulent people asked him saying, What shall we do? He said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none ; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. When the publicans said unto him, Master, What shall we do? He said unto them, exact no more than that which is appointed you. And when the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? He said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages. Luke 3:10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

Such was the wholesome advice of John the Baptist to a discontented people in troublesome times; over whom he had great influence. Nor did he give this advice, fearing the wrath of the king, but reprov'd him boldly, for taking Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done. Luke 3:19.

John, therefore, for conscience sake, thus taught an impatient and misguided multitude; and many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. Luke 3:18.

They whom John instructed, were such as came to him to be baptized: and, from his counsel to these different classes of men, it appears, that a power to suffer well for well doing, is of much greater importance in the kingdom of God, and of much greater use in this world, than that imperious courage, which is often only a power to exalt ourselves by injuring other people. Yet this mischievous power, under fine names, and plausible pretences, seems to be that kind of courage which most men admire, applaud, and endeavour to possess.

But human energies should always be valued, just as they are, more or less subservient to the will of God ; and as, in that connection, they are more or less, conducive to the happiness of mankind in this world, and are connected with a due concern for that which is to come.

If we form our judgment of John the Baptist according to these notions, our

opinion of him will be raised, and he will be high in our esteem. He was not a reed shaken with the wind; nor a man clothed in soft raiment; no, he was a prophet, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.—So Christ himself spake of John, when he was in prison, even to John's own disciples; adding these memorable words: Verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. Matt. 11: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

PART II.

ON BAPTISM, AS APPROVED AND FINALLY SETTLED By JESUS CHRIST.

WHEN John had baptized our Lord in Jordan, Jesus went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Matt. 3:16,17.

This testimony from heaven to the sonship of Christ, and this proof of his being accepted with his Father as incarnate, and fulfilling all righteousness, was soon obscured. For no sooner was Jesus baptized, than he was led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. Matt. 4:1.

His sudden departure from John, his long absence in the desert, and probably, the idle reports which were circulated at that time, concerning his temptations, seemed to be in. consistent with that honor which he received at Jordan.

John in the mean while, being present with his numerous disciples, being also zealous and popular, increased in fame, just in such proportion, as the character of Christ was traduced or concealed.

In this hour of temptation, some of John's disciples began to form unfavourable notions of his Lord and master, and to suppose that he was of less consequence in the kingdom of God than the son of Zacharias.

But John himself seems to have remained steadfast, under all the rumours that then prevailed. He continued to bear witness of Jesus, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me, is preferred before me; for he was before me.—And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. John 1:15-20.

When some of his own disciples came to him and said, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.—He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all:—He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true. John 3: 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33.

When our Lord knew the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John; (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. John 4:1, 2, 3.

Now, though the number of these converts to Christianity, might not be so great as had been reported, yet from this report it appears, that the gospel was then preached with success in Judea by our Lord's disciples; that they who believed the gospel were baptized, and that this advancement of the visible kingdom of Christ, vexed and alarmed the unbelieving Jews.

HAVING observed what attention our Lord paid to the ordinance of baptism while he was in this world, let us now observe, in what manner that ordinance was finally settled by him after his resurrection.

From the narrative of this settlement, given us by St. Matthew, it appears, First, that our Lord had no sooner risen from the dead, than he appointed his disciples to meet him in Galilee. Secondly, that the great object of this meeting was to assure them, that all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth, and to command them to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

On this narrative, to the end of the chapter, we may further observe, First, that the administrators of baptism were to be such as they had been, ministers

of Christ. Secondly, that their commission to teach, and to disciple by teaching, extended to all nations ; to one as well as another, without excepting any nation which might, at any time,, be willing to hear and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, that the persons they were to baptize were those only, in any nation, that believed in him, and seriously avowed that belief. Fourthly, that the manner in which such subjects were to be baptized, in any country, and at any time, was in water, with their own consent, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Fifthly, that after they were thus baptized, they were to be taught to observe ail things whatsoever Christ had commanded them. Sixthly, that such teachers, and such disciples, might expect his presence and blessing to be with them always, even to the end of the world. AMEN. Matt. 28: 7 - 20.

