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THE BABY

Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

O, what a joyous sunbeam com
To chase away the gloom!
A little infant, robed in white,
Illumines all the room!
So innocent, so beautiful,
We gaze with fond delight,
Upon the brow so pure and fair,
The blue eyes mild and bright,
The cheeks that tempt the fervent kiss,
The mouth like rose-bud sweet,
The little arms whose soft embrace
We lovingly entreat.

There's something like a golden crown
Upon the cherub's head,
Which seems around the gentle form
Celestial light to shed.
That light which is more felt than seen,
Must be the blessed sphere
Of Heaven, which, in infancy,
Lies with its glory near.
Dear child! its presence fills our hearts
With earnest joy and love.
Nor wonder we that angels watch
And guard it from above.

THE DESIGN OF BAPTISM ARGUED FROM THE BIBLE.

Did Baptism come in the place of Circumcision?

In searching the Scriptures for evidence that baptism came in the place of circumcision, we should expect to find in the discourses of Christ, or in his conversations with his disciples, some intimation, if not a distinct avowal of such design, had he intended that christian baptism should take the place of Jewish circumcision. We can conceive of no possible motive that could have induced the founder of christianity to withhold from his first disciples, or even from the Jewish nation any information on this subject that might throw light upon the relation which the christian dispensation was designed by him to sustain to the Mosaic Institute, especially if, as is maintained by Pede-baptists, "the christian church is a continuation of the Jewish church." Had Christ designed to re-model an existing church, in order to adapt it more perfectly to the accomplishment of the divine plan of human redemption; had this transformation involved the abolition of one portion of the Jewish ritual and the substitution of new rites for another portion; had baptism been designed, in accordance with this arrangement, not only to introduce into Christ's kingdom converts from Judaism to the christian faith, but also to secure to the children of baptized believers the right of similar admission, as the circumcision of the Jewish parent secured to his male offspring a right to all the privileges and immunities guaranteed to the Jewish nation by the law of Moses; if such, I repeat, had been the design of the founder of christianity, we should naturally expect to find some intimation or some express avowal of it in his discourses to the Jews, or certainly in his conversations with and his instructions to those of his disciples with whom he passed the years of his ministry on earth, and whom he finally commissioned to go out into all the world and preach his gospel to all nations.

But no such avowal or intimation is to be found in either of the narratives of the inspired biographers of Christ, who were for a long time his daily companions, and who have left on record, for our instruction and guidance, minute details of his conversations and discourses on a great variety of topics relating to

the kingdom of the Messiah. Nor were there wanting frequent occasions when such an avowal would naturally have been made, if baptism had been designed by him to take the place of circumcision. Such an occasion occurred when mothers "brought to him their young children, that he should touch them;" but "his disciples rebuked those that brought them"—a singular circumstance, if these disciples had been in the habit of baptizing, and receiving into "the kingdom of Heaven" such little children. In explanation of the conduct of these disciples on the occasion referred to, it has been suggested that these infants were not the children of baptized believers, and that, for this reason, the disciples conceived it improper that their parents should solicit for them a blessing promised only to "the children of the church." But the Saviour recognized no such distinction. "He took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them," pronouncing at the same time these memorable words: "Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Mark 10: 13-16. If Christ had designed, by these words to inculcate the doctrine taught by modern Pede-baptists—that little children do "receive the kingdom of God, and enter into it" by baptism—it necessarily follows, that only such as receive the kingdom of God, as a little child receives it can enter therein; and consequently, that those not baptized when little children, are forever debarred from entering the kingdom of God. If, however, these "young children" were the unbaptized offspring of baptized disciples, and if baptism had come in place of circumcision, why did not their parents solicit baptism for them, or why did not Christ direct his disciples (as he baptized not; see John ix. 2.) to baptize them? Or if they had already been baptized, why should the disciples have been offended at their being brought to Christ for a blessing? The whole narrative is perfectly intelligible, if we suppose that baptism had no relation whatever to circumcision: but that Christ took this occasion to impress upon the minds of his auditors the important truth that humility and child-like confidence were the essential elements of true christian faith. By any other hypothesis, the conduct of Christ, of his disciples, as well as that of the parents of these little children, is inexplicable; and hence, probably, the diversity of explanations given to this passage by Pede-baptist commentators.

To account for this ominous silence on the subject of infant baptism, in the writings of the four Evangelists, some of our Pede-Baptist theorists have suggested, that the full substitution of baptism was for circumcision not made until the church of Christ was fully organized—not until after the crucifixion of Christ—and infant baptism was not, probably, practiced to any considerable extent, if at all, before that time. In view of this suggestion, let us examine the history of the Acts of the Apostles, written by one of their own number. The commission under which these Apostles went forth from Jerusalem to preach the Gospel, is thus recorded by Mark: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." xvi. 15, 16. As recorded by Matthew it reads thus: "Go, ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." xxviii. 19, 20.

