

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### A CATECHISM ON THE DOCTRINES OF THE PLYMOUTH BRETHREN.

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(Continued.)

Q. What is their usual way of putting the case?

A. "A man is not called presumptuous, because, when God tells him the world was drowned by a flood, he believes it; and yet if a man, on the same testimony (2), believes that he has the pardon of his sins, and acknowledges it, he is called presumptuous." But surely God has nowhere in the world told A. B. that his sins are forgiven, as he revealed the fact of the flood. I can show chapter and verse for the flood. Show me chapter and verse for the pardon of A. B.

Q. But does not John say "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life?"

A. Yes; every believer hath everlasting life; but the passage does not tell me that you are a believer. I have only your testimony upon that point. I have no divine testimony upon it. Your own statement, "I am a believer" is not equivalent to a divine statement to that effect.

Q. But if a man owes a debt in London, and a friend pays it for him, he can have no peace till he knows that it is paid?

A. But surely if the debt is really paid, he is safe, though he still may be wanting in comfort. If you tell a roomful of people that their debt is paid or their sin put away, you can tell them that they are saved—that is, they are saved before they believe. If you preach this to all men, you are a Universalist at once, and teach that all men without exception will be finally saved. Whose debt to the last farthing did Christ pay upon Calvary? Was it that of his elect, as of all sinners as such? You say the debt of all sinners. Then, I ask, how any sinner can by any possibility be damned? If the sinner's debt was paid before he was born, it is surely a fact, whether he believes it or not, or hears of it or not. The Brethren make no distinction between a weak faith and a strong faith. They confound the certainty of the things to be believed with the assurance we have of them. The one is always the same; the other is proportioned to the strength of our faith.

Q. But unbelief is the damning sin?

A. Well, but the debt that Christ paid for every sinner includes unbelief in it, or it does not. If it does, the debt cannot be paid and remain due at the same time.

Q. But doubting is condemned. If I don't believe in God's Word, I make him a liar?

A. The doubting which Scripture condemns is not doubting our own safety, but doubting whether what God has said be true. To doubt whether I am a Christian or not does not make God a liar, for he has nowhere said I am so.

Q. But does not faith consist in believing that Christ died for me?

A. Not at all. That is assurance, which all saints should strive to attain, as Paul did—(2 Tim. i. 12)—but all have not this assurance.

Q. But my assurance does not depend upon self-examination. That mars my peace. I look to Christ, and I don't pore into the muddy depths of my soul?

A. You are quite right to look to Christ for comfort as well as pardon, but if you neglect self-examination you oppose the tenor of Scripture command. (1 John 2, 3; 2 Cor. xiii. 5; 2 Cor. iii. 1.) Paul supposes the possibility of self-deception in Gal. vi. 3. The Brethren say that holy works are not necessary to evidence faith to an individual; but Paul says—(Heb. vi. 9-11)—"that ye do show the same diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end." They say, too, that holy duties or holy affections are no evidence, for they may deceive us and be in hypocrites. But so may faith deceive us. Are there not false faiths as well as false loves? Paul commands us to work our salvation with fear and trembling—advice quite unnecessary on Plymouth principles. Our doctrine then is, *assured et debent*—believers *can* and *ought* to have this assurance, but it is different from faith, and is not of the essence of faith.

#### BELIEVER BAPTISM.

Q. What is the position of the Brethren upon this question?

A. They re-baptize all their converts, for they are usually Baptists in doctrine. They are therefore, opposed to the baptism of infants, though this has been the practice of the Church for eighteen centuries.

Q. But do they not imitate the apostles, who immediately baptized their converts?

A. Remember that their converts were those who had been Jews and heathens till their conversion. We act similarly in our foreign mission field. Your reference to the apostles does not meet the question. "What is to be done with believers' children? Show us an instance in the Bible of the child of Christian parents being allowed to grow up to manhood without being baptized. The Jews when they made proselytes to their religion, always baptized them *with their children*, and then circumcised them. So that household baptism is what we would expect to read of in the New Testament."

Q. Why, then, was Christ not baptized in childhood?

A. For a very good reason: because baptism had not been instituted. You could as easily argue against the circumcision of infants, because Abraham was not circumcised till he was a hundred years old; or ask, Why did not Noah eat the Passover? or John the Baptist keep the Lord's Supper? But John's baptism was not Christian baptism; for those baptized by John were baptized over again. (Acts xiv. 5.) If the Baptists quote the baptism of Christ, they must hold that no believer should be baptized till he is thirty years of age.

Q. But an infant cannot understand baptism?

A. It does not understand the nature of its mother's milk, and yet that milk nourishes it. The children that Jesus

blessed—(Mark x. 13-16)—did not understand his act, yet his blessing must have done them good. But the circumcised Jewish infant of eight days old knew nothing of the nature of circumcision, though it was "a seal of the righteousness of faith." (Rom. iv. 11.)

