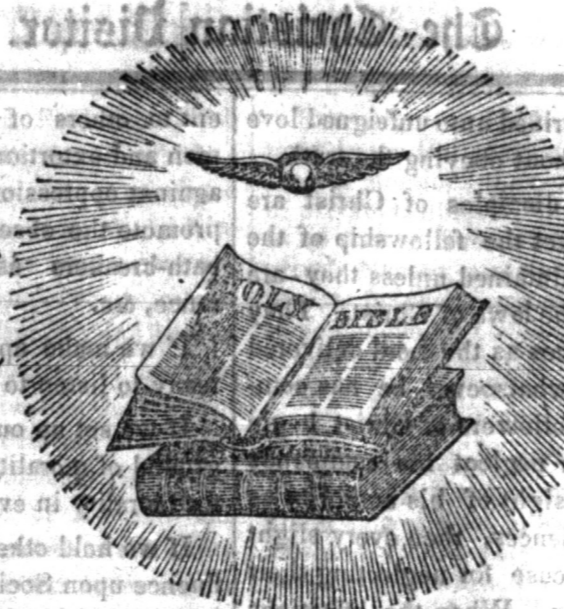


Christian Visitor.



A Family Newspaper—Devoted to

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BY PURENESS, BY KNOWLEDGE—BY LOVE UNFEIGNED.—St. PAUL.

{Rev. E. D. VERY, Editor.

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NO. 13

A CHAUNT OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS, AT THE LIGHTING OF THE EVENING LAMP.

From Dr. Bethune's "Lays of Love and Faith."

Light of the immortal Father's glory,
 Joyous, sacred, heavenly, blest,
 Jesus Christ, we bow before thee,
 As the sunlight leaves the west.
 We give Thee homage, grateful, lowly,
 That the evening light we see,
 Father, Son, and Spirit Holy,
 Holy, Holy, Holy, Three

Worthy art Thou, worlds unending
 Son of God, the life and light,
 To receive a praise transcending
 All created worth and might;
 Soon the star now shining o'er us,
 All the earth shall joyful see;
 And all tongues shall swell the chorus:
 Holy, Holy, Holy, Three.

Conversions to Baptist Sentiments.

Conversion to Baptist sentiments is becoming the order of the day. Almost every exchange records a new case of some minister, or prominent man, in different portions of the country, renouncing Pædoism, for what, after mature deliberation, they find to be the truth. Justification by Faith—Believer's Baptism by Immersion—and here lies the proof before us of another.

Dr. Wm. L. Slack, of Denmark, Tennessee, for thirty or forty years an old School Presbyterian, has renounced his Pædobaptist sentiments, in favor of the Baptist Church. His "Reasons" lie before us, and are remarkably conclusive.—But his remarks on Pædo baptismal regeneration, as taught in the confessions and disciplines of the Pædobaptist sects, are to the point, and proved upon them, beyond the possibility of successful refutation. His attention being directed to this point, and to the critical examination of classical writers on Baptizo were the means of his conversion. We design to publish the reasons in a tract form, in the course of a few weeks, for the use of the churches in Tennessee.

Dr. Slack is far from being alone in the position he at present occupies. During the last few years, hundreds of distinguished Pædobaptist divines, and classical scholars, have come to the same conclusions. Nearly one hundred Greek scholars, (including the conversions in our colleges) during the present year, have embraced our sentiments. In the past few years we can recall distinguished names that have left the several Pædobaptist churches in America.

From the Presbyterian; Dr. Judson, Luther Rice, Dr. Chapin, Latimore, Jewett, Frey, &c. Episcopal church, Dr. Hooper, of S. C., Southwood, and Nelson, Va.

From the Methodist church the conversions are so numerous, that they have become a matter of daily occurrence; among the last are Remington, Miller and Turrentine, of N. Carolina. Among the laity, conversions are surprisingly numerous, and increasing. Two of our preachers were conversing upon this subject, a few days since, in our hearing, and they found that they had, within the last eighteen months or two years, in this State, baptized between three and four hundred Pædobaptists! We welcome our brother Slack, and all who come to us in a full Baptist uniform.

While writing the above, our eye fell on still another case, recorded in the last number of that unequalled paper, The Christian Chronicle, Philadelphia. Mr. Remington, the late convert from the Methodist church, is proving a great blessing to our denomination. Converts are multiplying under his ministry. A few Sabbaths ago, he had the pleasure of immersing a Mr. Wood, a regularly ordained preacher of the Wesleyan Methodist church. He was much respect-

ed, and honorably dismissed by his Methodist brethren; after they had heard his reason for a change of sentiments, they paid him his salary in full, and in addition, made him a handsome present.—Tenn. Rep.