It may not be improper in this place, to add the following remarks:

First, we may observe, that an ordinance settled with so much solemnity, and by such authority, as Matthew has stated concerning baptism, cannot, in my opinion, be perverted, changed, trifled with, or neglected, from any commendable motive, or to answer any good purpose.

Secondly, that whatever abuses may at any time exist, or whatever offences may be suffered to abound, in reference to water baptism, the perpetuity of this ordinance, as it was finally settled by our Lord himself, is effectually secured. For, the promise of his presence to them that obey his will unto the end of the world, supposes, there must be a succession of such people in every age, however they may, in any period, or in any place, be misrepresented, and unhandsomely treated, on account of their stedfast obedience to the Son of God. Having therefore, such a promise, let us be of good courage, and say to succeeding believers: Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. I Cor. 15: 58.

So long as we live under the influence of such a promise, and of such an exhortation, what should make us afraid of following our Lord in this ordinance, and of following them who were best acquainted with his will? If there is any thing which should make us hesitate a single moment, I own, it has not yet come within the reach of my understanding.

PART III.

ON BAPTISM, AS IT WAS ADMINISTERED BY THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST.

NONE of the apostles were qualified to enter on their important mission, immediately after the resurrection of Christ. They were therefore, ordered to tarry at Jerusalem, till they were endued with power from on high. But when, according to his promise, they received the Holy Spirit, they were competent to the full discharge of their duty: and soon after this, they gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. Acts 6: 4.

On the very day of Pentecost, Peter preached at Jerusalem: and from the abridged account we have of that famous discourse, in the second of the Acts, we may observe, First, that he preached boldly Jesus Christ, and him crucified, before the very people by whose wicked hands he had been crucified and slain. Secondly, that many who heard that discourse, were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ? Thirdly, that Peter replied, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Fourthly, that the promise of this gift, was unto them and unto their children; notwithstanding they had said, His blood be upon us and upon our children. Fifthly, that this promise however, was not confined to them only; no, it was extended to them likewise, that were afar off, even to as many, said Peter, as the Lord our God shall call. Sixthly, that they who gladly received his word concerning Jesus Christ, were baptized: and the same day, there were added to them, about three thousand souls. Seventhly, that these converts continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts ii. 14-42.

When Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them; the people of that city, with one accord, gave heed to those things which Philip spake; hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. And when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Acts. 8: 5, 6 - 12.

Here we may remark, that the same order was regarded in Samaria, as at Jerusalem; the same discipline to them that were afar off, as to them that

were nigh : for the apostles and evangelists, in their teaching and baptizing, had no respect of persons ; but taught and baptized, in every place, in the same manner, both men and women.

The case of Simon the sorcerer is mentioned with that of the Samaritans. It is said of him, Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Acts 8: 13.

This man's heart was not right in the sight of God. Before he heard Philip, he used sorcery in the city of Samaria, giving out, that himself was some great one! And after he had heard Philip, when he saw that through laying on of the apostle's hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money to be partaker of the same power. This offended Simon Peter, who said unto him, Thy money perish with thee; because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Acts 8: 9, 18, 19, 20.

But, whatever Philip might judge of Simon, when the thought of his heart was no longer concealed, or whatever he might then feel on his account, he was soon encouraged again to baptize by a very peculiar providence. I now refer to the story of the Eunuch, who was a man of great authority, under Candace Queen of the Ethiopians.

From this well authenticated story, we may observe, First, that the Eunuch was a devout man before he had heard that Jesus was the Christ; for he came from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, at an annual festival, to -worship the God of Israel. Secondly, that his devotion, however sincere, gave him no right to be baptized; therefore, till he said, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, Philip did in effect, say to him, Thou mayest not be baptized. Thirdly, that the Eunuch made the first motion towards his own baptism: See, said he, here is water, What cloth hinder me to be baptized? Fourthly, that the Eunuch was baptized in water, in its natural state, and in that water that first presented itself to his notice. Fifthly, if I may so express the action, it was the Eunuch himself that was baptized, and not any particular part of him, under pretence, that a part of him was put for the whole. Sixthly, that when the Eunuch was baptized, and Philip and himself, were come up out of the water, though the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the Eunuch saw him no more, yet he went on his way rejoicing. Acts. 8: 26-39.