Q. There is no command or example in the Scriptures for infant baptism?

A. There is no command or example for admitting females to the Lord's Supper?

Q. But faith is necessary to baptism, and infants cannot believe?

A. Faith, too, is necessary to salvation. Therefore, they cannot be saved? If the want of faith shuts an infant out of the Church, the want of faith shuts an infant out of heaven. Where the Scripture speaks of the necessity of faith in order to baptism, it refers to adults only, for they only are capable of faith. You require to prove that God demands the same qualification from an infant as he does from an adult.

Q. But you baptize children, and profess faith for them, and they grow up unbelievers. You act a lie.

A. You baptize adults, who profess faith themselves, and yet turn out to be unbelievers. You and they acted a lie together. And if they should afterwards come to repentance, do you baptize them over again? Ought Simon Magus to have been baptized over again?

Q. But why, then, do you not allow children to partake of the Lord's Supper?

A. They are members of the Church without it. Besides, infant communion has no sanction from the Word of God. A child is a citizen of the state, but as a child, he cannot vote or exercise the right of citizenship.

Q. But is there any evidence for infant baptism? I can see nothing but believer-baptism in the Scripture?

A. We see in the very constitution of our nature that the parent represents the child while the child is unable to act for itself. The children were always included in the Old Testament covenants. (Deut. xxi. 9-13.) They were within the covenant and in visible membership with the Church of God nearly two thousand years before Christ. All the male infants were circumcised, Christianity did not put them out of covenant.

Q. But circumcision was not a religious ordinance, but a mere mark of carnal descent. It was a pledge of the possession of Canaan and of earthly blessings?

A. 1. It introduced the subject of it to religious privileges, and is called by Paul a "seal of the righteousness of faith." (Rom. iv. 11.) It was a sign of regeneration, or, as Paul says, "the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." (Col. ii. 11.) 2. The Ishmaelites, Edomites, and Midianites came from Abraham by carnal descent, and were also circumcised; yet they were to possess no part of Canaan. Circumcision thus had primary and special reference to the spiritual covenant. 3. It was the seal of a covenant, in which "all the families of the earth were to be blessed."

Q. But circumcision of the flesh in the Old Testament corresponded to circumcision of heart in the New Testament?

A. The argument fails, for circumcision of heart was enjoined upon the Jew as well. (Deut. x. 16; xxx. 6.)

Q. But an irreligious Jew, if he had been circumcised, could partake of the Passover?

A. He must have preparation of the heart. (Isaiah i.) That was demanded. "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart." (Deut. x. 10; Jer. iv. 4.) The distinction between "Israel after the flesh" and "Israel after the Spirit" existed in Old Testament times, as much as it does now.

Q. But why do you baptize females at all, seeing they were not circumcised?

A. Females were included with males in the covenants of the Old Testament. Besides, the Christian economy is larger and wider. There is "neither male nor female" in Christ Jesus.

Q. But show us evidence in the New Testament?

A. We answer—The Church membership of infants has never been set aside, and we are not bound to produce from the New Testament any express statute re-affirming their membership. The believing parents were taken in, but the children were not excluded. Paul says: Where even one parent is a believer, "the children are holy" (1 Cor. vii. 14), and John writes to little children as members of the Christian Church. (1 John ii. 13.) Let the Baptist show us a single passage in which the right of infants to Church membership has been abrogated in the New Testament. That he never can.

Q. Your argument is nullified by the apostolic commission—"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Here "teach" or "make disciples of" all nations comes before baptizing; therefore, infants are necessarily excluded?

A. We answer—1. The commission does not read, "Make disciples of all nations, and baptize them," but "make disciples, baptizing and teaching." The teaching is to follow the baptism. Infants cannot thus be excluded. 2. The nations include "infants." If he had said, "Circumcise all nations," would the Jews have understood him to exclude infants?

Q. But is not faith actually necessary in order to baptism in the New Testament?

A. A profession of faith was all that was necessary; for the baptized were in many instances strangers to those who "baptized" them. Yet the apostles baptized them, though they had been Jews up to that moment, without inquiring into their past history or into the sincerity of their profession. In no case was it said there was inquiry or delay for the purpose of inquiry.

Q. But the apostles had no need to inquire: they were inspired, and could discern spirits?

A. Why, then, did Philip baptize Simon Magus, who was not a true believer? On the Baptist principle that there is no baptism without faith, the baptizer can never be sure that the ordinance is valid, for he cannot be certain of the professor's faith. If there be no baptism without faith, then large numbers of Baptists are unbaptized, for they were dipped while they were still unconverted. Remember above all

things, that the baptism of proselytes is the only believer's baptism known to Scripture.

