

# THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—Paul.

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## Is it "A Great Discovery"?

The *Independent* of the 28th ult. contained on account of what it calls as "A Great Discovery in Apostolic Church History." The Bishop of Nicomedia has just published what purports to be the original Greek text of a work long supposed to be lost, called *The Teaching of the Apostles*—a work referred to by Clement, Eusebius, Athanasius and our fathers. If this proves to be a genuine work of the first half of the second century, it will be a valuable discovery. The account of *The Independent* is, however, taken at second hand from advance sheets of an article by Professor Adolph Harnack, of Giessen. His opinion is in favor of the genuineness of the document, but it has yet to be subjected to a critical examination by other scholars, and it may be that its genuineness will not be so readily conceded by all as by Professor Harnack.

Our esteemed contemporary, *The Evangelist*, has had its mental balance seriously disturbed by this discovery, and in an article entitled "What Will the Baptists Do?" it breaks forth into these exulting words:

In the face of this "teaching of the Apostles," the Baptists who shall presume to put forth the claim that immersion is the only baptism will be laughed to scorn. We thank God that this wall of separation has been broken down; this conceited and human invention of a great ecclesiastical organization has been exploded like a bubble. We pray God that other, like ancient documents, may be discovered to destroy the traditions and dogmas of human invention which have split the church of Christ into so many factions; that the barrier walls of the denominations may be broken down, and the unity of Christ's church may be established—*one fold, one Shepherd.*

We should be heartily glad to see our Presbyterian brethren give up their "dogmas of human invention," such as infant-sprinkling and government by presbytery, and accept only the authority of the Word of God, in which case they would speedily become good Baptists. But this cannot be the meaning of *The Evangelist*; in fact, its emotions have so mixed its rhetoric that its meaning is not wholly clear. But we take it that it is in a high state of satisfaction with some teaching contained in this newly discovered document. In the extracts printed by *The Independent* occurs the following:

Chapter 7. But as to baptism, baptize thus: baptize after thou hast imparted all the above doctrines, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, in flowing water. If, however, thou hast no flowing water, then baptize with other water; if there be no cold at hand, with warm. But if thou hast neither, then sprinkle the head three times with water in the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

This is absolutely all the foundation there is for *The Evangelist's* outburst. The words in question are translated from a German translation made by Professor Harnack, not from the original Greek. The translation of a translation, through no fault of the translators, often fails to represent the original document correctly. This is the case in the present instance. There is one copy of the book of Bishop Bryennios in this country, and by the courtesy of the Editor of *The Independent* we have been permitted to see a transcript of the Greek of Chapter 7. The last sentence should be rendered, "But if thou hast neither, then pour out [water] upon the head (*ecchei eis tan kephalen*) three times," etc. This confirms what was already established, that sprinkling as a substitute for baptism was unknown in the early church, though affusion was sometimes admitted. What, then, do the words of chapter 7 establish? They prove that nothing was known to the writer of this document but the baptism of believers; how does *The Evangelist* like that? They prove that the usual and most approved baptism was immersion in flowing water—a custom observed to the letter by large numbers of Baptist churches to this day, though the flowing water is not regarded by them as essential to the validity of the ordin-

ance; how does *The Evangelist* like that? If flowing water were not to be had, other water might be used, preferably cold. And as a last resort, in case enough water for immersion could not be had, affusion was allowable as a substitute. The only case in which such a difficulty could be supposed would be in so-called "clinic" baptisms, i. e., of persons confined to their beds by sickness. There could never be any difficulty in immersing well persons. We submit that the words prove just this, only this.

