

## Contributions.

## The Commission vs. Denominationalism.

XXII.

T. B. KNOWLES.

Bishop Whatley, commenting on John iii. 5., affirms, "That our Lord here speaks of baptismal regeneration, the whole Christian church has, from its earliest times, invariably taught: Regeneration, as detached from baptism, never entered into any creeds before the seventeenth century." (H. 40.) And Timothy Dwight, pres. of Yale College, says: "To be born again is precisely the same thing as to be born of water and of the spirit; and to be born of water is to be baptized, and he who understands the nature and authority of this institution and refuses to be baptized, will never enter the visible nor invisible kingdom of God." With this George Whitfield agrees when he says: "Does not this verse urge the absolute necessity of baptism?" Yes, when it may be had. (H. 41.) And so does Wesley, in his note on Rom. vi. 3: "In baptism we, through faith, are grafted into Christ," etc. And let us hear Dr. Philip Schaff. He writes. "The authorized version renders Rom. vi. 3: 'So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ;' verse 4, 'baptized into death.' And Gal. iii. 27, 'baptized into Christ.' Why not say, then, with equal propriety, to baptize into the name of Christ, that is, into communion and fellowship with him and the Holy Trinity, as revealed in the work of creation, redemption and regeneration?" And in Lange's Com., Matt. xviii. 24, the same author says: "How many, alas! forfeit the benefits of baptism, i. e., the remission of sins, by a life of impenitence and ingratitude, and become worse than heathen?" The language of Adam Clark is also worthy of note, after saying that baptism is "the visible sign of the cleansing, purifying influences of the Holy Spirit," . . . "and therefore should never be separated from the thing signified." He adds, "But it is a rite commanded by God himself, and therefore the thing signified should never be expected without it." Baptism is therefore necessary to the enjoyment "of the cleansing, purifying influences of the Holy Spirit." Dr. Alexander, of Princeton (Com. on Acts ii. 38), says: "The whole phrase to (or towards) remission of sins, describes this as the end to which the multitude had reference, and which, therefore, must be contemplated in the answer." "The beneficial end to which all this led was the remission of sins." Sechler, on the same passage, says: "The apostle promises to those who repent and receive baptism (1) the remission of sins, and (2), the gift of the Holy Spirit." And on Acts xxii. 16, he says: "We have here a noble testimony to the value which was assigned to holy baptism by the pure apostolic church. It was not a mere external ceremony, but a means of grace for washing away sins, and was the first actual entrance into the church of Jesus." (Mc. G. I. 260.) Able men among the Baptists have likewise spoken of the relation of baptism to the remission of sins, and in harmony with New Testament teaching on this subject. Dr. Hackett, commenting on Acts ii. 38, says: "Aphesiu hamartoon, in order to the forgiveness of sins." (Matt. xxvi. 28, Luke iii. 3), we connect naturally with both the preceding verses. 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." (C. S. 220.) And Dr. Howey says: "Here repentance and baptism are

represented as leading to the forgiveness of sins." Again, in a note on 1 Peter, iii. 27, he says: "But in this passage baptism itself is spoken of as an embodied request or prayer unto God." "Baptism, therefore, saves, because it stands for and means genuine reliance, for the first time, upon the mercy of God in Christ, and indeed, an earnest request for pardon; it expresses the act of the soul in turning to God and seeking His grace." (Sl. p. 1.) This candid language of the doctor will be easily recognized as a pretty fair statement of *Disciple* views. It will be interesting, also, to hear what the English Baptist, Dr. John Gale, says. "Baptism," says the Dr., "I grant, is of great necessity; and though I dare fix no limit to the infinite goodness and mercy of God, which I am confident He will give mighty proofs in great instances of kindness towards all sincere, though mistaken, men, however, the gospel rule is, according to the doctrine of the apostle, to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. We should be very cautious, therefore, of making any change of these things, lest we deprive ourselves, through our presumption of the title to pardon, without which there is no salvation." (Ref. W. Hist., I. Bap., C. and S. 176.) Now, notwithstanding the plain teaching of the New Testament, that baptism, united with faith and repentance, is "for the remission of sins;" and further, that the statements of the apostolic fathers, in their writings, declared the same; and, that the standards of most of the Protestant churches, and the candid statements of many of the foremost men in those churches, maintain this view of the relation of baptism to remission; still, the teaching and practice of denominationalism are against, and strongly opposed to, the apostolic teaching and practice with respect to baptism.

