

are in "a state of saving grace," nor do I believe that "all" baptized adults are in such a "state." I do not believe that a majority of those who make a profession of their own faith, and are then baptized, are really regenerated by the Spirit of God. Dr. A. Campbell, the founder of the Campbellites, and the most powerful advocate of "Immersion in adult age" that America has yet produced, says that *not one-tenth* of those so baptized (immersed) will ever enter into the kingdom of Heaven. I do believe that many children, born of Christian parents, are made the recipients of the Spirit's saving and regenerating grace while yet in their unconscious infancy. See Jer. i. 5; Luke i. 15; 1 Sam. i. 28; 2 Tim. iii. 15. I do believe that we have very strong presumptive evidence of the salvation of all children of Christian parents who with earnest prayer consecrate such children to the Lord, and implore His saving grace for them (James v. 16).

Children of the Lord's people belong to the Lord by virtue of their birth (Ps. cxxvii. 3). They are not baptized to make them of the Lord's visible people, but because they are already among and of that visible people. The lambs of your flock are "marked" because they are yours, not to make them yours.

The trouble with all the enemies of infant baptism, of whom I have any knowledge, is that they have an erroneous notion of what the visible Church is, and what the Lord designed it to be. When God created our race, and placed them here on this earth, He gave to them the power and privilege of perpetuating their kind (Gen. i. 28, and ix. 1, 7). Man was made in the image of God—"the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." And the Lord claims as His own, every child born of the race (Ps. cxxvii. 3). He claims its service of heart and life through all its earthly pilgrimage (Proverbs xxiii. 26).

Now observe if all the race, without a single exception, had, from the beginning, loved and served the Lord, as was certainly their duty and highest privilege, there never would have been such a thing as a Church on earth. There might have been a race of faithful servants of the Lord—loving, serving, and honouring Him their Lord and Saviour, raising, educating, and training their children for His service, through all their generations, and all going home at last to heaven—but no "Church;" for the "Church" (*ekklesia*) signifies the "called out from"—called out from what? called out from the apostate race of man, which had repudiated its obligations to the Lord and had "gone after other gods." And throughout the history of an apostate race whenever parents have been "called out from" the lost mass of mankind, for the visible service of the Lord, the infant children of such parents have invariably been "called out" with their parents. No exception to this rule can be found in the divine record. Whatever visible external rite such parents have received to distinguish them from the apostate, disobedient mass around them, has been, by the Lord's authority, given to their infant children. Since the coming of the Lord in the flesh this distinguishing rite is "baptism with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." All who recognize, profess, and acknowledge their obligation to be the Lord's in heart and life have a right to the ordinance of baptism. And when they recognize the claim of the Lord upon the heart and life-service of their infant children, and are willing to trust the Lord for the salvation of their children, and to raise, train, and educate such children for the Lord's service, here and hereafter, then they have a right to put the "Lord's mark" (baptism) upon their children also. This ordinance then publicly recognizes the claim the Lord already has to the bodies and souls of the children, and it binds the parents to train them for that service, and it puts such children under lasting obligation to be the Lord's. It also seals the promise of the Lord, "I will be thy God and the God of thy seed after thee" (Gen. xvii. 7 and Rev. xxi. 3).

So that the "Church" of the Lord Jesus Christ, in all dispensations, with all its ordinances, ministers, word and worship, has been, and now is, in its visible organization, a school of Christ wherein souls are trained and taught for the service and glory of God. No visible Church ever existed on earth in which all the members were real believers, and certainly regenerated by the Spirit of God. There were "believers" (by profession) in whom the Lord had no confidence (John ii. 23-25). There were professed "believers" whom the Lord called children of the devil (John viii. 31-44). If such "believers" (and we have plenty of them now)

are not in "a state of grace" will "Inquirer" tell us why are they baptized?

The second question of "Inquirer" is this: "If the conditions for baptizing an adult are not the same as for baptizing an infant, is there a reason or a purpose for baptizing the one that does not apply to the other?" To this we reply by saying that, if we understand the question (which is ambiguous) the "conditions" in both cases are the same. No "reason" or "purpose" can scripturally be given for the baptism of an "adult" that cannot be given for the baptism of an "infant child of believing parents." The heathen adult, who has all his life been living in open rebellion against God, who has neglected or repudiated his obligation to love, serve and honour his Lord, is convinced that he is in the wrong—that he ought to love and obey the kind and beneficent Saviour who died for him. He feels his load of sins, he professes to repent, to turn away from his sins, professes his willingness to trust the Lord, and wishes publicly to recognize his obligation to love, serve, and honour Him all the days of his life, he desires to be known by the name of the Lord, and to be recognized as a disciple and follower of the Lord Jesus. Now, is such an adult a proper subject of water baptism? We affirm that he is, because his profession is "credible"—we know nothing against it. We cannot see and know his heart. If he has faith the Lord gave it to him (Eph. ii. 8). If he has repentance, it is the gift of God (Acts v. 31). If he do "good works" he was "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. ii. 10). His very willingness to recognize the claims of his Lord upon him, is of God (Phil. ii. 13).