If the genuineness of this document be completely established, and criticism assign its date somewhere between the years 100 and 160 A. D., the sole effect of this passage on the question of the act and subjects of baptism will be to place the date of the perversion of the ordinance a century earlier than it has hitherto been placed. About the year 250 one Novatian was sick unto death, and not being able to be immersed was "baptized" by having water poured profusely about him as he lay on his bed. This is the first recorded case in the history of the church of anything else than immersion, and it is well-known that this and similar cases gave rise to a serious question whether such baptisms were valid. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, who died in the year 258, has in one of his letters a reply to a question on this point, and decides that "when need compels and God vouchsafes his mercy, his compendious methods confer the whole benefit on believers." But even Cyprian restricts the efficacy of pouring to those who by reason of infirmities are unable to be immersed. There was so much doubt entertained, so late as the fourth century, about the validity of these "clinic baptisms" that in case of recovery one who had thus been baptized was not allowed to enter the ministry.

The teaching of the above extract from this new document is at variance with the unanimous testimony of the Latin and Greek fathers as to the practice of the early church with regard to baptism, so entirely at variance with this testimony that the natural inference is that the passage is interpolated, the document not genuine, or the true date of it much nearer 250 than 150 A. D. The tone of Cyprian's letter and the prohibition of those baptized by pouring from the ministry are irreconcilable with the theory that affusion had been recognized as an alternative form of baptism, even in cases of necessity, for a full century before Cyprian wrote.

What will the Baptists do? In view of the fact that this newly discovered *Teaching of the Apostles* recognizes nothing but believers' baptism, and the affusion of believers only in cases of emergency, the question ought rather to be, What will the Presbyterians do? Moreover, other sections of the document show that neither bishops nor presbytery—in the modern sense—were known in the church when it was written; and worst of all, it recognizes that dreadful Baptist heresy, "close" communion: "Let no one, however, eat or drink of your eucharist except those baptized in the name of the Lord; for in reference to this the Lord has said, 'Ye shall not give that which is holy to the dogs.'" (Chapter 9). The exegesis is bad, but the doctrine is unmistakable. The document, therefore, is a hard blow at the Presbyterian theory, while it leaves the Baptist theory untouched. For the latter rests not on the practice of the early church, but on the example and command of Christ and on the practice of his Apostles. The example of the early church is valuable only as confirmatory evidence that our interpretation of the New Testament is correct. But if the entire history of eighteen centuries

were swept away, Baptists would do precisely what they now do, and what they will continue to do—stand on the Word of God and its supreme authority. To the law and the testimony, not to any human authority or practice, is our ultimate appeal.—*Examiner.*

## Comfort in the Dark Hour.

"There never was such an affliction as mine," said a poor sufferer restlessly tossing in her bed in one of the wards of a city hospital. "I don't think there ever was such a racking pain."

"Once," was faintly uttered from the next bed.

The first speaker paused for a moment; and in a still more impatient tone resumed her complaint.

"Nobody knows what I pass through. Nobody ever suffered more pain."

"Once," was again whispered from the same direction.

"I take it you mean yourself, poor soul! but—"

"O, not me," exclaimed the other; and her pale face flushed up to the very temples, as if some wrong had been offered—not to herself, but to another.

She spoke with such earnestness that her restless companion lay still for several seconds, and gazed intently on her face. The cheeks were now wan and sunken, and the parched lips were drawn back from the mouth as if in pain. Yet there dwelt an extraordinary sweetness in the clear gray eyes, and a refinement on the placid brow, such as can only be imparted by a heart-acquaintance with him who is "full of grace and truth."

"O, not myself! not me!" she repeated.

There was a short pause, and the following words, uttered in the same low tone, slowly and solemnly broke the midnight silence of the place:

"And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand, and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed and smote him upon the head. . . . And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots. . . . And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads. . . . And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me!"

The voice ceased, and for several minutes not a syllable was spoken. The night nurse rose from her chair by the fire and mechanically handed a cup of barley water, flavored with lemon-juice and sugar to the lips of both sufferers.

"Thank you, nurse," said the last speaker.

"They gave him gall for his meat; and in his thirst they gave him vinegar to drink."

"She is talking about Jesus Christ," said the other woman, already beginning to toss restlessly from side to side. "But," she added, "talking about his sufferings can't mend ours—at least not mine."

"But it lightens hers," said the nurse.

