

once put to the proof, expresses itself, and is developed, and made satisfactorily effectual in appropriating the forgiveness of sins. Baptism is to be considered a condition of remission, because the faith which it expresses is a condition; and obedience to the Christ is a condition; and a public confession of Jesus as the Son of God is a condition; and a voluntary submission to him is a condition; and being dead to the world is a condition. Baptism is all these objectively. It is an act of faith, an act of obedience, an act of penitence, an act of confession, an act of submission, a voluntary act of a soul in which the divine life has commenced and hence is called "the bath of regeneration."

Baptism is, then, the formal condition of remission of sins to the penitent believer, and to no one else, because it is the divinely appointed way of formally accepting, and so of coming to an assurance of pardon.

The very act of baptism is beautifully appropriate for the purpose herein set forth. It is a burial. When the penitent comes to baptism he ceases to exert himself. He places himself in the hands of another. By another, not by himself, he is buried beneath the water; and by another, not by himself, he is raised up out of the water. Divine wisdom is, therefore, apparent in the appointment of baptism to stand in the place and fill the office in the Christian system that it does.

B. B. Tyler.

These questions, forwarded to me at my summer resort, can only be answered here and now in briefest style.

1. The phrase "baptism for remission of sins" is unfortunate, in that it apparently separates baptism from its necessary antecedents, without which it is meaningless and purposeless. Baptism as a part of the "obedience of faith" does not "actually contribute toward securing remission" in the sense that the death of Christ does. In other words, it is not a procuring cause of remission. It is, however, in our understanding, a "condition of remission" in the sense that it is the outward expression of faith and penitence, in obedience to which remission is promised.

2. Bro. Errett's statement in the "American Supplement to the Encyclopedia Britannica" we do not regard as "contrary" to the foregoing, but only as another way of stating the same truth. Baptism conveys the "divine assurance of the forgiveness of sins" because the public submission to Christ which it expresses is made a condition of remission.

3. No one among us, so far as I know, holds that baptism "does anything toward securing forgiveness," only in the sense explained above. We do regard it, however, as a "condition of being forgiven," in the case of all who have opportunity to obey this requirement. No doubt most Disciples "take the word of God for it," without seeking a philosophical explanation of the fact. Many, however, do see in baptism a divine fitness as the act of self-surrender to Christ. In its symbolic meaning it sets forth the burial and the resurrection of Christ, facts which declare his divinity and divine mission. How well adapted, therefore, is such an act to serve as a test of faith in and a condition of self-surrender to him!

(a) From the foregoing it will be seen that baptism is better fitted for conveying the divine assurance of forgiveness, being an overt act of faith, than a text of Scripture which enjoins no such overt act.

(b) The theory of a "mysterious efficacy," held by sacramentalists, is discarded by intelligent Disciples.

(c) The statement under this subdivision admirably expresses the view held by the Disciples, and none, perhaps, would demur to the statement that "forgiveness ought not to be looked for, so long as disobedience is the habit of the soul." Such "habit," however, could hardly exist with genuine repentance. No doubt the divine appointment of baptism is due to its fitness "to serve as an act of final and open submission," but our obligation to obedience to that ordinance is based, primarily, on its divine appointment, even though our knowledge may not fully perceive its fitness.

Finally, permit me to say that much of the misunderstanding in reference to the import of baptism and its place in the divine scheme of redemption is the result of its separation from faith, of which it is the embodiment. Too many Protestants think and speak of baptism as something apart from faith; and even many Baptists fail to emphasize the value of baptism as the culminating act of surrender to Christ and a condition of receiving the divine assurance of forgiveness, under the mistaken impression that in so doing they would invalidate the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith. Paul himself perceived no such contradiction. When we come to the point where we can recognize baptism as that degree and measure of faith which secures or appropriates justification, we will be far along the road to unity of understanding on this question.

We all owe a debt of thanks to Dr. Johnson for his clear-cut questions and his kindly interest in this matter. I only regret that the state of my health and the space to which we are limited forbid a more adequate reply. Fraternal yours,

JAS. H. GARRISON.

Macatawa Park, Holland, Mich., July 21, 1890

BROTHER PHILPOTT: The answers to Professor Johnson's very proper questions should be full and very frank. The answers here given will be found numbered and lettered to correspond to the questions.

1. It is believed that baptism actually contributes toward securing remission, being divinely appointed as a condition of remission. Christian baptism is obedience, and this obedience is as spiritual as the faith and repentance which it expresses, and is therefore properly associated with faith and repentance as a condition of forgiveness of sins. Dr. Barnes states the truth respecting the place of baptism very clearly in his comment on Acts ii. 38, thus:

There is nothing in baptism itself that can wash away sin. That can be done only by the pardoning mercy of God through the atonement of Christ. But baptism is expressive of a willingness to be pardoned in that way, and a solemn declaration of our conviction that there is no other way of remission. He who comes to be baptized, comes with a professed conviction that he is a sinner, that there is no other way of mercy but in the Gospel, and with a profound willingness to comply with the terms of salvation, and receive it as it is offered through Jesus Christ.

