

Contributions.

The Commission vs. Denominationalism.

XX.

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Whether we may, or may not, be able to fully comprehend just how baptism is "for the remission of sins," or to what extent it is a factor in enabling the sinner to appropriate the blessing of pardon, and enjoy the assurance of that fact, one thing is certain, namely, that Christ has united baptism to faith and repentance in giving the law of pardon and the conditions of remission of sins. And the birth of water has been united to that of the spirit, in the entrance into His kingdom. (John iii. 5.) We notice, then (1), That the teaching of the apostles everywhere is in harmony with this fact. Saul, though called to be an apostle, was commanded, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," etc. The pious eunuch, in hearing Jesus preached unto him, learned that it was necessary for him to be baptized, "and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." The Pentecostians were baptized for the remission of sins; the saints at Rome "were baptized into Christ Jesus," "into His death." In this, they "became obedient from the heart to that form (immersion) of teaching the facts, Christ's death, burial and resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4) whereunto they were delivered," and "were made free from sin," and "became servants of righteousness." (Rom. vi.) The church at Ephesus was "cleansed with the washing of water by the word." (Eph. v. 26.) "According to His mercy He saved us," says Paul, "through the washing of regeneration

(Titus iii. 5.) And Peter, speaking of those "saved through water," says, "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism." (1 Peter iii. 21.) Again, Paul says, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, did put on Christ." (Gal. iii.) Such is the uniform teaching with respect to the design of baptism, showing the relation of this to the remission of sins, throughout the New Testament.

(2) The works of the earliest Christian writers show that they held this view of baptism. Barnabas, who travelled with Paul, and wrote his "general epistle" before the death of John, speaking of baptism, says: "It is written to the people of Israel how they shall not receive that baptism which brings to forgiveness of sins; but shall institute another to themselves, that cannot." (Chap. x. 2.) Had he spoken this of pedobaptism, his words would apply with equal force. Again, in verse 14, he says: "We go down into the water full of sin and pollution, but come up again bringing forth fruit; having in our hearts the fear and hope which is in Jesus, by the Spirit." There can be no misunderstanding of this apostolic writer, as to his views respecting the purpose of baptism. It plainly shows that he understood baptism to be a condition of the forgiveness of sins, and of hope in Christ. Hermas, who lived contemporary with Barnabas, and is mentioned in Rom. xvi. 14, wrote a book entitled, "The Shepherd." This work was so highly thought of by the fathers, that it was "appointed to be read to such as were to be instructed in the faith, and desired to be directed in the way of piety." So says Athanasius, as quoted by Dr. Pendleton.

In Vision III., Hermas, speaking of the church, that it appeared as a "tower built upon the water," asks the one

instructing him in the Vision: "Why is the tower built upon the water?" And is answered, "Because your life is and shall be saved by water," (baptism) Vis. III. xx. 41, 42. And in his commands he says, "I have even now heard from certain teachers that there is no other repentance besides that of baptism, when we go down into the water and receive the forgiveness of sins; and that after that we must sin no more, but live in purity." (Com. iv. 18.) Again, in his Similitudes, he says: "For before a man receives the Name of the Son of God, he is ordained unto death; but when he receives that seal, he is freed from death, and assigned unto life. Now, that seal is the water of baptism, into which men go down under the obligation unto death, but come up appointed unto life." (Sim. ix. 152, 153.) There can be no doubt that both of these writers had heard the apostles preach; and surely their language bears the same ring as that of the apostles, as has already been shown. It is evident, as Hagenbach affirms, that "from the earliest times, great importance was attached to the doctrine of baptism, because of its supposed relation to the forgiveness of sins." And it is but reasonable to suppose, that these holy men, writing as they did, before the death of all the apostles, and for those who had been taught by them, wrote simply the truth as they themselves had learned it from the apostles. And it is clear that their teaching, with respect to the design of baptism, and its relation to the forgiveness of sin, agrees with the inspired language, "Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water; which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism," etc. It would be interesting to show that many of the early Christian writers, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, and others, clearly taught the baptism to the remission of sins. The last writer mentioned says: "The forgiveness of sins having been once obtained at baptism, we arise, by constant exercise in well-doing, which is, as it were, a constant repetition of baptism, the Divine forgiveness anew." And again, "In the baptism of water, the remission of sins is received, in that of blood, the crown of virtue." Yet, he clears himself from holding anything like what is called baptismal regeneration. "For water alone," says Cyprian, "can not purge away sins and sanctify a man unless he have also the Holy Spirit." Doubtless, he has Paul's language in his eye. "He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

3. The testimony of councils and of the creeds harmonizes with what has been adduced, on the relation of baptism to remission of sins. The Augsburg confession, 1550 A. D., has this to say on baptism: "The scriptures teach that it is necessary to salvation as a ceremony ordained of God; also, by baptism the grace of God is offered" (W. K. P. 16).

The confession drawn up by Melancthon in 1551, for the council of Trent, speaks as follows: "I baptize thee: that is, I do witness that by this dipping, thy sins be washed away, and that thou art now received of the true God." And a confession composed by Brentz in 1552 A. D., for the same council says, "I believe and confess that baptism is that sea, into the bottom whereof, as the prophet saith, God doth cast all our sins." The second Helvetic confession, 1564 A. D., thus speaks: "To be baptized in the name of Christ is to be enrolled, entered, and received into the covenant and family, and so into the inheritance of the Son of God; that is to say, to be called

sons of God, to be purged, also, from the filthiness of sins, and to be endowed with the manifold grace of God for to tread ar... an innocent life." (W. K., P. 16.) The Nicene creed, adopted in the first half of the fourth century, says: "We believe in one baptism for the remission of sins." The teaching of the Protestant churches on the relation of baptism to the remission of sins, as far as they agree with what has already been given, is as follows: "The Church of England, Art. xxvii, says of "Baptism," . . . "it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church; the promises of the forgiveness of sins, and of our adoption to the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed," etc. And the answer to question first, in "A Catechism (Book of Common Prayer) is: "My Sponsors in Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." And during the "ministration of baptism," the preacher prays: . . . "We call upon Thee for these persons, that they, coming to Thy holy baptism, may receive remission of their sins by spiritual regeneration." And, further, the catechism teaches:

Q. "What is the inward and spiritual grace of baptism?"

A. "A death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness, for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace."

