

The Universal Obligation of Christ's Disciples to Labor Personally for Him _____

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We believe that every individual whom God has called by his grace is under the most solemn and imperative obligations to labor not only indirectly but directly, for the extension of the cause of Christ. No man can be religious, unless he be a religionist. To this work he must consecrate his whole being, and this work he cannot delegate to another.

In this work there are various departments of service, each one having his own gift, one after this manner, and another after that. To suppose Christ to call a man to be his servant, and have nothing for him to do, is absurd. Among these gifts is aptness to teach, or a power bestowed, in different degrees, to address men on the subject of their souls' salvation. On some men this gift is bestowed so largely that they are called to devote their whole time to this service. On others it is less largely bestowed, and these may very properly combine labor in the ministry with some secular pursuit. It is surely sufficiently common for a man to begin with the ministry and end by uniting it with a secular calling ; why may not a man, with equal propriety, commence with a secular calling, and end by combining with it the work of the ministry?

That this is the apostolic plan is, I think, evident to anyone who will candidly read the New Testament. That this view of the ministry is according to the mind of the Spirit is, I think, evident from the success that has attended it wherever it has been adopted, whether in heathen or in Christian lands. It is in vain to say that to adopt these views is to place ourselves in opposition to the public opinion of the world, and of the various denominations of Protestant Christianity.

The opinions and practices of Protestant Christianity are by no means as sure a guide as the precepts and examples of the New Testament. It can scarcely be denied that, at the present moment, Christianity is everywhere losing its hold upon the masses of the population, Our ministry and our houses of worship are becoming the ministry and the houses of worship of the rich and the educated, while the whole body of the people is uncared for and forgotten. Jesus Christ taught us that one of the evidences of his

divine mission was that to the poor the gospel was preached. If we do not preach to the poor as well as to the rich, we lose this badge of discipleship. Shall we then follow the example of a declining Christianity, or shall we tread in the footsteps of the Master?

The fact is, if we must speak the truth, almost all our denominations are sinking down into the belief that all the direct work for the conversion of the world is to be done by

the ministry; thus making a broad distinction between the clergy and the laity (I use these terms, not because I approve of them, but because they are so much in vogue). We are coming to think the minister is to do the work of the Lord, and the business of the private brother is simply to pay him for it. I say we are coming to this belief; we have not yet exactly arrived at it. Our Sunday schools form an exception. It is still held that the uncommissioned messengers of Christ may, and ought to labor here. But these are conducted mainly by the young, especially, as I have before remarked, by young women. Had it not been for Richard Raikes, I do not see what employment could have been found for our young disciples. But, as it is, as a Christian advances in age he gradually leaves even this service, and thus this work really finds employment for but a small portion of the Lord's host.

Another exception is in the case of colportage. It is strange that we are governed so much by names. The introduction of a French word has here wrought almost a miracle. A colporteur is generally a man, as Episcopalians would say, not in holy orders, who travels from town to town, and goes from house to house to distribute tracts, converse with families, hold religious meetings, and by every means but formally taking a text and pronouncing the benediction, does precisely the work of a minister. He is to all intents and purposes a lay preacher. Yet, call him a lay preacher, and thousands would tremble for the respectability of the ministry. Call him a colporteur, and every one subscribes to sustain him, and all acknowledge that his agency is of vital importance to the church of Christ.

Yet this work is confined to young men, frequently to illiterate men, to foreigners, and in general to those whose time can be purchased at the cheapest rate. What would our merchants and lawyers and men of property and worldly standing think if we should urge them to undertake this same labor? What would they say if we should ask them to spend their vacations and intervals of leisure in the summer months in doing substantially the labor of a colporteur, or to use the offensive term, of a lay preacher? They would tell us they will give their money. Yes, but God requires not your money but yourselves. And how much of your money do you give? Why, two or three men worth some hundreds of thousands apiece, will unite in supporting one such laborer, when they might each one

support ten or twenty, by denying themselves of some expenditure for useless and soul-destroying luxury.

The fact is that our most intelligent, able, middle-aged, private brethren have little to do, and they do little. This broad distinction which has grown up between them and the ministry has reduced their effort for the cause of Christ to its minimum. Our lawyers, merchants, men of business in the several departments of active life, our teachers and professors have no spiritual work before them beyond caring for their own souls. Hence their piety languishes, they become entangled in the world, they follow its customs, they adopt its maxims, they share in its amusements, simply because they have no spiritual work to do by which their religious principles may be invigorated. Let any one look over one of our churches at a communion season, especially over an old and wealthy, and, as it is called, a most respectable church, and say whether in what I have said I have overstated the facts. Monopoly is a curse,

either in state or church. This growing monopoly must be broken up, or the whole church will sink into fatal worldliness.

The private brethren of the church have rights. Jesus Christ has called them to be his servants, and he has conferred on every one the privilege of working in his vineyard, and has promised to each laborer a rich reward. He has given to each servant some particular gift, and permitted him to use that gift for him. Of this right, no man or body

of men, or ecclesiastical authority may deprive him. Every Christian is Christ's freeman, and he has a right to labor for Christ in any place where his Master opens a door, and he is to seek diligently to ascertain where the door is opened for him.

If the private brethren of our churches have rights, then it follows that they have also duties. If Christ has given them the right to labor for him, then he has imposed upon them the corresponding duty. It is the imperative duty of every brother who has any power of public address to use it for Christ. You say that you have not this gift. Did you ever try? When you were first converted you had it, and were willing at all times to tell men of the excellency of Christ. Had you continued to do so, like James Shelburne, you would now have become a Christian of a very different character from what we now behold. You have so long buried your talent in the earth that you do not know where to find it, and your whole spiritual nature is suffering on account of it.

Do you believe that Christ called you by his grace, that you might be a very respectable, influential citizen, a kind and worthy neighbor, willing to attend church twice on Sunday, pay your tithe, and subscribe to beautify your house of worship, and give perhaps the interest of your income to advance his cause, and have nothing more for you to do?

Let me ask you a plain question. Do you believe that Christ called you that you might go forth and bear fruit, or that you might be a branch that beareth no fruit, whose end is to be burned? Do you believe that Christ called you by his grace, that you might be a very respectable, influential citizen, a kind and worthy neighbor, willing to attend church twice on Sunday, pay your tithe, and subscribe to beautify your house of worship, and give perhaps the interest of your income to advance his cause, and have nothing more for you to do? And are you to excuse yourself for your disobedience to Christ, by pleading that you pay your minister for laboring for souls, and that you are not in "holy orders?"

Brethren, beloved in the Lord, excuse my plainness in this matter. I write not to please you, but to do you good. I humbly hope that "the love of Christ constraineth" me. (2 Cor. 5:14) Look abroad upon Zion; consider her desolations. Iniquity abounds. The love of many waxes cold. Our youth are growing up without any regard for religion, and are yielding themselves up to all the allurements of a soul-destroying world. The masses of our people are not under the influence of the institutions of religion.

Multitudes among us, even at our own doors, are pressing on to Judgment Day, as ignorant of the way of salvation as

the heathen in India or in Africa. Foreigners by hundreds of thousands are landing upon our shores, the decided and avowed enemies of the cross of Christ. The governments of the world acknowledging the name are enemies to the power of the religion of Jesus. And at such a time as this, are we all to sit down quietly and satisfy ourselves with doing nothing for Christ, because we pay the minister's salary that he may do it for us? No! The cause, at this emergency, requires the most active employment of every talent of every true disciple. The masses of the church must be aroused, or the enemy will come in like a flood, and there will be neither faith nor power to raise up a standard against him.

But while we do this, we must rely on something in-finitely better than an arm of flesh. Let us meditate over these things, and ask the Master to show us our duty. Let us with one heart pray for a universal descent of the Holy Spirit upon all his churches. Should the dayspring from on high visit us once more, we could not remain in our present condition. We should be constrained to arise and make sacrifices for God. Then the feeblest among us would be as the house of David, and the house of David as the angel of the Lord.



The Redemption of Man Brings Glory to God

J. Davis

From *Sermons on Various Subjects*, 1837

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men." (Luke 2:14)

The only begotten Son of God being anointed to be a prophet, priest and king, had a very important work to accomplish, as the Mediator between God and man. It was necessary that he should humble himself and assume our degraded nature. Had he appeared in our world in all the majesty and glory of the Deity, it would have been impossible for the children of men to listen to his doctrine, and it would have been impossible for him to offer himself a sacrifice for sin; but being God manifested in

the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us, God in our nature; very justly then, and with the greatest propriety the angels sang with rapture and surprise, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will to men.

I would call your attention:

- I. To the incarnation of Christ, and

- II. To the glorious anthem sung on the solemn occasion.