"I wonder how."

"Hush!"

And the gentle voice again, took up the strain:

"He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, with his stripes we are healed."

The following day, as some ladies visiting the hospital passed by his cots, they handed to each a few fragrant flowers.

"The gentle voice was heard again, "If God so clothe the grass of the fields which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast in the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

A few days passed away, when, on a bright Sabbath morning, as the sun was rising, the nurse noticed the lips of the sufferer moving, and leaning over her she heard these words: "Going home! I have fought the good fight. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." Her eyes closed, and the nurse knew that the hand of death was grasping the cords of life. A moment more and all was over. The soul had gone.—*Sword and Trowel.*

## Access to God.

Christ has "consecrated a new and living way into the holiest of all," through his death and intercessions. We have access in his name through the assistance of the Spirit. This rich privilege is one of the great blessings of God's children, the result of their adoption. They have access to God, their reconciled Father. The grounds of this privilege are the perfect satisfaction Christ has rendered for us, whereby he has opened the way; his presence, in royal priesthood before the throne, and his promise. Our access should be with strong confidence, holy boldness, and filial liberty.

The privilege of access God's children enjoy, is not one of favor and grace only, but of justice and right, since the Lord Jesus, as their surety, is within the veil. With a true and sincere heart, free from deceit and guile, "in spirit and in truth." With a pure conscience, free from the consciousness of all their sin should they come. Guilty souls cannot have free communion with a holy God. "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we do those things that are pleasing in his sight." He never turns the penitent away. We may learn the marvelous condescension and grace of God! To permit, yea, invite sinners to approach him with confidence and love!

## I Will Guide Thee.

BY A. J. GORDON, D.D.

Will the Lord direct us in straits where we do not know which way to go? Will he tell us what to say when we know not what word is most needed? If we believe that he will, we shall cast ourselves on his help with more earnestness than we have been wont. We believe in Divine guidance, but too often thwart and hinder by our meddling. As one is drawn by a horse, and holds the reins, and so guides it as he will, so many are moved by God's will, and yet insist on directing that will by their own will. The promise is explicit—"I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." The following is a gracious illustration of such guidance.

At Madeley there occurred, under the ministry of John Fletcher, the following remarkable incident:

"An ugly, furious butcher was so enraged at his wife's attending church whenever she had the opportunities that he threatened to cut her throat if she did not leave off going. One Sunday morning when she came down dressed ready for church, her husband said: 'Well, I shall not, as I intended, cut you throat; but I will heat the oven, and throw you into it when you return.' She went to church, nevertheless; and strangely enough, the sermon which Mr. Fletcher had prepared went from him past recovery. When he was afraid that he would be obliged to leave the pulpit without uttering a word, there came into his mind the narrative of the three Hebrews who were cast into the fiery furnace. On this narrative he enlarged with a freedom and

fulness that convinced him that there must be some peculiar reason for it. The "needs be" as he afterwards discovered, was that a poor, timorous soul required just the very aid to her faith which the sermon supplied. She even hastened home to go into the fiery furnace. When she got to her own door she saw flames issuing out of the oven, and expecting nothing less than to be thrown in. But, to her amazement, on entering, she found her husband on his knees wrestling with God for the forgiveness of his sins! He caught his wife in his arms, and begged her pardon for the cruel wrong he had contemplated. 'I know now,' Mr. Fletcher said, when he heard this story, 'why my sermon was taken from me.'—*Watchword.*

## Delays May End in Death.

Dr. McLaren in his annual sermon to the young, from Acts xxiv. 25, closed with these words:

Six-and-twenty years I have preached in Manchester these annual sermons to the young. Ah! how many of those that heard the early ones are laid in their graves—and how many were laid in early graves; and how many of them said, as some of you are saying, "When I get older I will turn religious." And they never got older. It is a common-place word that, but I leave it on your hearts. You have no time to lose. Do not delay, because delay is decision in the wrong way; do not delay, because there is no reason for delay; do not delay, because delay robs you of a large blessing; do not delay, because delay lays up for you, if ever you come back, bitter memories; do not delay, because delay may end in death. And for all these reasons come as a sinful soul to Christ the Saviour, and ask him to forgive you, and follow in his footsteps. And do it now! "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

