

The Present Office of Jesus Christ

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It is our mercy that we have now to do with a living Saviour. The grandeur of the work achieved in Gethsemane and on Calvary, will ever make it pleasant and profitable for us to linger by those scenes of mingled woe and triumph. The cross and the sepulchre will always be to us the symbols of our redemption. But we may not tarry forever here, for the sepulchre is now empty, and as we stand in thought at its mouth we seem to hear the angel say, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen." (Luke 24:6) While the voice of the Master Himself is heard proclaiming, "I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of death and of Hades." (Rev. 1:18)

We have then to consider our Lord in His risen glory. We shall examine the Scripture testimony to His present position and offices.

1. The risen Saviour is alive, never to die again. His own words are, "Behold, I am alive again FOR EVERMORE." (Rev. 1:18) "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, FOR EVER sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10:12-14)

This great fact is the evidence of the truth of an important theological doctrine, for it demonstrates the perfection of the Redeemer's work. It proves that there is no need for any other sacrifice for sin; and hence the immortality of the risen Christ is, to all who trust in His great propitiation, a proof of the reality of their acceptance by God. "He was raised again for our justification;" (Rom. 4:25), because His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of power are irresistible evidences of the acceptance by eternal justice of that work in which we trust. An enthroned Christ is to us a pledge of security; for the acceptance of His work being thus declared, the safety of all those who trust in that work is at the same time made manifest.

2. The risen Redeemer is constituted the head of the resurrection. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." (I Cor. 15:20) "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:28, 29) Having triumphed over death and the grave, the keys of both are now in His hands. They have been surrendered to His authority. "He has the keys of death and of Hades." (Rev. 1:18) "He openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." (Rev. 3:7)

The entire control of the invisible world, and of the entrances into it, as well as of egress out of it, is with Him. He fixeth the hour when the breath shall quit our nostrils, and the body shall return to the earth from which it was taken. He, too, will speak the word which shall call the bodies of all men from the slumbers of the tomb. And, verily, to the believer who knows that he must soon die, it is an encouraging thought that fearful death and the dark grave are under the absolute control of "Him who was dead, and is alive again for evermore." Surely we need not fear entering upon any territory where HE reigns, however gloomy it may look in the distance! Will not His supremacy, presence, and grace convert it into a region of light?

"In each of the three grand epochs of the Church, an example has been given of a man raised to heaven in both body and soul, to sustain the hope which all the faithful possess of arriving at the same happiness. Enoch furnished the first of these examples before the law; Elias the next, under the legal economy; and Jesus Christ, our great leader, the last, under the dispensation of the gospel God has so ordered the light in each of these three periods, that it has appeared by degrees, until it has shone in all its lustre. It was a propitious sign for believers of the first world, when they saw a good man disappear, and receive a residence, after his sojourn upon the earth, in another place than the tomb.

"It was a still greater presumption in favour of those who lived under the second period, when they saw the heavens open to receive one of their prophets, who was carried thither in a chariot of fire.

"But it is a demonstration to Christians, and like a taking possession of that which they are expecting, to see the finisher of their faith traversing the vast spaces which separate the heaven and the earth, listening to the Church triumphant, which summons the gates of the palace of glory to open to receive Him (Ps. 24:7), and entering there Himself, to prepare in that blessed region the 'places which He destines for them. It became us to have such a sovereign priest, holy, innocent, without fault, separate from sinners, exalted above all the heavens.'" (Heb. 7:26). *Discours Historiques, Critiques, Theologiques, et Moraux*," par M. Saurin, vol. i. pp. 72, 73.

3. Our ascended Lord is invested with dominion over the universe. "He has all power in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18) "He has power over all flesh." (John 17:2) "All things are put under Him." (Heb. 2:8) "The government is upon His shoulders." (Isa. 9:6, 7) "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son." (John 5:22) He is "Head over all things." (Ephes. 1:22) He has the "seven horns" of unlimited dominion. (Rev. 5:6) "He is over all." (Rom. 9:5) "He sits in the midst of the throne." (Rev. 5:6). "Let all the angels of God worship Him." (Heb. 1:6)

And this universal authority over every element, world, and creature, the Redeemer exercises for a special end—namely, the everlasting salvation and well-being of the Church. Has He "power over all flesh?" It is, "that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given Him." (John 17:2) "Is He head over all things?" He is so, "for His body, the Church." (Ephes. 1:22, 23) All things are in His hands, and hence "all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28) Let the pious reader refresh himself with the thought that the hands once pierced upon the cross now grasp and wield the thunders of retribution; and the voice once feeble and tremulous in death, now "speaketh, and it is done; commandeth, and it standeth fast." If thou who readest these pages belongest to Christ, then all things are thine, and thou art with the Lord a joint heir of the universe. (Rom. 8:17) Every atom, every world, and every event, is ruled for thy good; all are advancing the glorious consummation when thou shalt stand before the throne without spot, or blemish, or any such thing, for all are in the hands of Him who loved thee unto the death!

4. Though thus enthroned, our Lord is still the one Mediator between God and man. For it is of Christ as glorified that the Scripture affirms, that "there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ." (I Tim. 2:5) "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (I John 2:1) "He also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:34) "Christ has entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. 9:24) "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." (Heb. 7:25) "The forerunner is for us entered within the vail, even Jesus, made a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. 6:20); agreeably with the prediction of Zechariah, "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." (Zech. 6:13), that is, between the Father and the Son.

Thus, the Saviour, though invested with universal dominion, condescends to act the part of an Intercessor. He is still the Mediator, or daysman, between God and us.

But the Mediatorial office includes every other usually ascribed to Jesus:

a. It includes the kingly function. Our Lord is the Mediatorial King of the universe and of the Church. "The Father judgeth no man (personally and directly), but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." (John 5:22) Hence Christ is both "the wisdom of God and the power of God." (I Cor. 1:24) All divine rule is now administered in the name and by the authority of the God-man, on whose shoulders the government is laid (Isa. 9:6). "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him." (Ephes. 1:10) Thus the whole universe is placed under a Mediatorial King, and will remain so for ever. For heaven is "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (II Pet. 1:11) And after the millennium and the judgment, Jesus will still be in the throne.

For thus John the Apostle describes the final state of all things: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. 22:1) "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him (the Lamb); and they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads," (Rev. 22:3, 4). "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." (Rev. 21:22) "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Rev. 21:23) Thus, even after He has rendered up a final account of His administration of divine government at the last day (See I Cor. 15:24-28), and has, in the presence of an assembled universe, done homage to His Eternal Father as the Original Fountain of all authority, He will retain His regal supremacy, and will be confirmed in His kingdom forever.

