

Baptists, The Only Thorough Religious Reformers

John Quincy Adams

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PREFACE TO THE CENTENNIAL EDITION

The following Lectures have a peculiar history. They were originally delivered to the Baptist Church in Caldwell, N. J., in the ordinary course of pastoral labors in that place, and were not then intended for the press. At the urgent request of those who heard them, the author was induced to give them to the public. They were delivered from meager notes, and from these, as his “copy,” the author, himself a practical printer, set up the types of the first edition, which was published in 1858. As much of the matter was thus extemporized, at the “case,” the entire book was never written. The late excellent Spencer H. Cone, D. D., then pastor of the First Baptist Church of New York city, read the proofs, and so well pleased was he with the work, that he ordered the first fifty copies for his own church, recommending it from his pulpit as well as by the notice which appears among the “Recommendations.”

Several editions were printed during the few following years, and the work was widely circulated through the country, and seems to have given a new phase to the baptismal controversy, by directing attention to the GREAT PRINCIPLES which underlie the action of the Baptist denomination. It shows that these principles, though based on God's Word, are constantly violated by Protestant pedobaptists, though they profess to be governed by that Word. Not a few of these have been led, by the perusal of previous editions, to see the utter inconsistency of pedobaptism with the principles of the New Testament, and have renounced it, and united with the Baptist denomination. Among these, several highly honored and useful brethren, now in the ministry of the denomination, might be named.

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The occurrence of our National Centennial seemed to the author an appropriate time to issue a revised, and enlarged edition, especially as some years have elapsed, since the plates of the first editions were destroyed, and during all that time applications have been made for the work, which could not be supplied.

To the advocacy and propagation of the principles here presented, our country owes all it possesses of true greatness. American principles are, essentially, Baptist principles, and this is owing to the fact that Baptist principles have impressed themselves upon the nation, as the only principles consistent with a government divorced from ecclesiastical control, and recognizing the universal right to civil and religious liberty.

And to the recognition and prevalence of these principles, the evangelical pedobaptist churches of our land owe their spirituality and moral power, in spite of the inconsistency of infant baptism, the legitimate and baneful fruits of which are nipped in the bud, by the influence of Baptist churches.

With the earnest prayer that the present edition may be as useful, at least, as previous ones, in leading Christians of every name to the knowledge and practice of Bible truth, the work is commended to the blessing of God, and the candid consideration of the reader.

J.Q.A. Newburgh, NY, 1876

RECOMMENDATIONS

FROM THE FIFTH EDITION, PUBLISHED IN OCTOBER, 1856.

From REV. SPENCER H. CONE, D. D.

“We have read this little book with more than ordinary gratification. It treats an important subject in a Scriptural and logical manner. There is no attempt to conceal or modify our denominational principles; they are stated kindly and persuasively, yet with a manliness and earnestness worthy of all praise. We suggest the expediency of stereotyping the work, printing it in a cheap form and circulating it by thousands. 'Christian baptism is immersion only; if it is right to preach it, it is right to print it.' — that is my creed; and without either violating it or covering it up, I can heartily commend this plain, straightforward production of our young ministering brother to all who wish to 'buy the truth and sell it not.'”

From REV. ARCHIBALD MACLAY, D. D.

“With the work of Brother Adams, entitled “BAPTISTS THOROUGH REFORMERS,” I am decidedly well pleased. I have perused it with great satisfaction, and consider the reasoning contained in it the most conclusive I have ever read. It is just the book for the times, I can cheerfully recommend it.”

From the N. Y. RECORDER.

“Baptists Thorough Religious Reformers: BY JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.— Mr. Adams illustrates in himself several things; that practical printers make clear, straight-forward writers — that Pedobaptists who sacrifice something for their convictions, make thorough Baptists — and that he is the strongest Baptist of all, who, passing far down beneath philological questions, in which some shallow opponents think they see all there is of Baptist doctrines, sees and comprehends the principles which are embodied in the denomination, as in the primitive church. All these characteristics, illustrated in Mr. Adams personally, are transferred to his book. It is clear and straightforward — it is thoroughly Baptist — and it is so, not on grounds of philology merely, but of those foundation principles which belong to the kingdom of Christ. The volume is suggestive and valuable

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and will be read with interest and advantage.”

From the MICHIGAN CHRISTIAN HERALD, Detroit.

“The Baptists have not hitherto performed their share of book-work. They are, however, retrieving their character. This work, from the pen of REV. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, is the result of a course of lectures. It is written in a plain, clear, straightforward style, and is an earnest and honest exposition of the great principles of Baptists. The author was formerly a Pedobaptist, and in changing his church relation, he has been led to look more intelligently into the principles of the Baptists, than many who have not had the same reasons to study them. The book should be in the hands of every Baptist family.”

From the GOSPEL BANNER, St. Louis, Mo.

“The author, JOHN Q. ADAMS, is a man of clear perceptive powers. He looks into a subject, not at one. He digs down beneath the surface, and has something to do with principles, which, like roots interlaced, form the strong support of the Christian tree. His subject has been for years a central thought, around which other thoughts have gathered. It grows naturally; he treats it with a master-hand. It is a book you all need. Buy it.”

From the TENNESSEE BAPTIST, Nashville, Tenn.

“We read this book with much interest and satisfaction. The arrangement of the themes is admirable, the discussion of the various topics is bold, clear, earnest, and satisfactory. It presents Baptist principles in an imposing and interesting light, and in this is well calculated to do good. This book should be circulated by tens of thousands. It should be scattered broadcast over the whole land. We shall be glad to see it introduced into the South and West, and we hope our booksellers will order large supplies. Instead of pursuing a time-serving policy, Mr. ADAMS speaks right out, and proclaims our principles to the world, though surrounded by the most adverse circumstances. We honor him for his fidelity and fearlessness. May such men be multiplied.”

From the N. Y. CHRONICLE.

“This work presents the distinctive features of the Baptist denomination in a new light, and should be read by every Protestant.”

From the CHRISTIAN (QUARTERLY) REVIEW.

“We are here presented with a small volume containing great and weighty principles, which cannot fail of commending themselves to the judgment of the judicious reader. Had the Reformation been carried forward on these principles, the opposing obstacles to the union of God's people, and, consequently, to the prevalence of the Gospel, had been taken out of the way. The volume is valuable and will repay a careful perusal.”

[In addition to the above notices many others of subsequent editions have been received. When the author was in London, in August, 1868, Rev. C. H. Spurgeon informed him that he had used “Baptists Thorough Reformers” as a text book in his Pastor's College, regarding it as the best Manual of Baptist principles he had met.]

LECTURE I. THE AIM, THE REPROACH, AND THE TRIUMPH OF THE RELIGIOUS REFORMER.

“These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.” — ACTS xvii, 6.

It has always been the policy of the advocates of error, when unable to sustain themselves by sophistry, specious reasoning and false logic, to stigmatize the advocates of the truth as innovators, disturbers of the peace, and dangerous to the harmony and interests of the community. Such was the course pursued by those who uttered the language of the text. Paul and Silas, having been released from the Macedonian prison, where they had been confined for preaching the Gospel, took their departure from Philippi, and passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, “they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.” Here Paul, according to his usual custom, met the Jewish rabbis and teachers, and reasoned with them out of the Old Testament Scriptures, concerning Jesus of Nazareth — proving to them that he was the Meesiah. His reasoning on this subject was so forcible, that many of the Jews were convinced, and professed their faith in the Saviour. This stirred up the hatred and envy of the discomfited rabbis; and, finding themselves unable to cope with the superior logic and masterly reasoning of Paul, they enlisted the prejudices of the rabbis, and gathered a mob, and created a riot, and endeavored to lay violent hands on the disciples, and thus accomplish by force and superior numbers, what they could not effect by fair argument. Their accusation against the disciples is contained in the words of the text: “These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.” My theme is,

THE AIM, THE REPROACH, AND THE TRIUMPH OF THE RELIGIOUS REFORMER.

I. THE AIM OF THE RELIGIOUS REFORMER. A Reformer is one who seeks to remove abuses which have crept into an organization or community, or one who boldly enters a field where error has held undisputed sway, and fearlessly wields amid giant powers of opposition, the weapons of truth. He aims to entirely revolutionize the minds of the community in which he labors, on that particular subject where he believes reform to be needed. A compromise between truth and error is not what he seeks, and will not satisfy him. “The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” is his motto. Old systems of error, however sacred on account of their antiquity, he boldly attacks. Though massive darkness has long brooded over the people, he aims to dissipate the gloom, and shed upon them brilliant rays of light. His work is a mighty one; the end for which he labors is noble and sublime. He holds a position in advance of the community in which he resides, and the age in which he lives — hence he possesses traits of character that are peculiar, which fit him to toil and suffer for the accomplishment of his designs.

A spirit of noble daring is his. He fears not to grapple with error, though sanctioned by age, and supported by popular favor. He scruples not, if need be, to stand alone, as the champion of truth. With undaunted intrepidity he braves the “world's dread laugh” or meets its frown. With a spirit of indomitable perseverance, he steadily adheres to his purpose and determinedly pursues his single object. Every obstacle thrown across his path affords a new incentive to increased activity. Every difficulty he meets, only gives new strength and inspires fresh courage. He is not to be turned aside. Having put his hand to the plough, he looks not back.

Self-sacrificing effort and benevolent labor are his. His time, talents, property, are all laid upon the altar of truth. He toils, not to achieve a name, to amass wealth, or to advance a sect. He labors for the good of others, while often he receives only their hatred, reproach and persecution. If there is one picture on earth that reminds us, more than any other, of the meek and lowly Saviour, it is the spirit and conduct of the reformer, patiently suffering at the hands of those whose moral elevation he labors to effect. And here is the test by which the true and false reformer may be tried and discovered. Infidelity boasts of seeking a reform. But when

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did Infidelity ever inspire its advocates with a spirit of self-denial for the good of others? Where are its sacrifices made to benefit and elevate the human race? Did infidelity ever suffer to benefit man? Does it to-day go forth, as an angel of mercy, to labor, to suffer, and to bless? No, no. But the true reformer has a high purpose, a benevolent aim; he occupies holy ground, and he can suffer, unjustly suffer, to benefit his fellow-men. Let us notice,

II. THE REPROACH OF THE REFORMER. All Reforms are attended with agitation and conflict, but none more so than reforms in religion. At first, the reformer may attract but little attention. His attacks on error may appear so feeble, and his efforts to advance the truth may seem so faint, that the opponents of truth may esteem only the smile of ridicule and scorn necessary to throw his work into insignificance, or a slight exertion of authority sufficient to extinguish it. But let him continue with boldness, energy and eloquence, to plead for truth and begin to make an impression upon the public mind, and gather adherents around him; then will his adversaries become agitated and alarmed. Like the fierce storm, lashing into foam the waters of the mighty deep, they stir up the popular mind, until the entire community moves in angry surges, and persecution and violence ensue. The more bold the onset, the more forcible the elucidation of truth, the more numerous the adherents to the reform, the more fiercely will the advocates of error oppose the effort, and the more desperately will they seek to crush by force, or circumvent by cunning, what they cannot master by argument, or defeat by sound logic.

In such an event, the reformer labors under every disadvantage. He is reproached as a disturber of the public peace. He is regarded as the cause of all the confusion and uproar, and must bear all the odium connected with it. Look at the text and its connection. The disciples had peacefully taught in the synagogue in Thessalonica, yet all the uproar was charged upon them: "These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also." Thus it has ever been. The opposers of reform have lashed into fury the elements of political strife, and then have charged the peace-loving disciples of truth with all the disastrous results.

The reformer is also reproached as an innovator. He is opposing old customs and popular usages. He seems to be ruthlessly trampling on all that has been held beautiful and venerable. He seems to be setting up individual and novel opinions against the united and established wisdom of ages. He seems to be destroying every thing and advancing nothing. He seems to be a reckless intruder, trespassing on ground rightfully occupied by others. He seems to touch sacred things with an impious hand. He seems to be sowing dissensions, destroying hallowed institutions, and introducing unauthorized innovations. But he perceives that these old forms and venerated institutions are the offspring of error, and that truth and right demand their extermination; in the name of God, therefore, he goes forth, to overturn, to revolutionize, and to reform.

He is further reproached as illiberal, uncharitable, bigoted, and narrow-minded. Because he refuses to call error truth, and darkness light, and wrong right, the slaves of error, the victims of darkness, and the followers of wrong conclude that he is uncharitable and narrow-minded. They forget that it is the highest charity to expose error and oppose wrong, and that only the largest minds and most benevolent hearts will seek to disseminate light and dispel darkness, even though "the darkness comprehendeth it not."

There never yet was a reform attempted, that did not suffer the reproach of the dominant party. Look at that old reformer Lot: "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and will needs be a judge." Look at Moses, the prophets, John the Baptist, Martin Luther, Roger Williams. All these were reproached as innovators, and virtually charged with "turning the world upside down." But the greatest innovator that ever appeared in our world was Jesus Christ. He was the Great Reformer. He aimed directly to abolish the old dispensation and make all things new. He paid no respect to the antiquity of the scribe, the morality of the Pharisee, or the sanctity of the priest. He threw himself upon the merits of the truths he delivered, and declared himself a radical innovator and reformer. Did not He meet reproach? Let the purple robe, the reed sceptre, the thorny crown, the mocking homage, and the blood-stained cross reply.

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The apostles were reproached. The Gospel which they preached was a great innovation upon old and venerable institutions. No reform could ever be compared with that which they sought to effect. They aimed to overturn all the religions in the world. Hence they were accounted “vagabonds, fools, and moon-struck madmen.” They were treated with ridicule, scorn, and contempt. They, a few ignorant fishermen, seeking to abolish those religions which had stood for centuries, and which had gathered around them all the charms of history, philosophy, and poetry; religions whose massive temples towered in majestic splendor to the very clouds — religions which numbered among their devotees, crowds of kings and heroes, artisans and sages, and which were cherished by the most powerful and refined nations of the earth. It is not strange that at first they were only deemed worthy of ridicule; nor is it surprising, that as success crowned their persevering labors, they became the subjects of violent hate and bitter persecution. They were shaking the foundations of ancient superstitions, they were disturbers of the public peace, they were detestable innovators, they were hateful reformers, in short, they were “turning the world upside down.”

This kind of reproach Baptists especially have been called to endure. They are great innovators. Of all persecuted sects, the Baptists stand forth as most prominent, simply and only because they aim at a more complete and thorough reform than any others ever attempted. They teach that Christ's kingdom is not of this world; that the church is not a national, political, or provincial establishment; but a congregation of holy men, separated from the world by the receiving of the Holy Spirit. They seek to “turn the world upside down” — not in the odious sense, but in the proper and desirable sense. The world is wrong; it is morally wrong side up; it needs to be revolutionized, and primitive Christianity alone can do it. This is the instrument by which Baptists aim to accomplish their design. By the propagation of primitive Christianity, they confidently expect to achieve a complete and entire Reformation in the Pagan, Romish, and Protestant world, and bring the race of man back to God. We pass on to notice,

III. THE TRIUMPH OF THE REFORMER. The true religious reformer must ultimately triumph. However opposed, reproached, and persecuted, he triumphs. Even when he appears to be discomfited he triumphs. While he struggles on in adversity, and while sad reverses meet him in his work, still he triumphs. The power of the truth is manifest in the support it yields him amid these disheartening circumstances. The consciousness that he has discharged his duty with fidelity, fills his mind with peace. He feels that the smile of God is upon him; hence the frowns of the opposers of truth, and their anathemas, are lighter than vanity to him. He esteems “the reproaches of Christ greater riches than all the treasures” of earth. The shame of the cross he counts greater honor than all the applause of the world, and the martyr's death is to him sweeter than all earthly pleasures. He exhibits a dignity of character that far outshines all others, and totally eclipses, on the historic page, all his slanderous persecutors. He is as far superior to the time-serving demagogue, as are the burning beams of the meridian sun to the last sickly rays of the feeble taper, flickering in its socket, and just ready to expire. He knows no fear of consequences. Duty, it is his to perform — results, are God's to control. He stands firmly, as the rock in the ocean, unmoved amid the howlings of the tempest and the fury of the waves. For him there is a, glorious future, however dark the hour of trial may be; and though for a time he endures reproach, he will have a name when his persecutors have perished and are forgotten.

Every true religious reformer that ever lived in our world triumphed. Daniel, and the three Hebrew worthies, possessed the spirit, endured the reproach, and achieved the triumph of Reformers; they saw their enemies clothed with shame, and the cause of God, which they had espoused, gloriously advanced. And though their pathway to success lay through the lions' den and the burning furnace, these only made their triumph more sublime, and shed a new halo around their names. Martin Luther triumphed — and though Rome anathematized and bitterly execrated him, the name of the poor monk of Erfurth is honored wherever evangelical Christianity prevails; while the distinguishing doctrine for which he contended has become one of the strong bulwarks of the Protestant world, and the terror of Antichrist. Roger Williams triumphed — though banished from the Massachusetts colony, and driven into the desert wilds among the Indians. The religious liberty for which he suffered, and which American citizens today enjoy, forms the most distinguishing and pre-eminent glory' of our country. How superior the fame of such men to that of the mere military hero!

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Napoleon won his fifty battles; William Carey translated the Bible into almost as many different languages; and while to-day the name of Napoleon begets sentiments of disgust, or wakes emotions of unhallowed ambition, the name of William Carey touches a chord in every Christian breast, arousing to new life and to more unreserved consecration to Christ, the energies of the ablest and best of Zion's sons and daughters.

There is a great deal of this work of reform before the church at the present day. Especially is this true of the Baptist churches of this country. They are prepared to labor for a more thorough reformation than any others can undertake. There are forms of error, productive of incalculable mischief, which none others can consistently attack; while all others retain and seek to perpetuate the unscriptural dogma of infant baptism, which with every other traditionary rite must be abolished, before the world's revolution will be complete. Let it be remembered that each has a personal interest and responsibility in this matter. Let the inquiry be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Every Christian is to aim to reform, first himself; then the world. The Word of God must be our weapon. With this, old forms of error must be attacked, and the conflict only end when the field is left in possession of truth. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

LECTURE II. THE RECEPTION WHICH SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE RELIGIOUS REFORMER.

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." — ACTS xvii. 11.

INFIDELITY and error have always delighted to taunt the disciples of Christ and the friends of truth with ignorant credulity, and the reception of unfounded and absurd dogmas, without due forethought and investigation. They have arrogated to themselves all the freedom of thought and independence of mind there is in the world, and profess to have calmly investigated the truths which they reject. The taunt on the one hand, and the assumption on the other, are both false; for it is a significant fact, that a pure Christianity has advanced just in proportion as the right of free and independent investigation has been enjoyed and exercised; and moreover, it is the glory of Christianity, that it courts the test of candid examination, and commends such a course whenever adopted.