I. But in the first place, the incarnation of Christ, demands our serious attention.

Though it is impossible for the unchangeable God to be made a creature; yet the human nature was so closely and mysteriously united to the divine nature, that the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the prince of peace, is the Son given and the child born in Bethlehem Ephratah. Though the incarnation of Emmanuel did not take away nor tarnish in the least degree the essential glory of the Deity; yet it was a very great condescension in him, who is above all, God blessed forevermore, to be united to the nature of man. With the greatest astonishment Solomon asked the important question—but will God indeed dwell on the earth? (1 Kings 8:27) The question is not answered in the affirmative by men and angels. The Word that was in the beginning with the Father in the fullness of time tabernacled in the flesh; “and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) Though we cannot form any idea of the infinite distance between God and man, yet that vacuum is filled up in the incarnation of the Messiah, so that he is called the true God, and the man Christ Jesus.

Notwithstanding that our blessed Redeemer thought it not robbery to be equal with God but made himself, of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being, found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the painful and ignominious death of the cross.

Though angels are more excellent creatures than men, yet he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Though he did not take upon him the human nature in its original glory; yet he was perfectly free from all the contamination of sin; he was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners; he knew no sin, there was no iniquity found in him, nor any guile in his mouth. (1 Pet. 2:22)

Though it was impossible for the divine nature to become human, or the human nature to become divine; the two natures mysteriously united in Christ, make but one glorious person. Notwithstanding that our blessed Redeemer thought it not robbery to be equal with God but made himself, of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being, found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the painful and ignominious death of the cross; (Phil. 2:6-8) yet there we

something so wonderful and glorious in his nativity that the angels came down from heaven to publish the glad tidings.

It is true, there were no Ambassadors sent to the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, and the court of Rome, to proclaim his birth; but the Ambassadors sent to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem in the land of Judea, were far more noble than any that ever announced the birth of an eldest son, of the greatest monarch in the world.

No sooner Jesus made his appearance on earth than the command was given that all the angels of heaven should worship him, whose example was followed by the wise men of the east who came and worshipped him. The prophet Isaiah said that his name should be called Wonderful! (Isa. 9:6) And the angel Gabriel said to Mary that he should be great, and should be called the son of the

Highest; and that the Lord God should give unto him the throne of his father David; that he should reign over, the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there should be no end. (Luke 1:32-33) He became poor, that through his poverty, we should be made rich. He humbled himself that we might be exalted,—he was wounded, that, we might be healed;—yet he died of the most shameful death, that we might be saved in the most glorious manner that infinite wisdom might have contrived.

II. The glorious anthem spoken on the solemn occasion, glory, Peace, and good will.

The shining light between the cherubims on the mercy seat in the tabernacle was called the glory of the Lord, for it represented the presence of the Messiah. Moses and Elijah saw the glory of the Messiah on the Mount of transfiguration; and all the believers have seen his glory by the eye of faith. The word glory in the angels’ anthem denotes the honor and praise conferred on the divine government resulting from the humiliation of Christ. The redemption of sinners by the blood of the cross, and the spirit of grace, is consistent with the glory of God as our Creator and Lawgiver.

The new crown of glory as an index is showing some new perfections that were not visible before. In the representation that God has given of himself in the works of creation and providence, and in the nature and requirements of the law, it is evidently seen that the

righteous are happy that the Lord Jehovah is their God; but by the angel's proclamation it appears that the miserable objects of mercy may rejoice. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy;" (Luke 2:10) which shall be to all the righteous?—No. —Which shall be to all the defenders of rights, life and property? —No—but shall be to all people. A Saviour, and a Redeemer is born, for a lost and perishing world. Look to the cross, and beheld a righteous God and a Saviour. Here we see the Lawgiver himself, embracing the rebels; the former receiving the glory and the latter the benefit, resulting from the death and resurrection of Christ.

All this may be considered as an anthem of praise and glory to God, for redeeming grace and dying love. Though the angels received no benefit, yet to these things they desire to look. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14) Not by compromising matters with the devil, as he offered to do, when the Son of God was tempted by him in the wilderness; neither is the peace founded by him on the expense of the law, but by magnifying the law and making it honorable; neither is it peace with enmity, for that is slain by the death of the Lamb of God, when atonement and reconciliation were made for enemies. Having made peace through the blood of his cross, sinners are reconciled to God.

The atonement of Christ is the foundation of peace with God and peace of conscience. Conscience is a witness within, condemning for doing that which is wrong, and justifying for doing that which is right. Let that internal monitor speak and the truth is likely to come out.

Had it not been for him who was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger in the stable of Bethlehem, the good will of God to men would never have been manifested, for men deserved nothing at his hands, but his wrath and displeasure forever; but the gift of his only begotten Son is the strongest and clearest evidence of his good will to men. The babe of Bethlehem might have addressed the inhabitants of the earth in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? When I called was there none to answer; (Isa. 50:2) Why don't you know me by the description given of the Messiah by the prophets? Is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? No—verily I can redeem, being clothed in human nature, I can save to the very uttermost; though my almighty power is hid from your eyes. This is the arm that clothed the heavens with blackness, dried up the sea, and made rivers a wilderness.

"Though you do not hear me speak, I have the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to him that is weary; being clothed in human nature, I can hear the cries of men, and sympathize with them. Because of my good will to men, I became a man, and will give my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that will pluck off my hair, and I will never hide myself from shade and spitting. Calvary and Joseph's grave shall be the manifestations of my good will to men; and hell itself shall see that my good will is stronger than death.

"Who will contend with me? Let us stand together.—Who is mine adversary? Let him come near to me.—In all my journey from my Father's house to the gulf of death; and from there home to the mansions of glory, the good will of God to man, shall be written on every gate and door post, from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven. Yes, and the gates of death and hell shall hear of the good will of God to men, and shall tremble to the very centre, as if they were shaken by a most tremendous earthquake."

I imagine I see the angel pointing to Bethlehem, saying: "Yonder in the stable is the sun of righteousness shining seven times brighter than the sun of the glory of God ever appeared in creation and providence, and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; that God might be righteous in the justification of all that believe in Jesus." If the glory of God was so brilliant, when the Father glorified the Son; when the Son glorified the Father, and when the Holy Spirit glorified them both, what must be the splendor of the glory of God shining forth in the face of Jesus Christ at his second coming, when the great Parchment of divine wisdom shall be unfolded?

When the great act of free justification, whereby the sinner is entitled to eternal life, by deed and gift, shall pass without injuring any of the attributes of God. God has manifested his good will to men in creating all things for their accommodation; but more especially in demolishing the kingdom of darkness in their hearts, and establishing the kingdom of heaven therein, founded on the merit of Emmanuel's blood; pressing out the wine of eternal life for us from the cup of his own mortality; destroying the works of Satan, liberating us from his iron yoke of bondage, and uniting us to himself in the bonds of peace and love. Glory to God in the highest for his good will toward men.

All the designs of mercy, the manifestations of the power, goodness, and the riches of God's grace for man, upon man, and in man are clear evidences of the good will of God to men. Like so many machines with dog wheels, one acting upon the other, the whole is in constant motion. The wheels of eternal purposes and infinite atonement, and the operations of the Holy Spirit as the quickener and sanctifier of men, set the whole machinery, of vocation, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification, in motion.

The law of the spirit of life has power and sufficient room to turn in Christ Jesus. Good will to men is the spring of peace upon earth, and the river flowing from that spring is the salvation of men; which runs within the golden banks of the passive and active obedience of Christ, down to the sea of eternal life; without doing any damage to any man whatever. Its floods convey no mercy to devils; but carry away many precious jewels from their tyrannical dominion.

When Jesus returned from the manger, the cross and the grave, his glory shined from on high, over the hills of the whole Roman Empire; and the rivers of peace, love and salvation, swept away from the temples of Europe more false gods than would have filled the Pantheon at Rome—to be worshipped no more. Nothing can stand before this

glory of God in the highest, this peace, and good will to men. They will in spite of all opposition follow Jesus to every region, to every house, to every congregation, to every town and city, and to every heart where Jesus will go.

O that the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ might shine upon this congregation. O Lord, convert the careless, and the prayerless sinner; let him be founded on the foundation of joy that all his sorrows might be swallowed up. Let thy good will to men constrain them to look on the world as a secondary thing; and go out quickly to behold Jesus in the means of grace with great fear and joy.

When your eyes are opened to behold the glory of God, your lips will soon be opened to proclaim it, before the church and the world, praising and adoring God for what you have experienced, for what you have felt, and for what you have seen and heard. Soon you shall be removed from glory to glory, from peace to perfect love; where that fear that hath torment shall never enter; where you shall join the heavenly choir in ascribing glory to God for his good will to men.