And in the Church pre-eminently Jesus reigns as a Mediatorial King. He represents the entire Godhead. He is Lord of ordinances and of influences. (Matt. 5:21-48) He is the Lord of the Sabbath-day (Mark 2:28), and of all other divine institutions. He is seated as King on God's holy hill of Sion. (Psa. 2:6) He is the Head of His body the Church. By His presence He renders the assemblies of His saints pleasant and profitable. He sheds forth the influences of the Holy Spirit to make the word effectual to the conversion of souls. (John 14:16-18, and 16:7-14) He gives His servants wisdom wherewith to confound all gainsayers. (Luke 21:15) He holdeth in His right hand the ministerial stars which shine in the spiritual firmament, sustaining their brilliancy, and fixing the sphere in which they shall move. (Rev. 1:16) He walketh in the midst of the golden lamps, the Churches, to feed them with the oil of His grace, and to trim them with a godly discipline and watchfulness. (Rev. 2:1)

Every saint is sustained by His power and is governed by His laws. The strongest can do nothing without Him, and the weakest can do all things through Him, when He strengthens them. (Compare John 15:4, 5, and Phil. 4:13) Every step in their pilgrimage is ordered by His providence; and He will at last say to them, "It is enough; come up hither." And in His Father's house, He is now preparing a mansion for each of His disciples to which He will introduce its destined tenant. (John 14:2, 3) His hand will place the diadem of righteousness and life and glory upon the brow of each saint (II Tim. 4:8); and His name will be the burden of heaven's never-dying anthems. (Rev. 5:9-14)

Ecclesiastically, the Church has no head, no king, but Jesus, and the ascription of such a title to anyone but Him is an impiety and a blasphemy. On Him she depends for the laws by which she is to be governed, and the grace by which she is to be saved. No earthly monarch can intrude into the territories of Immanuel without grievous sin; and we deeply regret that our beloved Queen (whom may Heaven long preserve, and whose life is adorned so richly with private and public virtues) should retain so terrible a title as that of Head of the Church. May the day soon come when the Sovereign of these realms shall no longer be addressed by one of the peculiar and distinctive names of the Lord Jesus Christ!

b. The Mediatorial office includes the prophetic. Jesus Christ is that other Prophet like unto Moses, but infinitely greater than he, whom the Lord promised to raise up for His people. (Deut. 18:15-19) He is the Mediatorial Prophet, who teaches us with irresistible authority, for He is the incarnate Logos, or Wisdom of God. "Never man spake as He spake." (John 7:46) He executed the functions of the prophetic office in the days of His flesh, by the delivery of those marvellous discourses of His on God, and morals, and salvation. On all divine themes "He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Matt. 7:28, 29) On the most recondite questions, pertaining to the Divine nature, will, government, and grace, He spake with unflinching ease and confidence. The profoundest mysteries which had baffled the wisdom of all the sages of preceding ages, He solved in a few sentences. Grace was poured into His lips, and all His communications were pregnant with wisdom and truth.

And His teaching still lives among us by the records of the four gospels—those graphic chronicles of His sayings and doings! In them is preserved the ministry of our Lord; in their pages we seem still to hear the echo of His voice, and to see the footprints of His eventful pilgrimage!

The Apostles, too, spake in the name of Jesus. They were inspired by His Spirit, and were succoured by His grace. They were to perfect the exhibition of Christian truth; to consummate the work which their Master had commenced; and to give form and organization to the societies of the faithful. For Christ promised that He would be with them and would speak through them. (Matt. 10: 19, 20) And their instructions, too, like their Master's, have been preserved in the New Testament. So that the Spirit of Christ still speaks in the recorded acts and epistles of His Apostles.

With Mary we may now sit at His feet, and hear His voice. And the Holy Spirit, as the glorifier of Jesus, is still among us to apply the word of inspiration to our hearts, by opening the eyes of our understanding to perceive its majesty. He clothes His own word with might, and renders it the power of God unto salvation. Jesus, the Son of God, is still the mediatorial prophet of the whole Church. He is made unto us "wisdom" as well as "righteousness." (I Cor. 1: 30)

c. The Mediatorial office is pre-eminently priestly in its character. Jesus Christ is our "advocate with the Father" (I John 2:1); our "great High Priest" who "ever liveth to make intercession for us." (Heb. 7:25). His intercession is now carried on within the veil in heaven itself (Heb. 8:1); and it is to this principally that the Apostle refers when he says, "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (I Tim. 2:5)

The very presence of Christ in heaven is to us a propitiatory or mercy seat. "He is set forth as a propitiatory offering." (Rom. 3:25) And as the mercy seat was the appointed place of intercourse between God and the Israelites, so Christ Jesus is the medium of our approach to God, and of the acceptance of our prayers. But the ancient mercy seat was only approached at stated intervals on the annual day of expiation; our mercy seat is always accessible, because the Redeemer's one sacrifice is infinitely perfect and of everlasting efficacy. "Through Him (Jesus) we, both Jew and Gentile, have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Ephes. 2:18)

Our prayers may ascend in our darkest seasons, because Jesus is in heaven. We may always come secure of a gracious reception because our Mediator is not merely before the throne, but upon it. (Rev. 3:21) He is the mediatorial angel whom John beheld in vision at heaven's altar, having a golden censer. "And there was given unto Him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." (Rev. 8:3, 4) Though He is in the midst of the throne, He is still "the lamb" there. (Rev. 5:6) He retains His priestly character, though encompassed with all the splendours and royalties of heaven. "He is a priest upon His throne!" (Zech. 6:13)

John beheld a representation of His coronation in vision. Jesus came to Him that sat upon the throne, and challenged His right to take the book of Divine Providence, and unloose its seven seals of inscrutable mystery. And John saw Him as "a lamb that had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes." (Rev. 5:6). Not that Jesus literally carries His scars now in glory, any more than He has literally seven horns or seven eyes. We shall see no holes in His hands or His feet when we behold Him, for His hands now hold the seven stars, and His feet are like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace. (Rev. 1:15, 16)

The body in which our Lord appeared to His disciples on earth after His resurrection, but before His ascension, was not His glorified body, for it was still flesh and blood (Luke 24:39); and "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." (I Cor. 15:50) He had not yet ascended. (John 20:17) John beheld a symbolic representation of our Lord's glorified body, and it prostrated him as a dead man. (Rev. 1:12-17) There were no signs of ignominy upon that form: all traces of the cross and the tomb were gone. His countenance was no longer overspread with the pallor of death, but was as the sun shining in his strength; and His voice was no longer feeble and tremulous with soul anguish, but was majestic and powerful, as the rushing of many waters.

But though all traces of His wounds are gone, the efficacy of the blood which they once poured out still lives, and shall live forever. He is the Lamb in heaven! His sacrifice is still fragrant there! His voice is yet heard as an intercessor with God.

The intercession of Christ in heaven is not intended to supply any supposed defect in His atoning work; for, "by His one offering, He hath perfected for ever them who are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14) His intercession is simply the presentation of His already perfected sacrifice. His advocacy is founded upon the fact that He hath finished the work given Him to do upon earth. The intercession of Christ is the voice of the blood of sprinkling speaking within the veil, and that voice can never speak in vain.

Nor does the Redeemer plead because the Father is averse to our salvation, but simply that the Father may be glorified in all ages as the upholder of the rights of law and justice, a position which He occupies throughout the economy of our redemption. The Redeemer's sacrifice was offered to the Father; and His intercession is presented to Him, that cherubim and seraphim may ever recognise the connection between the propitiation and forgiveness. The standing intercession of Christ in heaven is an everlasting memorial of the fact that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9:22)

The great blessings for which our Lord prays are set forth in the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of St. John's gospel, and in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. They include the following things:

- the coming of the Holy Spirit as the convincer of the world (John 16:8)
- the teacher of believers (John 14:26)
- the comforter of saints (John 14:16)
- the continuance of this divine *Paraclete* with the Church for ever (John 14:16)
- the justification of all who trust in the atonement (Isa. 53:11, 12);
- their preservation from the evil influences of a corrupt world (John 17:11-15)
- their sanctification by means of revealed truth (John 17:17); and
- their preservation to behold their Lord face to face, and to share in His glory (John 17:24)

As to the peculiar method in which this intercession is carried on, the Scriptures are silent. Whether the great Mediator utters vocal prayer—prayer that is audible to the angels and redeemed spirits—or whether the whole is purely a mental process, we know not. All that is revealed is that the intercession is continually going on, and that all the inhabitants of heaven are cognizant of the fact.