If the Eunuch was not wholly immersed in water, who will inform us what

part of him was baptized? Consider what is said on this affair. First, the Eunuch commanded his chariot to stand still. Secondly, they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch. Thirdly, in that situation, Philip baptized him, and not any part of him to the omission of any other part. Fourthly, that after he was baptized, both Philip and the Eunuch came up out of the water. Now, is it credible, that if Philip had only intended to have sprinkled the Eunuch, that such an account would have been given of that performance. To suppose, that Philip was destitute of common sense, merely to support an innovation, not existing when he baptized the Eunuch, is inadmissible. A good cause stands in no need of such support, and one that is not good will not be thus supported.

When the Eunuch first went down with Philip into the water, his feet were undoubtedly covered with that element; but mere immersion is not baptism; and while the Eunuch stood erect in the water, it was not possible for Philip to baptize him in that position. When therefore, the Eunuch was baptized, the nature of the act, on his part, required, that he should yield his whole body to Philip, and be willing to be buried under the water, and to rise again ; that in coming up out of the water, he might walk before God, in newness of life.

While Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee, he had no desire to be baptized by any minister of Jesus Christ; nor had he, in that state, any right to Christian baptism; because, whoever is baptized, does in effect say, I am a Christian : but as soon as he was converted, Ananias said unto him, And now, why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord. Acts 22: 16.

For Saul to comply with this exhortation, was, or might have been, a very difficult task. He well knew, if he submitted to that ordinance, he would thereby openly acknowledge Christ to be the Messiah, and that this would expose him to the implacable resentment of his countrymen the Jews, and to many other resentments, indignities, and dangers. But when he was converted to Christ, he conferred not with flesh and blood: he arose therefore, and was baptized. Gal. 1:16. Acts. 9: 18.

Cornelius was a soldier, a Centurion of the Italian band; a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house. But Cornelius, though thus applauded, knew not, at that time, the way of salvation: for Peter, after this account of him, was appointed to tell him words whereby he, and all his house should be saved. Now, that house, or that person, which is to be saved by the instrumentality of words, must believe them; because it is impossible,

that any words on religious subjects, should have a saving influence on the mind of an unbeliever. Acts 10: 1, 2. Acts 11: 14. Rom. 10: 16.

When Peter came to Cornelius, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, among other things, he said, To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Acts 10: 36, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48.

From the preceding narrative, it again appears, that devotion and morality, without faith in Jesus Christ, gives no man any right to baptism: they gave none to Saul of Tarsus, nor did they give any to Cornelius.

Let it also be remarked, that in receiving the Holy Ghost, water baptism is by no means set aside. The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, are not only given to profit withal, but unto obedience; and therefore, if to be baptized in water, is any part of that obedience which Christ requires of them that believe in him, nothing which they may receive from the Spirit of God, will produce an aversion to that duty, or prompt them to conceive, that disobedience, of any kind, is indulgence.

He that thinks slightly, and talks loosely, of any moral duty, or of any positive institution of Jesus Christ, on presumption, that he is filled with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, is, either an imposter, or an enthusiast; is either a bad man, or a man not to be trusted. We may all of us be confident, that the operations of the Spirit of God on the minds of men, will never be inconsistent with any doctrine, duty, or disposition, commended to our notice by the apostles of Jesus Christ.

Of Lydia, and of her baptism, St. Luke has given us this account:

A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Saul. And when she was baptized, she besought us saying, if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there and she constrained us. Acts 16: 14, 15.

Here we find, that hearing, believing, and being baptized, were connected; just as in the preceding cases; and that Christian fellowship was likewise immediately connected with Christian obedience. Come into my house, said Lydia, nay, she constrained them: and when Paul and Silas were discharged from prison, they entered into the house of Lydia, saw the brethren there, comforted them, and departed from Philippi. Acts 16: 15, 40.

What is said of the Jailor, is mentioned in the same chapter; and from what is said of him, we may observe, First, that the Jailor was not baptized till he had heard of Christ, and believed in him. Secondly, that his baptism was not delayed, because of the persecution then at Philippi, because he was a man under the immediate control of the magistrates of that city, because Paul and Silas were then in prison, and the Jailor had been charged to keep them safely, nor because it was about midnight when he was baptized. Thirdly, that the Jailor was not baptized in his own house; for, after he had submitted to that ordinance, he brought Paul and Silas into his own house, and sat meat before them. Fourthly, that he and all his, were baptized at the same time, in the same place, and, with the same effect: for he rejoiced believing in God, with all his house. Acts. 16: 25, 34.

