

Christian

Visitor.



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“BY PURENESS, BY KNOWLEDGE—BY LOVE UNFEIGNED.”—ST. PAUL.

Rev. E. D. VERY, Editor.

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GIVE TO THE NEEDY.

Give as God hath given thee,
With a bounty full and free;
If He hath with liberal hand,
Given wealth to thy command,
For the fullness of thy store,
Give thy needy brother more.

If the lot his love doth give,
Is by earnest toil to live.
If with nerve and sinew strong,
Thou dost labor hard and long,
Then e'en from thy slender store,
Give, and God shall give thee more.

Hearts there are, with grief oppressed,
Forms in tattered raiment dressed,
Homes, where want and woe abide,
Dens, where vice and misery hide:
With a bounty large and free,
Give, as God hath given thee.

Wealth is thine, to aid and bless
Strength to succor and redress;
Bear thy weaker brother's part,
Strong of hand and strong of heart;
Be thy portion large or small,
Give!—for God DOTH GIVE THEM ALL!

Julia B. Fletcher.

Is the Administrator necessary to the Validity of Baptism?

Those who assume the affirmative maintain, that in order to valid baptism, three things are necessary, viz., the subject, the mode, and the administrator. The administrator, say they, must be a minister in good standing in a gospel church, who has himself been immersed: or rather, he must be a regular Baptist minister. This is a fair and plain statement of the case. The question submitted above supposes a proper subject and mode; the bone of strife relates to the administrator. The question thus cleared of all unnecessary obscurities, should be calmly met, and all the consequences flowing from the positions assumed by those on the affirmative, should be dispassionately examined and prayerfully embraced or rejected.

And the first consequence claiming our attention is, that if the administrator be necessary to the validity of baptism *now*, he was always necessary. This is a plain, common-sense deduction, which we presume no one will controvert. There has been no law given in relation to baptism since the canon of revelation received its final amen. If at any time since the introduction of Christianity into the world, an individual received baptism in a manner contrary to the divine enactments, it was invalid to all intents and purposes; for God has not given a law contrary to that in the Bible. The proposition of the affirmative is, that those who have been baptized by an improper administrator, are not baptized at all. If that is true now, it is always true. It assumes that a man cannot give what he has not received. If John Jones, who baptized John Smith, was baptized by an improper administrator, it follows that John Smith has no baptism, seeing that John Jones did not have it. And so on, every administrator from now to the Apostles must be proved to be a proper administrator, or else all baptisms coming from him will be null and void. If any link in the succession be broken, the most skillful spiritual smith under the whole heavens cannot mend the chain. If one thing is necessary to another, they are mutually dependent—one destroyed and both are destroyed.—An improper administrator twenty generations removed, is as fatal to the genuineness of the ordinance as such a one but one generation removed.

Nor will it avail to argue that cases of necessity may arise when a proper administrator can not be obtained, and that then an improper one is allowable. Thus some have contended, and not unfrequently we have seen such a position assumed in defence of Roger Williams. But the argument is

were wont to say, that in cases of necessity, when immersion could not be administered, affusion would suffice; and where water could not be procured, that wine, or oil, milk, or even sand might be used! Such reasoning is monstrously absurd. For where a duty cannot be performed, the obligation ceases. No man is required to perform an impossibility.—And a thing not done right, is not done at all. The man who cannot be baptized, is not required to be baptized. He who, by a plea of necessity, resorts to sprinkling, or uses another element than water, and calls it baptism, mocks God. He performs an act of will worship; he does what is not required at his hands. The same is just as true of the administrator, on the hypothesis now under consideration. If one of defined character must administer baptism, then another of a different character cannot administer it. The necessity in the case may dispense with the ordinance altogether, but it can never justify its administration in an invalid manner.

The conclusion then seems to be inevitable, that if the administrator is essential to the ordinance *now* he was *always* so, and under all circumstances.

