

SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM MADE PLAIN.

BY JOHN BATES.

"He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved."—Jesus Christ.

The subject of baptism is beginning to excite much attention. Many persons are enquiring respecting it. Baptists are on the increase, and the Lord is abundantly blessing their labours. Let me endeavour to make scriptural baptism plain. The following texts of scripture, as arranged, are worthy of your prayerful consideration. It is the desire of my heart that you may know the will of Jesus and follow him fully. Call no man master.—Obey Jesus.

BAPTISM IS EXPRESSLY COMMANDED.

Jesus says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. xxviii. 18, 19; Mark xvi. 15, 16; and also Acts x. 48.

TEACHING GOES BEFORE BAPTISM.

The commission requires that we should teach, or make disciples, before baptism: Matt. xxviii. 19. On the day of Pentecost Peter taught the people before he baptized them: Acts ii. 37-42. Cornelius and his friends were taught before they were baptized: Acts x. 44-48. The Corinthians were taught before baptism: Acts xviii. 8. This is the plain scriptural plan; first teach, and afterwards baptize.

REPENTANCE GOES BEFORE BAPTISM.

Peter said, "Repent," before he said, "and be baptized." Acts ii. 38. Indeed on all occasions the apostles required a profession of repentance before baptism.

BELIEVING GOES BEFORE BAPTISM.

The commission says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark xvi. 16. The Samaritans believed Philip before they were baptized: Acts viii. 12. The eunuch said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," before he was baptized, Acts viii. 37; the Corinthians believed before they were baptized: Acts xviii. 8. This indeed is the uniform scriptural plan; first a profession of faith in the Messiah, and afterwards baptism.

KNOWLEDGE IS NECESSARY BEFORE BAPTISM.

To demand repentance and faith before baptism implies a conviction of sin and a knowledge of the Saviour. To be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, involves a knowledge of the triune Jehovah. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?" "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him?" Rom. vi. 3-9. The apostles never baptized persons until they had some knowledge of the gospel.

CONFESSION OF SIN IS CONNECTED WITH BAPTISM.

They were baptized of John in Jordan, confessing their sins. Matt. iii. 1-6; Mark i. 1-5.

BAPTISM SHOULD BE A MATTER OF CHOICE.

John's disciples went out to him to be baptized as a matter of choice: Matt. iii. 5, 6. On the day of Pentecost they that gladly received his word were baptized by their own choice: Acts ii. 41. This was the case with the Eunuch, with the Corinthians, and the apostle Paul: Acts viii. 36; Acts xxii. 16. In every instance baptism was free and voluntary, being done as a matter of choice by the person or persons who wished to be baptized.

BAPTISM IS AN ACT OF CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE.

When John refused to baptize Jesus, he said, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Matt. iii. 15. We are commanded to be baptized, Acts x. 48; and it is sinful to reject that command as the Pharisees and lawyers did: Luke vii. 30.

BAPTISM REQUIRES HOLINESS OF LIFE.

Those who have been "buried with Christ in baptism," are expected to "walk in newness of life." Rom. vi. 4. As many as have been baptized into Christ, "have put on Christ." Gal. iii. 27. Candidates for baptism must have the answer of a good conscience toward God: 1 Pet. iii. 21.

BAPTISM HAS AN IMPORTANT DESIGN.

It is a figure of regeneration: John iii. 5. It is emblematical of the Christian's new life: Rom. vi. 3, 4. It represents the washing away of our sins: Acts xxii. 16. It is a sign of our

external union with the professing church: 1 Cor. xii. 13. Can baptism really regenerate us? No.—"The Spirit giveth life." 2 Cor. iii. 6. John iii. 8. Can baptism really wash away sin? No.—"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John i. 7. Can baptism save us? No.—"By grace ye are saved." Eph. ii. 8. Is baptism acceptable to God without faith? No.—"Whosoever is not of faith is sin." Rom. xiv. 23; Heb. xi. 6. Should the baptized be faithful to their profession? Yes.—"They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." Acts ii. 42. Is it sinful to reject or alter baptism? Yes.—"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it: Deut. xii. 32.

