

The Family.

THE CHRISTENING.

By James Smith, of New Park Street.

"Mother," said a little girl a short time ago, "when she returned home from school, 'one of my school-fellows says, that her parents are going to have the baby christened: have I ever been christened?' 'No my dear,' said her mother, 'you have not.' 'But why,' said she, turning to her father, 'was not I christened, when I was a baby?' 'Because,' said her father, 'God has no where commanded it in his holy word. You have read the New Testament through, have you not?' Yes." "Well, did you read any thing about the christening of babies there?" "O, no, I don't remember that I did!" "That, then, is just the reason why you were not christened when a baby; the New Testament contains an account of all the ordinances that were appointed by Jesus Christ, or attended to by his apostles; and as it contains no accounts of christening babies, it is not required by God, and if it is not required by God, it is no part of his worship. God has told us in his word all we are to do, as well as all we are to believe; and he bids us 'search the scriptures.'"

"But, Father, what is christening?" "It is a mere human invention, intended to be a substitute for christian baptism. Before the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, he commanded his disciples to 'Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;' and when any believed the gospel, and sought salvation from Him, they were to 'baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Mark xvi. 15, 16. Matt. xxviii. 19. The word baptize is not an English word, but it signifies to dip the person in water: so that christian baptism is the solemn dipping of a person in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "But should no one be baptized except grown up persons?" "No one should be except he repent of sin, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and purpose in his heart to lead a new life. It is not age that fits us for baptism, but a new heart. Every person who is rightly baptised professes to renounce the world, forsake sin, trust in the Saviour, and do as God has commanded in his holy word. Baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus Christ, a proof that the person is willing to be his servant, and a public profession of faith in Him. The Lord Jesus promises to save all who believe on Him, and are baptized in his name; they are not saved by baptism, but by Jesus, and by believing in him; but the person is baptized because Jesus commands him to be, and he wishes us to keep his commands." "But, father, how did christening begin?" "Many years ago, when bibles were very scarce, and the people knew very little more about religion than the priest chose to tell them, and almost every body in christian countries did just as the priest bade them; the priests told the people that no one could go to heaven without being baptized, though they never found this in the bible. Then they began to baptize babies, for fear they should not be saved if they died. Since then, in this cold country, and in other places, parents not liking to have their babies dipped all over in cold water, the priests said it would do as well, if a little water was sprinkled on the face or poured on the head. So that now they take the babe to the priest, very nicely dressed in white; and he prays or reads some prayers, over it, sprinkles a little water on it, and this is called a christening."

"But why is it called christening?"

"Because the priest said, that when he prayed over, and sprinkled water on the child, God gave it a new heart, took it for his own child, and it became a christian. It is therefore called *christening*, or *making a christian*." "But does God do so?" "No, my dear, we never knew one instance in which he did. As children grow up, we can see no difference whatever between those who have been christened, and those who have not. All are alike prone to sin, all require to be converted by God's Holy Spirit, and to have their sins pardoned through the blood of Christ." "Then does christening the baby do it no good?" "No, none whatever; not the least. How should it? God did not command it, and therefore will not bless it. Neither John the Baptist, our Lord Jesus Christ, nor any of his apostles ever christened one baby; but only baptized men and women. Real religion is produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and always leads the person to pray to God, to be sorry for sin, to love the Saviour, to desire to be holy, and to

do good; all who have such religion should be baptized, but none besides. Because such are real christians, and only such have a right to be called christians."

"I hope, my dear, that you will be led to see what a dreadful thing sin is, and to pray to God to give you a new heart, that the Holy Spirit will lead you to love the Saviour, and to follow his example. He was baptized; you know by John in the river Jordan; and said, 'Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' He is our pattern, as well as our Saviour; and we are to copy his example, as well as rely on his precious blood." "But did not Jesus receive little children, when he was upon earth?" "Yes, but not to christen, or baptize them. He took them up in his arms, prayed for them, blessed them, and it is very probable that he healed their diseases. And though he is in heaven, he will receive you, if you really desire to be saved from your sins, and go alone and pray to him, feeling as if he was present in the room, and was listening to every word you say. Prayer is the heart talking with God: telling him what it feels, what it fears, and what it desires. God listens to all such prayers, and blesses all such praying children. I hope, my dear, that you will remember, that the whole of the will of God is made known in the bible. All that you should believe about God, or sin, or the Saviour, or ordinances, or on any religious subject is to be found there. Also, all that you should do, as far as religion is concerned, is to be found there too. God does not require you to believe any thing but what is in the bible; nor does he require you to do anything which he has not commanded there. Therefore, turn to your bible, and to your New Testament especially, when you want to know if any religious service is right; and if you do not find it there, you may safely reject it. Christening, or infant baptism, as some call it, is an invention of men; it is not to be found in the bible; and is therefore no part of the religion of Jesus Christ. It does no good. It never did any good. But it has led to many mistakes, and done a very great deal of harm."

If you should be spared to grow up, I trust the Lord will give you repentance for sin, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that then you will be baptized, as your Lord and Saviour was. You know how the apostles baptized, for the Holy Spirit has given you a very particular account of the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Philip preached unto him the gospel, he believed in Jesus, and felt great love to the Saviour in his heart. 'And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the Eunuch said, see here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? and Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the Eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.' Acts, viii. 36-39."

"Then, when shall I be baptized, father?"

"As soon as ever you give proof that your heart is changed. When I know that you daily retire to pray, when you hate sin and forsake it, when you love Jesus, and obey him from the heart; then I shall rejoice to see the minister of Christ lead you down into the water, that you may be 'buried with Christ by baptism,' and rise again to live a new life of holiness and love."

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