We have a striking illustration of this in the text and its connection. The apostle Paul, having been driven from Thessalonica by an infuriated mob, excited to deeds of violence by bigoted and interested partisans, fled to Berea. Here he pursued a course similar to that which he had adopted in Thessalonica. He entered the Jewish synagogue and taught in the name of Jesus. The community in this place was composed of men of more independent minds, and nobler spirit than the Thessalonians; and, consequently, they gave the apostle a far different reception from that which he experienced in their city. They were not afraid to discuss, examine, and fairly investigate the new doctrine which he introduced to them, and after bringing it to the proper test, to let it stand or fall on its own merits. This conduct was truly noble; and as such, it is endorsed by the Holy Spirit in the inspired words of the text: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Though the apostle appeared among them as a reformer, they did not consider him an intruder, or treat him as an innovator; but they acted like rational, intelligent beings; they acted like men; they acted as all should act

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under like circumstances. Our theme on the present occasion will be,

THE RECEPTION THAT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE RELIGIOUS REFORMER.

In illustrating this theme, I shall invite your attention to the conduct of the Bereans, and their treatment of Paul and Silas, as the divinely approved example. This example will appear to better advantage, if we follow the phraseology of the text, and notice,

I. THE COMPARISON INSTITUTED. “More noble than those in Thessalonica.” The Thessalonian Jews had exhibited a spirit of gross intolerance. They were destitute of that spirit which truly ennobles man. They had power and influence, and they used these to crush the weak. They were filled with envy and jealousy, and they gave vent to their feelings in acts of violence and oppression. Refusing to be convinced themselves, they determined to prevent all others from being convinced. They appealed to passion, and prejudice, rather than to judgment and reason. They made old opinions, and popular usages, the standard and test by which they tried the apostles' teaching, instead of the Word of God. They falsely accused them of disturbing the peace of society; and, by a willful misconstruction of their words, they even charged them with treasonable designs against the government: “These,” said they, “all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.” They drove them entirely away from their city, and then took security of those who had hospitably entertained them. Nor was this all. They followed them to Berea, and stirred up the people there, so that Paul was compelled to leave that place. Now, in contrast with this course, notice,

II. THE RECEPTION OF THE APOSTLES BY THE BEREANS. “They received the word with all readiness of mind.” They were wedded to the same rites as were the Jews in Thessalonica. Their prejudices were in favor of Judaism and arrayed against Christianity. Hence, the teaching of the apostle was as much opposed to their views, as to those of the Thessalonians; but notwithstanding all this, they “received the word with all readiness of mind.” This implies that they received it,

1. Respectfully. It is too frequently the case, that when the truth is presented to those who have long cherished religious error, they treat it with ridicule, especially where it comes in contact with their preconceived opinions. Thus the Athenians treated Paul, when he broached the doctrine of the resurrection, “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.” (Acts xvii. 89.) Thus it is, often, in our day. The curling lip, and the sneer of contempt, and the expression of ridicule, are seen and heard as soon as a favorite dogma is touched, no matter how kindly. Not so with the Bereans. However novel the doctrines of the apostle appeared, however opposite to what they had been taught, or however different from their previously formed opinions, they listened to what he presented with respect. They received the word,

2. With candor. They were disposed to be frank and fair. They were open to conviction — honest and ingenuous in their conclusions. They kept their minds free from an undue bias, and let every argument have its full weight. They were disposed to think and judge according to truth and justice. They were willing to admit every reasonable and logical conclusion. They banished prejudice, and examined the subject impartially. This is the proper way to arrive at the truth. God gave us our reason to be exercised in religious matters, as well as in worldly affairs. These Bereans neither exhibited bigotry on the one hand, nor credulity on the other. They were willing to hear, and then they judged for themselves, and formed their own conclusions. This is all that can be demanded. This course was honorable to themselves, and would make even those respect them who differed from them. And this is true of any man, or body of men. let them be candid, fair and frank, and they will win the respect of those who arrive at, a different conclusion from them. They received the word,

3. Patiently. They did not get in an ill-humor with the apostle, or exhibit signs of irritation, or cherish feelings of malice toward him, because he sought to convert them from Judaism. Though it was the religion of their fathers — though they had been brought up in it — though their prejudices were strongly wedded to its

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rites and ceremonies — still, they calmly listened to the reasons urged by the apostle why they should abandon it, and connect themselves with that sect which was “everywhere spoken against.” They were not offended at his zeal; their minds were unruffled, and day after day they came to patiently hear him through. How different is this from the conduct of most persons. Just touch their peculiar doctrines, or hint that the rites which they observe are unscriptural, and without waiting to hear the reasons for such an opinion, they at once become agitated, and impatiently desire to leave the place and inwardly determine that they will not again enter it. So did not the noble Bereans. They wished to find the truth, though it might lie in a different direction from that in which they had been accustomed to seek it. They desired to follow the truth, though it might lead to the abandonment of time-honored customs and the breaking up of old and pleasant associations. Therefore, “they received the word with all readiness of mind.” Such a course might offend interested partisans, but God commends it as noble. We notice,

III. THE TEST BY WHICH THEY TRIED THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES.— “They searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.” This is the divine standard of appeal. God gave it as our guide, and we are commanded to search it. It is to be the test of all religious teaching; and the conduct of the Bereans in making it the test of Paul's preaching is honored by its divine Author; for let it not be forgotten that it is Jehovah who speaks in the text.

They did not appeal to Tradition. They might have done this. Rumor said that Christ was an impostor; Paul affirmed that He was the Messiah. How were they to decide? Simply by appealing to the Scriptures. They did not appeal to their priests and rabbis. They had told them to oppose Christianity, and seek to exterminate it. But they knew their priests were fallible men, and that if they obeyed them, they might possibly be “found fighting against God.” They did not appeal to their own preference, and interest, and convenience. These would have prompted them to reject the investigation of the doctrine. and decide at once in accordance with tradition and popular customs.

Abandoning all these false and uncertain standards, they appealed to the Scriptures, to settle the differences between their views and those of their reformers. They “searched” the Scriptures; as one who seeks for something that is lost. Many persons read the Bible only to find support for what they already believe, and search the Scriptures to prove that what is new to them is not so. But these Bereans exhibited the same candor in testing the word, that they did in its reception. If the Scriptures sustained the apostle, they adopted his views; if not, they rejected them. Thus they honored God, and exempted themselves from the charge of willful ignorance, intolerance, and superstition.

This is the reception that should always be given to those who aim to reform a community, whether that reformation be universal, or whether it have reference only to a single doctrine or ordinance. Such a reception is all we ask for these Lectures. Such a reception is all Baptists ask anywhere. Those who hold the truth have nothing to fear from such a course. Respectful, candid, and patient attention, will enable them the more readily to detect sophistry and specious reasoning, and the study of the Bible will always expose what is unscriptural and erroneous. Moreover, this course has the sanction of Jehovah, however much it may offend men. The Bible should be the test of all preaching. That man who desires to make himself the umpire and final standard of appeal to his congregation, involves himself in a fearful responsibility, and virtually claims for himself infallibility. Yet some ministers appear offended if their authority is questioned, or if their preaching is tested by the Word of God. So did not Paul. Though inspired, he commended the course of those, who, instead of taking his say so for it, examined the Scriptures for themselves, to see whether those things which he told them were so. To adopt a contrary course, and blindly follow a minister or priest, is downright Romanism; and, if pursued universally, would arrest the progress of the Gospel, and clog the wheels of truth, and stamp error with immutability.

What if the Hindoo, the Burman, and the Chinese follow their priests, and universally determine never to examine Christianity? What if the Mohammedan, Romanist and Greek, follow their teachers? What if the

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Universalist, Infidel, and Atheist, follow their champions! And yet these have as much war rant to do this, as the Presbyterian, Methodist, or Baptist. No, my brethren, your minister is not to be the umpire or standard. There is but one who could say, "Follow Me!" and that was Christ. We point you to Him. We direct you to His Word as the standard of your duty, and to His example as the pattern of your lives. If, in these Lectures, we say anything that conflicts with these, reject it; but if you God, on examination, that these things which we preach are so, remember, the whole responsibility of rejecting, not us, but the Word of God, and the meek and lowly Saviour, rests at your own door.

If the conduct of the Bereans were universally imitated, what happy events would follow. How soon would infidelity, and error, and superstition vanish before the influence of sound reason and Scripture truth. What courtesy, and forbearance, and love, would be manifested among brethren who differ. How much more diligently would the Bible be studied, and how soon would the multitude of sects and parties disappear, and the Saviour's prayer that they all might be one would be answered.

The contrary course can benefit no one. If a man is in an error, no matter how trivial, it can do him no good to continue in that error. Especially, it can do him no good to dwarf his mind, and stunt his intellectual powers, in order that he may continue in it unmolested. Yet this is the effect of refusing a candid investigation of the truth. Further, if a man has the truth, he will not fear investigation, but rather court it. "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

If a pretended reformer appears, there is no surer way of exposing the imposition, than the adoption of the example of the Bereans. But if a, contrary course is pursued, it frequently leads to the exercise of a morbid sympathy toward those who hold injurious error. Now Baptists appear before the world as those who aim at a complete reform. They, appeal not to the sympathies, but to the consciences of men; not to prejudice, but to reason; not to tradition but to the Scriptures. They simply ask for the reception which the Bereans gave to those who sought to convert them from Judaism to Christianity.

LECTURE III. THE WEAPONS OF THE RELIGIOUS REFORMER

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."
— 2 CORINTHIANS x. 4.

Ever since the introduction of sin into the world, there has been an unremitting conflict between truth and error. The earth has become a vast battle-ground; the theatre of a mighty moral warfare. Truth and error are necessarily opposed to each other, and whenever they come in contact, a fierce contest ensues, which ends only when error is destroyed. This conflict is not, however, one of a material kind; nor should physical force be used in carrying it on. It is a moral warfare; and ultimate success can be sensed only by the use of corresponding weapons. The advocates of error may press into their service carnal weapons, as indeed they are always forced to do, in their vain efforts to sustain themselves. and oppose the truth; but thus they only acknowledge their own weakness, and betray the defects of their cause, and insure in the end their own defeat. The disciple of the truth needs no such weapons. He knows that they can yield him no advantage, and secure no permanent benefit; and he sees that they would only encumber and embarrass him in the conflict, and retard the cause he seeks to advance. He feels that in order to be successful, he must use only those means which God has appointed, and which He can bless. He therefore appropriately adopts the language of the text: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." The theme of this Lecture is,—

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In conducting any enterprise, or effecting any work, instruments are necessary implements adapted to the end designed. The work of the reformer is, in a great measure, a work of destruction. He goes forth to demolish all that is opposed to truth — all that prevents its free and rapid advance. He is the pioneer, who is accounted “famous according as he lifts up the axe upon the thick trees.”[1] Error is rather negative than positive. Truth was intended to enlighten man; error, like a cloud, intervenes to shut out its brilliant rays. Truth was intended to make man happy; error infuses poison, and introduces the ingredients of misery. Truth was intended to make man free; error rears her fortress and strongholds, and makes him a captive in them. Now the work of the reformer is to dissipate this cloud — to extract this poison — to pull down these strongholds. The work of Christ, the Great Reformer, was eminently a work of destruction. He was manifested that He might “destroy the works of the devil.” Let us notice,

I. THE STRONGHOLDS WHICH THE RELIGIOUS REFORMER IS CALLED ON TO DEMOLISH.

1. Ignorance.— All religious error is the offspring of ignorance and mistake. God is true, and His Word is true. No religious error can find any support there. Yet we know that error does exist to a vast extent. How mighty, then, is this fortress! and how strong! Look at the ignorance of heathen nations. See the ignorance of those who are under the dominion of the Papacy. Behold the lamentable ignorance of a vast majority of Protestants. Now the reformer meets this stronghold wherever he undertakes to labor. He beholds wilful ignorance of plainly revealed truths. He beholds one body of men wilfully ignorant of the views and practices of another body which they condemn. He finds himself misrepresented, misunderstood, and opposed, because men are entrenched in this stronghold. The Apostle Paul once found himself a victim of misrepresentation which had gained currency simply through the inexcusable and wilful ignorance of those who believed them. “Art not thou that Egyptian,” he was asked, “which, before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?” The religious reformer is frequently assailed with questions as absurd, betraying the wilful ignorance of those who oppose him in his work. This ignorance he labors to remove.

2. Prejudice.— Prejudices are generally in favor of that to which men are accustomed, and opposed to that which appears new to them. If men have been accustomed to error, they love it on account of its antiquity; and the inquiry too frequently is not, what is truth? but, is it in accordance with our prejudices? is it what our fathers practiced? is it what they taught us? Men speak of time-honored customs; they forget that, while errors may be time-honored, truth is eternal. Prejudice is a mighty stronghold. Its walls are of adamant strength and of almost impenetrable thickness. Entrenched in this fortress, men are unapproachable. The soundest logic, the strongest arguments, the most convincing proof, the fairest reasoning, all fail, all are powerless, while prejudice holds the mind within her grasp. The very work of the religious reformer brings him in direct contact with those customs which appeal most powerfully to men's prejudices. He aims to remove old errors; but, in order to do this, he must first demolish the stronghold in which they are entrenched. He aims to convince men that it is better to be the willing subjects of reason, than the blind slaves of prejudice.

3. Self-interest.— Many go with the crowd, merely because it is to their present interest. After they are enlightened by truth, and after their old prejudices are overcome, still, selfishness prevails; and instead of doing that which they know to be right, and laboring to advance the truth, they prefer to act contrary to their own convictions. They perceive that the truth is unpopular — that its advocacy will necessitate self-denial and sacrifice — that their temporal interests will suffer, and their names be cast out as evil. Now the religious reformer aims to make men benevolent; he labors to make them willing to deny themselves and cheerfully suffer for the good of others and the sake of the truth. Selfishness must be demolished, this mighty stronghold must be pulled down, ere the reformer can succeed in his work. Thus, the victims of error must be driven from every refuge, and their hiding-places must be destroyed, before they will be made free by the reception of the truth. Notice

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II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED.— These are stated in the text negatively. “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.” The religious reformer does not invoke

1. The Civil Power.— He does not seek to force men by legal enactments to embrace his views, or profess attachment to his cause. He does not seek to unite the Church with the State, or enforce his teachings at the edge of the sword and the point of the bayonet. He does not use persecution or oppression of any kind. He does not use authority of office, either civil or ecclesiastical. He does not use the authority growing out of the domestic relations to force the consciences of those who are subject to him, or compel them to adopt his views of truth. He utterly renounces compulsion of every kind. The gibbet, the rack, and the stake, are all discarded by him. Here was one radical defect of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The civil arm was invoked, the State was united with the Church, a political element was infused, and carnal weapons were used as freely by the Reformed Churches in enforcing their dogmas as by the Papacy in maintaining its heresies. The thorough religious reformer uses no such weapons. Neither does he employ

2. Calumny and Misrepresentation.— In order successfully to combat the opinions and practices of an opponent, individuals sometimes distort and falsify his views. They present an absurd doctrine, which is inconsistent both with reason and revelation, falsely charge it on those whom they oppose, and then eloquently declaim against it. Or, they mistake the arguments used by their opponents to sustain their views, and endeavor to make the impression that they are but weak fanatics, or men laboring under mental imbecility. Or, they openly slander and vilify them, and injure their reputation. And thus they labor to bring into disrepute both the views and practices they oppose, and the persons who advocate them. All who persecute, love to have some pretext; they therefore first slander their victim, and then put him to death. Thus it was with Jesus; false witnesses rose against him; and though their testimony carried its refutation on its very face, it was made the pretext for his crucifixion. But the thorough religious reformer, having no desire to persecute, needs no pretext for it; he therefore discards calumny and misrepresentation. Neither does he resort to

3. Flattery and Cunning Artifices — He appeals not to sinful passions, such as pride, ambition, self-indulgence and a desire for worldly honor. This is often done in order to advance a sect or party. “Our denomination,” it is urged, “is the most popular — it numbers more than any other — it has more wealth.” “Our church is the most respectable — it embraces the most learned and talented men; therefore we are right.” “It will be to your interest to join our church, because it is THE church of the place.” Now all such motives as these must be classed among the carnal weapons. They appeal to selfishness. The true reformer makes no such appeals, urges no such motives, wields no such weapons: “For the weapons of his warfare are not carnal.”

Such weapons are impotent, and worse than useless, in seeking to advance the truth. If a man becomes an honest and faithful follower of the truth, it must be for the truth's sake, and not to avoid persecution, or reproach, or unpopularity. Such weapons can never pull down the strongholds of error, but rather render them more impregnable. Persecution will never enlighten the mind of the ignorant, misrepresentation will never remove prejudice, and flattery will never demolish selfishness. And further, such weapons only recoil on the heads of those who use them. It is an immutable decree of Jehovah, that “they who take the sword shall perish with the sword.” We have a striking illustration of this in the burning of Cranmer and Rogers. We have been taught to sympathize with them in their martyr-deaths at the stake; and that sympathy we would not check, for they were cruelly persecuted. But we would at the same time recognize in their sufferings a fulfilment of Christ's words, “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” The hands of both of them had been stained with the blood of Joan Boucher, a noble-minded and pious female, who, in the reign of the youthful Edward, was committed to the flames for the sin of being a Baptist. “Cranmer is said by Fox to have been most urgent with the young king to affix the sign manual to the cruel document. The youthful king hesitated. Cranmer argued from the law of Moses, by which blasphemers were to be stoned to death. With tears but unconvinced, the royal signature was appended. Rogers also thought that she ought to be put to death, and when urged with the cruelty of the deed, replied, ‘that burning alive was no cruel death, but

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easy enough.” [2] God has shown, in an unmistakable manner, his disapprobation of carnal weapons. While the reformer deprecates the use of these means, there are weapons employed by him which are “mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds.” Among these we notice,

1. The Word of God. This is the double-edged sword of the Spirit. This is the grand weapon which is to cut its way through all error. It always has been successful, and always will be. Those only have been successful reformers, who have used this as their great weapon. Look at the Great Reformer; when he went forth to encounter, in the wilderness, the arch adversary of truth, how did he vanquish him? Though all the hosts of heaven were ready to do his bidding, and drag Satan back to his prison, He disdained to exert physical force. He used this great weapon; and every assault of the Tempter was repelled by the calm reply, “It is written — it is written — IT IS WRITTEN. When the apostles went forth, the Word of God was the instrument with which they overcame the opposition of Judaism. And what gave rise to the reformation in the sixteenth century? Why, a poor monk found a Bible, and in his cell made it his study. Happy would it have been for the world, if the reformers of that age had been guided exclusively by its holy precepts. Discarding tradition, and every human invention, the thorough religious reformer makes the Bible both his text-book and test-book.