A second consequence from the maintenance of the affirmative of this question is, that no person in these days can possibly *know* that he has been baptized at all. Certain it is that so far as we are concerned, we are involved in a most profound ignorance as to the validity of our baptism; and yet we are a Baptist of a Baptist—our father and our father's father were Baptist ministers. We have perfect knowledge of our immersion in the beautiful waters of the Kentucky river. The minister on the occasion has often told us that he was immersed by a certain Baptist minister. And we have been informed too, upon what we have ever esteemed reliable tradition, that said minister was also, some sixty years ago, immersed by another Baptist minister. But here our information terminates;—who baptized that minister, we have no means of ascertaining; all our inquiries have been utterly unavailing. Here then, at the distance of a little more than half a century, an impenetrable barrier hinders our progress; clouds and darkness hang upon our horizon, and intercept our vision; and still we are seventeen centuries this side of the apostles, our cord broken, and we left to wend the dark labyrinth of succession all that long and dreary distance in order to know that we have been baptized! And we think it altogether probable that few members of the Muscle Shoal association would be more successful than ourselves in establishing the line of their baptism, extending from this to the apostolic age. Permit us then to suggest a plan by which the difficulties in this association may be amicably adjusted:—Let all those who can furnish clear and indubitable evidence of the validity of their baptism, according to the terms of the affirmative of this question, vote non-fellowship for those churches and ministers who believe it right to receive a member who has been immersed on profession of faith by a Pedobaptist minister; and let all the rest keep silence. We hazard the prediction that this will put the matter forever at rest; and what can be more fair? Surely no brother in all Alabama would wish to condemn in another what he allows in himself!

It is in vain to urge, in answer to this, that a regular succession of proper administrators may be traced to the apostles. Were we even to grant this (which, by the way, no man can prove), still insurmountable obstacles would beset our path—still we could not know that we had received baptism from this succession. There have been, it must be remembered, a numerous host of *improper* administrators—and from these we may have obtained our baptism. Who can tell? Who can dispel the mists of scepticism which must necessarily becloud every mind called to investigate this subject? Who now can possibly establish the validity of his baptism

administrator, but knowledge on the subject is utterly out of the question.

The last consequence we shall note at present is, that the affirmative of this question makes baptism an anomaly among divine institutions; it makes it a duty which no one can know that he has performed. Baptism is thus rendered useless and nugatory? If we cannot know that we discharge a duty, there can be no benefit or advantage in efforts at its observance. Its performance or its neglect must, in our minds, amount to the same thing, for if we cannot know that we discharge our duty, what do we gain by efforts to discharge it? In being baptized, we may perform a duty; and then we may be mocking God; and according to the doctrine under review, we have no means of determining which is the case. Doubts must ever surround our baptism. It cannot therefore furnish the answer of a good conscience toward God. It is impossible that any one can know that he has obeyed the last great commission of the Saviour—that he has been buried with Christ by baptism into death, and arisen to walk in newness of life! But is not this strong presumptive proof, that the position of no baptism without a certain and definite character of administration, is an absurdity?—Can we not know when we discharge any duty?—Can we not positively determine when we observe the ordinances of God's house? Or has the lapse of centuries rolled an oblivious wave over the way of holiness, so that no longer can we discern the right paths to walk therein? As at present informed, we are not prepared to receive these things. —*Western Bap. Review.*

The Exposition of Scripture,

AND THE PREACHING OF OUR LORD AND HIS APOSTLES.

From a Review of Bonas's Commentary on Leviticus in the Presbyterian Review for 1846, p. 509.