But, after all, will not infant baptism do? No. There is but "one baptism." Eph. iv. 5. Then is there no command for it? No. Not one. Is there not one plain example recorded? No. Not one. Did the apostles never in any instance practice infant baptism? No, NEVER. Then is not infant baptism unscriptural? Yes. It is not commanded; infants CANNOT BE TAUGHT; they CANNOT REPENT, they CANNOT BELIEVE; they CANNOT HAVE KNOWLEDGE, they CANNOT CONFESS, they CANNOT BE BAPTIZED AS A MATTER OF CHOICE, they CANNOT OBEY, they CANNOT WALK IN HOLINESS; neither can they UNDERSTAND THE DESIGN OF BAPTISM; all of which those persons could do who were baptized by the apostles: hence infant baptism, I think, cannot be scriptural baptism. Do not say it is of no importance, for every ordinance of Jesus is important, and should be observed in the way of his own appointment. To break one of the least of Christ's commands, either from ignorance or any other cause, must be wrong. Let me beseech you to observe the ordinance aright, otherwise you may have to say, "Our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order." 1 Chron. xv. 13. We verily have been disobedient by observing baptism "otherwise than as it is written." 2 Chron. xxx. 18.

Christian reader, you are here taught the will of God, in his own words, respecting an important ordinance. Weak believers may be accepted of God through the righteousness of Christ, but their weakness, error, or disobedience is not acceptable to him. Such things cannot be pleasing to God. Do not follow custom, or the multitude, or tradition, or say, "I will do as my fathers did," but follow Christ. Be fully persuaded in your own mind, for he that doubts whether infant baptism is true, is CONDEMNED if he does it: Rom. xiv. 23. It is the highest honour on earth to be a faithful disciple of Jesus. You or I must be wrong in infant baptism or believers' baptism must one of them be unscriptural. Think of this. Let us pray for each other, and may God of his infinite mercy guide us into the true knowledge of and scriptural obedience to his divine will, that we may both have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Eph. iv. 5.

AN AGE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH.

It is, again, a memorable fact in the present position of Christ's people, that the age is one of historical research. The religious controversies of our times seem to transfer themselves into that historic field. The battle with the enemy at the gates soon shifts its scene to the graves of the fathers, and the monuments of the old Past. There is, on the part of the favorers, and of the opposers alike of spiritual religion, and anxious tendency to inquire into the creeds and deeds of the forefathers. A D'Aubigne is fighting over again the old battles, and reviving the forgotten watchwords of the Reformation, by this graphic portraiture of the men and events of that stirring era.—The Puritan Fathers are beginning to know the honors of a partial resurrection, as our age is disinterring and relieving them from the foul cements in which they were enwrapped, and the lying epitaphs under which they were buried, by the lewd and godless age which immediately succeeded them. As we look on the stalwart, spiritual proportions of these ancient worthies, Christians of our own day seem convicted of comparative degeneracy. With larger means, and wider opportunities, we appear to accomplish less than did these devoted men. As we look at their writings so voluminous and rich, and at their toils so varied and incessant, their fierce and absorbing conflicts, and their far-reaching and still brightening influence, we seem to ourselves like mere infants in the tribes of Israel, when handling, in wonder and despair, the sword of Goliath, and remembering how a David wielded

it against its stout owner, or when touching the bedstead of Og, king of Bashan, that was nine cubits long;—a dwindling race that may not wear the armor, or renew the victories of those who have preceded us. And yet what were the Puritans, or the Reformers even to the primitive Christians? The honor and memorial of an Owen, a Bunyan, or a Baxter, a Samuel Rutherford, a John Knox, a Simon Menno, a Latimer, a Calvin or a Luther, pale beside the story of the fishermen apostles, who, cheered by no precedents, and without the furniture of learning, or wealth or numbers, stood forth confronting the dark Sanhedrim, and lifting at the foot of Caesar's throne an unblenched brow, and delivering before Pride and Might a cheerful testimony that faltered not, even whilst they heard the roar already of the lions which in the dens of the amphitheatre were awaiting their Christian victims; and whilst they saw the ruddy glare of those martyr fires even then closing the existence of so many of their meek fellow confessors. To complete their work, and to gather in the full fruits of that covenant, of which they received the first ripe ears only, we need their spirit. Their memory is a summons.—And thus, we say, the histories of the past, as they are in our times awakening new interest and study, challenge it of the churches, that they become, more than they now are, fountains of piety and mighty in faith, and more closely conformed to what their godly forerunners were, firm in trust, and valiant in deed,—fearlessly defying man, because simply relying on God.—[Dr. Williams.]

Bishop Sherlock's Comparison of Christ with Mahomet.

Go to your natural religion; lay before her Mahomet and his disciples, arrayed in armor and blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands who fell by his victorious sword. Show her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her into his retirement; show her the prophet's chamber; his concubines and his wives; and let her hear him allege revelation, and a divine commission, to justify his adultery and lust.

When she is tired with this prospect, then show her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men. Let her see him in his most retired privacies; let her follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God. Carry her to his table, to view his poor fare, and hear his heavenly discourse. Let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his cross; let her view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!