Reasons why I became a Baptist.

BY WILLIAM L. SLACK.

It is not my design, in this communication, to enter largely into the discussion of my subject, but rather to state the circumstances and reasons which led me to abandon Pædobaptism, and to adopt those sentiments advocated by the Baptists, and, to my mind, clearly exhibited in the Holy Scriptures.

About three years ago, I proposed to my wife, who was a Baptist, to have our little daughter sprinkled: she remarked, she had serious objections to it, but yet, if I was determined to have it done, I might bear the responsibility. This declaration astonished me not a little, for I thought that infant sprinkling was an ordinance so well attested by every shape and manner of evidence, scriptural, historical, traditional, and reasonable, that the most ignorant and prejudiced, when the facts were properly presented, would be compelled to adopt and advocate Pædobaptism. My first step, then, to the accomplishment of purpose was, to overthrow and dissipate my wife's conscientious objections to this scriptural and reasonable ordinance; and I set myself to work immediately to cull and select from every source within my reach, the arguments for its support. I searched, read, selected, considered, and rejected almost every argument presented to my mind.

The solid, ancient, adamant foundation upon which I thought my superstructure was built, seemed now to exhibit some time-worn rents, which no art could fully repair. I could not see distinctly the bearing of those arguments for Infant Sprinkling, and it was indeed plain that they required great labor, and a patient and diligent effort of the mind to render them at all intelligible. The apparent weakness of the arguments presented by my Authors, I attributed to a deficient understanding of their subject. I took up the Assembly Confession of Faith, turned to the article Baptism, page 120, hoping to find here everything satisfactory to dissipate my doubts, and to reassure my mind. I read that Baptism was "a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins," and that "by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such (whether of age or infants) &c.

I asked myself, can Baptism mean all this? Surely, I have been greatly in the dark upon this important subject! Is it possible that by its right use, promised grace is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost? I had often denied the intrinsic and essential importance of Baptism, but here it is exhibited as the very essence of salvation, in the clearest and most emphatic manner, and although Romans vi. 3—5 rose to my mind, yet I was inclined to think that I did not understand the subject, and that the Assembly of Divines, the most learned body of Theologians in the world, knew better than I could possibly know, and that Baptism meant all they said, and nothing less. I consoled myself with the reflection that if I were not able to prove and maintain the ordinance in question, I could easily refute the arguments and objections brought against it, not thinking that of necessity the *onus probandi* fell to my lot.—I took up Pengilly's "Scripture Guide to Baptism," because represented to embody, in a small compass, the views and arguments of the Baptists on this subject, fully determined to consider and refute it step by step, for I felt that this would be a light and trifling task. I read it partly, but instead of finding its refutation an easy task, I found it, to my surprise so filled with God's revelation and Christ's own words, that I laid it aside for the present, with the

resolve that at some future period I would give it an impartial and attentive consideration. I was not satisfied in my mind yet I communicated my feelings to no one at this time. Reflection after reflection arose as circumstances favored, and in despite of all my efforts to the contrary, my doubts and objections increased, so that I no longer felt that I was omitting an important duty, by not having my child sprinkled.

A few months since, I went to work to investigate the subject, desiring to be guided by what Christ would say, and determined to receive, believe, and obey whatever in my judgment the scriptures would present. I turned to Matt. iii., and read of John baptizing "in the Jordan," and to Mark i: 5, "in the river of Jordan." This language so fully and explicitly declares what was done, that to my mind it needed no comment. Matt. iii. 11, next presented itself, "I indeed baptize you with water," and the corresponding passages in Mark i: 8, Luke iii: 16, John i: 26, Acts i: 5, and all these translated "with water." I placed these passages in connexion with "in Jordan," and "in the river of Jordan," and a manifest inconsistency to me in the translation. It does not express a continuation of the same, but an idea quite different. To say John baptized in the Jordan, and still more explicitly "in the river of Jordan," and then as a continuation of the same, that he baptized "with water," conveys a great inconsistency, and carries with it its own refutation. The passages above cited, translated by *in water*, would exactly accord an idea, and is the proper and literal rendering of the Greek. We can with propriety say "with water," not taking it in connexion with "in the Jordan," but if, "in the Jordan," had been translated *with the Jordan*, as it should have been to accord with "with water," the absurdity would have been too glaring to have been received.