So let it be, says my soul. Amen.

The Baptism of Infants

Edward T. Hiscox

From *The Baptist Short Method*, 1868

The baptism of unconverted children, and unconscious infants, has become common through the Christian world. The Romish Church, the Greek Church, and most of the Protestant churches, practice it. Yet Baptists condemn it as unscriptural, unreasonable, and injurious. They believe that repentance and faith should always precede baptism and that whenever one exercises these, whether old or young, then he should be admitted to the holy ordinance of baptism, but never till he has believed. Infants, incapable of faith, are unfit for baptism.

Baptists make the following assertions respecting this practice:

1. That there is neither precept nor example found in the New Testament to authorize or sanction infant

baptism. Nor indeed is there even an allusion to it in the Scriptures — very naturally because it did not exist.

2. That Christ did not command it, nor did either the apostles nor early Christians practice it.

3. That it arose with, and was a part of, the early corruptions of the Christian churches in after ages.

4. That the practice is presumptuous and censurable on the part of parents, sponsors, and administrators; and productive of evil, both to the child that receives it, and to the church that allows it.

If these statements be correct, how can the custom be maintained by intelligent Christians?

NOT OF SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

Nearly all the advocates and defenders of infant baptism have, with considerable candor, admitted that it was not instituted by Christ, nor practiced by the apostles or their immediate successors.

DR. WALL, of the English Church, who wrote the *History of Infant Baptism*, a work so able, that the assembled clergy, in convocation, gave him a vote of thanks for his learned and able defence of this custom, says: "Among all the persons that are recorded as baptized by the apostles, there is no express mention of any infants." (*Hist. Inf. Bap., Intro.*, pp. 1, 55)

FULLER says: "We do freely confess there is neither express precept nor precedent in the New Testament for the baptizing of infants." (*Infants' Advoc.*, pp. 71, 150)

BP. BURNETT says: "There is no express precept or rule given in the New Testament for the baptism of infants." (*Expos. 39 Articles, 27 Art*)

BAXTER says: "I conclude that all examples of baptism in Scripture do mention only the administration of it to the professors of saving faith; and the precepts give us no other direction." (*Disput. of Right to Sacra.*, p. 156)

LUTHER says: "It cannot be proved by the sacred Scriptures, that infant baptism was instituted by Christ, or begun by the first Christians after the apostles." (*Vanity Inf. Bap.*, part 2, p. 8. See Booth's *Pedo. Er.*, part 2, Ch. i)

DR. GOODWIN says: "Baptism supposeth regeneration sure in itself, first. Sacraments are never administered for to begin, or to work grace; you suppose children to believe before you baptize them. Read all the Acts, still it is said, "They believed, and were baptized." (*Works*, vol. i., part 1, p. 200)

CELARIUS says: "Infant baptism is neither commanded in the sacred Scriptures, nor is it confirmed by apostolic examples." (*Shyn. Hist. Mennon.*, p. 168)

LIMBOROH says: "There is no instance can be produced from which it may indisputably be inferred that any child was baptized by the apostles. (*Com. Syst. Divin.*, B. 5. Ch. xxii., sec. 2)

DR. FIELD says: "The baptism of infants is therefore named a tradition, because it is not expressly delivered in Scripture that the apostles did baptize infants; nor any express

precept there found that they should do so." (*On the Church*, p. 375)

NEANDER says: "Baptism was administered at first only to adults, as men were accustomed to conceive of baptism and faith, as strictly connected. We have all reason for not deriving infant baptism from apostolic institution." (*Ch. Hist.*, vol. i., p. 311. Torrey's Trans. Also, *Plant. and Train.*, vol. i., p 222)

OLSHAUSEN says: "We cannot in truth find anywhere a reliable proof-text in favor of infant baptism." (*Comment. Acts 15:14, 15*)

HAHN says: "Neither in the Scriptures, nor during the first hundred and fifty years, is a sure example of infant baptism to be found." (*Theology*, p. 556)

ROBERT BARCLAY says: "As to the baptism of infants, it is a mere human tradition, for which neither precept nor practice is to be found in all the Scriptures." (*Apology*, Prop. 12)

WILLIAM PENN says: There is "not one text of Scripture to prove that sprinkling in the face was the water baptism, or that children were the subjects of water baptism in the first times." (*Def. of Gospel Truths*, p. 82)

PROF. LANGE says: "All attempts to make out infant baptism from the New Testament fail. It is totally opposed to the spirit of the apostolic age, and to the fundamental principles of the New Testament." (*Inf. Bap.*, p. 101. *Dune. Hist. Bap.*, p. 224)

HAGENBACH says: "The passages from Scripture cited in favor of infant baptism as a usage of the primitive church, are doubtful, and prove nothing." (*Hist. Doct.*, pp. 190-193)

PROF. JACOBI says: "Infant baptism was established neither by Christ nor by the apostles." (*Art. Bap.*, Kitto's *Cycl. Bib. Lit.*)

Dr. HANNA says: "Scripture knows nothing of the baptism of infants." (*North Brit. Review*, Aug. 1852)

A great number more from the ranks of Pedobaptist scholars and divines have borne similar testimony, which could be cited to the same effect. But, on this specific point, let these suffice.

RISE OF INFANT BAPTISM

If the baptism of children was not appointed by Christ, nor practiced by his apostles, what was its origin, and when did it come into use?

TERTULLIAN is the first who mentions the custom, and he earnestly opposes it. This was at the close of the second century, or about A.D. 200. His opposition to it proves two things. First, that it was in occasional use at least; and second, that it was of recent origin. For it must have been in use to be mentioned at all, and if it had long been in use, it would have been earlier alluded to.

BINGHAM could find no earlier allusion to it than this of Tertullian, though he believed it to have previously existed. Had there been any earlier historic record, he would have found it. It must, therefore, as is generally agreed, have arisen about the beginning of the third century.

VENEMA says: "Nothing can be affirmed with certainty concerning the custom of the church before Tertullian; seeing there is not anywhere in more ancient writers that I know of undoubted mention of infant baptism." (*Eccl. Hist.*, vol. iii., ch. ii., secs. 108, 109)

CURCELLAEUS says: "The baptism of infants in the two first centuries after Christ, was altogether unknown, but in the third and fourth, was allowed by some few. In the fifth and following ages it was generally received." (*Inst. Christ. Relig.*, B. 1, Ch. xii)

HIPPOLYTUS, bishop of Pontus, writing in the first half of the third century, bears this testimony: "We in our days never defended the baptism of children, which in our day had only begun to be practiced in some regions." (*Hippolytus and his Age*, vol. i., p. 184. See Duncan's *Hist. Bap.*, p. 115.—Curtis' *Prog. Bap. Principles*, p. 101)

BUNSEN, the learned translator of Hippolytus, declares that infant baptism in the modern sense "was utterly unknown to the early church, not only down to the end of the second, but indeed to the middle of the third century." (*Hipp. and his Age*, vol. iii., p. 180. See Curtis' *Prog. Bap. Prin.*, p. 101)

SALMASIUS says: "In the two first centuries no one was baptized, except, being instructed in the faith and acquainted with the doctrines of Christ, he was able to profess himself a believer." (*Hist. Bap. Suiceri Thesaur.*, vol. ii., p. 1136)

CURCELLAEUS says: "The custom of baptizing infants did not begin till the third age after Christ was born. In the former ages no trace of it appears, and it was introduced without the command of Christ." (*Dissert. de Pecc. Orig. Dis. 2*, sec. 56)

Such testimony is quite conclusive. Infant baptism was unknown in the churches until the first part of the third century after Christ. Had it existed before, some trace of, or allusion to it, would have been discovered. But the most labored and learned research has failed to make any such discovery.

It should be added that when the baptism of children did begin to be practiced, it was not the baptism of unconscious infants at all, but as Bunsen declares, of "little growing children, from six to ten years old." He declares that Tertullian, in his opposition to infant baptism, does not say one word of newborn infants."

CYPRIAN, an African bishop, at the close of the third century, urged the baptism of infants proper because of the regenerating efficacy of the ordinance. He and his associates were the first to take this ground. (*Hippol. and his Age*, vol. iii., pp. 192-5. See Curtis' *Prog. Bap. Prin.*, p. 125.

FROM WHAT CAUSE DID IT RISE?

From what cause did infant baptism rise? That question is not difficult to answer.

It is well known that at a very early period the notion began to prevail, that the ordinances possessed some special virtue. It was believed that baptism had a sanctifying, saving power that in it sins were washed away, and the soul by it was fitted for heaven. Thus the sick were thought to be prepared for death, and salvation secured, or made more certain, by its efficacy. Anxious parents, therefore, desired their dying children to receive baptism, to secure them against the perils of perdition. Such was the error of a superstitious age. Hence arose infant baptism as one of the many perversions which early corrupted the doctrines and ordinances of Christianity.