It is important that the intercession of the Son should be distinguished from the intercession of the Spirit. The former is carried on in heaven, the latter upon earth; the former is for us, the latter is in us; the former pleads our cause before the throne of God, the latter sustains the cause of Christ in our souls; the former is an intercession of merit, the latter of power; in the former we are prayed for by the Mediator; by the latter the spirit of prayer is kindled and kept alive in our own hearts.

d. As Mediator, our Lord will dispense the awards of the last day. The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son. (John 5:22) Our Lord did not come to execute this judgment at His first appearance. Then He said, "I judge no man." (John 8:15) He had then to present Himself as an atonement for our sins, and had thus to lay the foundations of our salvation. "The Father sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:17)

But at the last day Jesus will descend to execute judgment. "The Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man." (John 5:27) That is to say the Son of Man whose regal investiture is described by Daniel the prophet. (Dan. 7:13, 14) Jesus Christ is the Mediatorial Judge of the universe. At His bar all generations of men will have to stand. (Matt. 25:31-46) The tremendous alternative of endless joy or woe will be decided for each by His award. Now He wears the priestly vest and girdle (Rev. 1:13), but then He will array Himself in the robes of judgment, and will preside at the last general assize of the universe. "The Father hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)

And surely this arrangement will be appropriate. It will be but right that the Bridegroom should welcome His spouse into the palace which He has by His blood and death purchased for her everlasting residence; and it will be equally becoming

that He whom the world has for ages rejected, should sentence His enemies to eternal perdition! Let Him whom the nations have despised, vindicate His right to the homage which He has claimed. Let outraged mercy and love incarnate sit in judgment upon those who have daringly rejected this unspeakable gift!

It will be appropriate that He, in whose nature the Godhead and humanity combine, should pronounce the final sentence of each member of our race. The Redeemer of men, Himself a man, will not be needlessly severe in His judgment of men. Terrible indeed will be the wrath of Jesus, when His long-suffering is over, and the day of vengeance has arrived. What more fearful than the spectacle of mercy arrayed for judgment! Nothing is so dreadful as exasperated love! The Lord Jesus will appear all the more terrible when He assumes the character of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, because He has so long been the Lamb of God!

Thus, Jesus is the Mediatorial King, Prophet, Priest, and Judge of men. And for ever will He be our medium of communion with the Godhead, for it is a truth, and will ever remain so, that "God dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, NOR CAN SEE" (I Tim. 6:16), in this or in any other state. Through eternity, then, we shall not approach an abstract Deity, but shall ever worship God in Christ.



Adoption

J. M. Pendleton

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While regeneration denotes a change of heart, and justification a change of state, Adoption seems to be a complex term which represents the believer as regenerated and justified. So far as this term is expressive of the feelings of God's children toward him, it coincides with regeneration, and so far as it expresses a relation of acceptance with God through Christ, it is identical with justification.

It may shed some light on the subject to say, that ancient nations—Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and others —were familiar with the process of civil adoption. By this process, children were taken from families of which they were natural members, introduced into other families, and made to sustain a legal relation thereto—a relation similar in its results to those of the natural relation. Such children were recognized as the children of those who had adopted them, and became their heirs. In view of this definition of civil adoption we can easily see that spiritual adoption is the act by which God takes those who were by nature children of wrath in a new relation to himself—a filial relation—involving their recognition and treatment as children. They are distinguished by the appellation "sons and daughters" of the "Lord Almighty." (See II Cor. 6:18)

Civil adoption and spiritual are in some respects similar, in others dissimilar. The points of similarity are such as these:

1. In each kind of adoption, the child is taken from another family. The fact that the child belongs to another family renders the adopting process necessary. Sinners, we know, are estranged from God, children of the devil, members of another family.
2. In each, the adopted child sustains a new relation to the adopter. This relation is a filial one which cannot possibly exist until the adopting act is performed.
3. In each, the adopted becomes the heir of the adopter. By the law of nature and by the civil law too, the child is regarded as the heir of the father. The adopted one is in the place of a child. Christians, having been adopted by God, are his heirs. They inherit from him, and their inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.

But there are points of dissimilarity:

1. Civil adoption, it is supposed, was first permitted for the benefit and comfort of the childless. There is nothing like this in spiritual adoption. Jehovah is not childless. The angels are "the sons of God," and they constitute "an innumerable company." These "sons of God shouted for joy "when the omnipotent Creator laid the foundations of the earth. (Job 38: 7)
2. In civil adoption, something amiable and attractive in the adopted excites the regard of the adopter. Hence, Pharaoh's daughter was charmed with the infant loveliness of Moses, had compassion on him, and adopted him as her son. We are told also, that Mordecai, because Esther was "fair and beautiful" and her parents were dead, "took her for his own daughter." (Esther 2:7) To instances like these, there is nothing similar in spiritual adoption. In the moral character of those whom God adopts, there is nothing attractive, but everything repulsive. They are his enemies, guilty of high treason against the King of glory. They bear the image of Satan, for they are of their father, the devil. The wickedness of their lives is only an expression of the greater wickedness of their hearts. Surely, God, in adopting such creatures into his family is prompted by nothing good or amiable in them, but by his amazing and infinite love.
3. In civil adoption, though a filial relation is established, there is not necessarily a filial disposition. Adopted children sometimes become moral monsters in human form. So base is their requital of the kindness of their benefactors as to sicken every benevolent heart. Spiritual adoption is always connected with a filial temperament. It is inseparable from regeneration, by which we are born of God and become his children through faith in Jesus Christ. Where the filial relation is established the filial affections are exercised. All whom God adopts love him as their gracious Father.

The privileges of adoption claim attention. They are many, and I name the following:

- 1. Unobstructed access to God.** The child can approach the father when a stranger would be repulsed. The son can gain admittance when the servant would ask a hearing in vain. The people of God may draw near to him at all times. He ever bids them welcome. They may approach him with confidence. He invites them to come boldly unto the throne of grace." (Heb. 4:16) Paul says, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:15) How delightful to feel the sublime joy resulting from fellowship with God! How cheering is his fatherly smile! Who that has experienced the blessedness of free access to God as a Father would exchange it for all that "earth calls good or great"?
- 2. The adopted are brethren of Christ.** "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Eph. 1:5) The whole of the process of spiritual adoption is through Christ, and the fatherhood of God is inseparable from brotherhood in Christ. All the adopted can claim the Lord Jesus as their Brother. He is said to be "the first-born among many brethren." (Rom. 8:29) There is a numerous family, but he is the Elder Brother. All others are adopted for his sake. Nor is he ashamed of the relation he sustains to them. "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Heb. 2:11) What an honor is this! To claim Christ, not only as a Friend, but as a Brother, and to know that this fraternal relation is cemented and sanctified by the blood of the cross.
- 3. They enjoy the Spirit of adoption.** We are told, that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. 4:4-6) The Spirit is a Comforter. He comforts the adopted by bearing testimony to their adoption. We therefore read in Rom. 8:16 as follows: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." He enables us to appropriate the promises made to the adopted. When we are conscious that we possess the evidences of adoption our spirits also bear witness.

