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"GO . . . SPEAK . . . TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE."

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Is devoted to the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ, and pleads for the union of all believers in the Lord Jesus in harmony with His own prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, and on the basis set forth by the Apostle Paul in the following terms: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."—Eph. iv. 1-6.

What is Legalism?

PROF. I. B. GRUBBS.

If one should lead a class step by step through the Epistle to the Romans annually for fifteen years, he would be apt to find out the fatal error that Paul therein so earnestly and successfully combats. If some of our scribes would do this they would not be so reckless in the use of terms whose real import they do not seem to comprehend. If under his powerful presentation of the claims of Jesus, Bro. J. J. Haley should see a deeply penitent sinner weeping, who had come forward to acknowledge those claims and find rest of soul in looking to the Saviour alone for the bestowment of this blessing in that Saviour's own appointed way, would he thrust away this trembling, trusting soul and pronounce him a "legalist" or a "sacramentarian"? If this weeping penitent, feeling so keenly his need of the grace of God in Christ, moved not only by the sermon which he had just heard, but by recollection of the teaching he had read in the first apostolic sermon under the great commission of our Lord, had now turned in genuine repentance from a sinful life and wished, under the instruction he had gained, to "be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," would our brother, backed by Dr. Clifford, say to this sinner pleading for pardoning mercy through Christ, "My friend, I perceive that you are actuated merely by 'the letter of the Bible;' you 'have a theory of baptism based upon Old Testament legalism, infused into New Testament interpretation,' and are liable to 'die of legalism and logic?'" Would this mockery of the man's earnest yearnings after Christ be any less mockery of the teaching of the Holy Spirit?

What is legalism? and who is a legalist? Is it not about time to pause and consider whether the free use of these terms in certain quarters does not involve a violation of God's moral law through a truthless and unrighteous application? Hear Paul's description of self-righteous Jews: "They being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Depending upon their legalistic morality, like the

self-righteous moralists of our day, they had no use for "baptism for the remission of sins," for they never dreamed that they stood in need of "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The lesson of baptism which points only to Christ and teaches the absolute need of forgiveness through Him, was wholly meaningless to them. And to confound baptism for the remission of sins with legalistic self-sufficiency, is to identify two things that are not only different, but that stand in eternal contradiction as irreconcilable opposites. The former belongs to a gracious system that centers in Christ; the latter depends on a legal system standing apart from Christ and his entire redemptive work. The former teaches man that he is a sinner and needs the pardoning mercy of God, and hence, by gracious direction he is "baptized for the remission of sins;" the latter leads him to expect justification on a basis that excludes the very idea of pardon; "for it is written, cursed is every one who continues not in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them." The intelligent believer in baptism for remission, in looking through the appointment of Jesus to Jesus himself as the only source of life and peace, renounces, of necessity, all self-righteousness and "submits himself to the righteousness of God." Thus the "logic" of "baptism for the remission of sins," is the logic of the soul's loving trust in Christ himself as the only Saviour of men. It leads the seeker of salvation right up to the grace of God in Christ and exhibits the very spiritual essence of our holy religion.

What then are we to think of the statement of Dr. Clifford, endorsed by his admirer in the article before us, that this teaching "is alien to the spirit of Christ and His gospel, refuted by an exact and full interpretation of the New Testament, and is intrinsically sacramentarian, mechanical and unspiritual!" Do these men know just exactly what they are talking about? Looking to Jesus for blessing, in heart-felt reliance on His own gracious promise as connected with his own clearly expressed conditions, "intrinsically mechanical and unspiritual," and "alien to the spirit of Christ and His gospel!" The only possible way to entertain this egregious absurdity, is to forget that everything here points to the Saviour Himself as the only hope of the world and to violently sever his appointments from all connection with Him as their author, with Him as the object to whom they point, and with the merciful end to which He, Himself, has most graciously ordained them. If "baptism for the remission of sins" is "intrinsically sacramentarian, mechanical and unspiritual," then is every act of submission to Christ and every element of Christian worship absolutely devoid of all spirituality. Are these gentlemen prepared to take this position?

But let us now ask, "What idea does the author of the article before us attach to the expression, 'sacramentarian dogma of baptismal remission?'" This may easily be determined when he speaks of it as implying "the ascription of sacramental or remissional efficacy to the ordinance." But who among us ever believed in such miserable nonsense as this? The unjustifiable substi-

tution of the misleading phrase "baptismal remission" for the scriptural expression "baptism for remission," will sufficiently misrepresent our teaching, without the untruthful intimation that we ascribe "sacramental or remissional efficacy to the ordinance" itself. And why this resurrection of an effete sectarian charge against us, which we had supposed that even the most prejudiced of our opponents had abandoned in the light of a better understanding of our teaching? We have no concern with either legal justification or "sacramental grace." As clearly shown above, intelligent belief in baptism for the remission of sins, involves of necessity belief in salvation by grace, in justification by faith. In the very midst of Paul's earnest argument to establish justification by grace, through faith he says: "You are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." I have in mind a preacher who announced to the people that at his next appointment he would set forth our teaching on the design of baptism; as he felt sure that many rejected it by confounding it with Jewish legalism or with Romish sacramentalism. A number of Presbyterians of the strictest sort came to hear the discourse and went away with expressions of high praise, and a zealous lady who was not present expressed regret to the preacher that she had not heard a sermon of which she had heard her brethren speak so highly. Is it then any supposed "inconsistency" that has made us "a power in the land?" And are we likely to "die of legalism and logic" by a close adherence to the great Scriptural principles for which we have ever contended? I must here be allowed to say that after making these principles perceptibly felt by almost the entire Protestant world, and after gaining through them a glorious conquest, if we should now, through mere sentimentalism and through a false religious liberalism, basely abandon them, we would receive, as we would deserve, the contempt of all the world.