VITRINGA says: "The ancient church, from the highest antiquity, after the apostolic times, appears generally to have thought that baptism is absolutely necessary for all that would be saved by the grace of Jesus Christ. It was, therefore, customary in the ancient church, if infants were greatly afflicted, and in danger of death, or if parents were affected with a singular concern about the salvation of their children, to present their infants or children in their

minority to the bishop to be baptized." (*Observ. Sacr.*, vol. i., B. 2., ch. iv., sec. 9)

SALMASIUS says: "An opinion prevailed that no one could be saved without being baptized, and for that reason the custom arose of baptizing infants." (*Epist. Jus. Pac.* See Booth's *Pedo. Ex.*, Ch. iii., sec. 3)

VENEMA says: "The ancients connected a regenerating power and a communication of the Spirit with baptism." This writer asserts that the early Fathers believed baptism to possess a saving efficacy, and cites Justin Martyr, Tremens, Clemens, Tertullian, and Cyprian, as of that opinion; the last named of whom has been called the inventor of infant baptism. (*Eccl. Hist.*, vol. iv., p. 3, secs. 2, 3, 4. See Booth's *Pedo. Ex.*

CHRYSOSTOM, writing about A.D. 398, as cited by Suicerus, says: "It is impossible without baptism to obtain the kingdom. It is impossible to be saved without it." And as cited by Wall, he says: "If sudden death seize us before we are baptized, though we have a thousand good qualities, there is nothing to be expected but hell." (*Suicer. Thesau. Eccl.*, vol. i., p. 3)

WADDINGTON, in his *Church History*, declares touching the opinions of the third century: "The original simplicity of the office of baptism had already undergone some corruption. The symbol had been gradually exalted at the expense of the thing signified; and the spirit of the ceremony was beginning to be lost in the form. Hence a belief was gaining ground among the converts, and was inculcated among the heathen that the act of baptism gave remission of all sins committed previously." (*Hist. of the Church*, Ch. ii., p. 53)

Thus we discern plainly why, as well as when, this custom arose. An invention of men, based on a perversion of Scripture doctrine, it is now boldly claimed to be an ordinance of God. How can honest and pious men make such a claim?

We are reminded of the words of the pious CHARNOCK: "The wisdom of God is affronted and invaded by introducing rules and modes of worship different from divine institution." And we will venture to ask, with the devout BAXTER, though both had reference to other subjects: "What man dare go in a way which hath neither precept nor example to warrant it, from a way that hath full current of both."

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

We have already seen that the baptism of infants, with that of the sick and the dying, originated in a belief of the saving efficacy of the ordinance. Thus the unscriptural device of infant baptism grew out of the false dogma of baptismal regeneration. A dogma as pernicious as possible, and as repugnant to common sense, as it is to the Bible, but one to which the advocates of pedobaptism have ever clung.

EPISCOPIUS asserts that the Milevitan Council, A.D. 418, declared pedobaptism to be a necessary rite. (*Theol. Inst.*, B. 4, Ch. xiv)

DR. WALL says: "If we except Tertullian, Vicentius, A.D. 419, is the first man on record that ever said that children might be saved without baptism." (*Hist. Inf. Bap.*, p. 1., Ch. xx., p. 232)

HAGENBACH says: "The Church of England taught the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, yet with cautions." He cites Jewel, Jackson, Hooker, Taylor, Pearson, and

Waterland, to justify the assertion, which the baptismal service of that church plainly proves. (*Hist. Doctrines*, vol. ii., p. 366)

The words of our Saviour, "Verily, verily, I say unto you; except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom

of God," (John 3:5) were almost universally applied to baptism, and supposed to teach that there was no salvation without it.

WALL declares that, "from Justin Martyr down to St. Austin," this text was so understood. "Neither did I ever see it otherwise applied in any ancient author." And he adds, "I believe Calvin was the first man that ever denied this place to mean baptism." (*Hist. Inf. Bap.*, p. 2, Ch. vi., p. 354)

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH held to baptismal regeneration, and in the Council of Trent thus declared it: "If any one shall say that baptism is not necessary to salvation, let him be accursed." (*Cat. Coun. Trent*, p. 165, 175)

THE GREEK CHURCH holds the same dogma. Cyril, patriarch of Constantinople, and declares: "that both original and actual sins are forgiven to those who are baptized in the manner which our Lord requires in the gospel." (*Confes. Ch. Faith*, Ch. xvi. 1631)

The Catholic Church held to baptismal regeneration, and in the Council of Trent thus declared it: "If any one shall say that baptism is not necessary to salvation, let him be accursed."

STAPTERUS says: They hold the absolute necessity of baptism, and that, "without it, no one can become a real Christian, and that it cannot be omitted in respect to infants without endangering their salvation." (*Theol.*, vol. v., p. 82)

THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES generally have held, and to a degree do still hold, the same unscriptural dogma. Booth cites the following Protestant confessions, which embrace it: the Confession of Helvetia, that of Bohemia, of Augsburg, of Saxony, of Wittenburg, of Sueveland, of the Church of England, and of the Westminster Assembly. (*Pedobap. Ex.*, ch. iii., Ref. 3)

A large number of Pedobaptist divines and scholars are cited by the same author, as holding this doctrine, including Luther, Gerhardus, Vossius, Deylingius, Fiddes, Whitby, Wilson, Scott, John Wesley, and Matthew Henry. (*Ibid.*)

Do its advocates and defenders now take the same ground, and make the same claim for the saving efficacy of baptism? If not, on what ground, and for what reason do they maintain and defend the baptism of infants? Have they any reason for it, only that they have been accustomed to it, and taught to believe it right.

REASONS FOR INFANT BAPTISM

1. Some good and honest people verily believe that infant baptism is taught in the Bible. Certainly they have not examined for themselves. A very little effort will show how utterly without foundation is such a supposition, and that neither precept nor example, intimation nor allusion, is found in the New Testament, to authorize or sanction it. Read the sacred record through from beginning to end: and nothing of the kind appears.

2. Its antiquity commends it to many. It has been a long while in vogue, and very generally practiced by the various branches of Christendom. We have seen when and why it arose, and how long and how generally it has been in use. But does that prove it right? Is a usage necessarily good and true because it is old? Then we should adopt and practice many absurd superstitions of the early corrupted churches; such as the worship of images, invocation of the saints, prayers to the Virgin, oblations for the dead, consecration of baptismal waters, and many others; not a few of which came into use about the same time as this; and some of which are even older.

Not what is old, but what is true, should be our rule; not what antiquity, but what the Bible teaches, should we obey. Not tradition, but as Chillingworth declares, "the

Bible only," is true religion. We should say, as said Basil, "It is a manifest mistake in regard to faith, and a clear evidence of pride, either to reject any of those things which the Scripture contains, or to introduce anything that is not written in the sacred pages."

3. Others acknowledge that while there is no positive command or authoritative example for infant baptism in the New Testament, yet the general principles on which it rests are there found; the fundamental truths are there taught, from which this custom may be inferred. This is a strange mode of reasoning. For if we may, by remote deduction and vague inference, originate ceremonies, call them gospel ordinances, and impose them on the consciences of men, then the whole Jewish ceremonial, and the entire ritual service of the Papal Church, may be adopted and used and taught as of divine authority and binding on believers.

But what a reflection is this on the wisdom and goodness of God that he should have left positive institutions, designed for universal observance in his churches, to be vaguely inferred from supposed general principles, rather than to have been plainly and explicitly taught in his word. Such reasoning will not serve in matters of religion. Let this maxim of Tertullian have its due weight, especially as applied to religious rites: "The Scripture forbids what it does not mention." And with Ambrose we may ask, "Where the Scripture is silent, who shall speak?"

4. Some suppose that the household baptisms mentioned in the New Testament must have included infants, and hence constitute a warrant for baptism. Here again is mere inference, a foundation quite insufficient for positive institutions to rest upon. It is inferred that these households had infant children in them, and that such infant children were baptized, both of which are wholly gratuitous. There are probably few Baptist churches in the world of any considerable standing and history that have not one or more entire households in their communion, each member of which was baptized on a profession of faith.

The case of Lydia and her household, baptized at Philippi, and mentioned in Acts 16, is especially relied on. Now observe: Lydia was a merchant woman, "a seller of purple," "from the city of Thyatira," and was at Philippi, about three hundred miles from her home on business when she heard Paul preach, was converted, and then "she was baptized, and her household." There is not the least evidence that she had either husband or children. If she had a husband, why was she so far from home on business? If she had infant children, they would not likely

have been with her on such a journey, for such an object. Her "household," doubtless, were adults, either members of her family, or persons employed in service such as her business required. The most reckless sophism alone could build infant baptism on a case like this. A poor cause it must be, that relies for the defense of a permanent religious ordinance on such evidence.

