

# THE REFORMED VIEW OF BAPTISM

(Concluded)

by

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## THE OBJECTIONS TO PAEDOBAPTISM

**I**n our last article we attempted to set forth the positive truth that the infant seed of believing parents are to be baptized. "The argument in a nutshell is simply this: God established His Church in the days of Abraham and put children into it. They must remain there until He puts them out. He has nowhere put them out. They are still then members of His Church and as such entitled to its ordinances. Among these ordinances is baptism, which standing in a similar place in the New Dispensation to circumcision in the Old, is like it, to be given to children."

The quotation above is taken from the conclusion of a fascinating article by B.B. Warfield entitled: "The Polemics of Infant Baptism" in which he takes up six objections to Infant Baptism listed by A.H. Strong in his Systematic Theology and shows that not one is valid. (Studies in Theology, pp.389ff.) The whole article is well worth reading. Here, in a much briefer response, I simply want to consider two objections which regularly occur.

### **Objection 1. There is no command in the New Testament for Infant Baptism.**

The first response must surely be that the argument is on the other foot! That infant circumcision as well as adult was practised by the express command of God in the Old Testament Church is admitted by all. Where, under the New Dispensation as it been revoked? And why, under the brighter and fuller light of the Gospel are our children to be spiritually disadvantaged as compared with their position in the Old?

Secondly, when, as usually happens, our objector states that he needs a positive command there is surely a measure of arrogance here. God instructs us in His Word in Prose: "*In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth.*" (Genesis 1 : 1). In Poetry: "*The Heavens declare the Glory of God.*" (Psalm 19 :1). By parable: "*A sower went forth to sow.*" (Mat. 13 : 3) There is Allegory: "*Which things*

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*are an allegory.*" (Gal. 4 : 24). And also Apocalyptic: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*" (Rev.1 :1). Matters may be: "either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture." (Westminster Confession: Chapt. 1 para 6). It is not for the creature to stand in judgment on how the Creator should instruct us - let us reverently accept whatever way He does.

Thirdly, it may be objected that "I care not a fig for your 'good and necessary consequence.' Give me a plain command of Scripture - and I will obey! Do you not?" Every Christian Church I know rightly admits believing women to the Lord's Supper. But there is neither command nor example of such in the New Testament. We do so and properly do so, as a result of "good and necessary consequence."

A consideration of these points shows this (objection) simply falls to the ground.

### **Objection 2. The Scriptures require Faith and Repentance before Baptism.**

The argument is of course that as infants are incapable of exercising either they are not proper subjects of baptism. But let us spell the argument out a little further and it will be seen to be a sophism. What is actually being implied is this: The Scriptures require faith and repentance of *Adults*, in order to baptism; but as *Infants* cannot exercise these they cannot be baptised. The fallacy lies in the fact that the premise is about *adults* but the conclusion is about *infants*.

This will perhaps be made clearer by substituting another scripture: "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*" (Mark 16 : 16). So: The Scriptures require belief and baptism of *Adults*, in order to be saved; but as *Infants* cannot exercise these they will be condemned!

Again: "*If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.*" (II Thess. 3 : 10). So: The Scriptures require work of *Adults*, in order to eat; but as *Infants* cannot work they may not be fed!

The sophism, a specious but fallacious argument, is surely now clear. We do not believe all infants are lost, nor do we believe they should not eat. The mistake arises simply by applying to infants what was intended for adults - and clearly then this objection falls to the ground also.

## IMPLICATIONS

**W**hat conclusions may we draw from this series of articles ? ( See previous articles in "British Reformed Journal" numbers 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 14.)