2. Candor and Affection. He takes pains to ascertain accurately the views of those whose errors he would correct, giving them credit for the truth they hold, and acknowledging their excellences wherever they exist. His work is not to destroy their lives, their liberties, or their reputations, but their errors. He therefore speaks the truth in love, and seeks not theirs but them. His great wish is to benefit them; and, like the blessed Redeemer, who could mingle His tears of compassion with his denunciations against sin, the reformer boldly and sternly denounces error, yet cherishes ardent affection for those who are “out of the way.” He also employs

3. Sound Reason. He appeals not to passion or prejudice, but to the understanding. He is able to give a reason for every thing he attempts. He shows the fitness of things, and their propriety; he invites the exercise of the judgment of those whom he addresses. Instead of regarding men as brutes, who are to be driven by force, he recognizes them as rational, intelligent beings, who are to be convinced, and persuaded, and moved by mental and moral power. Christ and the apostles were great reasoners; especially is this true of the apostle Paul. Who can read the epistles to the early churches, without being struck with the force of his reasoning? The advocates of error cannot stand before the reformer who is well skilled in the use of this weapon.

4. Earnest, believing, importunate prayer. — “Mighty through God.” He must give success in the use of the weapons. The religious reformer, therefore, while he wields the “sword of the Spirit” and exhibits in his own life the power of the truth he holds, depends only on God for success in his work. He pleads for men with God, while he pleads with men for the truth. Every successful religious reformer has been a man of prayer. Earnestness in the pulpit has not accomplished so much as earnestness in the closet. With a deep conviction that it is God's work he is endeavoring to advance, he confidently looks up for God's aid and blessing in prosecuting it, and feels assured that while his weapons are not carnal, they are yet “mighty through God” to the pulling down of strongholds.”

These are the weapons of the reformer. With these he goes forth to attack the strongholds of sin, and raze to the ground the giant fabric of error. To be successful even in advancing the truth, we must use only the divinely appointed means; for wherever the opposite course has been pursued, the most disastrous results have followed. Truth is only trammelled and retarded by the use of any but the heaven-approved weapons.

These weapons, only, have been used by Baptists. They have never figured on the historic page as persecutors. Though the subjects of bitter oppression and cruel persecutions themselves, it has been their glory always to exclaim, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds!”

[1] Psalm lxxxiv. 5.

[2] Religious Liberty, its Struggles and Triumphs, p. 110.

LECTURE IV. THE FIRST FEATURE OF THE REFORM AT WHICH BAPTISTS AIM — THE EXALTATION OF THE WORD OF GOD ABOVE TRADITION.

“Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.” — MATTHEW xv. 6.

EVERY reform in religion presupposes the existence of errors, evil in their tendencies and results, which have gradually crept into ecclesiastical organizations, and which need to be removed in order that such organizations may become pure and scriptural. A reform is not the introduction of a new system of religion, but rather the revival of the old system, and the assertion of its supremacy over the innovations of men. It is not a movement based on the pretended reception of a new revelation, conflicting with previous ones from an unchanging Jehovah, but it is the enforcement of the commands and precepts which have already been revealed, but which have been obscured, and invalidated, and made of none effect by human tradition.

Thus it was with the Great Reform introduced by Jesus Christ. He declared that he came “not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it.” In the prosecution of his mission, he utterly disregarded the religious rites which owed their origin to mere human invention, and, by a studied non-observance of the traditions of the Jewish elders, he constantly exhibited his disapprobation of them. At the same time, he taught principles, which, if carried out, would restore the supremacy of God's law, and effectually remove every vestige of this usurpation of authority by man. This course brought down upon him the displeasure of those who were wedded to the rites of tradition, while they neglected the more important commands of God. They therefore came to expostulate with him in reference to the course pursued by him, saying, “Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders?” But Jesus, in reply, asked them a far more pertinent and weighty question: “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” and then, after citing a case in point, he charged them, in the words of the text, with making void the law of God, by substituting their unscriptural observances for his divine commands: — “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”

There exists to-day a body of Christians, who are laboring to effect the same kind of reform as that in which the blessed Saviour was engaged, more than eighteen hundred years ago. That body, though designated since the days of Christ by various names, is known, at the present time, by the name of Baptists. The theme of this, and several succeeding Lectures will be,

THE DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THAT REFORM IN WHICH BAPTISTS ARE ENGAGED.

Many persons suppose, that the only difference between Baptists and other evangelical denominations, is respecting the mode and subjects of baptism. This is, indeed, the principal external difference: but this difference exhibits the adherence, on the part of Baptists, to a great and important principle, which is involved in their action, and which they believe to be violated by those who differ from them in this matter. An illustration of their position is found in the text and its connection. The washing of a person's hands before eating, was, in itself, a small matter; but it involved, in this instance, a sinful obtruding of human tradition in the place of divine commands. This is just the principle that is involved in the practice of infant sprinkling. We announce, then, as the First Feature of the reform in which Baptists are engaged,

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The Exaltation of the Word of God above Tradition, in all Matters of Religious Duty.

There has always been a conflict between Divine revelation and human tradition; and yet the advocates of the latter have almost invariably endeavored to reconcile it with the former, and thus the Word of God is often distorted in vain efforts to make it support that which is of merely human origin. The ultimate effect of these efforts is to divide the Bible against itself, and to cause it to be utterly disregarded as the standard of appeal in matters of religious duty. It was thus with the traditions of the Jewish elders. Those who followed them and practised their rites, ceased to regard the Scriptures which they possessed as the standard of duty; they became a dead letter, and the tradition of the elders — not the Scriptures — was the authority they cited for the support of their rites. “For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother; and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”

The same result followed, when the disciples listened to the voice of tradition. On one occasion Christ said, in reference to John, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” Tradition immediately distorted the question into an assertion: “Then went that saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die.”[1] Here tradition uttered a falsehood, and taught as usual a lie.

It is thus, also, in reference to the Church of Rome. Tradition after tradition has been received, until it becomes dangerous to the interests of that church to permit her deluded members to read God's Word — so directly are her traditions opposed to that Word. And, in order to sustain herself, she vainly arrogates to herself infallibility, and exalts herself above the Bible, and makes the commandment of God of none effect by her tradition. The will of the Pope, and the decisions of councils, are made the standards of appeal, and the Bible is a dead letter. And yet this same church, in all her corruption, endeavors to reconcile her traditions, in some instances, with the Bible; but, in order to do it, she distorts and invents Scripture to suit herself.

On what does the Papacy rest to support its penances, and image-worship, and prayers to the saints, and priestly absolutions, and, in short, its very existence? I reply in one word, Tradition. Let the Bible become her standard, and she would cease to exist. She has made almost every commandment of God of none effect by her tradition.

Thus it is, also, with Protestant Pedobaptist churches. Tradition is the basis on which infant sprinkling rests. We look in vain for any command in reference to it in the Bible; the Scriptures utter not a word in support of it. The most able Pedobaptists have themselves admitted this. Says Dr. Woods, an eminent Pedobaptist: “Whatever may have been the precepts of Christ, or his apostles, to those who enjoyed their personal instructions, it is plain there is no express precept respecting infant baptism in our sacred writings. The proof, then, that infant baptism is a divine institution, must be made out some other way.”[2] He says further: “The want of an express, positive command of Scripture that infants should be baptized, is not to be considered as a valid objection against infant baptism.”[3]

It is here plainly admitted that there is no command for infant baptism in the Word of God. But we do not need these admissions to substantiate our assertion. We simply appeal to the Bible itself. If it was there, we could see it for ourselves. We ask any one to show us the first instance of the sprinkling of an infant, or any command to administer baptism to infants. It cannot be found. Thousands of dollars have been offered for the production of a single text, authorizing the practice; but these premiums have never been claimed. On what, then, does it rest? I reply, on tradition. Dr. Woods says that authority for it, “may be afforded particularly by an unwritten tradition.” It is a human invention, having no higher authority than that of man. It is one of the traditions which the Protestant Reformers brought from Rome. It is the main “pillar” on which Popery rests; for, if you take away the baptism of infants, Rome would soon fall. Its defence necessitates Romish arguments; and instances are not wanting where Pedobaptists in combating Romanists, have either been

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compelled to use arguments fatal to their own practices, or else be defeated.[4] And it is a matter of history, that Protestant arguments against Baptists have often been used by Romanists against Protestants themselves. A forcible proof of this is seen in the following extract from the Roman Catholic Catechism:

“Q. Can Protestants prove to Baptists, that the baptism of infants is good and useful?

“A. No; they cannot; because, according to Protestant principles, such baptism is useless.

“Q. Why do you say this?

“A. One of the Protestant principles is, that no human being can be justified except by an act of faith in Jesus Christ; but no infant is capable of making this act of faith; therefore, upon Protestant principles, the baptism of infants is useless.

“Q. Can you draw the same consequence from any other principle?

“A. Yes; their first principle is, that nothing is to be practised which is not authorized by Scriptural example; but it does not appear from Scripture, that even one infant was ever baptized; therefore Protestants should reject, on their own principle, infant baptism as an unscriptural usage.

“Q. How do Baptists treat other Protestants?

“A. They boast that the Scripture is evidently for Baptist practice — that other Protestants hold traditional doctrines, like the Catholics. They quote Matt. chap. 28: 'Go teach all nations, baptizing them,' from which they say it is clear that teaching should go before baptism; hence they conclude that as infants cannot be taught, so neither should they be baptized, until they are capable of teaching or instruction.

“Q. What use do they make of Mark, chap. 10: 'He who believeth and is baptized shall be saved?'

“A. They say it is evident that belief or faith must precede baptism; but they add infants are not capable of believing; therefore neither are they capable of being baptized.

“Q. What can Protestants reply to this Baptist reasoning?

“A. They may give these passages another meaning; but they can never prove that their interpretation is better than that of the Baptists, because they themselves give every one a right to interpret Scripture.

“Q. How do Catholics prove that infants ought to be baptized?

“A. Not from Scripture alone, which is not very clear on this subject, but from the Scripture illustrated by the constant tradition of the church.

“Q. Can Protestants use this argument of tradition against the Baptists?

“A. No; they have no right to use it in this matter, where it would serve them, since they reject it in every question where it is opposed to their novel and lately invented doctrines.”[5]

Says the President of the famous Council of Trent, a Roman Catholic Cardinal, speaking of the Baptists: “And surely, how many soever have written against this heresy, whether they were Catholics or Reformers, they were able to overthrow it, not so much by the testimony of the Scriptures, as by the authority of the Church.” And Bayle, in his Critical Dictionary, says that the Protestants were obliged to meet the Baptists

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with arguments which were turned against them by the papists. Dr. Woods furnishes us an illustration of this assertion. He says: "It is unquestionable, that the knowledge of some extraordinary events of providence, or of some divine injunctions, may be as truly and as certainly communicated in this way, [by an unwritten tradition,] as in others; and we should in many cases, consider a man who should refuse to admit the truth and authority of a tradition, to be as unreasonable, as if he should refuse to admit the authority of written or printed records." [6] Now I ask if this is not giving up to Rome all she claims? "We should consider a man who should refuse to admit the authority of tradition, to be as unreasonable as if he should refuse to admit the authority of written or printed records!" Will not Popery heartily endorse this doctrine? Now on what kind of traditionary authority does infant sprinkling rest? Why, upon the same as every other corruption of Rome; and if Romish tradition be followed in this case, why not in all others? Thus, we have shown that infant sprinkling requires Romish arguments. Now, the simple reason of this is, that, like the other rites of Popery, it is founded in tradition.

Further, the commandment of God is made of none effect by this tradition. God has given express and plain commands, in reference to every duty and ordinance. He has commanded believers to be baptized; He has extended the command to none others. Those baptized in infancy, in a multitude of cases, grow up in unbelief, and never become believers. But where they do become converts, they are taught, by the tradition of the church, that their infant baptism is sufficient, and they are not expected to be baptized after believing. And even when persons sprinkled in infancy are led, by the study of the Bible, to desire baptism after they have believed, strong efforts are always made to dissuade them from it, and they are often compelled to go to the Baptists in order to be baptized. These things are of such common occurrence, that it is unnecessary to relate instances in proof. Thus the Word of God is made of no effect.

Again, Pedobaptists, like the Jewish elders, endeavor to reconcile their tradition with the Word of God. Look at their reasoning: "Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free." Pedobaptists say: "If any persons be sprinkled in infancy, and be not baptized after they believe, it is sufficient." There is an exact parallel. Here you perceive the reasonings of men, in both instances, though opposed to the express command of God, are made the standard, instead of his Word. Would it not sound strange to hear a Pedobaptist minister urge his people to simply follow the teaching and example of Christ, in reference to baptism? Yet this is right; but this comes directly in contact with their tradition.

Now Baptists are opposed to tradition, any where and every where; whether they find it in the Church of Rome, or in Protestant churches. They aim to elevate the Word of God above tradition, as the standard of duty in all places. It is professedly the grand doctrine of Protestantism — which Protestants themselves have abandoned — that Baptists steadily maintain. They aim to bring all to this standard. They, themselves, have always adhered to the Bible. Did any one ever hear of Baptists being charged with following tradition? The charge would be ridiculously absurd; for they have always opposed tradition as a guide in matters of religious duty.

From these remarks, it will be perceived, that while the subjects and mode of baptism is the external ground of difference between Baptists and others, that difference involves a great principle; and the primary question is not, Shall infants be baptized? but, whether God's Word or tradition shall be our guide. God has uttered his will in the matter. That will we follow, as we find it in his Word. Those who oppose us, by their own showing, follow tradition. We are laboring to effect a reform. In doing so we refer all to the Bible. We assert its supremacy above all human teaching, our own, as well as that of others.

This, then, is a prominent feature of the reform in which Baptists are engaged. And I observe it is most important and necessary. Especially is it necessary

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1. In combating error. If tradition be allowed in one particular, who will prohibit it in another? Romanism is gaining ground in this country; it is a religion of tradition. Who will oppose it? Those who are themselves trammelled by tradition? To every argument, they can retort, as they have done, "Where do you get your infant sprinkling?" The most staunch Romanist asks nothing more than the adoption of the principle, contained in the language already quoted, of a Protestant Pedobaptist in support of infant sprinkling: "We should consider a man who should refuse to admit the truth and authority of tradition, to be as unreasonable as if he should refuse to admit the truth, of written or printed records." No Pedobaptist can consistently oppose Romanism. There is no consistent position between the Romish and the Baptist church. Tradition leads to the one — the Word of God to the other. Infidelity and Rationalism, also, are rearing their heads in our midst, and who shall meet them? Their cry is, "Priestcraft, and ministerial dictation!" Who shall meet them? Those who suffer their ministers to tell them what to believe, and to dictate whether they shall investigate a subject or not? No! but those who are prepared, by an independent investigation, and a manly appeal to the Bible, to show the falsity of their charges. This feature of reform is necessary

2. To the purity of the Church. No organization can be pure, without a pure standard. Tradition is liable to perversion; there is no certainty about it. To-day it assumes one position, to-morrow an opposite one. Thus it has ever been. The Church of Rome, though claiming infallibility, has constantly changed her ground of action, because governed by the variable standard of tradition. This is no less true of Protestant Pedobaptism. To-day, infants are sprinkled on one ground; to-morrow that ground is abandoned, and another, directly opposite to it, is urged, as a reason for administering the rite. Anon, both these are abandoned, and a new position, with a new set of arguments is introduced.

This is strikingly illustrated in the experience of Simon Menno, a Romish priest, who in 1580 was converted to Christ, and to Baptist sentiments, by reading the New Testament. He says:

"I examined the Scriptures with diligence and meditated on them earnestly, but could find in them no authority for infant baptism. As I remarked this, I spoke of it to my pastor, and after several conversations he acknowledged that infant baptism had no ground in the Scriptures. Yet I dare not trust so much to my understanding. I consulted some ancient authors, who taught me that children must, by baptism, be washed from their original sin. This I compared with the Scriptures and perceived that it set at naught the blood of Christ. Afterward I went to Luther, and would gladly have known from him the ground; and he taught me that we must baptize children on their own faith, because they are holy. This also I saw was not according to God's Word. In the third place I went to Brucer, who taught me that we should baptize children in order to be able the more diligently to take care of them, and bring them up in the ways of the Lord. But, this too, I saw, was a groundless representation. In the fourth place I had recourse to Bullinger, who pointed me to the covenant of circumcision; but I found as before, that, according to Scripture, the practice could not stand. As I now on every side observed that the writers stood on grounds so very different, and each followed his own reason, I saw clearly that we were deceived with infant baptism."

Can the church be pure with such a contradictory guide as tradition? Never!

Finally, I inquire, Does the charge of the text lie against any of my Christian brethren? If you have neglected baptism since you believed, because you were sprinkled in infancy, it most assuredly does. Your sprinkling rests on tradition. The Bible says, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." If, because sprinkled in infancy, you refuse now to obey Christ, we say to you, in His own truthful language, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition!"

[1] John xxi. 22, 23

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[2] Lectures on Infant Baptism, p. 10, 11.

[3] Lectures on Infant Baptism, p. 17.

[4] This is strikingly illustrated in the celebrated Letters of “Kirwan” (Rev. Dr. Murray, a Protestant Pedobaptist) to Bishop Hughes. He says: “Once secure a just and scriptural view of the character of a true minister of Christ, and of the great end of a gospel ministry, and the whole framework of popery vanishes.” “A true minister is one who, with the love of God and of the salvation of men filling his soul, goes out into all the ways which providence opens before him, preaching everywhere, as did Peter and Paul, 'repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' He has only one object — to lead men to the knowledge of the truth. He goes out with an open Bible, to expound it, praying that the Holy Spirit may so apply its truths to the hearts of his hearers, that they may be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. To those who believe, he administers the rite of baptism, and, as God gives him opportunity, he administers the Lord's Supper to the faithful, for the purpose of commemorating the death of Christ, until he comes the second time without sin unto salvation. Such were the ministers of Christ before the rise of popery; and such only are the true ministers of Christ now.” — Kirwan's Letters to Bishop Hughes, Second Series, p. 90, 91.

No intelligent reader need be reminded that this is language utterly at variance with Pedobaptist teaching and practice.

[5] Doctrinal Catechism of Catholic Faith and Practice, approved by the Most Rev. John Hughes, D. D., pp. 184–186.

[6] Lectures on Infant Baptism, p. 17.

LECTURE V. THE SECOND FEATURE OF THE REFORM AT WHICH BAPTISTS AIM — THE RESTORATION OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

“My kingdom is not of this world” — John xviii. 36.

THERE was much misapprehension, during the ministry of Christ on the earth, concerning the nature of that kingdom which he was about to establish. It was most generally supposed, that it would be a temporal kingdom, differing from others only in its superior external splendor, its brilliant warlike achievements, and its universal extent. It was this false idea, that so perplexed Herod, at the announcement of the birth of the infant Saviour. It was this false idea that led the Jews to reject their Messiah, when he appeared among them in the character of the meek and lowly One. It was this false idea that led the disciples, just before the ascension of Christ, to ask, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

The principles to which the Saviour gave utterance, were calculated to remove these false impressions from the minds of all who had imbibed them. He taught his followers to cherish a spirit of self-denial, and humility, and peace. Every act of his life, and every word of his lips, bore testimony to the fact that he came not to set up an earthly empire, but a spiritual kingdom; and when he uttered the words of the text, “My kingdom is not of this world,” he simply gave an exposition of the principles he had been teaching during his life.