Dr. NEANDER says: "We cannot prove that the apostles ordained infant baptism: from those places where the baptism of a whole family is mentioned, we can draw no such conclusion." (*Planting and Training*, p. 162, NY ed. 1865)

PROF. JACOBI says, with reference to these household baptisms "In none of these instances has it been proved that there were little children among them." (*Kitto's Bib. Cyclo.*, Art. Bap.)

DR. MEYER, in his commentary, says: "That the baptism of children was not in use at that time, appears evident from 1 Cor. 7:14. (*Comment.*, Acts 16:15)

DR. DE WETTE, in his *Exposition*, says of Lydia's baptism: "This passage has been adduced in proof of the apostolical authority of infant baptism, but there is no proof here that any except adults were baptized." (*Comm. N. T.*, Acts 16:15)

DR. OLSHAUSEN says: "Baptism ensued in this case, without doubt, merely upon a profession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah. But for that very reason it is highly improbable that her house should be understood as including infant children." And he adds: "There is altogether wanting any conclusive proof-text for the baptism of children in the age of the apostles." (*Comm. N. T.*, Acts 16:14, 15. Kendrick's Trans.)

Most manifestly, all of her household, whoever they were, or whatever their age, believed—as she herself did—before they were baptized; of this opinion also were Whitby, Lawson, the Assembly of Divines, and other Pedobaptist authorities.

The case of the Philippian jailer, and his household, mentioned also in Acts 16, is another often referred to by the advocates of this rite. Now, observe that Paul and Silas being released from their confinement, spake the word of the Lord to the jailer, "and to all that were in his house." Whether adults or infants, the gospel was preached to them. And the jailer "was baptized, he and all his, straightway." Then, "he rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house." Observe the jailer's family was baptized; but

first, they listened to the Word; then they believed in God; and then they rejoiced in their new-found hope.

Such a record could never have been made of unconscious infants. Not a word is said of children; there is not even the most remote allusion to them. But the language most conclusively implies that those who were baptized were those who did believe and did rejoice. So that, whether the persons were old or young, it must have been believers' baptism.

BLOOMFIELD says: "It is taken for granted that his family became Christians, as well as himself." (*Comm. on Acts 16:31*)

Such is the faith of Baptists, and such the command of Christ: "Believe and be baptized." Calvin, Doddridge, Henry, and other Pedobaptists, declare that in this case they all believed, and, therefore, they were baptized, and did rejoice.

The household of Stephanas, baptized by Paul, and by him mentioned in 1 Cor. 1, is also quoted in support of this baptismal theory. Paul says: "And I baptized also the household of Stephanas." It is inferred here, in like manner, that because a household was baptized, therefore, that household had infants in it, incapable of faith, and they too were baptized. How entirely gratuitous is such an inference, and how utterly without foundation must be a theory based on such an assumption. If there were children, why not somewhere some mention of them? Households are constantly being baptized, and admitted to the fellowship of Baptist churches, but without infant baptism. Doddridge, Guise, Hammond, Macknight, and others, regard this case as giving no countenance to the custom of baptizing infants.

Of this very family of Stephanas, Paul, in the sixteenth chapter asserts, were "the first fruits of Achaia;" and he adds: "they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." This sounds, not as if said respecting infants, but as describing the Christian activities of adult believers. And such beyond all question were the household of Stephanas.

5. Again, some have claimed that baptism came in the place of circumcision. Hence it is inferred—only inferred—that as all the male Jewish children were circumcised, so all Christian children, both male and female, should be baptized. What the connection is between the two would require a sage to discover. Reasoning becomes unreliable when facts are perverted, resemblances forced, and unfounded assumptions accepted as arguments to sustain a theory supported neither by facts nor authoritative

teachings. Baptism did not come in place of circumcision, has no connection with it, and no reference whatever to it. For consider these things:

- a. If baptism, a Christian ordinance, was designed to take the place of circumcision, a Mosaic rite, would not Christ so have stated, or the apostles have mentioned the fact? But they never alluded to any such design.
- b. Circumcision applied only to males. If baptism takes its place, why are females baptized?
- c. Circumcision was an external sign of an external union with a national congregation, to secure the separation of the Jewish people from all other nations and races, and their unity as a nation. Baptism is an external sign of an inward and spiritual work of grace, already wrought in the heart; and indicates, not the separation of races, but the unity of the true people of God, of all races as believers in Christ, without distinction of blood or tongue.
- d. If baptism did take the place of circumcision, evidently the apostles did not know it; else they would have made some mention of it, either in the council at Jerusalem, or in epistles written for the guidance of the churches, or on other occasions, when both these subjects were discussed, and directions given respecting them. But no allusion is anywhere made to any such substitution.
- e. Jewish Christians did not understand that baptism had taken the place of circumcision; otherwise, they would not have insisted that converts to the Christian faith should receive both these rites. Indeed the whole attempt to found a Christian ordinance on a Jewish ceremony is unreasonable and absurd.

Baptism is an external sign of an inward and spiritual work of grace, already wrought in the heart.

OBJECTIONS TO INFANT BAPTISM

- 1. Its assumptions are false. It claims to be a gospel ordinance, when it is an invention of men. Christ did not appoint it; the apostles did not practice it; the Scriptures do not sanction it. This is sufficient reason why it should not be held as a Christian rite.
- 2. It impugns divine wisdom, and insults the divine authority because it claims to be needful, or useful in the church, though Christ, by not appointing it when he instituted the church, virtually decided it to be neither

needful nor useful. And also by binding this service on the consciences of Christian parents, as of religious obligation, when God has not commanded it, there is an unwarrantable assumption of authority, and a grievous wrong is committed. Divine wisdom knew best what positive institutions to ordain, and what positive commands to lay upon the people.

3. It deprives Christian converts of the pleasure and privilege of believers' baptism. For having received the rite in their unconscious infancy, without their knowledge or consent, when in after years they become regenerate and truly united to Christ, they cannot go forward in the voluntary discharge of this duty, and be baptized on a confession of their faith, without discrediting and rejecting their earlier baptism.

4. Because it appears like a solemn mockery, for parents and sponsors, to become sureties for the child about to be baptized, and declare for it, that they believe in God's holy Word, and the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the Apostles' Creed; that they will renounce the vain pomp of the world, the devil and all his works, with all covetous and sinful desires of the flesh.

5. Because it requires the officiating minister to declare what is false in the very performance of what should be a most sacred service. He declares what is false when he says: "I baptize thee;" since he rants, or sprinkles, and does not baptize at all. Still more, and if possible more recklessly, when he asserts that in this act the child, "is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church;" and also when in prayer he thanks God, "that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant, with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption; and to incorporate him into thy holy church." This is solemnly declared, when no such thing is done, and when the minister who says it, and all who hear it said, know that no such thing is done:—unless indeed, they do, in their hearts, believe in baptismal regeneration. But the child is not regenerate, nor adopted of God, nor incorporated into the church of Christ by this act. The service falsifies the facts.

6. But, and perhaps worst of all, infant baptism teaches still, to a certain extent, baptismal regeneration; of which false and dangerous dogma this rite was born. It is more than a false statement—it is a pernicious and destructive error to teach, or allow the notion, that a few drops of water on the face with any form of words, no matter what, can make that child regenerate, a child of God by adoption,

and a member of Christ's church. If the child when grown believes all this,—and why may he not believe it, if thus solemnly taught by parents and minister? He believes himself a child of God and an heir of heaven, sealed and sanctified by the Spirit, and in the narrow way of life, while blind to the fact that he is still unregenerate, in the gall of bitterness, a child of sin, an heir of wrath, and in the broad road to death. Such perversions, —such blind leadings of the blind,—are too serious, and too sad, to be countenanced by Christian men or Christian churches.

7. Infant baptism, in some sense,—though its advocates are not agreed in what sense,—makes the child a church member, and thus introduces an unsanctified, unregenerate membership into the nominal body of Christ, making that body carnal instead of keeping it spiritual, thus destroying the distinction which the Founder of the church designed should be maintained between it, and the world. For even if the infant, as such, is not a member, yet when

grown to maturity he is admitted to full membership, with no other demand for, or evidence of, regeneration. The purely spiritual character of the church is thereby destroyed, and like other associations, the spiritual and the carnal indifferently make up its communion.