Q. "How are we made members of the church, or mystical body of Christ?"

A. "By baptism. We are all baptized into one body. (1 Cor. xii. 13.)"

Q. "For what end did our Lord institute the rite of baptism?"

A. "To be the way and means of admitting man again into the favor of God, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John iii. 5.)"

Q. "What favors or privileges does God grant to persons baptized in this new covenant?"

A. "The forgiveness of all his own sins, if he hath committed any, and the sin of Adam, so far as it concerned him; a title to the Holy Spirit, as being the life of that body whereof he is now made a member, and the promise of a resurrection of his body, and a glorious immortality in heaven."

Q. "Does baptism cleanse us from all the actual sins we have committed before it?"

A. "Yes; as well as from original sin. Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins (Acts xxii. 16)," etc.

And this is the teaching of the Calvary catechism, viz.: "Q. What were you made in baptism? A. A member of Christ. Q. What else? A. The child of God. Q. What else? A. An inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. Q. What is the special grace of baptism? A. Cleansing from sin." The Confession of Faith says: "Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life," etc. (ch. 28th).

In the Discipline of the M. E. Church, in Sec. III, we read: "Our Saviour, Christ, saith: None can enter into the kingdom of God except he be regenerated and born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost," etc., and the minister then prays: . . . "We call upon Thee for these persons; that they, coming to thy holy baptism, may re-

ceive remission of their sins, by spiritual regeneration," etc.

The Baptist Church Manual simply says: "We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost."

All true. Baptism is, therefore, a condition of salvation, since it brings man into that name, in which alone is salvation. (Acts iv. 12.)

Harvest Time.

Every season has its own peculiar brightness and beauty. Even winter, with its cold and snow, has its peculiar charm to those who love the merry jingle of the sleigh bell, or the more exhilarating exercise of skating or snow-shoeing.

This is autumn—harvest time, summer's warmth and beauty have passed away. The clouds are heavier, the winds sigh mournfully, and as the sun nears the horizon, tingling the clouds with a roseate hue, one shivers as though an unnatural chill had taken hold of the body.

Some think the harvest time to be the most glorious of all times. It is then the farmer sees the result of all his hard work; it is then the naturalist beholds nature undergoing a great change. It is not true that in the Christian religion the harvest is the most glorious?

"What will the harvest be?"

"The harvest is the end of the world." "Let both grow together till the harvest."

Everybody will have a harvest of some kind. "They that sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; while they that sow of the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." " whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap."

These and other passages of scripture lead to the following conclusion: That in order to obtain a harvest, there must be: 1st, a sowing; and, a growing. We arrive at the following inevitable conclusions:

- 1. Everybody is sowing.
2. Everybody is growing.
3. Everybody is going to reap a harvest.

4. The harvest will be according to the sowing and growing. Let us consider briefly, 1st, the sowing. What is the seed? Our thoughts, words, and deeds. I read somewhere not long ago, that we might sow a thought and reap a desire, sow a desire and reap an action, sow an action and reap a habit, sow a habit and reap a life, sow a life and reap eternity. What large trees grow from small seeds. What tremendous results from one thought. What seeds are we sowing to-day? Are our thoughts pure? For "the pure in heart shall see God."

God is a discerner of the thoughts. Are our words good? "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth," says the Apostle. How much harm is done by careless talking. One sentence sometimes will undo all the good a man may have done in five years. Christians who indulge in foolish talking, and in the use of corrupt language, are sowing a seed that will produce a dreadful harvest. We must have the good thoughts and the good words, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Then there are our actions: these speak louder than words. There is a prevailing law in nature that seeds multiply by growth, so we find that thought has grown into words and words have multiplied into actions, and so the influence is greater and reaches further; covers more ground. What are your thoughts, words, actions? Good. Then you will have a good harvest, for as you sow, so shall you

reap. What you sow now you will reap in eternity.

What about the growing? We notice first the soil: it grows weeds naturally, but good seeds have to be sown and weeds kept down. So it is natural for us to have thoughts, etc., that can be compared to weeds, but we find the good seed is sown in our heart and it grows and brings forth fruit. There are certain conditions favorable to the growth of a good seed—good soil, cultivation, sunshine, showers. Growth in grace depends upon our making use of the conditions favorable to growing. Exercise is the law of development. If we are growing carnal it is because we are using the conditions favorable for the growth and development of that kind of seed. If we are growing more like our Divine exemplar, it is because we are adding to our faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, and those things which will give us an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. Both will grow together till the harvest. "What will the harvest be?"

What a day that will be when the angels shall go forth as reapers! What a gathering!

How small some of the seeds were, yet how they have grown. How that cup of cold water has expanded into a sea of glory: that kind word into a saved soul, while on the other hand the refusal of help to some poor Christians has grown into our refusal by God. Oh! how seed when sown does grow! What will the harvest be? Up! brother, sister, cut down the weeds, rank and tall they may be, cut them down. Sow good seed for an eternal harvest. Souls are perishing all around. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

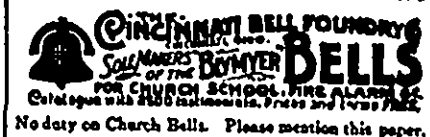
W. H. HARDING.

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