But the 16th verse directly strengthens and establishes the same construction, for "Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water," and again, Acts viii. 38—39, "and they went both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water," and again, Rom. vi. 4—5, "therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death."—How exactly in accordance are the above quoted passages! what a beautiful continuation of the same idea! How irresistibly does *immersion* force itself upon us as the only idea implied! I care not for nicely spun theories, and long and detailed reasonings upon the subject: the language is sufficient, complete, and perfectly intelligible. I next examined the commission, Matt. xxviii. 19 20, "Go teach (matheteusate) all nations;" the question occurs, how can infants be taught? Instruction here is a pre-requisite to baptism. I might be mistaken, and I turned to Mark xvi: 15—16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized," &c. How can I be mistaken—could language be more clear and intelligible. How can we avoid the conclusion; first, that the gospel must be preached; second, that the person must believe; third, that he must be baptized. If such explicit language were used in the common transactions of life, nine hundred and ninety-nine in one thousand would form a like conclusion. I could see no grounds, whatever, here, for infant sprinkling, for they cannot understand if they are preached to, neither can they believe, if the truth were presented ever so plainly.

I intended, if possible, that not a shadow of doubt should possess my mind upon the all important truths of the Scriptures, and I referred to the promise, Acts ii. 38—39, for the promise is "unto you and to your children, (teknois.)" What promise is it?—Baptism? No! but the promise of the Holy Spirit. Permit me here to remark, that I have often during several years past, in hearing my classes in Greek, met with the word *teknon*, and I have never,

to my knowledge, translated it *infants*, and the sense of the context would be plainly violated to do so. When very young children are referred to; the word *paidia* or *paidion*, a diminutive for *pais* [child] is used; see Greek text, Mark x: 14—15, Matt. xix: 14, Luke xiii: 16, Matt. xiv. 21, &c. But to refer again to Acts ii. 38—39, as quoted above, those children are mentioned in verse 17, as "sons and daughters prophesying," and verse 38 requires repentance before baptism. I asked myself, can I desire more evidence upon a subject already doubly plain! The sun in his splendor could not more fully enlighten objects within the influence of his rays, than the word of eternal truth enlightened my mind upon this subject, heretofore so clouded and difficult. That I might be in possession of all the facts relating to this interesting ordinance, I turned successively to those passages considering household baptism.

1. To Cornelius, Acts 10. 2. To Lydia, Acts 17. 3. To the Philippian Jailor, Acts 16.—Lastly, to Stephanus, 1 Cor. 1. And I could bring to view, not a single passage or idea favoring infant sprinkling, or that any one was baptized without previous belief and regeneration. Christ took little children, (*paidia*) up in his arms; put his hand on them and blessed them, notwithstanding the opposition, made by the disciples to their parents or friends presenting them. The passage certainly does not say, he sprinkled or immersed them, but that he blessed them. Must I infer that he baptized those infants? My mind refuses to do that, which the plain language denies. I desire to obey the commands of Christ, and when he says one thing, he cannot mean by inference another. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," Matt. 19: 14, has been my favorite passage, and I have labored, anxiously labored, to make this mean that infants were recognized by Christ as members of his church. Certainly, if infants are members of the church, by the above declaration of Christ, they are so by blessing and not by baptism. "Of such" always presented itself to me, like the mirage, to the traveller in the desert, the nearer I approached, the more evident the inconsistency. I frequently advanced it in argument, but was compelled as frequently to relinquish it, for some stronger and more tenable point. The evident inappropriateness of the passage, to the maintenance of my argument, I could well reconcile to myself by attributing it to my inability of discussion and ignorance of the subject. Can it mean of such children? The laws of language, principles of interpretation and rules of logic, are against such a construction. I can reconcile it to my mind in no other way than that the followers of Christ were to exhibit the humility and obedience of children. As little children, humble, forgiving and obedient to their parents, so the followers of Christ, who receive him in truth and sincerity, will really be, and appear humble and obedient to God their Heavenly Father,—to Christ their Redeemer,—and be willing to submit without a murmur to every divine command. There is one more point which has held an extensive influence over my mind, although I could never understand it, so as to make it either reasonable or intelligible.—the analogy between the Old and New Testament dispensations. Although once a favorite argument, yet I cannot see the analogy between the Jewish congregation and Christ's church; the former carnal and comprising the whole nation; the latter spiritual, and strictly including only those regenerated, or born of the Spirit of God. I cannot, and never could, see the analogy between circumcision and baptism, although I received the latter, as coming in the room of the former: and here permit me to remark, that I look upon baptism as a positive institution of Christ, which can neither be contracted nor enlarged, and therefore it cannot depend upon analogy, but upon the direct expression of the institution itself.