The words of Prof. Lange are weighty, and, should be pondered by Protestant defenders of this Papal emanation: "Would the Protestant Churches fulfill and attain to their final destiny, the baptism of new-born children must of necessity be abolished. It has sunk down to a mere formality, without any meaning for the child." (*Hist. Protestantism*, p. 34)

There may be other objections to this practice, but these are sufficient, it would seem, to deter any candid and conscientious Christian, who takes the Bible for his guide from giving it any countenance or support.



Joseph and Mary

From *The Baptist Challenge*, September 2015

Matthew and Luke, the first and third Evangelists, tell us all that we are told of Mary. They tell us that she was the espoused wife of Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, and that the divine call came to her after her espousal to Joseph and before her marriage.

What a call it was and what a prospect opened up! No sooner was Mary left alone of the angel than she began to realize something of what had been appointed her, and what she must now herself pass through. The sharp sword that the aged Simeon afterwards spoke of with such passion was already whetted, and was fast approaching her devoted and expressed heart.

On a thousand sacred canvasses throughout Christendom we are shown the angel of the annunciation presenting Mary with a branch of lily as an emblem of her beauty and as a seal of her purity.

But why has no spiritual artist stained the whiteness of the lily with the red blood of a broken heart? For no sooner had the transfiguring light of the angel's presence faded from her sight than a deep and awful darkness began to fall upon Joseph's espoused wife. Surely if ever a suffering soul had to seek all its righteousness and all its strength in God alone, it was the soul of the Virgin Mary in those terrible days that followed the annunciation. Blessed among

"Hail, thou are highly favored of the Lord," the angel had said to her. But all that would seem but so many mocking words to her as she saw nothing before her but an open shame, and it might well be an outcast's death.

women as all the time she was unblemished in soul and in body like the paschal lamb as she was; like the paschal lamb also she was set apart to be a divine sacrifice, and to have a sword thrust through her heart.

Mary must have passed through many dark and dreadful days when all she had given her to lean upon would seem like a broken reed. "Hail, thou are highly favored of the Lord," the angel had said to her. But all that would seem but so many mocking words to her as she saw nothing before her but an open shame, and it might well be an outcast's death. And, so fearfully and wonderfully are

we made, and so fearful and wonderful was the way in which the Word was made flesh, that who can tell how all this may have borne on Him who was bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh; to whom Mary was in all things a mother, as He was in all things to her a son.

For, hers was the face that unto Christ had most resemblance. Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. These are the beginnings of sorrows.

Joseph's part in all this is told by Matthew alone. And as we read that Evangelist's particular account of that time, we see how sharp that sword which pierced Joseph's soul also. His heart was broken with this terrible trial, but there was only one course left open to him. Conclude the marriage he would not, but neither could he consent to make Mary a public example, and there was only left to him the sad step of revoking the contract and putting her away privately.

Joseph's heart must have been torn in two. For Mary had been the woman of all women to him. She had been in his eyes the lily among thorns. And now to have to treat her like a poisonous weed — the thought of it drove him mad. Oh, why is it that whosoever comes at all near Jesus Christ has always to drink such a cup of sorrow? Truly they who are brother or sister or mother to Him must take up their cross daily. These are they who go up through great tribulation.

What a journey that must have been of Mary from Nazareth to Hebron, and occupied with what thoughts. Mary's way would lead her through Jerusalem. She may have crossed Olivet as the sun was setting. She may have knelt at even in Gethsemane. She may have turned aside to look on the city from Calvary.

What a heavy heart she must have carried through all these scenes as she went into the hill country with haste. Only two out of God, knew the truth about Mary; an angel in heaven, and her own heart on earth.

And thus it was that she fled to the mountains of Judah, hoping to find there an aged kinswoman of hers who would receive her word and would somewhat understand her case.

As she stumbled on drunk with sorrow Mary must have recalled and repeated many blessed scriptures, well-known to her indeed, but till then little understood.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass; and he shall bring forth thy

righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." (Ps. 37:5, 6) "Thou shalt keep them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of men; thou shalt keep them in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." (Ps. 31:20) Such a pavilion Mary sought and for a season found it in the remote and retired household of Zacharias and Elisabeth.

It is in the meeting of Mary and Elisabeth that we owe the Magnificat, the last Old Testament psalm and the first New Testament hymn. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." (Luke 1:46, 47)

We cannot enter into all of Mary's thoughts as she sang that spiritual song, any more than she could in her day enter into all our thoughts as we sing it. For, noble melody as her Magnificat is, it draws its deepest tones from a time that was still to come. The spirit of Christian prophecy moved her to utter it, but the noblest and fullest prophecy concerning Christ fell far short of the evangelistic fulfillment.

She is a happy maiden who has a mother or a motherly friend much experienced in the ways of the human heart to whom she can tell all her anxieties; a wise, tender, much-experienced counselor, such as Naomi was to Ruth and Elisabeth to Mary. Was the Virgin an orphan, or was Mary's mother such a woman that Mary could have opened her heart to any stranger rather than to her? Be that as it may, Mary found a true mother in Elisabeth of Hebron.

Many a holy hour the two women spent together sitting under the terebinths that overhung the dumb Zacharias' secluded house. And, if at any time their faith wavered and the thing seemed impossible, was not Zacharias beside them with his sealed lips and his writing table, a living witness to the goodness and severity of God? Now Mary and Elisabeth would stagger and reason and rebuke and comfort one another, now laughing like Sarah, now singing like Hannah, yet loving and confiding and pious women tell.

Sweet as it is to linger in Hebron beside Mary and Elisabeth, our hearts are always drawn back to Joseph in his unspeakable agony. The absent are dear, just as the dead are perfect. And Mary's dear image became to Joseph dearer still when he could no longer see her face or hear her voice. Nazareth was empty to Joseph; it was worse than empty, it was a city of sepulchres in which he sought for death and could not find it.

Day after day, week after week, Joseph's misery increased, and when, as his wont was, he went up to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, that only made him feel his loneliness

and his misery all the more. Mary's sweet presence had often made the holy place still more holy to him, and her voice in the Psalms had been to him as when an angel sings.

On one of those Sabbaths which the exiled Virgin was spending at Hebron Joseph went up again to the sanctuary in Nazareth seeking to hide his great grief with God. And this, I feel sure, was the scripture appointed to be read in the synagogue that day.

"Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and they shall call his name Immanuel." (Isa. 7:11, 14)

Joseph's heart was absolutely overwhelmed within him as he listened to that astounding scripture. Never had ear or heart of man heard these amazing words as Joseph heard them that day. And then, when he laid himself down to sleep that night, his pillow became like a stone under his head. Not that he was cast out; but he had cast out another, and she the best of God's creatures. Ay, and she perhaps — how shall he whisper it even to himself at midnight — the virgin-mother of Immanuel! A better mother he could not have.

So speaking to himself till he was terrified at his own thoughts, weary with another week's lonely labor, and aged with many weeks' agony and despair, Joseph fell asleep.

Then a thing was secretly brought to him, and his ear received a little thereof. There was silence, and he heard a voice say to him, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." (Matt. 1:20) Gabriel was sent to reassure Joseph's despairing heart, to demand the consummation of the broken-off marriage, and to announce the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Did Joseph arise before daybreak and set out for Hebron to bring his outcast home? There is room to believe that he did. If he did, the two angel-chastened men must have had their own thoughts and counsels together even as the two chosen women had. And as Joseph talked with Zacharias through his writing table, he must have felt that dumbness, and even death itself, would be but a light punishment for such unbelief and such cruelty as his.

But all this, and all they had passed through since the angel came to Zacharias at the altar, only made the re-betrothal of Joseph and Mary the sweeter and the holier, with the aged priest acting more than the part of a father, and Elisabeth acting more than the part of a mother.

For my own part, I do not know the gift or the grace or the virtue any woman ever had that I could safely deny to Mary. The divine congruity compels me to believe that all that could be received or attained or exercised by any woman would be granted beforehand, and all but without measure, to her who was so miraculously to bear, and so intimately and influentially to nurture and instruct the Holy Child.

We must give Mary her promised due. We must not allow ourselves to entertain a grudge against the mother of our Lord because some enthusiasts for her have given her more than her due. There is no fear of our thinking too much either of Mary's maidenly virtues, or of her motherly duties and experiences. The Holy Ghost in guiding the researches of Luke, and in superintending the composition of the third Gospel, especially signalizes the depth and the piety and the peace of Mary's mind.

We must not allow ourselves to entertain a grudge against the mother of our Lord because some enthusiasts for her have given her more than her due.