After Paul had departed from Philippi, he went to Thessalonica, Berea and Athens, and came to Corinth; where, being pressed in spirit, he testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. Acts 28: 5.

But when the Jews at Corinth, opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth, I will go unto the Gentiles. Acts 18: 6.

And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized. Acts 18: 7, 8.

Such are the accounts given us of baptism in the Acts of the apostles. Whether we read of individuals, or of households, in that authentic history, we invariably find, that they who submitted to that ordinance, first heard, then believed, and then, and not before, they were baptized. Afterwards, like the household of Stephanus, they addicted themselves to the ministry of the

saints. 1 Cor. xvi. 15.

From this order, we meet not with a single deviation in the New Testament, to gratify either the Jews, or the Gentiles, whether they were pious or profane, whether they 'were young or old, rich or poor, bond or free.

HAPPY would it have been for posterity, had all succeeding ministers of Jesus Christ, believed, that the apostles and evangelists well understood the full extent of his commission to baptize all nations, and had been content, with Christian simplicity, to have followed their example.

PART IV.

ON SOME TEXTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, WHICH, MORE OR LESS, ALLUDE TO BAPTISM.

OF these texts, the following seem to add no small degree of evidence in favor of believer's baptism.

Luke 12: 50. But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

It is generally allowed, that Christ here speaks of his own sufferings unto death, for the redemption of his people, and of his ardor to suffer the just for the unjust, to bring them to God. But, could any Christian paedobaptist, bear to have the original text translated thus: I have a sprinkling to be sprinkled with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Yet, if sprinkling and baptizing were perfectly equivalent, one would suppose, that the two terms might change places, without giving him the least offence.

Rom. 6: 3. Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?

If they who are baptized into the death of Christ, have any fellowship with him in his sufferings, or any joy in his atonement, the question in the text must have been put to believers, and to them only: and of this, I am the more confident, because it appears to me, that neither, unbelievers, nor infants, were commanded to be baptized when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans. If of any later date, a command has been issued for that purpose, of sufficient authority, it has not yet fallen under my notice.

Rom. 6: 4. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into 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.

Here, it is plain, there is an allusion to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion; and here, we have another proof, that they who were baptized, were believers in Jesus Christ: for who but believers are buried with him by baptism into death, and walk in newness a life?

I COR. 10: 1, 2. I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea.

As the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left, when they were baptized unto Moses; and as the cloud which was then above them, gave them light by night, no argument for aspersion or sprinkling, can be fairly drawn from their baptism. It was not literal, but figurative; and when we consider, that all the fathers went into the midst of the sea by special commandment, with their own consent, and were there walled up on each side with water, and a cloud over their heads ; when we also consider, that they soon emerged from this awful situation safely, to the opposite shore, in order to sing the praises of God for their great deliverance, we shall perceive some analogy between the meditation of Moses, and the meditation of Jesus Christ; and some analogy between the baptism of these fathers, and the baptism of believers under the present dispensation of the grace of God.

GAL. 3: 27, 28. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female : for ye are all one in Christ Jesus: and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

From these words, I think we may conclude, that as many of the Galatians as had testified their faith in Christ, by being baptized in his name, had put on Christ; that what they did was done voluntarily, one by one,, each believer for himself alone, and not for another; that, by so doing, it appeared they were all one in Christ, and were allowed to be Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise of the heavenly inheritance.

EPHES. 4: 4, 5. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

This one body, is the church of Christ; which is animated by one Spirit in each of its members; not from their first, but from their second birth: and all the members of this one body, are called in one hope of their calling. Over this sacred body, or church, there is one Lord, whose will, as revealed in his own word, is the invariable law of Christian obedience: and, in that church, there is one and the same faith; which faith is manifested by a cheerful submission to one and the same outward baptism, as well, and as much, as by any other single act of Christian obedience.

Col. 2: 11, 12. 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: 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.

From this important text and context, which have been so frequently misinterpreted, the following remarks seem to deserve some notice.