Man's own instruments may accomplish man's own objects; but in accomplishing God's objects, he must use God's instruments. Intellect may grapple with intellect; imagination may fascinate imagination; and sentiment may awaken sentiment; but if we would pierce the heart, and reach the inner soul, we must lay aside our 'excellency of speech and of wisdom,' and declare, in simplicity, 'the testimony of God,' as much as possible in God's own words. . . . The power of intellect is not the power of God unto salvation, even when exercised upon the truths of scripture. At least what is called 'intellectual preaching,' is by no means found most conducive to the great end of the ministry. . . . In preaching, as in all other duties, our work is purely ministerial; not to bring out our own thoughts and feelings, but, with the truthful simplicity of messengers, to bring out the thoughts and feelings of God. There is a great difference between giving our own thoughts upon the word of God, and simply opening up the word of God to our own circumstances, as the Spirit gives us light. In the one way, God is set aside that man may speak; in the other, man becomes the mere messenger of God. . . . We complain of the indifference of success in our own days, and the days of the apostles; but is there not as great a difference between our preaching and theirs, as there is between our success and theirs? Let any one examine for himself the sermons of the apostles as recorded in the Acts. How full they are of simple statements of gospel facts, how direct and pointed, how full of scripture—not of scripture-truth alone, but of the very words of scripture. They were not intellectual preachers, nor imaginative, nor sentimental, but they were very searching—those that heard were pricked to the heart; very solemn—men were overawed before them, and great fear fell on all the multitude; very direct—men could not evade them, even Felix trembled; very easily understood in their glad tidings—men were filled with immediate

truth, men's joy, and peace, and faith, abode steadfast. In the very words of God, there is amazing point to prick to the heart, and authoritative weight and power to overawe the conscience and control the will, and deep full-hearted tenderness to melt the soul. 'Is not my word like as a fire,' saith the Lord, 'and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' 'My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.' 'The entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple.' If we would return to the success of apostolic times, we must return to the scriptural fullness and simplicity of apostolic teaching. We must have less of man, and more of God. 'My speech,' said he, who was the most learned and intellectual, as he was the most successful of all the apostles, 'my speech and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and in power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.' 'which things also,' he adds, 'we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.' 'Expound much,' said Mr. M'Cheyne; 'it is through the truth, that souls are to be sanctified, not through essays upon the truth.' 'Preach the word,' says the Holy Ghost. 'Preach it as the word,' says one, whose ministry the Holy Ghost greatly blessed. 'I would,' he adds, 'humbly suggest for the consideration of all ministers, whether we should not preach more in the manner of God's word. . . . The metaphysical treatises of the later Puritans and Nonconformists gave place by an almost imperceptible transition to the moral ethics of moderatism. The Spirit of God departed, as the word of God was set aside. When men equipped themselves in their own armour, they were left to fight in their own strength.

Even the living Word himself, whose every utterance was the truth of God, fed for his own nourishment, used for his own defence, and employed in his own ministry, the written word of inspiration. It was thus he dealt with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus; 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.' We know not, in the whole compass of scripture, a more impressive and graphic exhibition of what constitutes the real essence of preaching, in form and substance, than is embodied in these few words. The exposition of scripture is the form—the things 'concerning Jesus' is the substance.

Sometimes we have heard exposition recommended, as being the *easiest* kind of preaching. But woe to the ministry formed upon the principle of getting decently through the work in the easiest way, and with the least amount of labour. . . . But in no department of ministerial duty is there such an awful weight of responsibility as in opening up the mind of the Spirit, in the exposition of scripture. . . . Let those, if there be any such, who want to do with *little study*, speak in their own names and express their own thoughts; but let none profess to speak in the name, and open up the mind of God, but those who are content, for the exposition of scripture, to travail in deliberate study, and earnest wrestling before God in prayer. . . . We trust that, in proportion as the great ends of the ministry are more definitely realized and aimed at, there will be greater directness and simplicity in the general style of preaching, less of mere sermonizing, and more of exposition. The word of God and not the word of man,—the mind of God and not the mind of man, is the great instrument for converting sinners and building up the body of Christ.

No less than 17 clergymen, many of them with their wives and daughters, turned out to grace the "Warwickshire Hunt Ball," on the 15th January, at Stratford-on-Avon. The people paid the