Q. I cannot see that 1 Cor. vii. 14 gives you any help?

A. There is no distinction here between the children of believers and the children of unbelievers, on the ground of one of the parents being a believer. The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife. Else were your children unclean, but now they are holy. It proves the church membership of infants, for it assumes the principle that, when both parents are reputed believers, their children belong to the Church, as a matter of course. But if he had taught that no child—even of believers—could be a Church member, there could have been no difficulty in the Corinthian mind.

Q. But the word holy means that the children were legitimate?

A. The word occurs about 700 times in the Septuagint, Apocrypha, and New Testament, and never means "legitimate" in any instance whatever. It means "holy" in the sense of being in covenant with God. Baptists forget that the heathenism even of both parents never made their children illegitimate.

Q. Have you any additional evidence?

A. Christ himself asserts the Church membership of infants—"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xix. 14.) If the kingdom of heaven means the state of glory, our argument is strengthened, for if they are fit to enter the Church above are they not fit to enter the Church below. If the kingdom means the Gospel Church, then he positively asserts their Church membership.

Q. But the passage means by "of such" those adults who resemble children?

A. No; for, then, it speaks nonsense. Imagine Christ giving as a reason for bringing children to him that men, humble and teachable as children, belong to his Church.

Q. But if Christ meant that the children belonged to the kingdom, why did he not baptize them?

A. Because Christian baptism was not yet instituted. The passage proves the Church membership of infants for the coming day of baptism.

Q. But we never hear of the apostles baptizing infants?

A. They baptized households. They baptized the family of Lydia, though there is no evidence that any of her household but herself believed. If there were infants in the house, there was no occasion to mention them if they retained their old unchanged position in the covenant. Of the eleven distinct cases of baptism recorded in Scripture, three are family baptisms, proving that such were common in apostolic times. Is it credible that there was not a single infant in those three households? That every member of them was capable of faith, and actually believed at the very same time as their parents? Remember, too, that the apostles, in writing to the Churches, addressed themselves to children, who must, therefore, have been included in the membership. (Eph. vi. 1; Col. iii. 10.) Again, *why do we never hear of the baptizing of households among the Baptists now?* If we never read in Scripture of the baptism of children, we never read of the conversion of children, and yet there must have been children converted as well as adults.

Q. But the historical argument is against you?

A. No such thing. It is for us. Tertullian was an opponent of infant baptism, for he held that baptism washes away sin; and that sin after baptism is specially dangerous; and that, therefore, young people should wait till they were married before they were baptized. He never calls it an innovation. Pelagius held that infants were born free of defilement. Then argued Augustine, "Why are infants baptized for the remission of sin, if they have no sin?" This implies that infant baptism was no innovation. For several centuries after Christ it was practised, and Tertullian was the first known to object to it, on the grounds stated. He lived in the second century.

#### BAPTISM—ITS MODE.

Q. But I cannot recognise your sprinkling as baptism at all. Baptism means the immersion of the whole body in water. Every instance of baptism in the New Testament was by immersion?

A. We know—(Acts. ii. 41)—that 3000 were baptized at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. We ask, where was water to be found to dip such a multitude?—There is no river passing the city, and always a scarcity of water. How could the twelve apostles dip 3000 persons in four or five hours? It now exhausts a strong Baptist minister to dip twenty-four grown persons; but each apostle must have dipped 250 persons within a portion of a single day!

Q. But all Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, were baptized by John in Jordan?

A. If he dipped them all, how could he do it during his short ministry of six months! Suppose there were 300,000 dipped—and this is a low estimate—he must have lived in the water more than half his time. He must have dipped about 1,648 persons every day! How did he do it?

Q. But the word "baptizo" (translated "baptize") means always dip, and nothing but dip?

A. Suppose that is the literal meaning, carry out your principle fairly. At the Lord's Supper you consume a small quantity of bread and wine, yet supper literally means a full meal. If the literal observance of the word is not to regulate the observance of the Supper, why should it regulate our observance of baptism? If you ask, then, how much water is necessary to a scriptural baptism, I ask, how much bread and wine one must consume to partake of the Lord's Supper?

Q. But in the 175 classical instances, the word means dipping, and nothing else.

A. And in all instances known to us, the Greek word *deipno* (supper) means a full meal, and nothing else. *Baptizo* has two meanings in Greek classics—to dip, and to put a liquid upon or over an object. The question is, which of these two meanings does it retain in the Greek Testament? Now, at Pentecost, the disciples are said to have been baptized with the Holy Ghost, but were not dipped into Him. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon them. Christ says—"Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come up."