The design of the apostle in this part of his Epistle to the Colossians, was to confirm the believers amongst them in the faith of the gospel, and particularly, in that great article of the Christian religion, concerning our being justified freely, by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. In subserviency to this design, he cautioned them not to be led away with the error of the wicked, from the simplicity of that truth which they had received; and exhorted them, as they had received Christ Jesus the Lord, to walk in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as they had been taught; abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware, therefore, said he, lest any man spoil, or rob you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him, said the apostle, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily: and ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power. But it might be objected, How are the Colossians complete in him, since they were not circumcised according to the law of Moses? To this objection, and to some other objections, which Pharisees and Philosophers might urge on this subject, Paul replies in the two verses which I have proposed to consider.

From them we may observe, First, that the believing Colossians are not said to be circumcised with the circumcision made without hands IN

THEMSELVES, BUT IN CHRIST; because in him, they were completely justified by the imputation of a perfect righteousness; which circumcision, under the law, did oblige men to perform, or to confess, that they were, without such righteousness, unable to stand before Jehovah in judgment. Such was the issue of circumcision under the law: but circumcision, as subordinate to the promise, prefigured that perfect righteousness which the law demanded; hence the apostle affirms, that believers are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Secondly, that in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, the apostle speaks chiefly of justification, and of our acceptance with God; from which sanctification, and all real purity of sentiment, and of behavior proceeds. Thirdly, that this putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, was by the circumcision of Christ or by that circumcision wherewith Christ himself was circumcised: the sign being put for the thing signified; namely, the circumcision of Christ, for his perfect obedience, and fulfilling of the law. Fourthly, that as circumcision was the first bearing the yoke of the law, to which any child born under it could be made subject, and as by circumcision, the person circumcised, was bound to keep the whole law, (otherwise his circumcision became un-circumcision) so the circumcision of Christ, is a convincing evidence of his being made under the law ; and, by his fulfilling the law, he brought in that everlasting righteousness through the imputation of which, all that believe in him are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Fifthly, that their communion with Christ in his benefits, was through the faith of the operation of God. Sixthly, that this way of holding communion with Christ, is, in a lively manner, held out and signified to believers in their baptism, wherein they are said to be both buried and risen together with him; the immersion of the body into the water, bearing an analogy to his burial, as the raising of it again out of the water, doth to his resurrection. Seventhly, that what the apostle intended to prove to the Colossians, was, that even their baptism, upon their first receiving, and making a profession of the Christian religion, did teach and oblige them to live upon Christ alone, and to join no other thing with him in the foundation of their hope. “See, Mr. Nehemiah Cox, On the Covenants that Gad made with Men before the Law”.

This author, very properly adds, These things being so, circumcision was of use no longer, neither had Christians any concernment in it; for having reached the accomplishment of its utmost end in Jesus Christ, it expired in course, and vanished away with the whole frame of the Mosaical ceconomy : and so far is the apostle from intimating, that baptism came in the room of circumcision, that he discourses of them as appertaining to two covenants so

differenced the one from the other, and in their complete ministration so opposed the one to the other, as that they could by no means, in this last respect, consist together.

1 PET. 3: 21. The like figure whereunto even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Here, we are informed, First, what baptism is not, and Secondly, what it is. It is not the putting away the filth of the flesh; but it is the answer of a good conscience towards God.

Thirdly, we are informed, how that good conscience, mentioned in the text, is to be obtained; namely, by the resurrection of Christ. Now, if baptism is accompanied with this effect to all that are properly baptized, and when they cheerfully submit to that ordinance, this pre-supposes faith: for without faith, no person can enjoy the resurrection of Jesus Christ, nor obtain by it, the answer of a good conscience towards God. Fourthly, the words of Peter inform us, that there is some analogy between baptism and certain circumstances, at least, attending the ark of Noah. In it, eight souls were saved by water: and Peter says, The like figure whereunto even baptism, doth also now save us. Baptism, however, is instrumental only to the salvation of believers. For he that believeth not, though he were baptized, cannot prove, there is any connection between his baptism and his own salvation. The ark of Noah was not of his own invention. But it was, by divine appointment, "a large hollow vessel, in which Noah and his family, were for a time, as it were buried; and especially this was the case, when the foundations of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and they in the midst of that deluge which destroyed the world."