When the apostles were enlightened by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they understood perfectly the

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nature of this declaration; and hence, they admitted none to visible membership in the gospel kingdom but those who gave evidence of repentance, and faith in Christ. They taught that the church of which Jesus is the Head, was a spiritual organization, composed not of those who came into it by hereditary descent, but of those who were born of the Spirit. But, there has been a departure from these principles; and organizations now exist, under the designation of Christian churches, which aim to unite the church and the world, and introduce the impious, and ungodly, and profane, into Christ's kingdom — thus reversing his declaration, that his “kingdom is not of this world.” Against this innovation Baptists strenuously protest. We announce, then, as the Second Feature of the reform in which Baptists are engaged,

The Restoration of the Spirituality of Christ's kingdom.

Let us inquire here, How is it, that the principle expressed in the text came to be violated? How does it happen, that others than those possessing the qualifications demanded by the Gospel, come to have a place in Christ's professedly visible kingdom? How comes it to pass, that what is professedly Christ's church, is the receptacle of the godless and the vile? I reply, simply through the introduction of the unscriptural rite of infant baptism. So long as the church followed the direction of her Lord, and baptized into her membership only those who gave evidence of faith, so long she retained her spirituality; but when she permitted tradition to add to the Word of God, and received into her membership infants, who grew up in sin and unbelief, then her spirituality was exchanged for worldliness — then she introduced a traitor into the citadel, who betrayed her into the hands of her enemies. In contending, then, for the baptism of believers only, we aim at the restoration of the principle expressed by the Saviour in the words of the text: “My kingdom is not of this world.” I shall endeavor to show,

1. That Infant Baptism tends to the Violation of this Principle. It is an undeniable fact, that all Pedobaptist churches have contended that infants are proper subjects for membership in the church, and therefore should be baptized. There are two opinions, however, as to the grounds of infant baptism. Some contend that the infants of professed believers should be baptized because they are already members of the church, by their natural birth, while others contend that they should be baptized in order to make them members. All Pedobaptists, however, agree, that infants are proper subjects for church membership, and by baptism they receive such to their membership. This is true, not only of the Church of Rome, but of all the Protestant Pedobaptist denominations, as can easily be shown by their Confessions of Faith and writings on the subject.

The Episcopal minister, at the baptism of an infant, says: “We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock.” And again: “Seeing that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church.” And in the prayer he thanks God that it hath pleased him “to regenerate this infant, and incorporate him into his holy church.”[1] M. E. Church Discipline, Art. XVII, says: “Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized, but it is also a sign of regeneration, or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the church.” The Presbyterian Confession of Faith says: “The visible church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children.”[2] We are told again, that “Baptism is a sacrament,” “whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church.”[3] “All baptized persons are members of the church, are under its care, and subject to its government and discipline, and when they have arrived at years of discretion, they are bound to perform all the duties of church members.”[4]

This is the doctrine of all Pedobaptist denominations. Those baptized in infancy are considered as sustaining the relation of members. The propriety of this relation is urged in every possible way. Says one writer, “Infants may be the disciples of Christ. A disciple is a scholar; this is the meaning of the word. And a child is a scholar before he learns his lesson, as well as afterwards. He is reckoned a scholar when he is committed to the care of the instructor, or has his name put down with those who belong to the school whether he puts his name down himself, or whether his parents put it down for him. The church is the school of Christ. The names of all those to whom God's gracious covenant [baptism] is applied, belong upon the records of the church.”[5]

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Here it is plainly taught that infants, by their baptism, are not only admitted into the church, but actually made disciples of Christ. Surely, Mr. Arnold had forgotten what Christ said, when he wrote the above: "If any man will be MY disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." However, I did not introduce this extract to combat it in this place, but simply to show that Pedobaptists contend for infant membership.

Another writer says: "This relation of children to the church is generally represented, by the most respectable authors, as infant membership. Against this I can see no valid objections. In a very important, though in a very qualified sense, baptized children may be considered as infant members of the Christian church." [6]

Says Dr. McDowell: "By baptism children become members of Christ's visible church." He says again, "Children by baptism, are brought under the watch-care of the church, and become the subjects of its wholesome discipline." [7]

From these quotations, (and they might be increased indefinitely) it will be clearly seen that infants become members of Pedobaptist churches by baptism; and these infants are the constituent elements of which these churches are composed. Having thus been admitted members in infancy, they retain their connection with the church after they are grown up, however vicious and abandoned they may become. Though they are sometimes guilty of such vile crimes as to merit their exclusion from society, and their confinement in the penitentiary, still they are not excluded from the church; and though they sometimes die under the hand of the public executioner, without any evidence of repentance, they die as members of the church into which they were baptized. Is not this uniting the church and the world "until death doth them part?"

Although these remarks apply, more particularly, to national churches — all of which are Pedobaptist — as the Romish, Greek, Lutheran and English Episcopal, who all receive and retain infant members, however vicious they may become, yet the same is true, in some sense of all other Pedobaptist churches. Dr. Woods, speaking of the duty of the church to its infant members, says: "On the question whether the church ever ought, by a public act, to cut off those who give evidence of obstinate impiety, there have been various opinions." "It is, in my view, utterly inexpedient to attempt to fix upon any particular age, at which those who were baptized in infancy, and who exhibit no evidence of piety, are to be abandoned by the church, as those for whom no farther efforts are to be made. For, suppose you fix upon the age of eighteen, or twenty, or twenty-one; who can be sure that a youth at that age though without any evidence of regeneration, may not be in a state of mind which is more susceptible of good impressions, and which affords more hope of salvation, than at any period of his life before? Now if any person should be in this state, and the church should adopt a principle like what I have referred to, they must forthwith exclude such a person from all the advantages of their Christian friendship; and they must do this at a time when those advantages would be most highly prized." "We are not to attend to present appearances; but are to consider the forbearance and longsuffering of God, and the multiplied instances in which His grace has visited those who had long lived in sin, and who, in human apprehension, had been fitted for destruction. And when those who have been devoted to God in baptism, wander far and long from the path of duty, and show fearful symptoms of obduracy, we are not quickly to despair of their salvation, but are to follow them with every effort which the sincerest love can dictate. And when no other effort seems to promise any good, we are to abound in prayer, relying on the infinite grace of God, and earnestly hoping that our prayers will prevail and that our children will at length be persuaded to consider their ways, and turn to the Lord." [8]

From this it will be perceived that those who are made members of Pedobaptist churches in infancy continue such when grown up — that they are not to be excluded no matter how ungodly they become, so long as hopes may be entertained of their conversion; or, in other words, so long as they live. This, we know, is the practice of Pedobaptists universally. Is not this uniting the church and the world?

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Now let it be remembered, that I have thus far confined my remarks to the effects of infant membership where only the children of professedly pious parents are admitted into the church by their baptism in infancy. How much more palpable does this evil appear, when we extend our observation to the practice — which exists, to a, greater or less extent, in almost; every Pedobaptist community — of baptizing the children of unconverted parents. The majority of Pedobaptists do not require piety as a condition in the parents, but simply a desire to have their children christened. There is nothing in the standards of any Pedobaptist church that actually prohibits the baptism of children of unconverted parents. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith appears to prescribe limits, but it does not actually do so, nor is it so understood by the ministry of that church. Says Dr. McDowell, “Seeing that a person by baptism has become a member of the visible church, although destitute of piety, and although he gives the church no evidence of visible piety, yet on what ground, or in what way can he be kept back from baptism for his child? I answer, let him be seriously and solemnly told the nature of baptism,” etc. “If this were properly done, it would have a great effect in keeping back many improper persons.”[9] I might, if it were necessary, furnish instances where Presbyterian ministers have baptized the children of unconverted parents without the least hesitation. But the worst feature of all is, that in some cases unconverted persons are urged to bring their children to baptism. Suppose, however, that in all cases, none but the children of truly pious parents were admitted to infant baptism and membership — would this remove the evil? Are such children any better than others? No; for like all others, they are born with carnal and depraved natures. They are of the world — they belong to it; and notwithstanding their religious parentage, they are “children of wrath even as others,” until regenerated by the Holy Spirit. As they advance toward maturity, they exhibit the same enmity to God, and the same evil passions, and the same sinful inclinations manifested by others. Some of them become notoriously vile; yet they are not to be excluded; but they retain their membership, into which they were brought in their infancy, and continue in it to the day of their death.

Now this is directly opposed to Christ's declaration: “My kingdom is not of this world.” It is directly opposed to the practice of the apostles. It is directly opposed to the New Testament description of church members. They are there described as a spiritual seed, lively stones, saints, sincere believers. But are baptized infants of this description? Do they possess the qualities which in the New Testament are invariably ascribed to church members? By no means. And yet they are received into what are professedly evangelical churches; and thus the spirituality of Christ's kingdom has been destroyed by infant baptism.” The church of Christ, bought with his blood, and ordained by him to be the fold of his sheep, the home of the renewed, in the world but not of it, has been robbed of its true design, by being converted into a common receptacle for the pure and the impure — a great drag-net, inclosing all alike.”

Infant baptism tends directly to amalgamate the church with the world. It is by means of this, that the church of Rome has spread her baneful influence over so many nations. This is abundantly evident from the fact, that through the christening of children she has made whole nations nominally Christian, teaching just what all other churches who baptize infants teach, that by their baptism they are made members of the church of Christ. Thus do Protestant Pedobaptists indorse the false teachings of Rome, and give their strength to the Beast, by propping up the main pillar on which Antichrist rests! I proceed to show

2. That the practice of Baptists is in accordance with the teachings of Christ. Baptists regard the kingdom of Christ as a purely spiritual organization, separate and distinct from the world. Acting upon this conviction, they admit none to baptism and membership, but such as profess their faith in Jesus, and give satisfactory evidence that they have “passed from death unto life.” They recognize no hereditary claims to the covenant of grace. They claim no “holiness” for their off-spring, arising from their natural birth, which entitles them to a place in God's spiritual temple; but regarding them as carnal, depraved and unholy, they constantly feel the importance of urging upon them their own personal obligations to “repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ;” while infant damnation has no place in their creed, for the simple reason that, like infant baptism, its supposed antidote, it is not found in the Bible. They aim to show that Christ's “kingdom is not of this world.” They receive none but professed converts, and when these walk disorderly, they withdraw themselves from them. They are laboring to reform both Protestant and Papal Christendom on this point,

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which they regard of vital importance to the best interests of the church and the world. Let their principles prevail, and there can be no unhallowed union of Church and State, no amalgamation of Christ's kingdom with the world; but the Church, with undimmed lustre will shine forth, her glory unobscured, her ordinances uncorrupted, and her membership uncontaminated, and instead of being "the mistress of the State, or the courtesan of the world — as pedobaptism has in too many instances made her — she will appear in all her loveliness as the Bride of Christ!"

From these remarks it will be seen, that infant baptism is not that harmless, innocent thing which many suppose it to be; but the parent of gigantic evils; the fruitful source of the existence of state churches, and most of the corruptions flowing therefrom; the instigator of all the persecutions which have ever been waged in the name of Christianity; a lying refuge and hiding-place of falsehood to ensnare and ruin souls; in short, the originator and propagator of Popery.

Infant baptism is an error from beginning to end — corrupt in theory and corrupting in practice; born in superstition, cradled in fear, nursed in ignorance, supported by fraud, and spread by force. With a tyrant hand it has shed the blood of martyrs in torrents in all lands. The introduction of infant baptism was the death-knell of religious liberty in the Christian communities where it was practiced. The first persecutions ever raised in the name of Christianity, were waged by the advocates of infant baptism against those who, adhering to the teachings of Christ and the apostles, denied its validity. The council of Carthage (A. D. 414) passed the following canon: "We will that whosoever denies that little children by baptism are freed from perdition and eternally saved, that they be accursed." The edict of Honorius and Valentinian III. (A. D. 418) forbids rebaptism throughout the Roman empire under the penalty of death. This of course was aimed at those who considered infant baptism as unscriptural, and immersed believers after they had confessed their faith in Christ, even though they had been baptized in infancy. Justinian, in the beginning of the sixth century, ordered new-born infants to be baptized, under a penalty for neglecting it. Under laws like these, enforced as they were in the middle ages with new and most sanguinary edicts in all the states of Europe, what multitudes must have become martyrs, may be conjectured from the fact that at the time of the Reformation Baptist martyrs were counted by tens and even hundreds of thousands.

Now, as we love the Word of God, the commands and example of Christ, the purity of the Christian Church, and the souls of men, we are bound unceasingly to labor for the extermination of this monster evil, this child of Tradition! In seeking to effect this reform, we shall use no carnal weapons, but simply adhere to the word of God, the precepts of Christ, and the practice of the apostles, and urge all others to do the same.

You perceive again, that while we differ from most other evangelical bodies merely as to an external ordinance, apparently, here is another great principle involved in that difference. Let me urge all to seek from the Bible a knowledge of the characteristics of those who composed the primitive churches, and see whether they will apply to the constituents of Pedobaptist churches. And if not, then "come out from among them," and aid those who are laboring to effect a reform which will restore the spirituality of the church, and clothe it with that moral beauty and attractiveness of which pedobaptism has shorn it. If you do this, and are proselyted, you will have proselyted yourselves; and such are the only kind of proselytes Baptists can make.

In concluding this lecture, I cannot refrain from saying a few words to those who have been baptized in infancy, and are yet conscious that they have never been "born again." I am induced to do this, because I am reminded that my attention was first led to a candid investigation of the subject of baptism, by discovering that, though unconverted, I was a member of the church, — having been made so by my baptism in infancy. This incongruous position you sustain. Though in the world, and of the world, you are also in the church, and of the church! You are not responsible, I am aware, for the inconsistency of the position you occupy. You were brought into it while in unconscious infancy, without your knowledge and consent. But, I inquire, do you not feel that such a relation is perfectly inconsistent with your own ideas of what the Bible teaches? A moment's reflection, I feel confident, if you are really Protestants, will convince you of it. At all events, I urge

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you, as Protestants, to search the Bible in reference to this matter, with the hope that you may be led, as I was, to see your unfitness for a place in Christ's kingdom, and to seek and obtain salvation through Jesus Christ, and then act consistently, by uniting with those who aim to restore the spirituality of Christ's church, by faithfully adhering to his own declaration; — “My kingdom is not of this world.”

[1] Ministration of baptism of infants.

[2] Westminster Confession, chap. xxv. sec. 2.

[3] Larger Catechism, question 165.

[4] Discipline of the Presbyterian church in the United States, chap. i. sec. 7.

[5] A. Discourse on the Proper subjects of Christian Baptism, by Rev, Samuel Arnold, p. 10, 11.

[6] Rev. Dr. Woods, Lectures on Infant Baptism, p. 170.

[7] Theology, vol. ii. pp. 493, 494.

[8] Lectures on Infant Baptism, p. 173–175.

[9] Theology, vol. ii. p. 484.

LECTURE VI. THE THIRD FEATURE, ETC. THE PROPAGATION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND THE RIGHTS OF CONSCIENCE.

“Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said, Forbid him not.” — LUKE ix. 49, 50.

THE Gospel of Christ not only differs from all other systems of religion in the superior excellence of the truths it reveals, but also in the directions it gives for the propagation of its doctrines. Other systems seek to advance themselves by invoking the aid of the secular power, and by forcing men, against their convictions, to accept a theory repugnant to their views. They have thus succeeded in thronging their temples with hypocritical worshippers, bound to their altars through fear and slavish dread. These systems, in order to maintain themselves, find it necessary to proscribe and persecute all who differ from them, either in their articles of belief or mode of worship. But the Gospel of Christ, though it is the infallible truth of God, expressly prohibits a resort to any such measures for its advancement. It not only teaches its adherents to utterly abandon the use of carnal weapons for its propagation, but it also charges them not to proscribe those who may differ in their views or mode of worship. This principle is directly expressed in the text and its connection. The teaching of the Saviour has been violated, however, even by his professed followers; and, in the name of the meek and lowly Jesus, men have gone forth with proscription, oppression, and persecution, to advance their own opinions, and crush out that liberty of thought, and those rights of conscience vouchsafed to man by his Maker, and the free exercise of which is alone compatible with his personal accountability. One body of Christians has always shunned this mode of procedure; and, in seeking to advance the truth, they have

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never engaged in persecution of any kind, though they have been themselves more bitterly persecuted than any others. I propose to prove that Baptists have always been the pioneers in the Propagation of Religious Liberty and the Rights of Conscience.

I shall endeavor here to define what religious liberty is. The views of many Protestants, even in this land of liberty, are exceedingly imperfect, and in some instances surprisingly erroneous, on this subject. Many consider toleration as synonymous with religious liberty; but a moment's consideration will exhibit the vast difference between the two. Toleration is the allowance of that which is not wholly approved. As applied to religion, the term is objectionable; because it presupposes the existence of some mere human authority, which has power to grant to, or withhold from man the exercise of freedom in matters of religion — and this is Popery. Our Creator, however, has nowhere delegated such authority to king, or priest, or any human organization whatever; on the contrary, he has shown, by the very nature of the soul of man, and the Revelation given to him, that it is his inalienable right to exercise his judgment without restraint in religious matters, and give expression, freely and fully, to his religious convictions, without human dictation or interference.

It is manifest, that if the right to tolerate exists in man, the right to prohibit, and to dictate to the conscience, must also exist with it; and thus toleration becomes merely another name for oppression. Toleration, therefore, is not religious liberty.

Religious freedom recognizes in no human organization the right or the power to tolerate. It does not stoop — either to magistrate or minister, pope or priest — to humbly ask leave or beg permission to speak freely, or act out its convictions; but it speaks and acts, because, in the exercise of its own right, it chooses to do so. It simply asks, with Paul, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” and having ascertained God's will, it goes forth to do it, though a host of priests, or a thousand executioners, stand ready to execrate and slay it. It acknowledges no human authority competent to come between the conscience and its Maker in reference to his will and its duty. Religious liberty does not exist where there is no recognition and acknowledgment of this right — the right of every individual of the human race, to think, and choose, and act for himself in religious matters.

Baptists have always strenuously contended for the acknowledgment of this principle, and have labored to propagate it. Nowhere, on the page of history, can an instance be found of Baptists depriving others of their religious liberties, or aiming to do so; but, wherever they have found, even in the darkest ages of intolerance and persecution, they appear to be far in advance of those who surround them, on this important subject. This is simply owing to their adherence to the Gospel of Christ in its purity. Here religious liberty is taught in its fullest extent; and it was only when the Christian church departed from God's Word, that she sought to crush the rights of conscience; and only when she fully returns to it again, will she cease to cherish a desire to do so.