There is concurrent testimony, for the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit. To enjoy the Spirit of adoption is an inestimable privilege. This Spirit cries—that is, prompts the adopted to cry—"Abba, Father." They claim relationship with God.

The beloved disciple therefore says:

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (I John 3:1, 2)

How great the honor for Christians, while in this world of sin and sorrow, to enjoy the blessed consciousness that they are the children of God, with all the high possibilities of glory before them!

4. They are the objects of divine care and protection. A kind earthly father provides, according to his ability, what is needful for his children, and "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." (Ps. 103:13) David, remembering his shepherd life and his care of the flocks committed to his charge, said, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." (Ps. 23:1, 2)

The Psalmist, it is true, speaks here for himself, but elsewhere he uses language so general as to include all who love and serve God "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Ps. 84:11) Paul said to the Philippian church, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19) He also said to the Romans, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28) If God, who has "all things" under his control, makes all things work together for good to his people, what more can they ask or desire? Surely, they may rejoice in his care and protection.

5. They are chastened in love for their spiritual good. Some may think it strange that I include paternal chastening among the privileges of adoption, but it cannot be improper to do so when we are told that our heavenly Father chastens us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. 12:10) Earthly fathers, owing to their imperfection, often make mistakes in the infliction of chastisement. They are prompted, it may be, by passion or controlled by caprice, and they may have unworthy ends in view. God is infinitely perfect and infinitely wise. The motives which prompt his action are worthy of his nature. He doeth all things well. We may safely say that because of his great love for his people he would never chasten them at all if their spiritual good did not require it. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (Heb. 12:6) Chastening, then, is a proof of his love, for he has in view the "profit" of those he chastens.

The expression, "that we may be partakers of his holiness," contains a most precious truth. It indicates that the chastenings which God inflicts on his people are promotive of their conformity to his moral image. To partake of his holiness is to become holy. This is his will concerning his people. He says, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (I Pet. 1:15, 16) The highest good of creatures is to be found in their holiness, in their likeness to God. If, then, God chastens those whom he adopts into his family that he may make them like himself: surely chastening is to be classed among the privileges of adoption. The sanctification of suffering is provided for in God's covenant with his adopted children, and they should, therefore, regard all their afflictions as blessings in disguise.

6. A glorious inheritance is in reserve for the adopted. This inspiring truth is taught in the following passages: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:17); "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." (I Pet. 1:3, 4); "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Rev. 21:7)

These precious Scriptures give assurance to the adopted of an inheritance so glorious that nothing more glorious can be desired or imagined. Who can adequately conceive how much is meant by the heavenly heirship—heirship with God and joint heirship with Christ? His adopted children are to inherit from God, their gracious Father, and they are to inherit in connection with their Elder Brother, Christ Jesus. They are to inherit all things, and their inheritance will be an immortal one. It is "incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away." This is what Jesus means by "a treasure in the heavens that faileth

not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." (Luke 12:33) How secure and how permanent! In the enjoyment of this heavenly treasure, the largest and highest aspirations of the saints will receive full gratification.

The expanded faculties of every redeemed soul will be filled to a blessed repletion with joy inexpressible and eternal. God will recognize his adopted ones, smile upon them, and permit them through endless ages to draw on his infinite resources for happiness. They will appear before his throne in all the beauty of unblemished purity, reflecting the image of their Redeemer, even as the polished mirror reflects the image of the noonday sun. But why enlarge? It will require eternity to comprehend and eternity to enjoy this last great privilege of adoption—the possession of the incorruptible inherits.



A Spiritual Membership ---

J. R. Graves

From *Old Landmarkism: What Is It?*, 1880

"Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house." (1 Peter 1:5)

"The Lord added to the church daily the saved." (Acts 2: 47)

The character of the material of which a public building, or a house for the protection of a family, is constructed, is manifestly of the very first importance. God never has commanded a structure to be erected for his service, that he did not specifically, indicate the material, and Christ no less specifically commanded the material that should be used in his house—the membership of his ecclesia. Let us look, then, at another mark of the "MODEL CHURCH":

The membership all professedly regenerate in heart before baptized into it.

The typical teachings of the Old Testament require this. Paul distinctly teaches (Heb. 12:18) that the kingdom of Israel was a type of the kingdom of Christ, and nominal Israel of his spiritual Israel; the literal family of Abraham, of the spiritual family of Abraham. Now it was by manual circumcision of the flesh that God called out from among the nations, and separated the family of Abraham and the Jews as a nation to himself. No one was recognized as belonging to Abraham's family unless circumcised, and no one could become a citizen of the kingdom or enjoy one privilege in it unless circumcised, for the uncircumcised were to be cut off. (Gen. 17:14)

So in the gospel dispensation, Christ calls out from the world, and marks all his people by the "circumcision made without hands," (Col. 2:11) "of the heart in the spirit, and not the letter" (Rom. 2:29), i.e., by regeneration of heart effected by the Holy Spirit; and such persons, and such alone, are Christ's people—Christians; and of such alone he authorizes and commands his churches to be constituted, and these churches of the spiritually circumcised, "saints."

Only with the idea of a purely spiritual membership can the Scriptures that refer to the church, be read intelligibly. Persons "quickened," made alive by the Spirit, are called "living stones;" and of such is his church said to be "built up a spiritual house," and to such—"the saved"—alone are to be added. This then, being the true idea of a scriptural church, whatever theory or practice naturally tends to destroy it. Introducing the unregenerate, cannot be of God, but must be considered as directly antagonistic to the authority of Christ.

There are three theories of church constituency extant between which Christendom is divided; and if one be the true one the other two must be false, and the pretended churches built upon them counterfeit and of pernicious influence.

I. The first theory is the Catholic.

According to this the church is the instrumental source of salvation, and her ordinances are God's appointed sacraments of salvation—channels of grace; so that out of the church, without the use of these sacraments, there is no salvation. Therefore those "churches" accepting this theory, teach that it is the duty of all, however wicked, to unite with "the church," to receive the grace of salvation, and to bring their children, young or old, into it, and give them baptism, etc.

This theory, if carried out, would introduce the whole world at once into the church, and obliterate the least distinction between the world and the church. It would be all church and no "world" or, rather, all world and no church. All purely Catholic countries and those where Protestant state "churches" prevail are proofs of this. These, therefore, cannot be considered scriptural churches in any sense—Methodist and Episcopal societies accept this theory.

2. The second is the Presbyterian theory.

According to this, believers and their children—natural seed—irrespective of regeneration, are entitled to membership. But this theory, carried out according to the standard expositions of it, would introduce the whole world quite as certainly as the former, for the "seed of believers" is made to include all who have descended from believing ancestors, however remote.

"The seed and posterity of the faithful, born within the church, have, by their birth, interest in the covenant and a right to the seal." *Westminster Assembly's Confession*

"Children may be lawfully accounted within God's covenant if any of their ancestors, in any generation, were faithful." Dr. Rathbun: quoted by Tombes, p. 32

"Infants that are born of believers belong to God before their baptism. Though they had not a father or mother that was acquainted with God, yet, perhaps, they had some ancestors who were so favored, and therefore they are members of the church." Peter Martyr: in *Booth's P. Ex.*, vol. II, p. 201.