1. When a person has been baptised in the name of the Trinity it is not to be repeated. It simply will not do for it to be set aside with some comment about 'infant sprinkling'. The minister who carries out such a repetition should know better - and the candidate could know better if only he or she had enquired. I know the word *anabaptist* carries negative overtones and one would not for a moment seek to defend the terrible incidents which have occurred in earlier centuries, but it still seems the only word to apply to this repeated practice. But, says someone, my parents were only nominal Christians. I was baptised because it was "the done thing". So God in mercy has given you the reality to correspond to what, in perhaps ignorance, was given in ritual as a child. Rejoice - but do not repeat. But, says another, the Church in which I was baptised is largely apostate and the minister was an ungodly man. If true these things are common and deplorable - but do not invalidate official actions - anymore than the character of a Registrar performing marriages affects their validity. The only exception to this rule concerns the cults such as Christadelphians; Jehovah's Witnesses; and Mormons etc. where in all cases the Tri-Una God is denied. In these cases Christian Baptism should be sought.

2. Where a person has been brought to true faith in Christ and has not previously been baptised then they should seek it as a matter of urgency. Baptism is the defining evidence to themselves and the world that they are Christians. It is perhaps ironical that the one place where one is most likely to meet unbaptized believers is in Baptist Churches - or amongst those connected by birth with them. It may be that, just as in some Presbyterian Churches there is a reluctance to take the Lord's Supper because of its infrequency and consequently the emphasis placed on it, the un-Biblical emphasis placed on Baptism and the demand for a particular, and we are persuaded, un-Biblical mode, often along with a great deal of associated display inhibits precisely the more exercised and sensitive souls who in the judgment of charity are proper candidates.

3. But beyond our quarrels and divisions we must seek the reality of the Faith. Have we truly repented and believed the gospel? Has God in Christ saved our souls? Whatever conclusions we come to about mode and subjects - the ritual - are we partakers of the reality to which it points - the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? If not, all our theologizing will be in vain - and it would be better if we had never been born!

### Conclusions.

In somewhat thankfully coming to the end of this series of articles - and hopefully moving on to something more profitable - I again recognize the danger mentioned at the start, of getting the whole subject out of proportion. The defence of the Reformed and Biblical position is forced on us by those who see the matter as of such importance as to set up Baptist Churches, appoint Baptist Ministers, and struc-

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ture a whole denomination.

We now invite all such to carefully re-consider their position. It is common for Baptists to see baptism as symbolising the death and resurrection of Christ. If however they will consider what has been written on its **Meaning** I suspect there is little with which they will wish to quarrel. As regards the **Mode**, let the reader, instead of relying on a few proof texts, carefully go through the New Testament and note every place where Baptism is spoken of - including those texts where the original is hidden by the translation. Let him consider the multitudes at Jordan, the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, the Jailer at night, etc. Then compare it with the amount of work involved in the average church in say, immersing one person. Now recollect that the ritual is to represent the reality of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. I believe the only conclusion can be to give up the insistence on immersion. As regards **Subjects** we are agreed that converted adults should be baptized. The only real question is the treatment of their children. Here we need to consider the whole data of Scripture. The fact that children were included in the Covenant from the first, the absence of any indication of a change, and then the incidental notices of family baptisms, and the commands addressed to children as members of the church can only point one way.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

The best book on Baptism is the Bible! The purpose of these articles has simply been to bring out the Biblical position and we simply invite our readers to emulate the Berean Christians and search out for themselves the truth of the matter and we are confident of the result. But many of us are deficient in Greek and also we will overlook matters unless our attention is specifically called to them. Certainly these articles could not have been written without drawing on others. The interested student may find help in the following amongst many:

Jay E. Adams  
James M.Cheney  
Peter Edwards

Edmund B.Fairfield  
Pierre Ch. Marcel  
John Murray  
Duane Spencer

The Meaning and Mode of Baptism  
William the Baptist  
Candid Reasons for Renouncing the  
Principles of Antipaedobaptism.  
Letters on Baptism  
The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism  
Christian Baptism  
Holy Baptism

The writer would welcome comment or correction, and although criticism is never very welcome, provided it is positive, it can only serve to the elucidation of the truth.