The churches reject the divine word, and follow human ideas, first advanced by the Catechism and Confession of Cracow—1574,—which says, Art. 5th, baptism is the immersion in water, and the immersion of a person who believes the Gospel and exercises repentance, in the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, or in the name of Jesus Christ; whereby he publicly professes, that by the grace of God the Father, he has been washed (ablutum esse), in the blood of Christ, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, from all his sins, etc." (p. 25). It will be seen that, according to this, baptism is not "for," in order to, the remission of sins, but, a declaration that "he has been washed;" a different idea altogether from that taught by the scriptures. In the divine announcement of the conditions of pardon, "repent, and be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ, for, *eis*, the remission of sins," the Holy Spirit used the particle *eis* which expresses that the act was to be performed in order to the end, or object, "remission of sins."

We have the testimony of learned men to the correctness of the fact here stated. The learned Prof. M. Stuart says: "*Eis*, followed by an accusative, in almost innumerable instances, designates the object or end for which anything is, or is done." And W. Trollope, of Pembroke College, Cambridge, also says, "*Eis*, the design intended and the event produced are also expressed by this proposition" (M. E. L. 23). Many passages might be cited, as, "this is my blood which is shed (*eis*) for, in order to, remission of sins;" "Repent ye therefore, and turn again (*eis*) that your sins may be blotted out, etc.," clearly showing that *eis* "designates the object or end for which anything is, or is done." But various manœuvres and adroit efforts have been made to evade this truth, and to throw

baptism out of the law of pardon altogether. It has been proclaimed "a non essential;" and then, every effort has been made to sustain the false charge. The effort has been made to exclude it, declaring it only a "sign" of something; and then ringing the changes on "saved by faith only," giving the lie to the Apostle James, who says, a man is justified "not by faith only." Then the effort has been made to substitute, "because of," for, "in order to," as the meaning of *eis*, in Acts ii. 38. That is, "repent and be baptized," because your sins are remitted. So, said Prof. Crawford, "I urge baptism to those who believe, and whose sins are already remitted." (Debate with Sweeney, p. 227.) That the Apostle commanded those enquiring the way of salvation to "repent," because their sins were remitted, is too absurd for serious reply.

This effort to do away with baptism is the merest trifling, and is equally destructive to repentance, since both sustain the same relation to remission of sins, and would it not be very strange reply for an inspired apostle to make to sinners enquiring what to do in order to receive pardon, to say, "Repent, because your sins are remitted."

Again, baptism is simply "the door into the church," says Rev. V. W. Tevis (M. E.), sermon, p. 17, and Rev. D. M. Wilton (Bap.), sermon, p. 58. "Baptists do not take the ground that members of other denominations are not Christians, but as baptism is the only proper door to the church, they hold that all who have been sprinkled are not baptized." Are we to understand that baptism is the door into the organization known as Baptist? Then it is easier to enter God's Kingdom than to enter the Baptist church. It must be so, for Rev. T. H. Carey says, that Baptists do not believe that "baptism is a saving ordinance," and adds, "As Baptists baptize only saved people," (Eureka, p. 92.) Agreeing with Rev. V. W. Tevis's language: "Believe! Believe! Hear it through all the scriptures. And then he baptized, because you believe; and, having believed, have experienced the new birth" (sermon, p. 23). And Mr. Tevis says, "I believe in baptism . . . but I do not believe that it is the way to the remission of sins, or that it is God's way to salvation" (S., p. 22.) That settles it! Peter, wrong again! in commanding "repent and be baptized . . . for, *eis*, the remission of sins."

Again, other conditions have been made in order to baptism and church membership, than those of the New Testament requirement. Thus, the Baptist church manual says, "Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of a change of heart, and adopting the views of faith and practice held by this church, as set forth in the foregoing declaration, may, upon baptism, be received into its membership." (Ital. mine.) And, according to Pres. Finney, the anxious seat has been substituted for baptism as an avowal of the sinners' faith. He says, "In the days of the apostles baptism answered this purpose." The gospel was preached to the people, and then all those that were willing to be on the side of Christ were called on to be baptized. It held the precise place that the anxious seat does now, as a public manifestation of their determination to be Christians" (Revival Lectures, T. 39). In the face of all such mere quibblings, it is refreshing to turn to the manly words of Phillips Brooks: "This of all others is the time to keep baptism and the Lord's supper reasonable and spiritual and grandly simple, and to guard them from all suspicion of magic and mechanics" (M. 12). And true, as Arch-

bishop Whatley says, "In all positive precepts, in short, an exact compliance with the very letter of the command is required, and is made by the command a moral duty to those to whom the command is given." (Intro. In., Moral and Ch. Ev., p. 13, No. 15.)

## The Children for Christ.

JAS. LEDIARD.

Theoretically the statement in this heading looks very well, and sounds well too; but practically, what do you think of it? This question can be answered by asking another: what effort are you making, as a member of Christ's church, to save the children? What definite and direct work are you doing to bring the children to Jesus Christ and into His church?