Dr. Lechler in Lango's Commentary on Acts ii. 38, sets forth the true place of baptism, thus:

Peter prescribes a twofold duty and promises a twofold gift. He demands that these persons should (1) change their minds—their whole moral state should undergo a change, *metanoia*—and (2) be baptized in the name of Jesus, as an expression of their faith in Jesus, or a recognition of him, and as a pledge of their submission to him as the Lord and Messiah. . . . Peter's demand, therefore, embraces a change of mind, and faith, in addition to the outward baptism. The latter is here viewed, on the one hand, as a moral act of the person who is baptized, but on the other hand, in consequence of

the promise that is immediately subjoined, unquestionably also as a means of grace proceeding from God. The apostle promises to those who repent and receive baptism (1) the remission of sins and (2) the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . . The former [*aphesis*—forgiveness] namely, is indicated by the word *eis* [for the remission, etc.] as the immediate purpose of baptism, and as the promise inseparably connected with it.

It is safe to say that the Disciples generally will accept the above exegesis.

Our teaching is also correctly expressed by A. C. Hervey, D.D., Bishop of Bath and Wells, in the Pulpit Commentary on the same Scripture, in these words:

We have in this short verse the summary of Christian doctrine as regards man and God. Repentance and faith on the part of man; forgiveness of sins, or justification on the part of God. And both these are expressed in the sacrament of baptism, which, as it were, ties the act of man to the promise of God. For the sacrament expresses man's faith and repentance on one side and God's forgiveness and gift on the other.

Dr. Hackett's exposition of the same text is also entirely satisfactory. He says:

His *aphesis* *hamartion*, in order to the forgiveness of sins (Matt. xxvi. 28, Luke iii. 3), we connect, naturally, with both the preceding verbs. This clause states the motive or object which should induce them to repent and be baptized. It enforces the entire exhortation, not one part of it to the exclusion of the other.

We are in entire accord with the four representative scholars whose words are quoted above—a Presbyterian, a Lutheran, an Episcopalian, and a Baptist, respectively. The critical commentators are generally agreed on the design of baptism.

2. Isaac Errett, agreeing with the best critics of all religious bodies, recognized baptism as a means of "conveying the divine assurance of remission" because of the promise of remission connected with it. It is not easy to see how baptism could convey such assurance if there were no such promise. Of course, in a general way, all obedience through life serves to give assurance of our right relation to God, as disobedience tends to cast doubt upon that relation. Baptism is not to be regarded as "merely a way of conveying assurance that one has been forgiven." Connected with baptism and the faith and repentance which it manifests is the promise of forgiveness. Complying with the appointed conditions the assurance comes—though baptism is not set forth in the Scriptures as "for assurance," but "for remission."

3. The faith of the heart needs to be expressed openly and solemnly in some divine command that means a total surrender to the authority of Jesus Christ—a command that draws a broad line between the old life of unbelief and the new life of faith. Baptism draws such a line. Behind it is a death to sin through faith and repentance; before it is a new life in the Church of Christ.

In the religion of Moses men were commanded to offer, in faith, a sacrifice and so receive forgiveness. In baptism we offer ourselves, by faith, and pledge ourselves as living sacrifices to God, and in this open and solemn surrender trust the promise of God that forgiveness is ours through faith, according to His promise. This is justification by faith. "For ye are all sons of God through faith, in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." (Gal. iii. 26, 27.)

When a servant proposed to enter upon perpetual slavery he expressed his love for his master and submitted to have an awl driven through his ear

into a post, and so a line was drawn between the old service and the new. In baptism the complete surrender of one's self is expressed, the awl is driven into the wall openly, the yoke is publicly taken. The mercury in the dynamometer that registers the uplifting power of faith rises to the line marked obedience. Faith here comes to the promise of forgiveness. Such an act from the heart, by faith, is spiritual in its meaning, and appears very properly as one of the conditions of remission.

(a) That "baptism sets forth in a vivid way the fact of the atoning work of Christ" may be true, though this is not very apparent. Its symbolism points directly to burial and resurrection. It speaks of an old life forsaken and a new life begun. It expresses the surrender of the soul to Him who died and rose again, and our reliance upon Him for salvation here and hereafter. It is what it means in our hearts, as an embodiment of faith and holy purpose, that fits this ordinance to mark the line where the promise of forgiveness is written. Of course its symbolism, whether it be more or less than we readily see, is suited to the place baptism occupies. Its suitability as a symbol of cleansing may be recognized with profit.

(b) The mysterious efficacy and the sacramental notion find no place in our teaching.

(c) We would put it a little other wise, thus: Baptism being an act of submission definite and complete, the first ordinance in the obedience of faith, we see divine wisdom in making it one of the conditions of remission. It is our wisdom to accept the divine arrangement and claim the promise of pardon where it belongs, and so be assured that our sins are forgiven. We would say that Christian baptism conveys the assurance of remission because of the promise of remission connected with it. It is perhaps not out of the way to represent baptism as "a formal acceptance of Jesus as Lord," but we prefer to regard the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, as an acceptance of Him as Lord, and baptism as a solemn act of obedience to Him as such. As the final salvation is made dependent on a life of obedience—not upon faith alone—it is fitting that sinners should reach the present salvation through the obedience of faith begun, not simply proposed.

H. McDIARMID

Cincinnati, Ohio, July 22.

—Christian Standard

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