Now this believing, converted heathen has an infant child, and as the parent now feels and recognizes his own obligations to love and serve the Lord—in fact feels and professes to be the Lord's—so he feels his child is the Lord's, and he wishes to publicly recognize the claim of the Saviour to the affections, service, and life of his child. If that child is ever regenerated the Spirit of God must do it. If it ever exercises faith in Christ, the Lord must give that faith. If it ever has true repentance, that too must come from above. If it ever does or has "good works," it, too, must "be created in Christ Jesus unto" them. If it ever has a will in harmony with the will of God, that too is God-given. So, as the converted heathen is baptized and enters as a disciple—a scholar—in the school of Christ, to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him—he hears the words of the apostle (Acts xvi. 31), "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved and thy family" (*oikos*). He believes the words of the Lord and offers that child for baptism, as the only rite to distinguish those who are disciples from those who are not. Now is such a child, a child of a believing parent who has already recognized the claim of God upon himself—a proper subject of baptism? Christ says, "Of such (i.e., children of believing, trusting parents) is the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xix. 14. Who dare object to the baptism of such an infant child? The case of the Philippian gaoler was in every respect similar to the one we have been supposing. And when the gaoler was baptized "all his" were baptized straightway, when the record in the original shews that none but the gaoler believed or rejoiced. The verb "rejoiced" is in the singular number and agrees with the gaoler and no one else, while the participle for believing is in the masculine gender and singular number, and agrees with, and depends on, no one but the gaoler.

When the children of believing, praying parents are brought for baptism, who dare say that the Spirit of God has not already, in answer to prayer, regenerated their souls? If not already regenerated by the Spirit, who, that believes God's promises, will dare doubt that, in answer to the prayers of trusting parents, God will give the grace signified by the water—that is, cleanse the soul with the blood of Christ, which is the "blood of sprinkling" (Heb. xii. 24). So certain and infallible are the promises of God for the salvation of all that in true faith and sincerity are committed to Him in His own way, that all true believers act upon His promises just as if they were already fulfilled.

The third question reads thus: "Why may not an infant be baptized by a Presbyterian minister, though its parents belong to another denomination, or to none at all?" To this I reply that a Presbyterian minister may baptize children whose parents are not Presbyterians. I have myself baptized such. It is not because the parent is a Presbyterian, but because he professes at

least to be in covenant relationship with God that he is entitled to the sign and seal of the covenant for his child.

But parents who are not Christians at all have no right to have their children baptized, because, having neglected or repudiated their own obligations to love and serve the Lord, they cannot enter into covenant with the Lord in behalf of their children. The first duty of such parents is to enter into covenant relation with the Lord for themselves, recognize the claims of Christ upon themselves, and then they will have the right and privilege of entering into covenant with Him in behalf of their children, and of recognizing His claims upon the hearts and lives of their dear ones. Parents who profess to be Christians and neglect or refuse to have their children baptized do virtually repudiate the claims of the Lord to their children, and in effect they renounce their covenant obligations to God in behalf of their children. It is not a slight offence against God and their children, when parents thus act. And it is not to be wondered at that such children often grow up in irreligion and ungodliness, sneering and scoffing at the religion their parents professed.

"Inquirer's" fourth question is: "What is the difference between the moral character of an infant of Christian parents, and one whose parents are not Christian, that the one is more worthy of baptism than the other?" This question has been partially anticipated in my reply to the others. As to the innate moral character of the two infants named, I find no ground for saying that there is any difference. The child of Christian parents "is by nature a child of wrath even as the other" (Eph. ii. 3). The child of Christian parents needs, and must have, the regenerating work of the Spirit of God, or it cannot enter the "place prepared" for God's people (John xiv. 3).

The grand and distinguishing difference is that the child of Christian parents has the prayers, the example, and the instruction of pious, godly followers of Christ. And they have the assurance that the Holy Spirit will be given to their children in answer to prayer (Luke xi. 13), and they have the certain promise of the Lord "to be their God and the God of their children after them." If Paul could say that the "profit of circumcision" was "much every way," surely no believer in the promises and covenants of the Jehovah Jesus would be at a loss to see the difference between a child born in the "house of God," of parents who have a right to claim the richest blessings of His providence and grace, and a child born of parents who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise" (Eph. ii. 12). When even one parent is a Christian and desires the child baptized, the Scriptures teach us that the child is "worthy" of the ordinance (1 Cor. vii. 14).

The fifth question is: "Having baptized an infant, what is to be done with its name?" Its name is to be enrolled among the members of the Church visible, and the child is to be watched over, instructed and prayed for by parents, officers of the church, and pastor (John xxi. 15). And as soon as it has knowledge sufficient "to discern the Lord's body," it should be encouraged to come to the Lord's table and thus be admitted to all the privileges of the house of God. A baptized child, in its infancy, is like a citizen of the State in his minority, to be protected by the law till he reaches his majority. If a baptized child grows up to be wicked and ungodly he is to be cut off from the privileges of the Church of God, as having forfeited all his covenant blessings by rebellion against God. But cases of this kind are far more rare than apostasy in Churches that repudiate infant baptism and pretend to baptize none but believers. I would advise "Inquirer" to examine the Church registers of some of the Anti-pædo-Baptist Churches and report the result of his investigation in this direction. The command to baptize is given to the administrators of the ordinance (Matt. xxviii. 19). The command to "commune" (to eat and drink at the Lord's table) is directed to the communicants, and not to the preachers, as such. These facts may answer some other unmasked questions of "Inquirer." If "Inquirer" has any other questions let him speak out.

THE eye of true faith is so quick-sighted that it can see through all the mists and fogs of difficulties. The faith that is grounded on the promises of God, discovers that in prison there is liberty; in trouble, peace; in affliction, comfort; in death, life; in the cross, a crown; and in a manger, the Lord Jesus.