Many of our congregations and preachers may be divided into two classes, so far as this subject is concerned; a small class who believe that children may be led to accept Christ as their Saviour, and obey Him and the Gospel quite early in life, and a larger class, who look with much doubt, on every child convert who comes into the church, and not unfrequently reflect on the preacher or Sunday-school teacher who is instrumental in leading the child to decision. I have sometimes heard such a remark as; this: "It is only a child," or, "our meeting was not very successful—only two or three children were added;" or again, how frequently we read the preacher's own account of a meeting, so many additions, "mostly adults," or so many "heads of families." But I cannot call to mind many accounts in which the children were given the place of prominence in the report, nor have I ever heard much rejoicing because the number added were children. However, it is just to say that within the past few years a change has been noted in our reports, for we read not unfrequently of so many added from "our Sunday-school," which is a sign that while they may not be children, they are quite frequently young people. Now I want to enter a protest right here against discriminating against the child converts in these reports of meetings held—as though that child was of less value than a convert of riper years. I do not believe that the child is of less value, either in the sight of God, or of less value to the church of Jesus Christ, and I pity from my heart the preacher who feels that to lead a child to Christ is a small and comparatively unimportant matter. I was once greatly pained by hearing a very successful preacher of the Gospel say, quite warmly, almost angrily on one occasion, when he had pleaded with the people night after night, and there had been no response: "I wish that child could have been kept away, it will go far to spoil our meeting." The child that called forth this un-Christian-like remark had come forward to confess the Saviour, and is to-day a Christian man, and a model Christian man at that; at that time he was a boy of not more than ten years old.

But let me state one or two reasons why I think we should not only welcome the children who come to the Saviour, but why we should strive to lead them there:

1st. *It will save them from the follies and vices and sins of youth and early manhood.* Sowing wild oats is not a necessity, it is a folly. There is no positive need that our children enter upon a life of deliberate sin; no need that bad habits grow strong, and heart and life be polluted before they seek the Saviour, better fly to Him for refuge. Better to be kept from sin than to be dragged out of it. "Prevention is better than cure," there is no doubt of it, but it is not nearly so popular, and we glory

more over the sinner whom by God's grace we have rescued than over the child whom we kept from ever becoming a slave to sin; and yet the latter is the wiser course as all can see. Let prevention be our aim, it will save us many tears and sorrows in years to come, and will give the church of Jesus Christ the benefit of the sweet young life of the children, who only need to be old enough to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and obey Him.

My second reason is, that many illustrious Bible characters began to serve the Lord while quite young. As instances of religious life in childhood, we have such names as Joseph and Samuel, David and Obadiah, Josiah and Daniel, Timothy and Jesus Christ the Son of man. Then, so far as I can learn, the early church gave much attention to the spiritual training of children, and many entered the church quite young. To this let there be added the list of youthful converts since apostolic days, who have specially distinguished themselves: Pres. Edwards began his religious life at seven years of age; Mathew Henry, at eleven; Bishop Hall, at eleven; Baxter, while very young; Watts, the writer of hymns, at nine years of age, and C. H. Spurgeon, at fifteen, and that great and good man says that he has received hundreds of children into the church between the ages of eight and sixteen.

A story is told of our late Brother Flower, well known to us by his work and writings, that on one occasion a number of men came forward to confess the Saviour, and amongst them a little boy. The good brother was somewhat embarrassed by the extreme youth of the lad, and his mind was full of doubt as to what he should say to one so young; he had not faith enough in the boy even to ask him (as of course he did all the others), if he believed in Jesus the Christ, so he changed that beautiful question for another, "My boy, how old are you?" and promptly the reply came, "Please, sir, I am just six months younger than Jesus was when he taught in the temple." And Bro. Flower says, I felt I had reflected seriously on the boy's faith and intelligence. I received his confession and he became a useful and honored member of the church. Our lately deceased Bro. Elder John Thomson, said to me many years ago, when talking on this subject, "If some one had shown me the way of salvation clearly when I was ten years old, I should have become a Christian then far easier than at a later period when the Gospel in its simplicity opened up to me," so I say, "Save the children."

My last reason and the most serious one is, if they do not come while young, they may never come at all. I know mothers who weep and fathers who mourn because the children who years ago expressed a desire to become Christians and were not allowed to publicly confess Christ, because of their youth, have gone astray and never expressed that desire since, and in some cases have died without God and without Christ, while others are so sunk in sin that humanly speaking there is little hope for them. I know scores of such, and so do you who read this, and even in your own family you can verify this statement. In early life they might easily have been led to the Saviour, while to-day the world and the flesh and the devil have such a hold on them that you are filled with a sad fear lest they should go on rejecting the Gospel till it is too late.

So I say let us teach the children of the love of God and Christ—of the claims of the Gospel, and let all our work with them, and for them, be with the distinct aim of leading them to accept Christ in the Gospel while they are young.

Save the children, Christ died for them; save the children, the church needs them, and if they are not saved, the world, and the flesh, and the devil will surely lead them down the broad path to death.