

BAPTISTS AND BAPTISM.

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WHO ARE BAPTISTS?

This name, "Pædobaptists," as its etymology suggests, is intended to denote those who baptize infants; but as applied to us, it is a very inadequate name, since we as readily baptize adults whenever occasion requires. We have here one of several instances in which accident or caprice has confounded sectarian names. We are Catholics, but not Papists; Episcopalians, but not Prelatists; Unitarians, but not Socinians; and we are Baptists, but we do not restrict the rite to believers or adults. Surely that name, "Baptists," is the common property of all who devoutly honour, as they believe, their Lord's command—"Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Such may justly remonstrate—"If any man trust to himself that he is a Baptist, let him of himself think this again, that as he is a Baptist even so are we Baptists." Being so closely identified with our "Baptist" brethren in theology and polity, we deeply regret that this question should have separated them from us; and we hail with joy every sign of the day when, in a common large-heartedness and strong mutual affection, we shall all be ashamed of the "divisions" that have grown out of the Baptist controversy.

BAPTISM A DISCIPLING RITE.

That our administration of the rite is usually to infants, arises from these two facts: That we regard baptism as *initiatory* to Christian instruction, and that Christianity is the faith in which England for centuries has been educated. Were we planting Christianity in heathen lands, adult baptism would bear just such proportion to infant baptisms as the awakened teachableness of the people demanded.

On the authority of the precepts and precedents of the New Testament, we consider baptism essentially a discipling rite—a rite that is to precede and introduce to instruction. Our Lord's command, just before His ascension, is the only full and explicit direction to baptize that we have (Matt. xxviii. 18-20.) And this manifestly places instruction after the administration of the rite—a fact which would have been far more patent to all had our translators duly indicated the distinction between the two terms "make disciples" and "teaching." John baptized "*unto* repentance," not after it, nor because of it (Matt. iii. 11.) His baptism did not discriminate character; the very men whom he denounced as a "generation of vipers," were baptized by him, and then sternly reproved (Matt. iii. 5-7, &c.) Nor did Christ's baptism discriminate (John iv. 1,) nor the Apostles' (Acts ii. 41,) nor Philip's (Acts viii. 13, compared with verses 18-24.) Verse 37 of that chapter is an interpolation, and has been fruitful of much misconception. (See Dr. Halley's "Sacraments," sec. vii. note A.) Nor do the other baptisms denote anything more than entrance into discipleship. There is no instance of delay for instruction or for test of character; as soon as ever any one was willing to be taught, baptism was administered. We meet with no cases in which the descendants of Christian parents were baptized in adult years, nor with exhortations to such to be baptized. Scarcely could this have been so if the views of "Baptists" had then prevailed. Nowhere is baptism presented as a church ordinance; it stands as an individual or family right, and is observed with equal propriety in the solitude of a journey, or at dead of night in the house of a gaoler, as in the presence of multitudes (Acts viii. 39, xvi. 23.) In our judgment, what is called "believers' baptism" contradicts Scripture by imposing the conditions