The Reformation which took place in the sixteenth century, while it aimed to remove many of the abuses of Popery, still did not recognize religious liberty. “There is not a confession of faith, nor a creed,” says Underhill, “framed by any of the Reformers, which does not give to the magistrate a coercive power in religion, and almost every one, at the same time, curses the resisting Baptist.” “It was the crime of this persecuted people, that they rejected secular interference in the church of God; it was the boast and aim of the Reformers everywhere to employ it. The natural fruit of the one was persecution — of the other, liberty.”[1] The Baptists stood entirely alone, as the defenders of the rights of conscience. All the Reformed communities agreed that it was right for the magistrate to punish those who did not worship according to the prescribed rule of their churches; and it was for opposition to this feature of religious oppression, in connection with their adherence to believer's baptism, that brought upon the Baptists those severe persecutions which they were called to endure. They contended for religious liberty; the Reformed churches opposed it, and committed themselves to a course fatal to the rights of conscience. I again quote from Underhill:

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“Honor, ease, and wealth flowed in upon the opposers of religious liberty, but tribulation unto death was the portion of those who ventured to advocate it. Most affectingly does the eminent Simmon Menno refer to this contrast: 'For eighteen years, with my poor feeble wife and little children, has it behooved me to bear great and various anxieties, sufferings, griefs, afflictions, miseries, and persecutions, and in every place to find a bare existence, in fear and danger of my life. While some preachers are reclining on their soft bed and downy pillows, we are often hidden in the caves of the earth; while they are celebrating the nuptial or natal days of their children, and rejoicing with the timbrel and the harp, we are looking anxiously about, fearing lest persecutors should be suddenly at the door; while they are saluted by all around as doctors, masters, lords, we are compelled to hear ourselves called Anabaptists, ale-house preachers, seducers, heretics, and to be hailed in the devil's name. In a word, while they for their ministry are remunerated with annual stipends, our wages are the fire, the sword, the death.’”[2]

Now, why was this? Did these Baptists deserve such treatment at the hands of their persecutors? Let a Catholic historian (Cardinal Hosius, President of the Council of Trent) reply: “ If you behold their cheerfulness in suffering persecution, the Anabaptists run before all the heretics. If you have regard to the number, it is like that in multitude they would swarm above all others, if they were not grievously plagued and cut off with the knife of persecution. If you have an eye to the outward appearance of godliness, both the Lutherans and Zuinglians must needs grant that they far pass them. If you will be moved by the boasting of the Word of God, these be no less bold than Calvin to preach, and their doctrine must stand aloft above all the glory of the world, must stand invincible above all power, because it is not their word, but the Word of the living God.”[3]

It is evident, then, that the Baptists suffered merely because they maintained that they ought “to obey God rather than man.” They found no direction in the Bible for the baptism of infants, and therefore they refused to observe the rite. The Reformed or Protestant churches sought to force them to do it, in opposition to their convictions. They maintained that this was also contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, and thus, in defence of the Bible, and the rights of conscience, they died.

As a proof of this let me give you one among very many other instances which might be produced. Balthazar Hubmeyer of Friedburgh, Switzerland, who with his wife, suffered martyrdom in 1598, at the hands of the Protestant Reformers, for the sin of being a Baptist, was originally a learned and eloquent Roman Catholic preacher, and while among them was called a Doctor of the Holy Scriptures. By the illumination of the Holy Spirit he was so convinced of the abominations of Popery, that following the counsel of God, he separated himself from it. He afterward rejected, among other Popish errors, infant baptism, and taught with all possible zeal, the immersion of believers according to the command of Christ. In company with one hundred and ten others, he was baptized by William Roubli, one of the earliest Swiss Baptists, and for some time a pastor at Basle. He himself baptized some three hundred persons in the few following months. He published a work on baptism, which brought, in the autumn, a virulent reply from Zuingle, the great Protestant Swiss Reformer. Some of the Baptists were cast into prison, and so cruel were the proceedings, that even the populace complained that injustice was done to them.

Hubmeyer published a tract, in which he complains of Zuingle and his followers: That they had proceeded at one time so far as to throw, into a dark and miserable tower, twenty persons, both men and pregnant women, widows and young females, and to pronounce this sentence upon them — that thenceforward they should see neither sun nor moon for the remainder of their lives, and be fed till their days were ended with bread and water, and that they should remain in the dark tower together, both the living and the dead, surrounded with filth and putrefaction, until not a single survivor of the whole remained. “Oh, God!” writes this good man, “what a hard, severe, cruel sentence upon pious Christian people, of whom no one could speak evil, only that they had received water baptism in obedience to the command of Christ.” Hubmeyer courageously went to the stake, and was burned to death on the 10th of March, 1528. His wife was also the partner of his sufferings. She was condemned to death by drowning, and in the river Danube found a watery grave.

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No matter whether Romanists or Protestants gained the ascendancy — the Baptists were persecuted by both alike. The reason of this was, that they claimed for the church of Christ, and the consciences of men, freedom from all human control. This was their distinguishing trait; and it was the assertion of this principle that brought them into collision with every form and ceremony of human invention in the worship of God, and every effort to bind the conscience to observe them. To worship God aright, the spirit must be free; for true worship is voluntary, and can only come from a willing heart.

From what I have submitted, it will be seen that the Baptists stood alone, as the defenders of religious liberty, during the progress of the Reformation, and for many years after. It will also be seen, that their idea of the church, composed of none but believers, immersed on the profession of their faith, was the grand cause of the separation of the Baptists, as individuals and communities, from all the ecclesiastical organizations supported by the Reformers and their successors. From the very nature of the case, there could be no union between them; from the first they were opposites, and so they remained. The Baptists occupied an independent and original position; they were neither Romanists nor Protestants, but thorough religious reformers, elevating their standard of religious liberty far above the most exalted ideas of Protestant toleration.

And thus it continued to be, till the establishment of the American Republic. Other denominations contended for toleration; Baptists demanded for themselves, and all others, religious liberty — the right of every one to worship God as he might choose. Even the Puritans, who fled from persecution in England, had no idea of religious liberty. They came here to establish their own faith, and to exclude all others; hence they were more rigidly intolerant than the countries whence they had fled from persecution. “Intolerance was a necessary condition of their enterprise. They feared and hated religious liberty.”[4]

All who did not conform to their views, were fined and imprisoned, and whipped and banished; and, as Baptists were especially opposed to religious oppression, the heaviest persecutions fell upon them. Hence, in 1644, a law was passed in Massachusetts against the Baptists, by which it was “ordered and agreed, that if any person or persons within this jurisdiction shall either openly condemn or oppose the baptism of infants, or seduce others to do so, or leave the congregation during the administration of the rite, he shall be sentenced to banishment.” The same year we accordingly find that a poor man was tied up and whipped for refusing to have his child sprinkled; and on July 30, 1651, Obadiah Holmes, John Clark, and John Crandall, Baptist ministers, were arrested near Lynn, Massachusetts, while preaching on the Lord's day, taken to the parish church in the afternoon, sent to the Boston jail, and subsequently fined. The fines of Clark and Crandall were, after a while, paid, but Mr. Holmes was kept in Boston jail till September, when he was tied to the whipping-post and publicly whipped. His clothes were stripped off, and thirty lashes sunk into his naked flesh, which was so torn and cut that for weeks afterward he could only rest upon his hands and knees even in bed.

This same spirit of persecution was manifested against Roger Williams. In 1639, he became a Baptist, and in 1643 went to England from New York, because he had been banished from Boston. In March, 1644, he obtained the charter for the colony of Rhode Island, with power for the colony to make its own laws; and in September, 1644, under that charter was established the first government on earth that granted full religious liberty. It was the first spot the sun had ever shone upon where the rights of conscience were fully acknowledged, and it was founded by a Baptist; and it may be considered the germ of that religious liberty which all American citizens now enjoy, for up to the very dawning of the American Revolution, and even after that period, Baptists continued to struggle and suffer heroically for religious liberty.

In Virginia, where the first permanent colony in America was established, the charter bearing date 1606, fourteen years before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, Baptists were bitterly persecuted. By law, a fine of two thousand pounds of tobacco was imposed on “those who neglected to have their infants baptized.” Baptist ministers were arrested and imprisoned as vagrants; some were pulled down from the stand as they were preaching, insulted and whipped, and many were imprisoned for preaching the Gospel. Elders John Waller,

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Lewis Craig, and James Childs were seized at a meeting, June 4, 1768, dragged before the magistrate, and imprisoned for forty–three days in Fredericksburg. Mr. Wofford was severely scourged, and carried the scars to his grave.

Dr. Hawks, historian of the Episcopal Church of Virginia, says: “No dissenters in Virginia experienced harsher treatment than did the Baptists. They were beaten and imprisoned, and cruelty taxed its ingenuity to devise new modes of punishment and annoyance.”

But the Baptists struggled on. On September 5, 1774, a Congress elected by the people of twelve colonies met at Philadelphia to consult for the general interests. The Warren Baptist Association of Rhode Island sent an agent — Rev. Isaac Backus, who with his mother, brother, and uncle, had suffered imprisonment for being Baptists — to Philadelphia, to join with the Philadelphia Baptist Association in presenting a memorial to Congress to secure religious liberty. But they met opposition; some even accusing the Baptists of trying to break up the Union, when they merely advocated universal religious liberty!

The Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, July 4, 1776. But the Declaration of Independence did not remove oppressive laws from colonial or State statute–books. In Virginia, for four years after the Declaration of Independence, marriages performed by Baptists were unlawful, their children declared illegitimate, and their inheritances lost. Not until 1785, was religious liberty fully established by law in Virginia— Thomas Jefferson, whose father was a Baptist, being the author of the bill. In 1809, writing to the members of the Baptist Church at Buck Mountain, whom he acknowledged as his coadjutors in the work, he says: “We have acted together from the origin to the end of a memorable revolution, and we have contributed, each in the line allotted us, our endeavors to render its issues a permanent blessing to our country.”[5]

A National Constitution for the United States was adopted in 1787. Its provisions were satisfactory as far as they went, but religious liberty was not sufficiently guarded. The Baptist General Committee of Virginia, in 1788, expressed their disapproval of this important omission, and, after consultation with James Madison, this committee, in August, 1789, wrote to General Washington, then President of the United States, saying that they feared that liberty of conscience, dearer to them than property or life, was not sufficiently guarded. Washington gave them a kind and encouraging reply, in which occurs the following language: “While I recollect with satisfaction that the religious society of which you are members have been, throughout America, uniformly, and almost unanimously, the firm friends of civil liberty, and the persevering promoters of our glorious Revolution, I cannot hesitate to believe that they will be the faithful supporters of a free yet efficient general government.”

In the next month that immortal First Amendment to the Constitution was adopted by Congress: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for a redress of grievances.” Thus were Baptists the propagators of our religious liberty.

Baptists have not changed since the Reformation, or the days of Washington. Their principles are still the same; and these principles bind them to the propagation of religious liberty. The very constitution of a Baptist church is compatible only with enjoyment of such liberty. It is composed of those who have exercised an intelligent choice, and who, in the possession of liberty to go elsewhere unmolested, have preferred to unite with it. Like true philanthropists they desire that all other's may enjoy equal freedom with themselves. They would use their liberty in endeavoring to liberate others. Infant baptism they regard as one great source of the destruction of religious liberty; in laboring therefore to lead its adherents to abandon it, they are seeking to effect a reform which will leave the conscience free to act according to its own convictions of God's requirements, which Pedobaptism prevents it from doing.

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It is sometimes said that these persecutions of Baptists by Protestants, must be attributed to the age in which they lived. How then are we to account for Baptists being so much in advance of the age? In contrast with the spirit of Zuingli (p. 11), mark the sentiments expressed by Jeronimus Segerson, who with his wife suffered martyrdom in September, 1551, one by burning, and the other by drowning, for the sin of being Baptists. They were both in prison at the time, separated from each other. "We must likewise wrestle with enemies; that is, we must wrestle here in this world with emperors, with the powers and princes of this world. We must in this world suffer, for Paul has said, 'that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.' We must completely conquer the world, sin, death, and the devil, not with material swords and spears, but with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and with the shield of faith, wherewith we must quench all sharp and fiery darts, and place on our heads the helmet of salvation, with the armor of righteousness, and our feet be shod with the preparation of the Gospel. Being thus strengthened with these weapons, we shall oppose and overcome all our enemies."

The same spirit has ever been manifested by Baptists. While others clamored for liberty and toleration when they were oppressed, and then, as soon as they came into power, began to oppress others, Baptists have claimed religious liberty for all, and have heroically suffered that all men might be free. Not in the age, but in the error of infant baptism, lies the root of state churches and religious persecutions; and only as Baptist influence keeps these in check, will Pedobaptism be prevented from bringing forth its legitimate fruit in the destruction of religious liberty.

Wherever Pedobaptism has had the opportunity to develop itself, it has always produced oppression and persecution, both in Romish and Protestant communities. Its direct tendency is to crush religious liberty, and destroy the rights of conscience. This is capable of proof, not merely from history, but from the very nature of the thing itself. Let me demonstrate this.

By infant baptism a person is committed, while unconscious, to a certain church; he is made a member of that church. Now, unless that church is infallible, it has no right to make a person a member without his consent; for, it may commit him to an alliance with error, and to the defence of it. But all churches are fallible, they may err; a person who is made a member of such a church in infancy, may discover an error in that church when he arrives at maturity. Without his own consent, he has been committed to that error; he was not left free to choose, where it is evident, from the nature of things, a choice might have been exercised. Pedobaptism is therefore inconsistent with liberty.

This will more fully appear from the following: All Pedobaptists agree that there is more than one mode of baptism. They all teach, also, that baptism is to be administered but once to the same individual. It is evident, then, from their own admission, that a choice may be exercised as to the mode; but they administer baptism to a child, while in a state of unconsciousness, and, according to their own teaching that person is never to be baptized again, however much he may prefer another mode — which they all admit to be equally valid — when he is converted. Multitudes find themselves thus embarrassed on arriving at maturity, and on experiencing conversion. They feel that their liberty has been taken away; and that, according to the teaching of their church, they cannot exercise a choice, where that very church admits that a choice might be made, if they were free. In order to enjoy liberty, they must of necessity go to the Baptists.[6]

If any should strenuously contend for only one mode of baptism, it should be Pedobaptists; for, they administer baptism when the subject knows nothing about it, and then maintain that it must not be repeated. They ought to be able, when the baptized child comes to years of understanding, to prove from the Word of God, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the mode adopted by them was the only correct one.

These remarks apply with equal force to the subjects of baptism. Suppose a Pedobaptist child is conscientiously convinced that he should be baptized after repentance and faith? He must either leave the church of which he is a member, or continue with it while he violates its teachings, or give up his religions

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liberty, and neglect his known duty. Numerous instances might be given to prove this. I will relate one, which illustrates this point.

Mrs. C., of Wethersfield, Connecticut, was sprinkled in infancy (neither of her parents being at the time professors of religion), by Rev. Dr. Chapin, pastor of a Pedobaptist church in that place. On arriving at maturity she experienced conversion, and desired to be resprinkled, but was refused. She then asked for her letter, which was also refused. After a long effort to persuade her to relinquish her purpose, she at length obtained her letter, and united with a Baptist church five miles distant.

Further, Pedobaptism tends to crush religious liberty, because it leads parents to do violence to the consciences of their children. Baptized children, when they are converted, frequently become Baptists in sentiment; but they are often forced to unite with Pedobaptist churches against their choice, or remain without a public profession of faith, or join the church of their choice at great sacrifice, and with much opposition.

Now Roman Catholics are far more consistent in this matter than Protestants who pursue such a course. They are taught that to leave the Romish church involves the certain loss of the soul; they are therefore bound, in order, as they suppose, to save their children from perdition, to keep them from becoming Protestants. But Protestants, generally, admit Baptists to be correct in all that is essential to salvation; if they oppose the union of their children with the Baptists, they exhibit more bigotry than the Romanist.

Remember, religious liberty involves the right to think, examine, decide, and choose for ourselves in all matters between the conscience and its Maker. This, Baptists seek to propagate; and to this, Pedobaptism, both in the Romish and Protestant bodies, is opposed. In contending, then, for the baptism of believers only, we contend for man's dearest rights — the rights of conscience.

Let Baptist principles prevail, and there will be no forcing the conscience, no forestalling the judgment; but man, free to act intelligently and understandingly, according to the light he possesses, will render to God voluntary obedience, none desiring to “molest him or make him afraid.”

[1] “Struggles and Triumphs of Religious Liberty,” p. 86.

[2] “Struggles and Triumphs of Religious Liberty,” p. 88.

[3] “Struggles and Triumphs of Religious Liberty,” p. 89.

[4] Dr. Ellis, Lecture before the New England Historical Society, March 11, 1860.

[5] Dr. Curry's Address, p. 54.

[6] It was thus with the author of these Lectures. He was sprinkled in infancy, and made a member of the Presbyterian Church. On arriving at “years of discretion,” and on experiencing conversion, his mind was led to the investigation of the subjects and mode of baptism. He came to the conclusion that believers were the only subjects, and immersion the only— mode. But he found that, on account of his infant baptism, he could not be immersed, as a believer, in the Presbyterian Church. For, their Confession of Faith teaches that baptism is not to be repeated to the same subject, and he could not ask any minister of that church to so far forget his own self—respect, as to deliberately violate his ordination vows, which bind him to sustain that Confession of Faith; neither would he have accepted immersion at the hands of such a one, had it been offered. But he saw at once that his liberty had been taken away. He looked at the children of Baptists, who, while they had been instructed just as religiously as himself, were not, trammelled by an act done for them when they could make

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no choice. He saw that they were free to act as their consciences, enlightened by the Word of God, might dictate. He therefore acted consistently, and united with that sect which is “everywhere spoken against.” And the opposition of relatives, all of whom were Pedobaptists, only quickened his steps toward the platform of religious liberty — a Baptist church.

LECTURE VII. THE FOURTH FEATURE OF THE REFORM AT WHICH BAPTISTS AIM — THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EQUALITY OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

“One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.”— Matt. 23:8.

ONE of the most inveterate sins of fallen humanity, is pride. Man thirsts for power. He loves to be elevated above his fellows, and to occupy a position of acknowledged superiority. He delights to be clothed with a little brief authority, which will enable him to look on all around him as his inferiors. It is the working of this spirit of arrogance and assumption that has created so many grades among men, both in the world and in the church. The disciples of Christ were infected with this spirit. They had imbibed it from the Jewish elders — the Scribes and Pharisees. They thirsted for the possession of such a degree of power and authority, as would entitle them to dictate to and rule over their brethren. Hence, we find them frequently disputing who should be the greatest. Christ invariably rebuked this spirit on every occasion of its manifestation. He taught them humility. He showed them that the principles of his gospel were opposed to all such sentiments of pride, and that instead of favoring the arrogant wishes of depraved humanity, it was designed to convert mankind into a universal brotherhood, all possessing equal rights, acknowledging but one Head, one Superior, one Master, even himself. He taught that his church was to be an association of brethren, all its members subject to one law, and all amenable to one tribunal, the voice of the church.

But how sadly has the teaching of Christ on this subject been perverted; and the professedly Christian church, instead of presenting to us the beautiful picture of a band of brethren, meeting together on the broad platform of equality, exhibits an array of gradations in authority, which vies with the most despotic governments of the world. Priestly arrogance and ministerial assumption of authority are exhibited on almost every hand, in both the Protestant and Papal churches; and from the class-leader to the mitred bishop — from the ruling elder to the triple-crowned Pope — there is a violation of Christ's declaration: “One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” Reform here is needed; and I announce, therefore, as the Fourth Feature of the reform at which Baptists aim,

The Establishment of the Equality of Christ's Disciples.