Well said old Thomas Boston, in opposing this theory, that it, like the Catholic, would sweep in all the world, "so long as it remains undoubted that all the world is come of Noah and of Adam." This theory is, therefore, evidently false, and, like the first, subversive of the spiritual idea of the church Christ established; and its societies are certainly no more churches than is the Catholic hierarchy. From the above consideration, the reader can appreciate the statements of the two Langes of Germany, distinguished Pedobaptist scholars:

"All attempts to make out infant baptism from the New Testament fails. IT IS UTTERLY OPPOSED TO THE SPIRIT OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE AND TO THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT."—Dr. L. Lange: *Infant Baptism*, p. 101

J. Lange, the renowned commentator:

"Would the Protestant church fulfill and attain to its final destiny, the baptism of newborn children must be abolished. IT CAN NOT, ON ANY POINT OF VIEW, BE JUSTIFIED BY THE HOLY SCRIPTURES." *History Baptism*, pp. 34, 35

3. The third is the Baptist theory.

This is that none but Christians should be baptized, and thus added to the church. I mean a person should give satisfactory evidence that he has been regenerated in heart, made a new creature in Christ, before he is baptized. All human societies—and by this test they may infallibly be known—baptize, and add to the church in order to save. Baptists do it, because they believe the subject is saved.

This is the grand characteristic that makes Baptists a peculiar people—that separates them from all other. They invariably place Christ before the church, while all others place the church before Christ. For this reason Baptists do not give baptism

to their infants, nor to unregenerate persons. I have not the space, in this little work, to make an extended argument against infant baptism; its unscripturalness, and its vast and positive evils to Christianity and the race; but I will simply indicate the four principal arguments in addition to the one given above, either one of which is sufficient to condemn it forever with every unprejudiced man or woman.

I. The Word of God contains neither precept for, nor example of, Infant Baptism, which is frankly admitted by hundreds of the most learned Pedobaptist scholars.

If infant baptism be a Christian duty, it must be a positive duty; and if positive, it must be clearly and unmistakably commanded, since all positive duties are clearly commanded.

A. Bledsoe, LL.D., late editor of the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, vol. 14, pp. 234, 235, the most scholarly man the Methodists of America ever had, makes this declaration:

"It is an article of our faith that the baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the church as most agreeable to the institution of Christ. But yet, with all our searching, we have been unable to find in the New Testament *a single express declaration, or word*, in favor of infant baptism. This may, perhaps, be deemed by some of our readers a strange position for a Pedobaptist. It is by no means, however, a singular opinion. Hundreds of learned Pedobaptists have come to the same conclusion, especially since the New Testament has been subjected to a *closer*, and a *more conscientious* and *more candid* exegesis than was formerly practiced by controversialists." [Italics mine]

Dr. Bledsoe quotes Drs. Knapp, Jacobi and Neander, distinguished German Pedobaptists, in proof that infant baptism was not instituted by Christ or his apostles, or known in the first ages, and adds: "We might, if necessary, adduce the admission of many other profoundly learned Pedobaptists, that their doctrine is not found in the New Testament, either in express terms OR BY IMPLICATION FROM ANY PORTION OF ITS TEACHINGS."

II. That the practice of Infant Baptism was unknown to the churches of Christ in the first two centuries after Christ is admitted by all standard Pedobaptist scholars and historians.

Curcelleus, acknowledged to be the most learned Protestant scholar of the sixteenth century, says:

"Pedobaptism was not known in the world the two first ages after Christ; in the third and fourth it was approved by few; at length, in the fifth and following ages, it began to obtain in divers places; and, therefore, we [Pedobaptists] observe this rite, indeed as an ancient custom but not as an apostolic tradition. The custom of baptizing infants did not begin before the third age after Christ, and there appears not the least footstep of it for the first two centuries."

So Neander, Mosheim, Gieseler, Schaff, Coleman. Now, if infant baptism was not instituted by Christ nor his apostles, nor known for ages after Christ, it is evidently a "commandment of men," and Christ himself has said, "In vain do they—all those—worship me who teach fur doctrine the commandments of men." (Matt. 15:9)

Such systems, no more than the worship of such bodies of men, can be pleasing or accepted by Christ, but condemned and abhorred by him, whatever men, who would be considered "liberal," may think or say. Christ does not, and cannot, approve them, nor should we, and hope to please him.

III. All the teachings of Christ and his apostles positively forbid the practice of Infant Baptism, and the admission of the unregenerate to baptism and church membership.

1. John, Christ's first gospel minister and apostle, it is admitted by all, baptized only penitent believers, and he positively declared that children, by virtue of their connection with pious ancestors, were not entitled to baptism. Christ never authorized any man to teach differently.

2. Thus Christ, during his ministry, made disciples before he baptized them (John 4:1), and therefore he did not make disciples by baptizing them, and therefore no one is authorized to say it can be done. Christ certainly never commanded his apostles or ministers to teach or baptize otherwise than he instructed John and his apostles during his own ministry. The commission is the permanent law for Christian baptism, and in it Christ positively forbade the baptism of unbelievers and non-believers, by specifying the character to be baptized, viz., "he that believeth." Since "the specification of one thing is the prohibition of all other things;" if he prohibited the baptism of a bell, mules and apes, he did that of a baby—an unbeliever.

3. The formula Christ gave forbids the baptism of infants or unregenerate persons.

He commanded all who were to receive his baptism to be baptized into, not in, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Whether into or in the name, equally implies by the authority—and no minister who has the fear of the Sacred Trinity before his eyes, will declare he does an act by the authority of Christ until he can find an express precept and command for it—and every intelligent minister and Christian knows such authority cannot be found in the Word. But the preposition "into," with a subject that is impenetrable and indivisible, is manifestly used figuratively, and means everywhere so used—a "profession of," or "faith in," and union with, etc.

"Into" repentance, means upon their profession—state of repentance (Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:38); "*eis ephesin amartioon*," into remission, a profession of being in that state; "*eis ti ebaptisthete*" and "*eis to ioannes baptisma*." (Acts 19:3) What faith did you profess by your baptism?

And they said, "We were baptized into John's baptism" - i.e., declared our belief in the faith, or doctrine we understood, that John taught. "*Eis ton moousen ebaptisanto*," baptized into Moses (I Cor. 10:2), was an act by which they expressed their faith in the existence of Moses, and their allegiance to him as their guide and lawgiver, and a baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, can certainly mean no less than a declaration or profession, on the part of the subject, of his belief in the tri-personality of the Godhead, and allegiance to their equal authority. Baptism was designed to be a profession of our faith, but infants are unable to exercise or profess faith, and unregenerate persons do not. Baptism is designed to be the answer of a good conscience toward God, but an infant has no conscience.

IV. The uniform practice of the apostles demonstrated how they understood their commission. (See Acts 2)

V. The evils of the practice are many and fearful, to the subject, to Christianity, the church, and to the world.

These are so many, and so great, that Dr. Gill declared infant baptism to be "part and pillar of popery;" and so distinguished a Pedobaptist and scholar as Dr. J. Lange, of Germany, felt forced to say: "**All attempts to make out infant baptism from the New Testament fails. It is utterly opposed to the spirit of the apostolic age and to the fundamental principles of the New Testament.**"

It seems to me, from these considerations, that the conviction of every candid person must be that Christ designed the material of his churches to be spiritual—built of lively stones—i.e., their members to be all "circumcised in heart;" "born from above;" in a word, professedly regenerated persons, and that the primitive and apostolic churches were each and all composed of such. This, then, is the irresistible conclusion:

All those religions organisations that, by fundamental law, do admit infants and the confessedly unregenerate to baptism and membership, are not, and should not, be considered, called, or by any art recognized as churches of Christ or evangelical bodies.