When natural religion has thus viewed both, ask her, which is the prophet of God? But her answer we have already had, when she saw part of this scene through the eyes of the centurion who attended at the cross; by him she spoke, and said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

The Efficacy of the Gospel.

This is displayed in the change produced by it on the temper and dispositions of men; and it is an efficacy greater than was ever exerted by any system of philosophy. The persuasions of men could move a few individuals to reform their outward course, (though the heart remained as far from God as before.) "But what are these?" says Origen, "compared to the genuine conversion and reformation of the multitudes, whom the plain and unadorned doctrines of the Gospel have turned from dissipation to sobriety, from timidity to a bold contempt of death, for the sake of religion!" "Give me," says Lactantius, "an angry, abusive, and passionate man; and with a few of the words of God," blessed in the renewing of his mind, "I will render him as meek as a lamb. Give me an avaricious and niggardly man, and I will return him liberal, and with unsparing hand distributing his money. Give me a man who is afraid of pain and death, and he shall presently condemn crosses, fires, and torments of every kind. Give me a lustful, adulterous, and lecherous man, and you shall see him sober, chaste, and continent. Give me a cruel and blood-thirsty man; his fury shall be instantly changed into clemency. Give me a man who is unjust, foolish, and a notorious offender, and he shall immediately become equitable, prudent, and innocent. So

great is the force of divine wisdom, that, when infused into the breast, it expels, by a single effort, folly, the mother of sin."—Lact. Lib. iii. Cap. 25.

The Last Will.

An Irish boy going one day to Bible school, met a Popish priest who was not so averse to the Scriptures as most of his brethren are.—The priest asked the boy what book it was which he carried under his arm.

"It is a will, sir," said the boy.

"What will?" rejoined the priest.

"The last will and testament that Jesus Christ left to me, and to all who desire to claim a title to the property therein bequeathed," replied the boy.

"What did Christ leave you in that will?"

"A kingdom, sir."

"Where does that kingdom lie?"

"It is the kingdom of heaven, sir."

"And do you expect to reign as a king there?"

"Yes, sir, as a joint heir with Christ."

"And will not every person get there as well as you?"

"No, sir; none can get there but those that claim their title to that kingdom on the ground of this will."

The priest asked several other questions to which the boy gave such satisfactory answers as quite astonished him. "Indeed," said he, "you are a good little boy; take care of the book wherein God gives you such precious promises; believe what he has said, and you will be happy here and hereafter." But when you read the word of God, remember that you cannot understand the wondrous things in God's law until your eyes are opened by the Spirit of God. You must pray to God for his Spirit to enlighten you in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember that when Hagar and her son Ishmael were cast out from the house of Abraham, the child was ready to perish for thirst, and that although there was a well of water near at hand, she knew not of it until the Lord sent his angel to point it out to her. Therefore you must wait upon God for his Spirit.

Preparation for Death.

"Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

Nothing is so terrible as death, to those who are strongly attached to this life. It is strange that we do not form a more just judgment of the present and of the future. We are as infatuated with this world as if it were never to come to an end. The names of those who now play the most distinguished parts in life will perish with them. It is the will of God, that all things shall be swallowed in a profound oblivion, man more especially. The pyramids of Egypt still stand, while the names of those who erected them are unknown.

What then can we accomplish here? To what purpose is the happiest life, if by a wise and Christian course it does not conduct us to a happy death? "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." These words are addressed to each one of us, of whatever age and in whatever rank we may be placed. Why do we so cling to life? and whence comes it, that we so shrink from death? It is, that we do not desire the kingdom of heaven, and the glories of a future world. Oh! ye dull souls, that cannot raise your thoughts above this world, where, by your own confession, you cannot find happiness. The true way to be ready for the last hour, is to employ the present hour well, and ever to expect the final one.

Who is Christ?

Ask Moses, and he shall tell you, "The seed of the woman, shall bruise the serpent's head." Ask Jacob, and he shall tell you, "The Shiloh of the tribe of Judah." Ask David, and he shall tell you, "The King of glory." Ask Isaiah, and he shall tell you, "The Wonderful—Counsellor—Mighty God—Everlasting Father—Prince of Peace." Ask John the Baptist, and he shall tell you, "The Lamb of God." Ask the God of the prophets, He hath told you, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Yea, the devils themselves have been forced to say, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." On no side hath Christ left himself without testimony.

The Light of Nature.

The celebrated Mr. Hume wrote an essay on the sufficiency of the light of Nature; and the no less celebrated Robertson wrote on the