At the angel's salutation she did not swoon nor cry out. She did not rush into terror on the one hand or into transport on the other. But like the heavenly-minded maiden she

was, she cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And later on, when all who heard it were wondering at the testimony of the shepherds, it is instructively added that Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And yet again, when another twelve years have passed by, we find the same Evangelist still pointing out the same distinguishing features of Mary's saintly character. "They understood not the saying which Jesus spake unto them...but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." (Luke 2: 50, 51)

And again, if we are to apply this sure principle to Mary's case, "according to your faith be it unto you," (Matt. 9:29) then Mary must surely wear the crown as the mother of all them who believe on her Son. If Abraham's faith has made him the father of all those who believe, surely Mary's faith entitles her to be called their mother. If the converse of our Lord's words holds true, that no mighty work is done where there is unbelief; if we may safely reason that where there has been a mighty work done there must have been a corresponding and a cooperating faith; then I do not think we can easily overestimate the measure of Mary's faith.

If this was the greatest work ever wrought by the power and the grace of Almighty God among the children of men, and if Mary's faith entered into it at all, then how great her faith must have been! Elisabeth saw with wonder and with worship how great it was. She saw the unparalleled grace that had come to Mary, and she had humility and magnanimity enough to acknowledge it. "Blessed art thou among women." Blessed is she that believeth, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." (Luke 1:42, 45) "Blessed is she that believeth," said Elisabeth, no doubt with some sad thoughts about herself and about her dumb husband sitting beside her.

Nonetheless as truly blessed as Mary was in her unique calling, the Lord made it clear that there are those who can be even more greatly blessed than she was. There was an occasion when a nameless but true woman spoke out, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and blessed be the paps which thou hast sucked." (Luke 11:27)

But our Lord answered her, and said, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." (Luke 11:28)

And again, "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Matt. 12:50)



The Forbidden Alliance

T. T. Eaton

From *Talks on Getting Married*, 1891

"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." (1 Cor. 6:14)

How worldly the churches are today! How far they are from being God's peculiar people, strangers and pilgrims on their way to another world and looking upon this as an inn where they shall tarry but a night and never return to it! As we think of this, the commandment comes home to us with peculiar force, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Which one of you has ever changed his plans or given up anything on which her heart was set because of this command? It is startling to think how little effect this plain, straightforward, unmistakable command of God has on the lives of Christians today.

There are some things which are self-evident to all who admit the truth of Christianity. Among them are that God's Word is as unchangeable as He—not varying with the times nor changing with the seasons, and that He is an absolute sovereign. If He chooses to explain His reasons, we must be grateful; if He does not, the obligation on us to obey is nonetheless binding. All we have a right to ask is, "What did He say?" To ask, "Why did He say it?" is presumption. Imagine a private saying to his general on the battlefield, "Why do you give me this order? I must understand and approve your reasons before obeying it."

There must be no question of expediency, or of your own desires or interests, when God commands. "Thus saith the Lord" must be an end to all controversy and to all hesitation. Consequences must be left in His hands. It will not do to say, "I cannot succeed, I cannot live;" still less, "I cannot be happy unless I disobey" the least of the commandments. Your success, your life and your happiness are God's business, not yours. You are meddling with what does not belong to you whenever you stop to consider what effect His commands will have on these things. Your duty is simple, unquestioning obedience to every "Thus saith the Lord." "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Eccl. 12:13)

What an example for all time we have in the grand obedience of Abraham. There was no doubt about the command, no possibility of mistake in the order to sacrifice his son, his only son, Isaac. Think of the unswerving faith which was back of Abraham's readiness to obey that command. God seemed to contradict His own promise, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." (Gen 21:12) In the epistle to the Hebrews we are given a glimpse into Abraham's thoughts as he took that memorable journey to the

mountain, and it is precious as a revelation of the character of him who was called "the friend of God." (James 2:23)

Going to his awful task, Abraham is not thinking of his own grief, of the loneliness of his old age, or of the horror and anguish of Sarah when he shall tell her of Isaac's death. If ever a man was justifiable in thinking of himself, or excusable for hesitating to obey, then was the time. He did not wait to reconcile the seeming conflict between the promise and the command. That would have been to sit in judgment upon God. Abraham obeyed promptly. God must be true, Isaac's seed must inherit this land, and therefore Isaac will be restored to life. Such were the father's thoughts, we are told in Hebrews — ah! What faith was there! He had never heard of one's being raised from the dead — but God's power was infinite. An unheard of miracle Abraham could easily believe would be worked, but that God's promise should fail he could not believe.

THE MEANING OF THE TEXT

And now, with these self-evident truths laid down, and Abraham as an example before us, let us consider the text, asking the only question we ought to ask, "What hath God said?"

"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." There is reference to the command in Deuteronomy which forbade an Israelite to yoke together an ox and an ass. They were the animals most used in farm work and which would be most liable to be yoked together. The one was a clean animal, under the law, and the other unclean. This command might bear hard on the poor farmers. If one of his oxen had been injured in the busy season, it might be a great inconvenience and a serious loss to him not to be allowed to harness an ox and an ass together for work in the fields. What possible harm it could do, the farmer might not be able to see. Then why, he might ask, should God, who cares so for the poor, give a command which would bear often hard on them and not so on the rich with their many yokes of oxen? But there the command stood, requiring obedience, and to it the apostle makes reference in the text.

The idea held forth is that believers are a distinct and separate species. All through the Bible this distinction is sharply and clearly made. No matter how amiable or honorable an unbeliever may be, he is a child of sin, a child of the devil, an enemy of God, a goat to be driven away at

last, and one who is condemned already. The Bible knows no middle class. There are to be different degrees of punishment and reward in the hereafter, but between the two classes, the saved and the lost, there is, even in this world, a great gulf. Thank God! It is not yet a great gulf fixed, for now there is a bridge, the atonement of Christ, across which whosoever will may go. But the bridge does not remove the gulf or lessen its width by one inch; it only spans it while the day of grace lasts.

Never forget, and never allow others to forget, that saints and sinners are a distinct species, incapable of amalgamation.

Under the Levitical law there was nothing partly clean and partly unclean. Whoever touched, an unclean thing became himself unclean till he was purified. There was no sharper distinction between those in the ark and those without,

between the Israelites and the Gentiles, than there is between every regenerate and every unregenerate soul. And this sharp distinction of species must not be lost sight of. It is the grandest cruelty to the unconverted to allow them to forget the great gulf between them and the saved. It leads them to lose sight of the vital importance of a change of heart. So sure as the church grows worldly, so sure does the world begin to think that regeneration is a small matter, that a decorous walk is all that is necessary, and that God is too merciful to be hard on a man who has been guilty of no daring sin or crime.

Never forget, and never allow others to forget, that saints and sinners are a distinct species, incapable of amalgamation. Let the line be drawn sharply. This does not mean that we should set ourselves up as holier than others; very far is it from thanking God in a pharisaical spirit that we are not like other men. It is rather like a man, himself rescued from a great peril, striving to rescue others. I have seen it in the papers that a Spaniard has discovered a method of inoculation which gives perfect security against cholera. Suppose that dread disease was raging in its full fury in this city, and you had been inoculated and were safe from all danger. Would you be proud of the gulf between you and those who were in peril? Would your continually reminding them of their danger and urging them to accept the remedy which had saved you — would this be any proof of pharisaism on your part? Would your never making any allusion to the remedy be any proof of love and consideration for them? Would it not rather be proof of criminal inhumanity?

NO ALLIANCE WITH UNBELIEVERS

"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," — not merely with infidels or heathen, but unbelievers. The

command in Deuteronomy is not against yoking an ox with a lion or a tiger or any wild beast, but against thus joining in work an ox with a domesticated animal, grazing in the same pasture in peace. If you are an earnest Christian, on fire with love to God, a heathen would not desire to be yoked with you. Felix would not have been willing to be yoked to Paul, who had too much to say about righteousness, temperance and a judgment to come, to be comfortable. It is with unbelievers we are forbidden to be yoked. And this word, which is rightly translated unbelievers, means also "disobedient ones," for the clear Greek mind saw that there could be no obedience without faith. There may be a sort of faith without obedience, for "the devils also believe and tremble" (James 2:19), yet do not obey. But there can be no obedience without faith, though it be only the slave's faith in the power and purpose of the master to punish. It is therefore the unbelieving and disobedient with whom Christians must not be yoked.

Let us next inquire what the Holy Spirit meant by the words "unequally yoked together," with an earnest desire to do just what He requires without any effort to explain away the words or give reasons why we cannot obey Him. Let us not be fearful of consequences, for we may be sure God knew what He was about when He gave us these commands, and it is ours simply to learn and to do what He has directed, leaving results to Him. It is but one word in the Greek which we translate "unequally yoked together," and it occurs only in this passage.