The Book of Common Prayer and the Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration

A commentary on the book "*An Attempt to Determine the Sense of the Book of Common Prayer on the Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration*" (Seely), by Rev. J. N. Green Armytage of Lancaster.
From *The Baptist Magazine*, 1843

The present is an age eminently controversial on many subjects, but on none, perhaps, more so than on those which relate to religion. It is not without great hope that we regard the progress of modern controversy, and although the conflict be painful and afflictive we anticipate the most salutary and glorious results. In the history of our world the plan of divine providence is being rapidly developed—the harvest is drawing nigh; but this general progress is perfectly compatible with alternations of light and darkness, just as the approach of the summer is consistent with sunshine and rain and with the changes of day and night.

The religious controversies of the age will end, we believe, in the discovery and triumph of truth, and in the eventual establishment of righteousness and peace. They seem to differ from similar controversies of any past age, in the fact that they are more general, being on such various topics, and carried on by such various parties, as to ensure, by the very number of the combatants and the subjects of dispute, a fair field and no favour.

As Baptists, downright nonconformists, the ultra-protestants, if men please so to term us, of the age in which we live, we can scarcely forbear a quiet, gentle, and we will say too good-natured, smile over the volume before us. It is, decidedly, a book worth reading, creditable to the author's intellectual vigour, and prompted, we do not doubt, by sterling sincerity and honesty of purpose. The Book of Common Prayer,—although, we confess, with our strictly Scriptural eyes we could never quite see it so,—we always supposed to be, in the estimation of its upholders, a clear, consistent, and explicit enunciation of Christian doctrine.

We thought that the book generally, and more especially the articles, were intended by certain civil and ecclesiastical functionaries, under whose authority they are published, "to conserve and maintain the church in unity of true religion and in the bond of peace, and not to suffer unnecessary disputations, altercations, or questions to be asked which may nourish faction both in the church and commonwealth." It is true that the wisdom of the means which were intended to promote this end always appeared to us rather dubious, but we never doubted that such was the design which the advocates of the Book of Common Prayer intended faithfully to promote. The book has now been in circulation for no less a space of time than two hundred and fifty years.

It might be a fair, and not altogether irrelevant question, to ask, whether it has answered its end? Whether within the church, whose especial unity and uniformity in faith and practice it was intended to promote. There be any result to compensate all the energy by which it has been defended and sustained, and the pains and penalties by which it has been enforced. If we can suppose our readers, in simple ignorance of ecclesiastical history and of the present condition of religious parties in these kingdoms, making such an inquiry, we are sure they would be astonished to discover in reply, that a book which was ordained to promote unity has ever since its introduction caused two kingdoms to ring with strife; is even now so little understood by its advocates.

It is quite necessary, two hundred and fifty years after its publication, to write treatises of considerable length and ability to explain its meaning in relation to some of the most important parts of Christian truth; and that even when these are written, not one half of the admirers of the prayer book will thank the labourer for his toil, or be at all satisfied with its results. And yet, however much astonishment the serious contemplation of them may awaken, these are facts which few will have the hardihood to deny, and none be able to disprove.

We submit, that by withdrawing the prayer-book altogether they could not do harm, and they might possibly do great good. Searchers for truth might then look right into the Scriptures themselves, rather than be encumbered with the imperfect inventions and second-hand thoughts of men of like passions with themselves.

Although for our own guidance it be a matter of little importance as to what is the exact meaning of the prayer book on certain solemn topics of which it ambiguously treats, yet we cannot be so far indifferent to the spiritual welfare of the thousands who in authority esteem it in dubious proximity with the words of inspiration, as to regard without interest any inquiry concerning what the prayer-book really does teach. We will therefore, as briefly as may be consistent with fairness, lay before our readers a statement of Mr. Armytage's theory on the subject of which he writes. It is one on which, if we mistake not, he represents more or less the opinions of many members of the English Church.

The author begins by citing those passages in the service of the church for the ministration of the public baptism of infants, which appear most plainly to assert the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. He discusses three modes of interpreting them, and proposes a fourth which he considers the true one. The first is that which supposes the positive efficacy of the sacraments, if rightly administered. It is the view of the tractarian party in Oxford, and of a very large portion of the clergy of the establishment. This theory Mr. Armytage explicitly and vigorously repudiates and opposes.

The second method of interpretation is that which supposes the ordinance of baptism to be intended to attest regeneration rather than to confer it; assuming that all subjects of baptism are already regenerate before coming to that ordinance. In treating of this theory our author experiences no difficulty in proving that it is not the theory of the prayer-book. He labours to show that it is not that of the Bible, by citing texts of Scripture which affirm baptism to be the means of conferring spiritual blessing. This fact, it appears to us, may be admitted, without overturning the theory with which our author supposes it incompatible. We can see no reason why baptism may not be the sign of having received spiritual blessing, and the means of conferring it also. It remains for our author to prove,—and this is the most difficult task,—that the blessings before baptism are not regeneration, and that those which follow necessarily are.

The third theory is that which supposes the phrases of the baptismal service the language of charitable hope. With an honesty which we were glad to meet with, he plainly asserts the unreasonableness of such a hope in regard to the great majority of infants brought to receive baptism. His own theory we will allow him to explain in his own words:

"It appears that, according to Scripture and the Church of England, regeneration, or the new birth, is not either faith or repentance, or both of these together, however true and truly effected by divine grace they may be, but something more and greater; inasmuch as faith and repentance are necessary in order that by baptism regeneration may be obtained and experienced."..."My position is, that repentance and faith, sincere and true, are always the prerequisite qualifications; and baptism a divinely ordained, and therefore generally, though not universally, requisite means for obtaining spiritual regeneration; and that this spiritual regeneration consists in the remission of sins, adoption, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and salvation; according to Acts 2:38, and Mark 16:16. I am not denying, or doubting, that true repentance and faith are the special work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man; but I am maintaining that these are not, in propriety of language, regeneration."

In expounding this theory, our author frequently and carefully guards his readers against any supposed necessary efficacy in the administration of baptism, confining himself to the definition of a sacrament as furnished by the Church of England, viz, that it is a sign, means, and pledge of spiritual blessing. Differing widely as we do from our author's opinions regarding the extent to which the ordinance is to be administered, we find in part a correspondence between our own ideas of the nature and importance of Christian baptism and the theory which he propounds and advocates.

In our estimation baptism is not a meagre and trivial form, but in it, as in all acts of obedience to the will of Christ, there are blessing and life. The texts of Scripture in which baptism is spoken of as connected with spiritual blessing appear to us, whatever ambiguity may otherwise attach to them, plainly to teach that the administration of this Christian ordinance is intended not only to be a sign of blessings already received, but a means of communicating continued life and health to the soul. Entertaining this opinion, we still reject with abhorrence the doctrine of sacramental efficacy, and assign to obedience to the Christian institution of baptism no privilege distinct in kind from those which belong to every act of dutiful submission to the will and authority of the great Head of the church.