I. It will devolve on me to show, in the first place, that such equality does not generally exist. In Romish and Protestant churches there is no recognition of equality among professed disciples of Christ. I suppose I need not stop to prove this assertion in reference to Romanism. All acknowledge that there are grades of power, both temporal and ecclesiastical, in that church. Even her most devoted adherents will not deny it. On the contrary, they admit and defend it.

Let us, then, turn to the Protestant churches. And first we will notice the Episcopal. Does this church recognize equality among her members? We reply, No! She has distinct and separate grades; and not only is

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the ministry above the laity, but there are three grades in the ministry: deacons, priests and bishops. In England, the bishops of this church, by virtue of their office, are clothed with temporal power. They are peers of the realm — that is, nobles of the land. The archbishop of Canterbury has the appointment of all the bishops, and is the highest nobleman of England. The archbishops hold authority over all the bishops. The bishops hold authority over all the churches, and inferior clergy, in their respective dioceses. They appoint ministers to their charges; they suspend, degrade, and excommunicate them. In America there are no archbishops. But the bishops, though possessing no civil power, have the same ecclesiastical power as those in England. The church has no voice in her government. In the Triennial Convention, the bishops form a separate house distinct and superior to the clergy and laity. The appropriate language of the bishops in England would be: “One is our Master, the archbishop, and all we are lords;” while both in England and America there is no recognition of the equality taught by Christ.

But let us look again at the Presbyterian church. Does equality reign here? Do all her members stand on the broad even platform of the Gospel? Can they say, “One is our Master, even Christ?” Let them answer for themselves. Both in their Confession of Faith and Form of Government, we find that the government rests not in the hands of the church, but in the session, presbytery, synod and General Assembly. These bodies attend to all the business of the church. An individual church has no power to act in the reception of members, the exclusion of members, the calling or dismissing of a pastor, or any other act of government which Christ has committed to his church. Other masters are recognized besides him.

The whole tendency of Presbyterian church government is to exalt the ministry in their authority above the church. Indeed, the ministry belong to a different order. They do not belong to the church as the other members do; they belong to the Presbytery. The church can not discipline a minister; neither can the session try him; but the presbytery must do it. Lest these assertions should startle any who have never examined the subject, permit me to give a few quotations from printed documents. The Westminster Confession says: —“The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his church, has therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers. To these officers, the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power, respectively, to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the word and censures, and to open it onto penitent sinners as occasion shall require.”[1] These officers we are told, by the Form of Government, are “Bishops or pastors, ruling elders and deacons.” The same Form of Government gives us the character of all the different bodies composed by these officers, for the government of the church. “The church session consists of the pastor or pastors, and ruling elders of a particular congregation;” and “it is expedient, at every meeting of the session, that there be a presiding minister. When, therefore, a church is without a pastor, the moderator of the session shall be either the minister appointed by the presbytery for that purpose, or one invited by the session.” Again, we are told that among other things “it is the duty of the session to receive members into the church, or exclude from the church those who deserve it, and to appoint delegates to the higher judicatories of the church.”[2] The church cannot act in receiving her own members. The session attends to this for her. A majority of the members of the church might be opposed to the reception of an individual, but if the session receive him, he is admitted. On the other hand, a person may fall under the censure of the session, and, though all the church beside may esteem him a Christian, the session has power to exclude and excommunicate him. Is this equality? This is more fully exhibited in the Directory for Worship. We are told that when baptized children “come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper. The years of discretion in young Christians cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the prudence of the eldership. The officers of the church are the judges of the qualifications of those to be admitted to sealing ordinances; and of the time when it is proper to admit young Christians to them.”[3] It is here implied that the church, that is, the inferior members of it, as distinct from the session, is not possessed of sufficient prudence to judge of the qualifications of those who are to be admitted to the Lord's table with them.

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But further, the Presbytery has power over the session and the church. By this body the rights of the church to call and dismiss a pastor are taken away. When a Presbyterian church calls a pastor, the call is not made to him, but to the Presbytery. “The call shall be presented to the Presbytery under whose care the person called shall be; that, if the Presbytery think it expedient to present the call to him, it may be accordingly presented; and no minister or candidate shall receive a call, but through the hands of a Presbytery.”[4] So, also, the minister himself is subject, not to the church, but to the Presbytery. He can not move without the permission of this body. “No pastor shall be translated from one church to another, nor shall he receive any call for that purpose, but by the permission of the Presbytery.” “The Presbytery, on the whole view of the case, shall either continue him in his former charge, or translate him, as they shall deem most for the peace and edification of the church.”[5] It is here implied that the Presbytery is more competent to judge of the affairs of a church, and to decide what is for its good, than the church itself. The church may think it best for their pastor to remove from them; but the Presbytery may think it best for him to stay; the only alternative the church has, is to starve him out, and this they cannot do, so long as they have real estate enough to pay his salary. This system is degrading to freemen, and insulting to Christianity!

Next to the Presbytery is the Synod, and then the General Assembly. The Session must submit its doings to the Presbytery, the Presbytery to the Synod, and the Synod to the General Assembly. Is this equality?

The Dutch Reformed church is governed in a manner similar to the Presbyterian.

Let us turn our attention for a moment to the Methodist Episcopal church. Shall we find equality here? No; for its very name shows that its government is prelatical. I need not enlarge on this point; for no one, surely, will pretend that there is equality in this church. Its founder expressly disavows any idea of it. He says, in a letter to John Mason, dated Jan. 13, 1790, “As long as I live the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists. We are no republicans, and never intend to be. It would be better for those who are so minded to go quietly away.” There are more grades in the Methodist Episcopal church than in any other Protestant community; and any one who will read the “Discipline,” will be convinced of it. A private member in the church has no voice whatever in the government. Private members are amenable to the class—leader — the class—leader to the preacher — the preacher to the presiding elder — the presiding elder to the bishop. Is this equality? The people have no voice in electing or dismissing their preacher, but must take whoever is sent, and let him go at the expiration of three years. The preacher has no choice of his field of labor. He must go just where the bishop may please to send him. The church does not receive or expel either her ministers or members. The circuit preacher has power to expel private members — the quarterly conference to expel local preachers, deacons and elders — the yearly conference to expel travelling preachers — the general conference to expel bishops. Is this equality? Read the following question and answer in the Methodist Discipline, in reference to the ordination of an elder, and then read the text.

“Will you reverently obey your chief ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you; following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourself to their godly judgments?”

“I will do so, the Lord being my helper.”[6]

Chief ministers! chief ministers! who are they? “One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” Surely, the language of Christ, and the language of the Discipline are very dissimilar. These churches, whose forms of government I have reviewed, compose the great majority of the professedly christian world. It is evident, then, that such equality as the text teaches does not generally exist.

II. I proceed to show, in the second place, that Baptists seek to establish such equality. The principles of church government in the Baptist denomination are expressed in the text: “One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.” There is no opportunity for the assumption of authority by a few, if it were desired.

LECTURE VII. THE FOURTH FEATURE OF THE REFORM AT WHICH BAPTISTS AIM — THE ESTABLISHMENT

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All meet on the broad, even platform of equality. The rich and the poor, the minister, deacons, and people, are all brethren. The pastor is no more, the poorest member is no less, than one of the brethren. Each church, in its collective capacity, transacts its own business, exercises its own discipline, and receives and excludes its own members, subject only to the authority of Christ, and governed only by his Word. On all questions, every member of the church has an equal right to speak and to vote. There is no authority superior to the church, to reverse its decisions, or to call it to account. The pastor, while he has no superior authority, has equal rights with the rest of his brethren. If called to another field of labor, he is at liberty to go without asking leave of a bishop, presbytery, or council. He is perfectly free to act in accordance with his own views of duty and his own convictions of right.

In a Baptist church there is perfect equality. It could not be otherwise. They recognize the church as a voluntary organization, into which persons enter by their own choice, and whose privileges and benefits all have an equal right to share. Christ has nowhere delegated his authority to a body of arrogant ministers, or prelatical bishops, or blasphemous popes; and Christians have no right to recognize and uphold the assumption of authority by them. It is not a matter of indifference. To support the assumptions of men, who have arrogated to themselves authority which belongs only to Christ, is to engage with them in rebellion against the one only Master; and where this is done knowingly, such cannot be held guiltless. In laboring, then, to advance Baptist sentiments, we aim to exalt Christ as the supreme and only Lawgiver and Ruler in Zion, in the place of presbyters, and bishops, and councils, and popes, who have usurped his throne.

But, some suppose that every church has a right to make its own laws, and to alter these laws to suit times, and circumstances, and places. Now, if the church was a merely human organization, this might be correct reasoning. But all churches claim to be of divine origin, and to have divine authority for their constitution and government. It is evident, therefore, that all cannot be right, for God cannot sanction contradictions. Further, if every church has a right to establish its own form of government, then the Romish church has an equal right with any Protestant church to invent and establish one, and no Protestant who takes this ground can consistently say a word against the Papal hierarchy. And if all are right, then right and wrong are no longer opposites. But all are not right. Christ has taught, in his Word, that the highest authority on earth is the church. Hence, in giving his apostles directions how to proceed in cases of offence, he designates the church as the supreme and final umpire. "Tell it to the church; and if he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican." Tell it to the church; not to the session, or presbytery, or synod, or general assembly, or council, or conference, or bishop, or cardinal, or pope, but to the church; and if he neglect to hear the church — what then? appeal? No; there is no higher authority to appeal to; for "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." The creation of other tribunals is the result of the arrogance of men who love to "lord it over God's heritage;" and the support of them is owing mainly to the influence of just such men, and their willing dupes. Baptists are willing to be "all brethren;" the ministry have no desire to be exalted to a position of rivalry to the Master in his church.

In order more forcibly to exhibit the contrast between Baptists and the other most prominent sects, let us suppose Christ to come again upon earth, and visit the places of worship in New York city and preach from this text. See him enter St. Patrick's cathedral. The Cardinal receives him very graciously, elated with the idea that the claim of Rome to be THE church is thus sanctioned by the Saviour, and he invites him to preach. He announces this text, and preaches as he did upon the plains of Judea: "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them; but so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all. Be not ye called rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." The Cardinal grows uneasy; he reminds the Preacher of the Pope, the Cardinals, the Archbishops, the Bishops, the Father Confessors, the Priests; but the Divine Teacher asserts that these are distinctions which men have made, and reiterates the doctrine of the text — universal equality among his disciples. The Cardinal denounces the Saviour as a heretic, and he is thrust out. He then wends his way through our great thoroughfare to Trinity Church. Here he is cordially received, for the Episcopal also claims

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to be THE Church, and here he repeats the sermon. But he is reminded of the Archbishops, the Bishops, the Triennial Convention, the Priests, the Deacons. He pronounces these grades all contrary to his teaching. The Bishop intimates that he is probably a fanatical dissenter, and he is politely handed to the door. He visits in succession a Presbyterian and a Methodist congregation with the same sermon; in the former he is reminded of the Session, Presbytery, Synod, General Assembly; in the latter, he is cautioned about the “chief ministers;” and the Class—leader, Steward, Preacher, Presiding Elder, Bishop, with their respective powers, are set before him; and for simply reiterating his own teachings, he is treated as a disturber of the peace, and put out of both places. See him now seek a Baptist pulpit. His sermon is just in accordance with their practice. There is nothing among them with which it comes in contact; no grades — none to exercise lordship or authority over them: “for one is their Master, even Christ, and all they are brethren.” A sincere “Amen,” is the response from every heart, and the world's Redeemer, banished from the Romish and Protestant assemblies, finds a refuge and a home in every Baptist church!

[1] Westminster Confession, chap. xxx. sec. 1, 2. Is it not surprising that a church claiming to be so orthodox as the Presbyterian, should retain in its Confession of Faith, a section tending so directly to bolster up the Romish doctrine of priestly absolution? Suppose an honest inquirer after truth in the Romish church should meet this, in his researches; would he not begin to think, and with good reason, that Presbyterianism and Romanism differ only in name?

[2] Form of Government, sections 1, 4, 6.

[3] Directory for Worship, chap. 9, sec. 1, 2.

[4] Form of Government, chap. xv. sec. 9

[5] Form of Government,, chap. xvi. sec. 1.

[6] Discipline, part II. chap. iii. sec. 2.

LECTURE VIII. THE FIFTH FEATURE OF THE REFORM AT WHICH BAPTISTS AIM — THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CORRECT PRINCIPLE OF BIBLICAL TRANSLATION.

“And the Lord answered me and said, Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.” — HAB. 2:2.

GOD's solicitude for man's well-being and eternal salvation is truly wonderful. Having made a revelation of his will, he is anxious that no ambiguity or indefiniteness should obscure his commands from his erring creatures. He wishes to afford to ruined man all the advantages possible, in order that he may be saved from the fearful consequences of his sin and guilt. Hence, he has not involved his duty in mist and uncertainty, but, on the contrary, he has revealed plainly all his moral requirements and positive institutions. In addition to this, he has expressly commanded those to whom is committed the great work of transcribing his will for others, to do it so plainly, that every duty may be recognized with such ease, “that he may run that readeth it.” But alas! alas! the express command of Jehovah has been violated, and his benevolent designs toward our race in a measure frustrated, by the efforts of those with whom the advancement of sect, and the propagation of human dogmas, is of more importance than the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

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Translators have not scrupled to bow to the mandate of kings, the dictation of councils, the restrictions of Bible Society boards, and the promptings of sectarian prejudices, until the bare enunciation of the principle contained in the text, has come to be denounced as sectarianism; and faithful obedience to the plain requirements of Jehovah in this respect, is assailed as a close and narrow bigotry. This state of things calls loudly for reform. I present, then, as the Fifth Feature of the reform at which Baptists aim,

The Establishment of the Correct Principle of Biblical Translation.

In presenting this theme, let us inquire,

I. What is the Correct Principle on, which Translations of the Holy Scriptures should be made.? To this I reply, that they should be conformed, as nearly as possible, to the inspired originals. Let it be remembered, that the Bible which we possess is a translation. The words of our English version are invested with Divine authority, only so far as they express just what the original expresses. I present this thought because there is, in the minds of many, a superstitious reverence for the words and phrases of our English version. This being a translation, partakes more or less of the imperfections of the translators; and, in every instance where the original is not clearly and fully translated, it is the word of man, and not the Word of God. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. In translating, therefore, into English, or Burmese, or French, or German, or Bengali, or any other language, it is evident to any one, that the Hebrew and the Greek should be the standard to which these translations should be conformed.

It is further evident, that every word, that is capable of being translated, should be rendered into any other language so as to express just what the original did to those to whom it was given. There must be no transfer of a Hebrew or Greek word into English or Burmese, for such a word would be unintelligible to the mere English or Burmese reader; and he must wait till some one, who understands these languages, shall come and explain to him the meaning of such words. Let me illustrate: —

Suppose an aged father, a Frenchman, writes a letter of instructions to his children and grandchildren, just as the former are about to emigrate to the United States. The letter is written in the French language, and is readily understood by the children. But the grandchildren grow up in ignorance of the French language, though they understand the English very well. Their parents die and leave the letter in their possession. In order to understand it, they must have it translated. Now suppose the person employed to translate, leaves here and there a word in French — untranslated. Those words would be unintelligible to them. They would be transferred, not translated. In order to be a good translation, the letter must express in English, just what the original expressed in French. So with the Scriptures; the correct principle of translating them is to make them speak to all the nations just what they speak to those who had them from the hand of God — just what the originals express.

That this principle is correct, is evident, also, from the fact that all Protestants, in discussions, appeal not to the translations that have been made, but to the original. They regard the original only as the standard. In the Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith we find the following: — “The Old Testament in Hebrew, (which was the native language of the people of God of old,) and the New Testament in Greek, (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations,) being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them.”[1] And this is the practice of all Protestants. It is evident, then, that all translations should be made to conform to the original, which is the standard of appeal. But I observe,

II. This Principle has been Generally Abandoned. There is no Bible Society, supported by Pedobaptists, that is pledged to the faithful translation of the Word of God from the inspired originals. In England and America the English version, which is acknowledged to have many defects, is made the standard, instead of

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the original. Nor is this all. Even this is not translated fully into the heathen tongues — some words are transferred, not translated. They are perfectly incomprehensible to those who read them until some one comes and explains them, and he may explain them just to suit his own views.

The British and Foreign Bible Society of England, composed of all evangelical denominations, passed a resolution, on the 1st July, 1883, virtually declining aid to translators of the Bible in foreign languages, unless “the Greek terms relating to baptism be rendered, either according to the principles adopted by the translators of the authorized English version, by a word derived from the original, or by such terms as may be considered unobjectionable by the other denominations of Christians composing the Bible Society.”

It had been the practice of the missionaries to translate these words, as well as all others. Now you perceive the resolution does not charge them with unfaithful translation, neither does it charge them to faithfully render the words into the language of the heathen; but it requires them to adopt the principle of the English translators, which was to transfer and not translate certain words, which, if translated, would not yield that support to infant baptism which the transfer of them does.

The American Bible Society, composed of all evangelical denominations, in February, 1836, passed the following preamble and resolution: — “As the managers are now called to aid extensively in circulating the sacred Scriptures in languages other than the English, they deem it their duty in conforming with the obvious spirit of their compact, to adopt the following resolution as the rule of their conduct in making appropriations for the circulation of the Scriptures in all foreign tongues:

“Resolved, That in appropriating money for the translating, printing or distributing the Sacred Scriptures in foreign languages, the managers feel at liberty to encourage only such versions as conform, in the principles of their translations, to the common English version; at least so far, as that all the religious denominations represented in this Society can consistently use and circulate said versions to their several schools and communities.”[2]

Here, again, you perceive there is an abandonment of the correct principle. That principle requires a faithful translation from the original. But the resolution just quoted requires that the English version, which, as I have before stated, is acknowledged to contain errors of translation, be made the standard. And even this is to be conformed to, only so far as that “all the denominations represented in the Society” can consistently use the versions made from it. These two societies represent pretty nearly the entire Protestant world in England and America. Now any one will perceive, that while such resolutions were in force, no missionary, who was governed by them, could attempt to faithfully translate from the original into the languages of the heathen. Consequently if a word occurred in the Greek which, if translated, would not suit all denominations, it must be transferred, and then the heathen could not understand it till it was explained by a missionary, and he might explain it just to suit his own creed. Instead, then, of having God's Word, which they would have, if the original was translated, they have in every instance, only the word of man.