Whether this account best agrees with immersion, or with sprinkling, and whether what is said of Noah and of his family, best agrees with believers, who like Noah, regard the special commandment of God concerning themselves, or with infants, who are, all of them unacquainted with his word, and will, let those who are impartial determine.

The evidence which I have now produced for the baptism of believers, by immersion, both that which is direct, and that in which the aid of inference has been employed, seems to be that sort of evidence which, as here united, cannot be overthrown.

Evidence to be good, must be such as the nature of the subject will admit; and to be full, it must contain all that is necessary to convince an impartial judge. Such evidence is not to be made, but found: and on the subject of baptism, it must be found in the word of God: because every thing that can be considered as evidence on that subject, is inferior to that which is there produced. The preceding pages were written in that belief, and till it can be proved that such belief is misplaced, what is said in them will not easily be refuted.

When inferences are produced against direct testimony, and clear examples, and are preferred before them, or when they are impertinent, and not in point, we lament that any man, especially that any good man, should ever be inclined, or compelled to argue so improperly : but when inferences coincide with plain precepts, and with good examples, when they are used to corroborate arguments they do not pretend to equal, surely, we have as much right to make use of inferential reasoning, on any subject, as other people.

APPENDIX.

WHEN the original practice of .believers baptism by immersion, first grew unpopular, and upon what particular account, it is not easy to say: nor is this a matter of any great moment. For, could it be proved, (though I believe it cannot,) that infant baptism was practiced in the apostolic age, the corruptions of that age, which were very numerous, can no more be defended than those of the last, or those of the present century.

But had the apostles known any thing of infant baptism, or of that which is commonly so called, their silence on that subject, when they warmly disputed against the continuance of circumcision, seems to have been unwise: therefore, we may suppose, they were all of them unacquainted with that business.

Had they known, approved, and practiced infant sprinkling, how are we to account for its ever giving way to the unpopular mode of immersion? Yet it must be owned, that baptism by immersion, was not only the constant practice of the apostles, but that this practice has been continued to this day, by a long series of ministers, both abroad and at home, many of which, have been as learned and as pious as their most respectable opponents.

It has often been said, that most of the corruptions of Christianity in this country, may be accounted for, by adverting to our former connection with the Church of Rome. This may be disputed; at least, it is certain, there are many corrupt sentiments of religion in this country which the Church of Rome never approved. But that paedobaptism was imported into Great Britain from the Church of Rome, as well as many other notions unworthy of importation, there is some reason to believe.

The Church at Rome was once, like the other primitive churches, congregational; and in those days, it consisted of such persons as first gave their own selves to the Lord, and to his apostles, by the will of God. At that time, their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world. But when the church AT Rome became the Church of Rome, primitive discipline was gradually laid aside, and then, the temporizing disposition of that church, was loudly spoken of almost in every nation under heaven.

Now, it is remarkable, that every national church formerly in communion with the Church of Rome, are paedobaptists, or advocates for infant sprinkling; and it is certain, that many who have dissented from those national churches, are as fond of that practice as they themselves: whereas the Greek church has preferred immersion to sprinkling; believing immersion to be the only proper mode of baptizing.

But it does not appear, that infant sprinkling ever was, in any place, suddenly, and at once introduced; as was certainly the case with believer's baptism: a difference so remarkable should not be overlooked.

When, just as the times and tempers of men would admit, infant sprinkling, any where, became popular, that change opened a wide door for many conjectures to be advanced, and for much curious reasoning to be brought into play, in order to defend the pleasing innovation and here, as in other cases, the progress of error naturally produced disputes, and divisions, more in number, and worse in their final consequences, than was generally foreseen.

At length, when both the proper subjects of baptism, and the only proper mode of baptizing, were, by the multitude given up, they who still adhered to the original practice, were severely censured, and treated as persons that were illiterate, illiberal, or criminally perverse: nor is such usage, in certain situations, where much is said against bigotry, utterly abolished in Great Britain,

even in this enlightened age.

It seems quite natural, that parents should have a partial regard for their children; and this partiality, within due bounds, answers very valuable purposes. But it may be carried too far, and there is reason to believe, it often has been carried much too far on religious subjects. For, though Christian parents are wisely enjoined in the New Testament, to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, yet it no where allows them to suppose, that the children of the flesh are the children of God. Eph. 6: 4. Rom. 9: 8.