Thus commissioned by the Great Head of the church, these Apostles went forth to propagate christianity throughout the whole

world. It will be admitted by all that the commission does not expressly command the baptism of any except believers; but it, by implication of the words "all nations" and "every creature," the baptism of infants is included in the command, we shall expect to find in the subsequent history of the transactions of these Apostles, abundant proof that they so interpreted the language of their commission; we shall expect to find them baptizing the "little children" of baptized disciples, as they go from place to place, planting and organizing christian churches; under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, according to the pattern given them by their Divine Master. But we search in vain, through the entire history of the apostolic ministry for a solitary example of infant baptism. We read accounts of numerous baptisms of believers—"both of men and women;" of "such as gladly received the word;" of daily baptisms and additions to the church of "such as should be saved;" of such as, after their baptism, "continued steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer;" of many such baptisms both among the Jews and among the Gentiles; but not of a single baptism of "little children," though the sacred historian describes in minute detail, as it respects the times, the places, the persons, and the attendant circumstances, of many of these baptismal scenes.

But were there not infants in the households baptized by the Apostles? It properly belongs to those who affirm it, to prove that these households contained infants. This, however, cannot be done; for the record makes no mention of them, and there is no circumstantial evidence tending to legitimate the inference that these families were composed, in part, of little children. Yet upon these four household baptisms thousand of christian parents are taught to rely for authority in presenting their unconscious infants to their clerical teachers that they may receive apostolical baptism from their hands.

But if we examine all that is recorded of these families, we shall find that they contained no infants, or, that if they did, they were not baptized. It is said of Crispus, that "he believed with all his house," Acts xvii. 8; of the jailor, that "he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house," Acts xvi. 34; of the household of Stephanus, that they "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints," 1 Cor. xvi. 15; of Lydia, that the Apostles, "after her baptism, entered into her house," and when they had seen the brethren they comforted them and departed," Acts xvi. 40. If then, there were children in these households, they were old enough to "believe," and to "rejoice" with their parents, and to "minister to the saints," and to be styled "brethren" by the Apostles; and such children were undoubtedly included among those whom the Apostles were commanded to teach and baptize. There is, therefore, not only no evidence of there having been infants in these families, but on the contrary, there are circumstances rendering it certain, either that there were none, or that the Apostles did not baptize them; for whoever were baptized, are also spoken of as "believing," "rejoicing," or as "brethren."

Moreover, it is a remarkable circumstance that Paul, if he had taught the churches which he had planted, that infant baptism came in the place of circumcision, should have neglected to say one word about baptizing children, in all his letters to these churches, whilst at the same time he instructs them in reference to all other matters of christian duty, and especially in regard to the religious training of their children. Paul was certainly far behind some of our modern "bishops" in

guarding "the covenant rights" of the helpless little "children of promise"—or else this whole subject, so much controverted in modern times, was so thoroughly understood by the apostolic churches, theoretically and practically, that there was no occasion for Bishop Peter even to speak of it in his "encyclical letters," sometimes styled his "General Epistles;" or for Bishop Paul to warn the churches at Rome, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Galatia, or at Philippi, against the doctrines of those anti-Judaizing teachers who so much annoy "the church" in these latter days. That the apostolic churches did thus understand this subject, and that they consequently never supposed it to be any part of their duty to have their infants baptized is much more probable, than that they should not have furnished the world with a single example of such practice notwithstanding its universal prevalence and its strict observance among them.

But we are told that baptism came in the place of circumcision, and that infants must, therefore, have been baptized by the Apostles though they have left on record neither precept nor example for our direction. As has already been remarked, the New Testament nowhere represents either Christ or his Apostles as teaching this doctrine or as furnishing any practical recognition of its existence. But we are not compelled to rest our argument against the doctrine upon mere negative testimony—the total absence of precept or example to sustain it. Paul, the great expounder of the constitution and the laws of the church of Christ, has placed this matter beyond controversy. When he visited the church at Antioch, he learned that the Gentile brethren there had been taught by "certain men from Judea," that they ought to "be circumcised after the manner of Moses." When Paul and Barnabas had "had no small dissension and disputation" with these Judaizing teachers, the church "determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and Elders about this question." On the arrival of this deputation at Jerusalem, "the Apostles and Elders came together to consider of this matter." The decision of the Apostles and Elders and the brethren of the church at Jerusalem, was as follows: "The Apostles, Elders and brethren, unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles at Antioch, and Syria and Cilicia. Forasmuch as we have heard that certain who went out from us, have troubled you with words subverting your souls, saying, ye must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses; to whom we gave no such commandment; it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul; men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas who shall tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, you shall do well." Acts xv.

Now if the Apostles and Elders and brethren at Jerusalem had known that baptism came in the place of circumcision, a reply very different from the foregoing would naturally have been sent to the churches at Antioch, and Cilicia, and Syria. They would have said to them, in substance, "Brethren, inasmuch as baptism came in the place of circumcision, the latter is done away and is in nowise binding upon you who have been baptized." Such a reply would have been explanatory and conclusive; and that some such response was not