And this leads me to notice a mistake in the strange article before us, touching the history of our movement. It is alleged that the teaching of the first "promoters of the movement" was modified essentially by Isaac Errett, and that this "revised doctrine" of baptism for remission does not even possess "the seeming merit of resting upon the basis of the letter interpretation of a half-dozen passages in the New Testament," which appeared to sustain the old form of the doctrine. Every thought in this allegation is erroneous. There has been no "theological evolution of our movement" from one form of teaching to another, and no mere grounding of this teaching on "the letter interpretation of a half-dozen passages" of Scripture, and no failure to establish it as worthy of all acceptance, even if grounded on this "basis." When Isaac Errett and others represented Christian baptism as bringing to the baptized "divine assurance of the remission of sins," so far from repudiating the idea that baptism is a divinely appointed condition of pardon, they employed language that of necessity implies such conditionality. For

the only conceivable way in which baptism can convey "assurance" of forgiveness, is through its conditional connection with the promised blessing, divinely established by the will of God so that on compliance with the condition the promise may be claimed in its fulfillment. How can it bring "divine assurance" otherwise than through its divinely appointed connection with the promise? And if this can be clearly shown to be the teaching of even one passage of the eternal Word of God, why should it be repeated a hundred times to demand implicit faith? But we find it demonstrably set forth in many more than "a half-dozen passages," and often under such circumstances and on such occasions as lend the force of confirmatory proof in "experienced facts" harmoniously connected with the teaching. When three thousand cry out for mercy in the throes of deep conviction, we have in their painfully felt need of forgiveness an "experienced fact" of importance; and when to these as yet unpardoned inquirers the commandment comes, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," there follows another "experienced fact" in the joys of salvation and the reception of the Holy Spirit, as conditioned on their submission to the commandments given. And going further back we find all this to be the result of a great fact embodied in the unrepealable spiritual constitution under which this instruction was given—the connection of baptism in the great commission with the names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as the divine source and bond of life and fellowship. Anything "mechanical and unspiritual" here, as based on a mere "letter interpretation" of isolated texts of Scripture?

But this, says the writer, would "sacrifice Henry Martyn and others," and a host of the best Christian men of the living world, to the "uncovenanted mercies of God," and lead "logically" to the conclusion that "all the unimmersed are unpardoned." And so it seems that we are to determine what God has, or has not, taught in the Scriptures, not by the language employed and the Scriptural facts which enter into the environment of those who are addressed, but by meditating on the piety of Henry Martyn and other good men! When Peter brought the Jerusalem gospel described above to the devout, prayerful, God-fearing and almsgiving Cornelius, through the command of an angel, who said to him of this Peter: "He shall tell thee words whereby thou shalt be saved, and thy house," had some advocate of the new method of determining divine truth been present, he would in consistency have countermanded the direction and pronounced the doctrine of the angel essentially "mechanical and unspiritual!" Now, passing over the shallow *non sequitur*, that the divine promise of pardon to the immersed necessitates the conclusion that "the unimmersed are unpardoned" under any and all circumstances, we would be glad to know what it is to "sacrifice Henry Martyn" and others unimmersed, "to the uncovenanted mercies of God." This is certainly an

original conception. The "mercies of God" must be something very dreadful if they should happen to be "uncovenanted!"

A word, in conclusion, touching this writer's own theory of remission. He says, "Remission of sins is obtained by a process of inward cleansing. Baptism is the representation of the inward process of spiritual cleansing, and is hence said to be the thing for which it stands." Granting the unauthorized, if not "mechanical and unspiritual, dogma," that "baptism is the representation of the inward process of spiritual cleansing," how would this make it represent the remission of sins unless we absurdly suppose that forgiveness is in the soul of those forgiven as a resulting element of the "inward process of spiritual cleansing?" There is a great confusion of mind here, coupled with a mistake often made as to the nature of the indispensable inward work to be wrought in the soul in order to salvation. Men are to be turned "from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins." The former is not a "process of cleansing," but a moral and spiritual renovating, a radical change of mind and heart, on which "baptism for the remission of sins" is conditioned through the appointment of the divine will. Then, with the knowledge of "divine assurance of forgiveness" thus given, comes the *release of the conscience from the sense of guilt*, and this is what the Scriptures call the purification of the soul or heart. Hence we are taught that through the remission obtainable under the New Testament, we can now "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, *having our hearts sprinkled (purified) from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*"—*Christian Evangelist*.

A Methodist Preacher Troubled.

C. L. Spencer, a Methodist preacher, is not satisfied with the prayer which the discipline of his church requires him to say at the baptism of infants. Referring to the allegation in that prayer that "all men are conceived and born in sin," he says:

"But if the child is 'conceived and born in sin,' he must be regenerated at some time, and it is reasonable to suppose that, since infant regeneration is a necessity, it must occur either in the act of his birth or in the act of his baptism—either on his entrance into the world, or on his consecration to God by his baptism. But if his birth be the time and condition of his regeneration, how can we pray for his regeneration in his baptism, unless we believe he has fallen from grace since his natal regeneration? But if his baptism is the time and condition of his regeneration, then before baptism he is exposed to damnation, and all infants dying without baptism are adjudged by the Divine law to be sinners, and having no sins of their own to atone for, they must suffer Adam's sin which, it is affirmed, they have inherited from Adam by their birth?"

The discipline does truly involve the infant in a serious predicament, but we doubt if any prayer that can be fixed up will help the practice of infant baptism much. Bro. Spencer is right in his opposition to the theory of baptismal regeneration, but infant baptism is predicated upon it, and when the theory is surrendered, the practice is without meaning.—*Christian Courier*.