The meaning is "unequally yoked together," so that progress in the right way would be hindered. And the command forbids any alliance which will be in the way of our spiritual growth and progress. We must consider God first of all in every relation of life, which we choose for ourselves. We cannot decide in reference to who shall be our fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters, but we can and must see to it that these relationships do not hinder our obedience to Christ. "If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26)

THE COMMAND IS EXCEEDINGLY BROAD

But in our marriage, our business relations, and our intimate friendships, we are free to choose, and therefore for these choices, we are responsible. In these things we must not for a moment forget our obligation to make our pleasure and our worldly successes entirely subordinate to God's glory. The text does not refer specially to marriage, as is so often taken for granted in quoting the passage. It refers to all connections and relationships in the world, and

to marriage only as one of these connections. But it is one, and one of transcendent importance, because of its intimacy and because it is for life. Every Christian should decide the question of marriage with an eye single to God's glory. Will I be more useful, more Christ-like in character, more separate from the world, and more devoted to God by marrying this person than by marrying some other, or by remaining single? This is first of all, and above all. God will not be made a secondary consideration.

The right treatment of this text does not require that I should dwell upon this point, but I will say that many, especially Christian women, have suffered in themselves, and in their children by reason of their disloyalty to God in the matter of marriage. Excuse my saying that Christian women, as a rule, more recklessly disobey this command than do Christian men. Thoughtful men, though they are unbelievers, know how largely their reverence for their mothers is based on the piety of those mothers, and they desire their sons to grow up with similar reverence. The thought of a Godless mother is revolting to us all, and men who care for the character of their sons will not lightly expose them to the danger of having Godless mothers by marrying women who are ungodly, in the vague hope that they may be converted afterwards.

The commandment, however, refers to all working together in any relation into which sin enters or which hinders the Christian's growth in grace or usefulness in the kingdom of God. It forbids all business connections which lead to violations of our Lord's commands. A Christian must not enter in partnership in a business which involves any dishonesty, or trickery, or gambling. It is not enough that he is not directly responsible for the sin, or that he does not do it himself and cannot prevent others doing it. If he profits by the iniquity he is guilty. He must not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers thus; he should come out from among them and be separate, and touch no unclean thing, as saith the Lord. (2 Cor. 6:17) Neither his name, his talent, his influence, nor his money must be used in any business where God's commands are disregarded. He must not rent his property for sinful uses, nor imagine the Lord will hold him guiltless because he shuts his eyes to what is done with his estate.

A Christian must not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers in any corporation which denigrates the Scriptures. One of our greatest preachers has said, "If any business leads to the necessary violation of the Scriptures, then the case is plain. A Christian is to 'have no fellowship with such unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.'" (Eph. 5:11) Do you say, in amazement, "This is too hard! In these days of corporations and partnerships, who

can avoid being yoked thus with unbelievers?" Did I not tell you at the beginning that the churches have become so worldly that many professing Christians stand aghast before the plain teaching of God's Word? Do you suppose that God changes his law one jot or tittle because of the commercial transactions of the Nineteenth Century? "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17, 18) Can any human being mock God by refusing to obey this command, and yet hope that God will be a Father to him while he persists in such refusal?

OBJECTION

It may be objected that withdrawing from every alliance which involves dishonest dealings or the violation of any of God's commands might result in financial ruin. What of that? In a few years financial success or ruin will be a matter of no consequence to you, my friend, and as you stand before the Judgment Seat no one will ask how much money you made in life; the one question then will be, and it is a question of vital and everlasting consequence, "Have you obeyed the commandments of God?" But other Christians do not obey this requirement! What of that? You are not to be judged by the conduct of Christians, but by the Word of God. But it does not involve financial ruin to maintain a good conscience before God.

It is true that but for the support of professed Christians many of the worst evils in our land would not be sustained. Suppose all who wear Christ's name refused to be identified with any business which involved the violation of Bible teaching—how long till such business would cease? The terrible growth of worldliness, the easy yielding to being yoked together with unbelievers, which has made such strides in our churches in the last fifty years, was recently brought home to me quite sharply. On the very day this article was published, Dr. Link offered a resolution in the Southern Baptist Convention, changing the day of meeting from Wednesday to Friday, because if the Convention adjourned on Saturday night, as was usual, the delegates would travel on Sunday! And observe that the majority of the delegates are pastors! Like people, like priest! When the Lord comes, will He find faith and obedience in the earth?

It is the old story of Saul and the cattle spared for the sacrifice. Our churches are growing in members, wealth, education, and what is called Christian activity, but are we growing in earnest love for God's Word and faithful

obedience to His commands? Will He compromise with us — so much Christian activity for so much being yoked together in disobedience with unbelievers? We must have no part whatever in business or amusement which involves the violation of God's commandments. This is the first meaning of the text.

THE TWO YOKES

And the second meaning is like unto it. "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Christians have their yoke, and unbelievers have theirs. The one is the yoke of Christ — "take my yoke upon you" (Matt. 11:29)—and the other is the yoke of the world, the flesh, and the devil; the yoke of selfishness, of living for pleasure, of money-loving; in brief, of making God's commandments a secondary consideration, and of being indifferent to a plain "thus saith the Lord." This interpretation covers much of the ground of the other, and it grows deeper in cutting away all conformity to the world. It is the unbeliever's yoke a Christian wears when he has any part or lot in any business or pleasure which involves sin. How often does the apostle enforce this command, and how wicked as well as absurd it is for Christians to wear the yoke of unbelievers!

APPLICATION

"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Are you obeying this command, or are you ignoring it? If you have violated it in the past, will you ask God to forgive you and to grant you grace to obey it in the future? Think you this will be hard? Religion never was - intended to be child's play. But it is hard only to the carnal nature, and Oh, the glorious promise if you will obey!

"Wherefore, come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father-, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The infinite God rises up in his might and majesty as He makes this promise — lest any should fear the consequences to their temporal interests of obedience to this command. Sons and daughters to the Lord Almighty!

There could be no grander promise than that, for time and for eternity — sons and daughters to the Lord Almighty! And may the Holy Spirit carry home to every heart the exhortation of the apostle which follows: Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God!" (2 Cor. 7:1)

God Firmly Against Unmarried Couples Living Together

Nick Michalinos

From *The Baptist Challenge*, November 2015

Question: Does God care if a man and a woman are not legally married yet want to live together?

Answer: To know the mind of God, we must look at the Word of God. Your question is one that needs to be clearly answered in this day when pre-marital sex and living together outside of marriage are being accepted as normal life styles.

Let me show you from the Scriptures that God is against an unmarried couple living together as husband and wife. He is opposed to all acts of sex outside the bounds of marriage, contrary to the standards set-up by a rebellious, Godless society world-wide.

We read in Hebrews 13:4 "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers (Gk. " *pornos*," fornicators) and adulterers God will judge." Here it is stated that "Marriage is honourable in all," without exception, even to ministers (1 Tim. 3:2).

The word "honourable" means "something of real value, of great worth, and in this state the marriage bed is said to be "undefiled," that is, "without stain, free from condemnation." While on the other hand, those fornicators and adulterers, who use the bed for sexual purposes outside the marriage state, are guilty of staining the bed with sin and are doomed to face judgment before God.

God was responsible for performing the first marriage when He brought Adam and Eve together as husband and wife (Gen. 2:21-24), and their offspring followed this marriage pattern.

There is nothing shameful in itself about sex. God made us the way we are. He created sex. He made our bodies with

their natural mating instincts and desires. It is not wrong for a man to be attracted to a woman, or vice versa. But all of these urges must be controlled and curbed until the marriage state takes place.

Paul writes: "*Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband*" (1 Cor. 7:2). If you will notice, he didn't say to avoid fornication for the man to "get a woman," but get a "wife," for marriage would lawfully meet his needs in this area.

He goes on to say that if a man or woman "cannot contain (restrain their passions by remaining single), let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn [with passion]" (1 Cor 7:9). Sex within the marriage relationship is right and normal. Sex outside this relationship is wrong and contrary to the will of God.

Marriage is used as a figure of New Testament churches in their union with Christ (Eph. 5:23, 29, 31-32; 1 Cor. 11:3; Rom. 7:4). Christ performed His first recorded miracle at a wedding in Cana (John. 2:1-10). God places His approval on scriptural marriages for it is written, "what *God hath joined together*, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6). We are exhorted to "flee fornication" (1 Cor. 6:18), and "avoid fornication" (1 Cor. 7:2).

Fornication is a sin that can be washed away by the blood of Christ, just like any other sin (1 Cor. 6:9-11). The scriptural answer to fornication is marriage (1 Cor. 7:2, 9), but to the Christian (only in the Lord) [to another Christian]" (1 Cor. 7:19; 2 Cor. 6:14).



***When You Feel Down In the Mouth Think of Jonah.
He Came Out Alright.***