Let me, before I leave this division of my subject, exhibit the evils of this course. No principle that is correct can be violated without evil results. We have seen that the correct principle of Biblical translation is violated by all Pedobaptist organizations; we may therefore look for evil as its legitimate fruit. The principle on which they act is, that it is right to make such versions, and such only, as shall teach Pedobaptist sentiments. Because Baptists refused to transfer Greek words into the heathen tongues, and insisted on translating them, they were thrust out. But, in order to make the Bible teach pedobaptism, it must be mutilated. Let us now look at the fruits of this in heathen lands. The first missionaries, and the first Bible translators, were Baptists. Hence, the first versions made in heathen tongues were faithful translations. After these translations had been circulated, the pedobaptist missionaries began to circulate their versions, in which words relating to baptism, and other words, were transferred. The heathen convert, when he read the translated word, could understand it, and knew what to do. But when he read the transferred word, he could not understand it; he must wait till he could

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find a teacher to tell him what it meant. If he met a Baptist missionary, he would tell him that the word meant to immerse. Then he would ask, "Why does it not read so?" What could the missionary say? He would have to say, "The translator who produced that version was bound by his Bible Society to put that word in." And if pressed for a reason for this, he must tell him of all the differences and disputes among Christians at home.

But suppose he meets a Pedobaptist. He tells him it means to pour, or it means to sprinkle. But the convert would ask him, "Why not put it so? we have words in our language which mean to pour or sprinkle." What would he say? He must give a reason; and he could assign no reason which would not awaken the suspicion of the converted pagan.

Take another case. A Baptist mission has been established; all has been harmonious. A transfer version falls into the hands of the people, and at once all is confusion and distrust, and the cause of Christ is arrested. I present these cases, because it has generally been represented, by Pedobaptists, that the Baptists have introduced controversy among the heathen nations on this subject; whereas, just the reverse of this is the case. It could not be otherwise; for the Baptists were the first to occupy heathen ground, and they had translated the Scriptures into many languages before a Pedobaptist transfer version was made. On these Pedobaptists rests the guilt, not only of mutilating God's Word, but, through this means, of reviving, on heathen shores, those dissensions which have distracted and retarded the cause of the Redeemer at home. Again, another evil of this course is, that it leads to the circulation of versions that teach known and soul-destroying errors. It will be perceived that the rule governing Pedobaptists is one of expediency. They do not require that the Word of God be faithfully translated, but that it be made to suit the majority. All the translator has to do is, to ascertain what is expedient. It may be expedient to transfer other words, and the rule adopted does not prevent him from doing it. This word may refer to faith, or something else that is fundamental, and the withholding of which may peril the soul. But I need not dwell on what might be; I will simply show what is done. The Spanish Testament employs the words, "Hacer penitencia," as the translation of the Greek word *metanoew*, to express the duty of repentance as enjoined in the original. But these words signify "to do penance," and are thus understood by the Spaniards themselves. When they wish to express our idea of repentance, they use the word "arrepentirse." Yet this version is circulated and sustained by the American Bible Society. But how did they come to translate it so? Simply by abandoning the correct principle of Biblical translation. Instead of taking the Hebrew and the Greek as the standard, they took the Latin Vulgate, which is a Roman Catholic version, and translated from that; and, as expediency was their rule, they found it expedient to suit the Catholics; and therefore the Pope permits it to be used, while he is mortally opposed to Protestant versions of the Holy Scriptures; and thus the money of Protestants is taken to promote Romanism. Let me here state another fact, that should make the ears of every Pedobaptist tingle with shame. While the American Bible Society was circulating this Catholic version, with money contributed by Protestants, they refused to aid, as they had been doing, the Baptists, in faithfully translating the Word of God, though they were generous contributors to their funds.

In the same Spanish version, printed and circulated by the American Bible Society, Heb. xi. 21, reads thus: "By faith, Jacob, about to die, blessed each one of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped the top of his staff." The idea conveyed to the mind of a Roman Catholic by this verse is the worship of an image on the top of his staff; and thus absolute idolatry is sanctioned and propagated by the Society which, with holy horror, withdraws its aid from Baptist missionaries, because they would translate all the Word of God, the words relating to baptism not excepted.

But we push our reasoning a little further. Suppose the Pedobaptists only claim the right to transfer the words relating to baptism. If they have a right to do this, then any denomination has a right to transfer those words, which, if translated, would be fatal to its peculiar views. The Roman Catholic may transfer the Greek word *metanoew* and have Luke 13:3 read, "Except ye *metanoew*, ye shall all likewise perish;" and the priest can explain it to "do penance;" and the Pope might contribute to the support of a Bible Society that would agree to transfer every word that does not suit him when translated. The Unitarian may transfer *Qeos*, and have John

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1:1 read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was theos;" and the minister can explain it to mean "a superior, intelligent creature." The Universalist may transfer aionion, teleutaw, etc., and have Matthew 25:26 read, "These shall go away into aionion punishment;" and the minister can explain it to mean "the grave!" Or they can have Mark 9:44 read, "Where their worm teleuteth not, and the fire is not sbennutai." Then the preacher can explain it to mean, "where their worm 'troubleth' not and the fire is not 'hurtful.'"

Now this would be as justifiable, as for the Pedobaptist to transfer baptizw, and then explain it to suit his own views. And further, if Pedobaptists have a right to withhold a part of God's Word, because a part is opposed to their teachings, then Rome has a right to withhold all, because all is opposed to her teachings; and again Protestantism is found bolstering up Popery. I proceed to show,

III. The Baptists aim to Restore and Establish the Principle of the Text. Baptists only desire to know and to teach God's commands — and they desire that all others may know them. They aim, therefore, in giving the Bible to the world, to follow the Divine requirement given in the text: "Write the vision and make it plain, that he may run that readeth it." In all their efforts to spread the Gospel, they have endeavored faithfully to translate the Word of God, from the original, into the language of the people; seeking to make it so plain, that if a copy of their translation should fall into the hands of a person who has no living teacher near him, he could ascertain from it all the commands of God. The instructions given to their missionaries by the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, are as follows: —

"Resolved, That the Board feel it to be their duty to adopt all prudent measures to give to the heathen the pure Word of God in their own language, and to furnish their missionaries with all the means in their power to make their translations as exact a representation of the mind of the Holy Spirit as possible.

"Resolved, That all the missionaries of the Board who are, or who shall be, engaged in translating the Scriptures, be instructed to endeavor, by earnest prayer and diligent study, to ascertain the precise meaning of the original text, to express that meaning as exactly as the nature of the languages into which they shall translate the Bible will permit, and to transfer no words which are capable of being literally translated"

What a contrast does this present to the resolutions adopted by the Pedobaptists! To this principle of faithful translation, the Baptists have always strenuously adhered. Efforts have been made to induce their missionaries to abandon it, but these have been in vain. When their versions have been translated, and ready for the press, money has been offered to print, if they would conceal a part of God's Word, by transferring certain words. On the 17th of April, 1836, at a meeting of the managers of the American Bible Society, the sum of \$5,000 was appropriated to the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, to promote the circulation of the Scriptures in foreign tongues, which "money would be paid over, if our foreign versions were conformed, in the principles of their translation, to the common English version;" that is, transfer, and not translate, the words relating to baptism. The grant was conscientiously refused. Efforts of a similar kind were made by the British and Foreign Bible Society to procure the transfer of the words in the Bengali version. But all was in vain; the Baptists loved the correct principle too well to abandon it for the hope of a mere temporary advantage, which would, in the end, paralyze their efforts in the conflict with error. If these versions of the Baptists had been proved unfaithful, it would have been different; there would then have been some show of reason in the course pursued by the Pedobaptists. This, however, was not the case; their great defect was, that they were not so mutilated as to make it possible for Pedobaptists to teach their views to the heathen. Or, if Baptists had mutilated God's Word to make it teach their own sentiments, it would have been different. But they were never guilty of this, nor have they even been charged with it. How then did the Pedobaptists seek to justify themselves? Why, they raised the cry that they were sectarian versions; which, when examined, simply means, that the faithful translation of God's Word teaches just what Baptists practice, and condemns the practice of Pedobaptists.

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But, neither smiles nor frowns, threats nor bribes, flattery nor slander, can move us from our attachment to God's Word, and our obedience to his requirement to give his will, faithfully translated, to all the nations of the earth. Our conflict with error may be long, but we have no doubts as to the final issue. God has honored, and will honor, those that honor him; and in no way can we honor him more highly than in a firm and constant adherence to faithful translations of his Holy Word.

From what I have submitted, it will be perceived that sprinkling, and infant baptism, have led to this desire for the mutilation of God's Word; and that those who adhere to this perversion of God's ordinance, are giving their sanction to the abandonment of the correct principle of Biblical translation. Their example, their influence, and their money, go to support these mutilated versions. Further, I remark, that the Pedobaptist rule of nontranslation of certain words, like their appeal to tradition, paralyzes their power to combat Humanism. How can they condemn the Popish practice of denying the Bible to the people, when they adopt the very principle of Popery? The Roman Catholic priest can say: "We only keep back what is opposed to our practice, and you, Pedobaptists do the same." What could a Protestant Pedobaptist translator say to this?

Surely, this question about baptism is not so insignificant, seeing it involves such great consequences! If the magnitude of a thing is to be judged of by its results, it is certain that the question of baptism is one of vast importance. As such, I urge the investigation of it upon every honest man. At all events, from the printed resolutions which I have quoted, all must perceive that the correct principle of Biblical translation is with the Baptists.

In concluding this lecture, I invite your attention to one or two inferences from the text: — "Write this vision and make it plain, that he may run that readeth it." I infer, that all we are to believe and practice is made plain in the Word of God, unless obscured in the translation. Infant baptism, therefore, either was never commanded by Jehovah, or else it has been obscured in the translation of his Word; for none, with the teaching of the Bible alone would ever discover it to be their duty to have children baptized. Those, therefore, who practice infant baptism, ought strenuously to contend for a faithful translation, that the obscurity which conceals this duty from the common reader may be removed. But I find that Pedobaptists oppose faithful translations; I therefore conclude that God never commanded infant baptism.

I infer, again, that we are to follow that which is plainly taught in the Bible, rather than what is doubtful. The Romanist may tell me that I ought to pray to the Virgin Mary, and seek the intercession of the saints; but while I read the plain declaration of God's Word, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," I will follow the Bible, and let the Roman Catholic go. The Unitarian may tell me, that Christ is not God; but while I read the plain declaration of God's Word, "I and my Father are one," "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," I will follow the Bible, and let the Unitarian go. The Universalist may tell me that there will be no future punishment; but while I read the plain declaration of God's Word, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment," I will follow the Bible, and let the Universalist go. So, too, the Pedobaptist may tell me that infants ought to be baptized; but while I read the plain declaration, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved," "Repent, and be baptized every one of you," I will follow the Bible and let the Pedobaptist go. Our duty is plain; for God has said, "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it."

[1] Westminster Confession, chap. i. sec. 8.

[2] These resolutions still govern the Society in its appropriations.

LECTURE IX. THE SIXTH FEATURE OF THE REFORM AT WHICH BAPTISTS AIM — THE RESTORATION OF THE ORDER OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCHES.

“Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized. . . And the Lord added to the church, daily, such as should be saved.” — Acts 2:41,47.

ALL professed Christians, who admit that the Scriptures contain a model for church organization, strenuously maintain that the denomination with which they are connected, is formed after the Scriptural pattern. This is true alike of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and all others. But it is abundantly evident, that while these denominations are so very dissimilar, they cannot all resemble one Scriptural model. It is further evident, that some who make pretensions to be “THE CHURCH,” are not satisfied to rest their claim to that title, simply on a comparison of their organization with the new Testament pattern of a Gospel church, but very gladly seek to bring in evidence from other quarters, by which they hope to support their cause. The Fathers, Tradition, Expediency, are all pressed into their service, to supply the lack of evidence afforded in Scripture; or, as is sometimes the case, to nullify and render powerless its direct testimony against them. All this I say, is done by those who profess to find, in the New Testament alone, a warrant for their ecclesiastical systems and organizations. They do not seem to perceive, that the very course which they adopt to support their claims, affords most conclusive evidence that they are false and vain.

But while some appeal to Tradition, and others to expediency, it is the glory of the Baptists that they act on the principle of the sufficiency of the Bible in testing this, as well as all other questions relating to religion. Though Jewish antiquity, and the Fathers, yield as much or more support to their distinctive features, as to those who are most clamorous in demanding submission to them, still they prefer to appeal to “the law and to the testimony.” I announce, as the Sixth Feature of the reform at which Baptists aim,

The Restoration of the Order of the Primitive Churches.

It is certain that primitive church order has been generally abandoned, from the fact that so many different organizations exist, each claiming to be the gospel church. Now, it is evident that not more than one of these dissimilar organizations can be constructed after the Scripture model. All that is necessary in testing their claims is, to compare them with the New Testament description of a gospel church. And any body of Christians that is unwilling to be brought to this test must of course give up this claim. Let us inquire,

I. What was the strict Order of the Primitive Churches.? We can only obtain satisfactory information on this point from the Word of God. The text and its connection present to us the circumstances under which the first gospel church was formed. From this it will be perceived, that first, the gospel was preached, then repentance and baptism were urged upon the hearers; “then they that gladly received the Word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved.”

1. The Primitive Churches were composed only of professed believers. Those who “gladly received the word.” In all the epistles to the churches it will be seen that the members composing them are addressed as “believers,” “saints,” “chosen ones,” “partakers of like precious faith” with the apostles; and even where their sins are spoken of, they are alluded to as “brethren,” who had departed from the faith. Dr. Dwight says, “There is but one character given in the New Testament to those who were church members, and that is the character of Christians. There is no mixture of any other character.”

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2. The Primitive churches were composed only of baptized believers. By baptized, I mean immersed believers. "They that gladly received his word were immereed." This is the translation — in the common version we have only a transfer. Let me, on this point, give you a few authorities for this translation, as there are some who deny its correctness — none, however, of any eminence as scholars. The learned Bossuet says: "Baptism was performed by plunging. In fine, we read not in Scripture that baptism was otherwise administered; and we are able to make it appear, that for thirteen hundred years baptism was thus administered throughout the whole church, as far as possible." Dr. Doddridge says: "'Buried with him by baptism.' It seems the part of candor to confess that here is an allusion to the manner of baptizing by immersion, which was the primitive mode." John Wesley says: "'Buried with him,' alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion." Whitby, author of a Commentary on the New Testament and more than forty other learned works, says: "It being so expressly declared here, that we are buried with Christ in baptism, by being buried under water, and the argument to oblige us to a conformity to his death, by dying to sin, being taken from hence; and this immersion being observed by all Christians for thirteen centuries, and the change of it into sprinkling without any allowance from the Author of this institution, being that which the Romanist still urges to justify his refusal of the cup to the laity; it were to be wished that this custom might be again of general use." Dr. Chalmers says: "The original meaning of the word baptism is immersion; and we doubt not that the general style of administration in the apostles' days was by an actual submerging of the whole body under water." Archbishop Tillotson says: "Anciently those who were baptized were immersed and buried in water, to represent their death to sin; and then did rise up out of the water to signify their entrance upon a new life."

I might go on and fill a volume with similar quotations, from every scholar of any note who has ever written upon the subject. In addition to this, every lexicon of note gives it a meaning, which signifies either an immersion into an element, or a complete overwhelming with it.

It is evident, also, from the narration of circumstances connected with baptism in the New Testament, that immersion was the primitive mode. Christ, when he was baptized, came up out of the water. When Philip baptized the eunuch, he went down into the water with him, in order to do it. The apostle Paul, in alluding to baptism, twice calls it a burial, and once a burial and resurrection. All who became members of the primitive churches were admitted by immersion; and as none were admitted but believers, none but believers were immersed.

3. In the Primitive Churches none were admitted to the Lord's table but those who were immersed. Though they were, at the time of their conversion, members of the Jewish nation, or, as a Pedobaptist would say, of the Jewish church, and had been circumcised in their infancy, still they must be immersed before becoming members, or enjoying the privileges of a Christian church. Yea, even though they had been proselytes to the Jewish religion, and were circumcised after they arrived at maturity, they must still be immersed, when they professed faith in Christ, before they could sit down at the Lord's table. It is admitted by all, to have been the practice of the primitive churches, to receive none but the baptized to the Lord's table.

4. The primitive churches were independent in their government. All the members were on an equality in each church, and each church was on the same equality with every other church. There were no bishops, in the sense in which that term is used by Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Methodists. There were no church sessions, presbyteries, assemblies, synods, or conferences. Advisory councils, having no power to legislate, were sometimes called to give counsel in difficult matters. But individual churches possessed supreme authority to administer discipline, and transact their own business. The church was the highest court of appeal.

II. Pedobaptists have universally departed from the strict Order of the Primitive Churches. The first Pedobaptist church was the Church of Rome. I presume I need not stop here to show that the Romish church does not conform to the Scripture model. All Protestants will affirm that she does not; and any one who will read the Bible will be convinced of it. Let me remind them, however, that in nothing is her dissimilarity to gospel churches more palpably manifest than in her infant baptism; and in this thing all Pedobaptists are

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trading in her path, while not one of them is conformed to the New Testament pattern. For,

1. They are not composed of the same materials. They number among their members others than professed believers. Every Pedobaptist church holds that the children of believers, when they are baptized, are members of the church, and form a part of it. I substantiated this assertion by numerous quotations from printed documents, in my lecture on the "Spirituality of Christ's Kingdom." I need not, therefore, repeat them here. But I remark, in addition to this, that conversion is not necessarily a qualification for membership in most Pedobaptist churches.

With Episcopalians, admission to full church privileges is granted to those who have been confirmed. The requirements for this service are thus stated in their Book of Common Prayer: — "The Church hath thought good to order, that none shall be confirmed but such as can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and can also answer to such other questions as in the Short Catechism are contained." The conditions of admission being thus made, irrespective of personal character, it cannot be expected that the Episcopal church will bear a comparison with that of primitive times. Indeed, it will be perceived that all that is needed is a good memory, in order to be confirmed as a member of that church.

The Presbyterians acknowledge in their standard, that "the visible church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children." They further say, "Children born within the pale of the visible church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the church, and are to be taught to read and repeat the Catechism the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's supper." [1] Now, in all this there is nothing said about regeneration, repentance, or faith. The late Dr. Chalmers, a distinguished Presbyterian minister, maintained that it was "wrong to say that none but the pious should be admitted to partake of the sacraments," while, for the decent regulation of the church, "it is well that the visibly profane or profligate are kept away." As to the duty of a minister to the "great majority of our species," who are "neither of the profligate or the pious," his business is, "not to exclude them, but to warn them." A church formed on such principles as these certainly cannot claim to be identical with the primitive churches.

In the Methodist body, it is held that a religious society is "a company of men, having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in the Lord, that they may help each other to work out their salvation." "There is one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies — a desire to flee the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." It is well known that persons who give no evidence of conversion are often allowed, and even urged, to become "class members;" and these "seekers," as they are termed, are admitted to the Lord's table. It is not necessary according to the Discipline, that a man should give evidence of conversion. It is certainly not impossible for unconverted men to fulfil a term of probation. And thus, in almost every Pedobaptist church it may be seen, that conversion is not absolutely insisted on as a condition of membership on the part of adult applicants.