NOAH'S FAITH.—The experience in the life-history of Noah is replete with thrilling interest, and exemplifies the power of faith in things not seen by the natural eye. The race had reached the ninth generation, and iniquity had become so prevalent, that Jehovah had determined to punish mankind with a signal judgment. Noah's family only of the thousands of earth were found faithful. In his household alone shone the lamp of the light of the Holy Spirit. There only was kept holy the Sabbath; there only was cherished a lively hope of a promised Redeemer, and there only was God's name reserved for prayer and blessing, while all the rest of the race wantonly cursed and blasphemed. Relatively, the world, in the purpose of God, was to be brought back to the early days of Adam, when himself with Eve and two sons were the only living souls of the race.

## SETTLE DISPUTES WITH PRAYER.

Two neighbors, a cooper and a farmer, were spending the evening together; both were professors of religion, but of different communions. Their conversation was first upon topics relating to practical religion; but after a time it diverged to the point of difference between the two denominations to which they belonged. It first became a discussion, then a dispute. The cooper was the first to perceive its unprofitable and injurious tendency, and remarked: "We are springing apart from each other; let us put on another hoop—let us pray." They knelt down and prayed together, after which they spent the remainder of the evening lovingly together, conversing on the things of the kingdom in which they both felt an equal interest. The suggestion of the cooper was an excellent one.—*Spurgeon.*

## SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS NOTES.

The Bible and a good atlas is all the personal luggage carried by General Gordon when he travels.

Mrs. Joseph Cook has entered the lecture field, taking for her theme "The Temples and Tombs of Hindostan," and illustrating her remarks with stereopticon views.

The President of the French Republic has \$120,000 a year, and he is allowed \$32,000 for household expenses, while Queen Victoria has \$1,818,800 a year, not counting the revenue of the Duchy of Lancaster, which amounts to a cool \$185,000 a year. The Prince of Wales gets \$175,000 a year, and the royal family has other annuities amounting to \$600,000.

The late Dr. Oncken some years ago, on a visit to one of the State Ministers of Russia, urged a policy of toleration towards the German Baptists of that country. The Minister became angry, and threw out a hint about Siberia. "Well," said Dr. Oncken, with his accustomed Christian fearlessness, "if you send us into exile we will preach the gospel in Siberia."

## Selections.

Controversy equalizes fools and wise men in the same way—and the fools know it.

We must have a weak spot or two in a character before we can love it much.—*Holmes.*

The beggar is the only man in the universe who is not obliged to study appearances.—*Lamb.*

When a strong brain is weighed with a true heart, it seems like balancing a bubble against a wedge of gold.

Let your actions follow the guidance of your judgment, and if between them both you go down the Falls of Niagra, go! It is the only course worthy of a man.—*Bushnell.*

The hours we pass with happy prospects in view are more pleasing than those crowned with fruition. In the first instance we cook the dish to our appetites; in the latter nature cooks it for us.—*Goldsmith.*

Let the colleges of our land be given up to the sole inspiration of pagan muses, and a corrupting and degrading heathen literature will dishonor and defile the land. Let skepticism, whether in the guise of soaring transcendentalism or in the form of groveling infidelity, seat itself in the professor's chair, and a darkness that can be felt, damp, chilly and penetrating, will settle down upon us, or a plague, loathsome as that of the frogs, will come into our houses and to our very hearths. If the moral atmosphere of the college be pure, and the standard of piety high, if truth and temperance, justice, liberty and humanity be the reigning idea, of the institution, the young men who go forth from it will, for the most part, range themselves on the right side in the great conflict of principles that is now going on, and their pens will fight battles and win triumphs more glorious than was ever won by the sword.—*Prof. Tyler.*

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