A religious education is undoubtedly, a favor; and from a child, to be well acquainted with the scriptures, is, even in London, an uncommon blessing. But if, under pretence of a religious education, any child is brought up with strong prejudices against the ordinance of baptism, as it was finally settled by Jesus Christ, after his resurrection from the dead, and is taught to consider believers baptism by immersion, as indecent, and dangerous, or as a mere ceremony of little, or of no importance, how such a part of his education can be of any real advantage to that child, I cannot understand.

One reason, why those positive institutions which are peculiar to the New Testament, have been neglected by some, and perverted by others, I take to be this; they are more closely connected with the gospel of Christ than unbelievers are able to discern and approve: and I may add, they are less to be valued on account of our own personal obedience, than as means of our holding communion with Christ, in that way and manner which he has appointed.

The nature, use, and end of baptism, and of the Lord's Supper, cannot be discovered and enjoyed, on mere legal principles ; nor indeed, in any other way than by faith in the Son of God. Under the influence of self-righteous tempers, the Jews perverted the laws of Moses; and from a legal and temporizing turn of mind, many professors of Christianity, have said and published strange things concerning the ordinances of Jesus Christ.

I do not, however, mean to insinuate, that all who differ from me concerning the positive institutions of Christianity, are governed by temporizing and legal tempers. I know that some of them are not, having conversed with

learned and pious men, both of the Church of England, and amongst dissenters, who have argued in a dispassionate manner, and I believe, according to their view of the scriptures, conscientiously, for infant baptism. But I have observed, that when those gentlemen were pressed in the debate, they allowed that much might be said for believer's baptism, but contended, it did not follow from thence, that believers only were to be baptized; nor that immersion was the only proper mode of baptizing.

On being asked, Why the subjects or the mode of baptism, should, at any time, be changed? I never yet was able to hear a good answer to that question and, I am afraid, that they who think this ordinance may be changed, hold, that there is a discretionary power on earth, to alter, as it may be thought expedient, the positive laws of Jesus Christ.

This is seldom, in so many words, asserted, but whether this is not the opinion of some pious people, they would do well to consider.

But, if any man argues thus, That whatever was the original command and primitive practice concerning the subjects and mode of baptism, This was never intended to be binding on posterity, in all circumstances, that gentleman should say, if the rule is not absolute, how much of it may be given up; and when, and by what authority which I apprehend, he will find a very difficult task.

That we may tarry one for another when we purpose to break bread, and that we may postpone the ordinance of baptism in case of sickness, and upon some other occasions, must be admitted: but that any church has power to alter what Christ has ordained, either in reference to the mode, or subjects of baptism, or in reference to the subjects, and design of sitting down at the supper of our Lord, I cannot believe.

THE merit of bringing forward so much evidence for the baptism of believers by immersion, as I have now done, is not great : because the task is easy to be performed. In truth, it is little more than letting the scriptures speak for themselves.

But let any paedobaptist, if he pleases, try, (not whether he can plausibly object to some things which I have advanced, this will not be disputed; but let him try,) whether he is able to produce equal evidence in support of his own sentiments. Let any paedobaptist, if he pleases, undertake this task, and

perhaps, he will soon be convinced, that what is easy for me, or for any other Baptist of tolerable abilities to perform, will be difficult, very difficult, if it be not impossible for him to accomplish.

If, however, this can be done by writing on the same subjects that are here introduced, in as narrow a compass, in as plain a manner, with as much reference to the scriptures, and, at the same time, as free from any personal dispute, this would, in my opinion, be the mean of proselyting more to the doctrine and practice of infant baptism, than all that has been yet said and published for that purpose.

But if, on the contrary, this cannot be done, how are we to account for such inability in our most able opponents? Certainly, it is not for want of zeal in them to support their own cause, nor for want of leisure, nor for want of human learning. But it is well known, that neither zeal, with leisure, learning, nor even with piety itself, can obtain any real dominion over truth. Far from it: truth may be concealed, denied, traduced, and trodden down; yet in what manner so ever it is opposed, we may safely say, Great is truth, and it shall prevail. Amen.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

In page 14, line 13, the letter l is wanting.

Other inaccuracies are left to the intelligent reader to correct as he may think proper.