But what shall we say of their infant membership.? We frequently hear of the "children of the covenant," and the "children of the church," from Pedobaptist pulpits, but do we hear any thing of this kind in the New Testament? Do we find unconverted men addressed as members of the church in primitive times, or young persons urged to fulfil baptismal vows, made for them by their parents, when they were unconscious infants? No, no! We see parents urged to bring their children up in "the nurture and admonition of the lord," but we nowhere find this duty enforced by any allusion to vows made at the dedication of their children in baptism.

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Again, those who united with the primitive churches came into them voluntarily. It was not necessary to look about, and see who were “free from scandal,” and tell them that it was “their duty and privilege to come to the Lord’s table;” but, constrained by the love of Jesus Christ, they voluntarily sought to profess his sacred name. “Here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized:” “If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest.”

2. Pedobaptists do not receive their members by the same initiatory rite that the primitive churches did. The primitive churches received their members by immersion. This was the act by which they publicly “put on Christ” before the world. A great many Pedobaptist authors acknowledge that the primitive saints were immersed, and that immersion is the proper signification of the terms which are used to designate the ordinance. In addition to those already quoted, I remark that Calvin says: “Here we perceive how baptism was administered among the ancients; for they immersed the whole body in water.” Bishop Taylor says: “The custom of the ancient churches was not sprinkling, but immersion,” Now, we know that Pedobaptist churches receive the majority of their members, not by immersion, but by sprinkling. Some may be immersed, but it is only after every argument to dissuade them from it has failed. The practice of these churches is sprinkling, the exceptions are immersion. In the primitive churches there was “one Lord, one faith, one baptism;” and that was immersion. Here, then, is a striking dissimilarity between all Pedobaptist churches and the primitive churches. The latter were composed of immersed believers. The former are composed of a mixed multitude of believers and unbelievers, sprinkled, poured, and immersed. The language addressed to the primitive churches cannot be addressed to them. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Have infants put on Christ? “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.” Can any Pedobaptist minister address his church thus? “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through faith of the operation of God.” Can this language be appropriately addressed to a Pedobaptist church? No; so far from it, many Pedobaptists do not like to read it in their Bibles. But still further; a Pedobaptist preacher cannot stand up, in a Pedobaptist community, and address unconverted men as the primitive disciples did: “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you.” They have been baptized, as they call it, already. From all this it is evident that Pedobaptist churches are very dissimilar to the churches in the times of the apostles, and to the teachings of the New Testament.

3. There is a wide dissimilarity between Pedobaptist churches and the primitive churches, in reference to the Lord’s Supper. In the primitive churches, all who were baptized, and members of the church, were admitted to the Lord’s table. None, who were considered proper subjects of baptism, and who had received that rite, were excluded from the communion. But Pedobaptists contend that infants are proper subjects, and that sprinkling is the proper mode. Every infant who is sprinkled, then, according to their view, is properly baptized, and is a member in the visible church and ought, according to their own reasoning, to be admitted to the Lord’s table. Pedobaptists are most inveterate close communionists. They are very eloquent against the bigotry and closeness of the Baptists, for not admitting members of Pedobaptist churches to the Lord’s table; but surely they should not expect us to receive persons whom we consider unbaptized, when they will not receive their own baptized members. All whom we consider baptized, and who are members of our churches, we receive; so did the primitive churches. But Pedobaptists have large numbers, whom they consider baptized members of their churches, whom they do not admit to the Lord’s table. This is a kind of “close communion” that we have never practised.

4. There is a dissimilarity in the government of Pedobaptist churches and the primitive churches. One was independent; the other is arbitrary, despotic, and tyrannical. I exhibited this fully in my lecture on the “Equality of Christ’s Disciples,” and therefore need not repeat the arguments here.

III. Baptists aim to Restore the Order of the Primitive Churches. They make no appeal to tradition, the Fathers, or expediency. They simply ask, “What do the Scriptures teach?” They follow the New Testament model of a church, and invite all to test them by it. It is not strange, therefore, that they confidently appeal to God’s Word for proof of the correctness of all they do. They take it all from the Bible, and therefore they know it can all be found there. Take any Scripture account of the course pursued by the apostles, or of the

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practice of gospel churches, and you will find the counterpart in a Baptist church.

Like the primitive churches, they are composed of immersed believers. Show us an instance of the baptism of an infant in the primitive churches, and we will then baptize infants. But until you do, we will oppose infant sprinkling as an innovation of man, having no divine authority, and therefore sinful, when performed in the name of Jehovah.

Like the primitive churches, Baptists admit none to the Lord's table but those who are immersed on profession of their faith. Show us an instance of a gospel church doing otherwise, and we will conform to the model.

Like the primitive churches, Baptists are independent in their government. Show us a pope, or bishop, or conference, or synod, or presbytery, or council, authorized to govern the church, and we will submit to just such authority as you can show us in the Bible.

Our position in these matters is illustrated by a narrative contained in a tract, published by the American Tract Society, entitled "Mick Healy, the Bible Reader." Mick had been a strict Roman Catholic for fifty years. One day he accidentally found a Bible, and commenced reading it. The more he read, the more he neglected the Romish service. The priest at length heard of it, and visited Mick, and sought to get the Bible from him. Failing in this, he began to expostulate with him. He told him he must not read it any more; and reminding him that he had not been to confession for a long time, he told him he must come and confess, for it was his duty. Mick held out the Bible to the priest, and said, "Will your reverence please to show it to me in the Book." Now this is just what we say to all the arguments of Pedobaptists. They tell us that all Christian parents should have their infant children sprinkled. We say, "Will you please to show it to us in the Book." They tell us that sprinkling will do as well as to go "down into the water," and be "buried in baptism," and "come up out of the water." We say, "Will you please to show it to us in the Book."

After some time, Mick united with a Protestant church, and regularly attended the Sunday-school. The children used frequently to gather round him, and put questions to him, to hear his answers:—"Well, Mick, why don't you now pray to the Virgin Mary?" "Because it is not in the Book." "Why don't you now confess your sins to Peter and Paul, Mick?" "Because it is not in the Book." "Why do you believe the Bible to be sufficient to make you wise unto salvation, without tradition?" "Oh, sure, it is all in the Book." "Must every thing in religion be proved by the Bible, Mick?" "Yes; whatever is not so, is only moonshine." Now our Pedobaptist friends ask us why we do not sprinkle infants; we reply, "It is not in the Book." They wish to know why we "go down into the water," and immerse those who believe, and "come up out of the water." We reply, with Mick, "Oh, sure, it is all in the Book." They ask us why we do not admit to the Lord's table with us those who are unbaptized. We reply, "It is not in the Book; and whatever is not in the Book is only moonshine." We aim to be Bible Christians, and to make our churches Bible churches. In upholding Baptist sentiments, we simply aim to perpetuate primitive Christianity.

We resemble the primitive Christians in another respect — we are "every where spoken against." This we expect, so long as men follow Tradition rather than the Word of God, and are influenced by the teachings of men, rather than by the example of Christ; but, when the Bible,— and especially the Bible faithfully translated,— is made the standard, then we shall triumph. We make no arrogant assumptions; we utter no idle boast; but we simply use the language of humble confidence and firm faith.

The progress of the Baptist denomination can be arrested only by taking the Bible away from the people; for, while they possess that, in spite of priests and princes, scaffolds and faggots, tortures and death, some will be found, as in all ages some have been found, who will contend for primitive simplicity, primitive purity, primitive order. On the other hand, Pedobaptism can only succeed by withholding the Bible from the people, or veiling the command to be immersed in an unknown tongue, or calling human tradition to support it, and enlisting carnal weapons to defend it. But its days are numbered; it is in its decline. Its end approaches; and

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soon will be heard the vocal shout, “Babylon the great is fallen, fallen,” and Rome, and all that is Romish, infant sprinkling and all, shall be destroyed. And so let it be!

Do not imagine, from these remarks, that I cherish any feelings of animosity toward those who practice infant baptism. No; far from it, I sincerely pity them. Especially do I pity the priests and ministers who are engaged in defending it. So much labor in vain — so much pains for nought. Has not Christ said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up!” Oh, how much better to come out on Gospel ground, take the Bible and follow Christ, and enjoy the sweet and abiding confidence that you have done what is right!

[1] Directory for Worship, chap. 9, sec. 1.

LECTURE X. GOD'S DISPLEASURE WITH THOSE WHO REMAIN SINFULLY NETRAL IN A WORK OF REFORM

Judges v. 23 — “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

IN almost every work of Reform there have been those who, while their judgments have been convinced of the correctness of the views of the reforming party, have, nevertheless, ingloriously consulted their own ease, and have chosen to occupy a neutral position during the struggle, and thus be prepared, at the termination of the conflict, to avoid the reproach of the Reformers, if unsuccessful, or share their honors, if triumphant. It was this spirit that actuated the inhabitants of Meroz, who were anathematized by Jehovah for the course they adopted. Those who are here referred to, were Israelites; their nation had been mightily oppressed for twenty years by Jabin, the king of Canaan. This was during the time that Deborah judged Israel. Wearing with oppression, the descendants of Abraham cried unto the Lord for deliverance. He heard their cry, and directed them to go forth against Sisera, the captain of the host of Jabin, promising to deliver their enemies into their hand. The Merozites, desiring to retain the favor of the Canaanites, who were very powerful, and yet not wishing to bear arms against their brethren, remained at home, and occupied a position of shameful neutrality. Meanwhile, the hosts of Israel, under Barak, having vanquished their enemies, returned in triumph, with songs of thanksgiving.

But the indolent, time-serving inhabitants of Meroz, learned that they could not reject the claims of their country and their God with impunity. God was displeased with them; and instead of permitting them to share the triumph of their brethren, he places them under his malediction, and directs their own countrymen to bitterly execrate them: “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” The Israelites were engaged in God's work — a work of Reform, The Merozites, who should have been interested in that work, and assisted in it, refused to do so. For this they were cursed by Jehovah. My theme is,

GOD'S DISPLEASURE WITH THOSE WHO REMAIN SINFULLY NEUTRAL IN A WORK OF REFORM.

In dwelling on this topic, I will present for your consideration a few propositions which will serve to elucidate it.

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I. God carries on all Reforms through Human Instrumentality. Ever since man fell, the work of Reform has been going on in the world, under the direction of Jehovah; and every work that tends to make man better and happier, and bring him back to entire conformity to God's will, is really His work, though carried on by human instrumentality. Thus, when he would disseminate the knowledge of his will and holy character among mankind, he raised up, and prepared, and used the Jewish nation, as the instruments, to whom a revelation of himself was entrusted. When that nation forgot him, and degenerated into idolatry, he raised up prophets to reform them. Elijah, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, were great Reformers. When they, the chosen and peculiar people of God, rejected the Messiah, and crucified the Saviour as an impostor, he did not turn from man, and seek angelic powers; but, through the apostles, he called the Gentiles into his kingdom, to be co-workers in the world's redemption. When the simplicity of Christianity became corrupted by its connection with paganism, in the days of Constantine, he still employed human instrumentality to testify against this departure from the faith. When, at a later day, the Romish Church had corrupted every doctrine, and polluted, by her unholy touch, every ordinance of the Gospel, he raised up Luther, Zuingli, Calvin, and others, as the instruments of effecting the Protestant Reformation. When these Reformed churches, still retaining somewhat of the spirit of Romanism, formed an unhallowed alliance with the State, and enlisted carnal weapons in their support, God brought forth the Baptists to assert the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, and the rights of conscience, and the great Bible doctrine of religious liberty and individual responsibility to God. When the Christian church had forgotten the great command, "Go, teach all nations," God raised up William Carey, to draw their attention to it, and through him originated the sublime work of Modern Missions which bids fair to reform the world, and produce a complete moral revolution. Thus, in every reform, God has used human instrumentality; and thus, if infant baptism, and sprinkling be a perversion of his ordinance, (as we think, in the preceding Lectures we have clearly shown it to be,) he will reform it by human instrumentality.

II. In almost every Work of Reform, some have remained Sinfully Neutral. There is a difference, it must be admitted, between sinful enmity or direct opposition to a work, and indolent, selfish neutrality. It was wrong for the Canaanites to oppress the Israelites; but, it is difficult to decide, whether their active opposition was, under the circumstances, any more criminal than the inactivity of Meroz. The latter knew that it was their duty to aid their brethren. They knew they were right, and that they needed assistance; and they knew, also, that their neutrality might possibly be the occasion of their defeat. Still, they came not up to help them, but left them to struggle on alone. Thus it has often been, when God's servants have gone forth to engage in the work of Reform. The correctness of their principles, the purity of their motives, the benevolence of their designs, have forced the conviction on many who have witnessed their efforts, that they were right; and yet they have never moved a hand to aid them, or uttered a word to encourage them, but have contented themselves with occupying a merely neutral position. They do not openly oppose the work; they do not enroll themselves among its enemies; but they are not prepared to make the sacrifices which a noble and manly advocacy of the truth demands of them. They fear that they may sustain injury in their business, perhaps. The most wealthy and influential members of the community are opposed to the world, and they will withdraw their patronage. Or, they dread the sundering of social ties, it may be. Their relatives and friends are committed to that which the Reform aims to correct or remove, and they cannot bear the thought of arraying themselves against the errors which friends love; they esteem their relatives more highly than the truth. Or, the open advocacy of what they feel to be right, will subject them to reproach. They will be called weak-minded, changelings, fanatical, deserters. Or, they will be compelled to unite with a weak body, which is greatly in the minority, and heavy burdens will rest upon them. Or, they are not certain that the efforts of the reforming party will succeed, and they dread the disgrace of a defeat. They forget that it is more honorable to be defeated while contending for truth, than to be victorious on the side of error. These things all combine to lead them to practice a time-serving neutrality. Like the Merozites, they come not up to the help of the Lord, and thus incur his displeasure.

It was thus in the days of Nehemiah, when he gathered the Jews together to build the walls of Jerusalem; "The nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord." It was thus in the days of Christ and the apostles. Thus it was, also, in later times. Who can tell how many, during the fierce persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes,

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the Romish Papacy, and the English Episcopacy, were led to adopt a neutral position, and act in direct opposition to what they knew to be right? So it is now; many persons see a thing to be right, and acknowledge it to be so; and yet they will not come up to the help of the Lord, because they must come up “against the mighty.”

Thus it has often been with the Reform in which Baptists are engaged. A Baptist congregation has seldom been organized for any length of time in a Pedobaptist community, without leading many to the conclusion that they were more Scriptural and nearer to the Gospel pattern, than the Pedobaptists. While some Christians, acting in accordance with such convictions, have submitted to immersion, and boldly committed themselves to the cause of truth, others, equally convinced of the truth, have continued to practice a time-serving neutrality. Thus it may be, perchance, with some who read these Lectures. Convinced of the evils of infant baptism, and of the necessity and importance of its removal, they may choose, still, not to identify themselves with those who are laboring to effect what they feel to be right. Like Meroz, they will not come “up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

III. God is necessarily Displeased with such Conduct. “Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof.” All sin is offensive to God, and occasions his displeasure; but sins against light and knowledge, are especially heinous in his sight. Such is the nature of the sin we are contemplating — the neglect of known duty. A person may oppose a work of reform from conscientious motives, while he believes that work to be wrong; but let him be convinced that reform is necessary — that the purity of the Church of Christ, the good of souls, and the glory of God are connected with its success, and he cannot then oppose it without guilt. A man whose judgment is thus convinced about a matter, occupies a far different and more responsible position than one who is in doubt concerning the propriety of it, or than he himself did before such conviction. He cannot remain in a neutral position, without sinning against conscience. Suppose a Romanist is convinced of the errors of Popery; he could not, after such conviction, remain in the Romish church, without the additional aggravation of sinning against his conscience. So of Pedobaptism, or any other error; when a person is convinced that it is wrong it becomes his duty to abandon it, and aid those who seek to exterminate it. God is always displeased with half-liartedness in his service, and some of the severest denunciations of his Word are against those who occupy a merely neutral position.

In the exercise of this displeasure, God frequently withdraws the smile of his countenance. A sense of obligations violated, and duty neglected, prevents the enjoyment of his favor; and whether that duty be a great or small one, if wilfully neglected, God is displeased and the soul feels it. He sometimes sends temporal afflictions. A man neglects known duty, for fear his business will suffer; God brings reverses and losses upon him, against which, with all his cunning, he failed to secure himself. He consults the wishes of his friends; they prove false to him. He dreads to sever himself from his relatives; God removes them from him by death. Or, if none of these calamities come upon him, there are other consequences which cannot be avoided. Conscience will upbraid, and the mind will often be perplexed, and distracted with anxiety. Then, in the event of the success of the reforming party, such are always objects of shame and contempt. They are regarded as the mere chips and straws, that float with the current. They are never depended upon in times of trial; and thus they often bring upon themselves more keen reproach than the true Reformer ever suffers. He endures reproach for the Truth's sake; they suffer it justly, for their recreancy to the Truth. The Reformer glories in the reproach he is called to suffer — it is his honor. They feel that they are dishonored, and deserve to be. They are generally disappointed in their expectations, and find that their wisdom is but folly, and their gain but loss. Look at the Merozites. What did they gain by their sinful neutrality? While Israel rejoice and triumph, Meroz is dishonored and execrated.

In concluding these Lectures, permit me to address, First, those who are members of the Baptist denomination. Brethren, great and important principles are involved in our action. Let us be faithful to the trust committed to us. On the propagation of our principles in this country, depends all that is dear to us as Christians, as Americans, as men. The Baptist element alone, in our country has preserved religious freedom

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and the rights of conscience. Baptists alone, are prepared consistently and successfully to meet and oppose those various and gigantic forms of error, which retard the progress and prevent the triumphs of the Gospel. Let us stand faithfully by those hallowed truths in defence of which myriads have gone to the scaffold and the rack, and firm adherence to which dyed even American soil with Baptist blood. Let us come up "to the help of the Lord against the mighty," and effect a complete and thorough reform, by the exaltation of pure Bible truth, unmingled with human inventions and the traditions of men!

Secondly, I address a word to those who are Baptists in sentiment, but who are not united with Baptist churches. Many such are found in almost every community. Why tarry ye? Are you not copying the conduct of Meroz? Beware, lest you incur God's displeasure, by your sinful neglect of known duty. "That servant who knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

Thirdly, those not Pedobaptists. There are large numbers in Pedobaptist churches who, while they cannot see that immersion is essential to baptism, still do not believe that infants ought not to be baptized. To such I say, You are convinced that the baptism of infants is unscriptural and wrong. Why, then, continue in a church that teaches what you know is contrary to the Bible? Further, have you been baptized since infancy, yourselves? If not, then, according to your own showing, you have not been scripturally baptized, and you are neglecting the first duty of the believer. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall he saved."

Finally, to those who are Pedobaptists I would say, If you have carefully read the preceding Lectures, you certainly can no longer wonder at the importance which Baptists attach to the proper subjects and mode of baptism. It is connected with views of the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, and individual responsibility, that are far from insignificant in their bearings. Be not surprised, then, if, moved with love to Christ, and love to the souls of men, they labor to induce investigation on this subject among Christians, that Pedobaptists may proselyte themselves to Bible sentiments. "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."

THE END