Granting, however, thus much in accordance with Mr. Armytage's theory, there yet remains the question as to whether the blessing received and communicated from heaven in baptism, rightly administered, is entitled to the distinct name of regeneration, or whether it be not of a more general nature. The theory of our author seems to us to analyze and divide what is incapable of analysis and division. The condition of a soul brought into communion with its God is described, as it appears to us, in the New Testament, by various words according as it is beheld in various aspects.

The condition which these words describe is but one and the same, though it receives different names. Faith, repentance, hope, pardon, new birth, life, salvation, and other terms, describe the condition of the soul according to various aspects and in relation to different objects. There is a unity belonging to all these which admits of their being distinguished, but not of their separation. A soul exercising true repentance must possess also true faith, and is already a partaker of regeneration.

The theory of Mr. Armytage separates faith and salvation,—making the one a qualification for baptism, and the other a blessing bestowed in or after it. On what ground rests this separation, and why does man put asunder what God has joined together? There may be an order in the manifestation of these spiritual states, but the presence of the one is a sure index, without any intervening ritual observance, of the presence, or certain succession, of the others.

There is no text which especially and clearly connects the blessing of regeneration with baptism. The passage quoted by our author, in John 3:6, has no more certain reference to baptism than the words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria respecting the water that he would give her. Both these, together with Titus 3:6, refer to the cleansing operation of the Holy Spirit—the inward spiritual grace of which water baptism is the outward sign. Mr. Armytage must allow us, prepared as we are to grant that baptism is a means of conveying spiritual blessing to the believing and obedient subject, to deny that it is a means of specifically conferring regeneration, or that any such wide distinction exists as that which he supposes, between that phrase and others made use of to denote the presence and action of spiritual life.

There are other topics on which we are widely at variance with our author; especially that of the subjects of this Christian ordinance. Plainly does he assert that faith and repentance are necessary to baptism; candidly does he admit "that there is no positive injunction to baptize infants at all, nor is a single instance of the baptism of infants expressly recorded in the whole New Testament;" but yet does he labour to prove that the same principles which regulate the baptism of the adult are observed in that of the infant.

Every infant, according to him, "is in baptism federally regenerated with the Holy Ghost; he is no more than federally regenerated, because he is no more than federally penitent and faithful; has only given his solemn pledge and covenant promise, signed and sealed in baptism, unto God, that he will repent and believe." Yet, as our author honestly observes and feebly attempts to explain, the service of the church says God has regenerated the child, and he is made a member of Christ.

Whatever be our estimate of Mr. Armytage's theory as it regards its correspondence with scriptural truth, we have a firm conviction that it is contrary to the meaning of the authors of the prayer-book. We interpret that book according to its literal and grammatical sense, aided by the knowledge which we possess of the circumstances and opinions of its framers. It was prepared by men emerging from the darkness of popery, who had scarcely had time to rid themselves of the prolonged errors and prejudices of past ages.

We would not say that it is discreditable to their knowledge or piety, considering the position they occupied and the times in which they lived. Our regret is mingled with astonishment that the Common Book of Prayer should continue to entammel so many men of strong and honest minds. It is indeed high time for the sons of true Christianity to put away childish things. Our anxiety for the church which Christ has purchased with his blood makes us eagerly long for the period when the green withes will be broken asunder (Jud. 16:7), and the servants of the Lord rejoice in the freedom and might of truth.



John's Imprisonment

William C. Duncan

From *The Life, Character and Acts of John The Baptist*, 1853

The evangelist John, as we have seen, has alone given us information respecting that part of the Baptist's ministry which was prosecuted after the public appearance of Christ. The other evangelists appear, on the other hand, to intimate that John was imprisoned by Herod immediately after the baptism of Jesus, and that it was this very act of violence which induced the latter to make his first journey, spoken of in John 1: 44. ff., into Galilee (cp. Matt. 4:12, Mark 1:14). In Luke (3:19, 20) the imprisonment of John is evidently mentioned only by way of anticipation because the writer wished to mention here at once and in connection all that he intended to say respecting the Baptist. That he did not intend to follow any historical order is made clear by the fact that he reverts, immediately after his observation respecting the imprisonment of the Baptist, to the baptism which he had performed on Christ, and relates nothing further regarding his subsequent fortunes and death.

With these representations, and especially with those given by Matthew and Mark, what the evangelist John relates to us in 3:23, 24, appears to come into direct conflict; that even after Christ had returned from his first journey into Galilee, John was still engaged in baptizing, and that Apostle even appears, by mentioning expressly that John was not yet cast into prison, to have intentionally forewarned his readers against the erroneous opinion to the contrary propagated by the other three evangelists. What, now, have we to think of this narrative, and how must we clear away the difficulty?

The easiest and most satisfactory expedient which we can adopt, is evidently to suppose that it was not the first journey to Galilee (John 1:44-ff), but the second (John 4:3) which was prompted by the imprisonment of the Baptist; in favor of which view in particular is the fact that John himself (4:1) assigns as the reason of this second journey the knowledge which Jesus had that the Pharisees had heard that he was making more disciples than the Baptist.

Wherefore could this be the ground of Christ's leaving so hastily those regions, if he did not think that he had reason to suspect some act of violence from the hands of the Pharisees; and on what could this fear have been more rationally based, than on the example of bold and violent despotism which he had before his eyes in the imprisonment of the Baptist? For the first journey to Galilee (John 1:44-ff), on the other hand, no such motive is assigned: Jesus appears to have gone thither at that time with the intention of giving the first proof of his divine power and glory to his friends and his near acquaintances in the land of his youth, and to collect here his first disciples, at a distance from the injurious influences of the Pharisees.

The narrative of John moves on in this chapter in such a manner, step by step as it were, after the fashion of a diary, that, since the imprisonment of John could not have been to him—he having been one of his disciples—of little importance, he must have made express mention of it, had it occurred at this time; instead of doing so, however, he speaks out in 3:24. expressly against this idea, and testifies that John still baptized in the Jordan at the same time with Jesus, after the latter had returned from Galilee and after the feast of the Passover had been finished at Jerusalem. (John 2:13-ff)

We are, therefore, obliged to suppose that the other three evangelists either knew nothing at all of the first journey into Galilee, together with the miracle that was wrought at the marriage in Cana, the return to Jerusalem to attend the Passover, and the expulsion of the sellers of merchandise from the temple and the conversation with Nicodemus which occurred in that city, or that they were not sufficiently acquainted with these events to give a narrative of them in their Gospels; and that, therefore, overleaping this period altogether, they began their representation of the ministry of Jesus with the second journey that he made into Galilee, which was occasioned by the imprisonment of the Baptist.

When we consider the form and nature of the Gospels — which are not by any means constructed upon the plan of registering with the greatest precision and scientific exactness, in its proper succession and chronological order, every single occurrence in the life of the Redeemer, but are meant to represent to us in bold outlines an exciting picture of his life and acts—this supposition is encompassed with the less difficulty; especially since Jesus was, at this early period in his ministry, but little known, and had but few Apostles, who either were for the most part first chosen upon, his second

journey (cp. Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20), or because now for the first time his constant attendants, and since this whole first journey to Galilee and back thence to Jerusalem and to the Jordan might have been accomplished within the space of a few weeks.

The imprisonment of the Baptist is narrated only incidentally by all three of the evangelists. Luke, as we have already seen, barely mentions the fact, and with it closes his account of the ministry of John before the public appearance of Jesus. Matthew and Mark, on the other hand, introduce the occurrence in connection with the course of their narrative respecting the labors and influence of Christ, while they are mentioning (Matt. 14:1, 2; Mark 6:14-16) the various opinions which were in circulation respecting the person of Jesus.

Among these opinions one was that Jesus was John risen from the dead, which, according to Matthew and Mark, Herod, who without doubt was reprovved and stung by his conscience for the murder of a man whom he acknowledged to be just, himself expressed; but which, according to Luke, who also mentions these ideas respecting Jesus (9:7-9), was held only by the people, while Herod did not express himself so pointedly and definitely, but only wished to see him who had now a greater number of the people in attendance upon him than at an earlier period John had, in which desire it is quite likely that there was included a sort of wavering conjecture that Jesus might perhaps be the Baptist himself upraised from the dead.

On this occasion, then, when they make mention of the death of the Baptist, Matthew and Mark subjoin a supplementary notice respecting the motive of his imprisonment and execution, the latter evangelist, who appears to have had the most exact information on the subject, giving the narrative most at length. John passes over the fact in silence, because he takes it for granted as known to his readers from the accounts of the two evangelists who had written of it before his Gospel was published.

The following is given to us as the motive which prompted to his imprisonment: Herod the Great had by Aristobulus, one of his sons, a granddaughter named Herodias whom he gave in marriage to his son, her uncle, Herod Philip, who, destined at first to be his father's successor, but afterwards disinherited by him, remained a private man, whilst the other three sons of Herod, Archelaus, Herod Antipas (the person here mentioned by the evangelists), and Philip,—whose name was the same as that of his eldest brother, but who was probably distinguished from him by some other special appellation,—divided amongst themselves, as tetrarchs, the greater part of their father's kingdom (cp. Part III., Chap. I).

The ambitious and sensual Herodias, preferring a tetrarch to a private man for her husband, persuaded her uncle, Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, to put away his lawful wife, a daughter of Aretas, the Arabian king, and to marry her, the eloping and unfaithful wife of his brother. Such an incestuous union (cp. Lev. 18:16) and, according to Luke 3:9, at the same time many other wicked acts of Herod, John, the public preacher of repentance, could not let pass unreprieved. He who had lifted up the voice of condemnation and warning against Pharisees and against members of the Sanhedrin, could not be deterred by fear from declaring freely and publicly that it was not right for Herod to have his brother's wife, and we may well suppose that he reprovved this wickedness with by no means soft and honeyed words.

(This iniquitous proceeding of Herod's produced a war between him and his father-in-law, which, however, did not break out till a year before the death of Tiberius (in the year of Rome 790, A.D. 37). In this war Herod was totally defeated and his army cut to pieces by Aretas; a calamity which the Jews in general attributed to the vengeance of God, inflicted upon Herod on account of his treatment of the Baptist (Jos. *Ant.* 5. 1-3.))

We are not obliged to suppose that the Baptist went with this express intention to the palace of Herod—to such a work had he not been called, and we find no proof that it was his custom to interfere in this way with family affairs, or to seek out particular individuals for special reproof. There is no objection to our supposing, what is not so improbable that Herod travelling on some occasion in his own land in the neighborhood of John, had gone out of his way, together with his attendant escort, in order to see this remarkable man, and that on this opportunity the Baptist had addressed to him these unwelcome words of reproof.

We are not obliged, however, to resort to either of these conjectures, for it does not contradict our narrative, if John spoke only in a general way publicly before the people respecting this improper act of Herod's since what he said could not easily

be kept concealed from the king. The direct form of the words, "it is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife", does, it is true, seem to indicate that the remark was made by John in person to Herod, but we are not compelled to press so strongly upon the expression, for the words might have been reported to Herod by a third person in that form which they would have taken if they had been addressed to him in person.

Mark represents the matter as if Herodias had been the chief agent in producing the imprisonment of the Baptist and the cause of the hastening of his execution, while Herod himself remained rather passive in the transaction, and in the hours of his better emotions even gladly listened to the discourses of John. Matthew, on the other hand, speaks of Herod as the prime author of his imprisonment, and as being eagerly desirous to put him to death as soon as possible thereafter.

We may readily conceive how an ambitious and sensual woman like Herodias, feeling herself wounded to the quick by the monitory reproaches of John, must, in the glowing bitterness of her hate, have sworn destruction against the man, and on that account have urged on her husband by all the arts of coquetry to throw the Baptist into prison, and, after she had obtained this request, have ceased not to seek his execution. Herod, the slave of sensuality, was no doubt often tempted by her and often incited by his own wishes to remove the bold reprovor out of the way, as Matthew expressly informs us (v. 5); but the weak prince was constantly kept in check by the fear which he had of the people, who regarded John as a prophet, and who might have risen in insurrection at his cruel execution.

Add to this, moreover, that, whenever the seductive arts of Herodias had not drawn him within the circle of their influence, and he looked at the matter more fairly and with more consideration, his own better judgment which still preserved with him something of the feeling of right and wrong, spoke out in favor of John, he recognized in him a just and holy man, and often he did not hesitate to allow him the privilege of conversation, nay, he even sometimes listened to him as a counsellor. Thus vacillating between a just regard for John and the desire to oblige the blood-thirsty will of his wife, the weak man continued for a long time undecided, until at last the seductive arts of Herodias gained the victory.

The historian Josephus, when he relates this occurrence (*Archæol.* 18. 5. 2), assigns a different reason for the imprisonment of the Baptist. Herod was fearful lest John, since he had so many adherents among the people, might at length excite an insurrection, which he sought to prevent by putting him in confinement. We see at once, however, that this was only the nominal ground, the pretext which was given out in public, for, since he was obliged to assign to the people some reason for having thrown into prison a man so beloved by them and so revered as the Baptist, and since the true reason, the just judgment and reproof by John of the incestuous marriage of the prince, could not well be declared. Herod was compelled to seek for some other ground, be it tenable or not, in justification of his conduct; and fear of disturbance among the populace seemed to him the most welcome and the most likely to answer his end.

Guarding himself in this way against the anger of the people, Herod awaited a moment when John, who frequently went from one bank of the river Jordan to the other, was found in his territory in Perea, had him arrested and, as Josephus relates, brought to Machterus, a castle on the east side of the Dead Sea, in the southern part of Perea, where he, therefore, was himself probably residing at the time. At least, the Baptist must, according to the narratives of Matthew and Mark, have been kept imprisoned in the immediate neighborhood of Herod; and it is rendered the more probable that he was confined near the place of Herod's residence at the time by the fact that Antipas had a palace in the neighborhood (*Jos. Bell. Jud.* 2. 4. 2); not, however, as some think, because war was being waged at that time between Herod and Aretas, king of Arabia,—the former residing as near as possible to the boundaries of his territory on the side towards Arabia, in order that he might arrange and direct all things connected with the war the more readily in his own proper person,—for this war did not break out till after the execution of the Baptist.

The confinement of John could not have possibly been very rigid, since Herod had been induced to decide upon it contrary to his own better inclination, and, according to the testimony of Mark (5:20) took pleasure in conversing with him himself, and also, perhaps, on account of the people, who perchance would not have quietly endured a cruel incarceration of the honored Baptist, and whom Herod feared so much that he did not venture of his own will to complete his execution. Without question, therefore, we are at liberty to conclude that John still had free intercourse with his disciples, many of whom must indeed have followed him in his imprisonment.

