

NOTES ON THE SIGN OR SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

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Notes on the sign or sacrament of holy baptism by William Clayton Walters

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WILLIAM CLAYTON WALTERS

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OF

HOLY BAPTISM:

BY

WILLIAM CLAYTON WALTERS, M.A.,

LATE FELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
AND BARRISTER AT LAW.



I entered into a Covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and
thou becomest mine.—Ezek. xvi. 8.

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JOHN W. PARKER, WEST STRAND.

M.DCCC.XXXVIII.

311.





TO
EDWARD CHAPMAN WALTERS,

MY FIRST-BORN,

I DEDICATE THIS:

BECAUSE to him I am indebted, under God, for the motive for pursuing the very interesting inquiry contained in the following pages; and in humble trust that this slight token of the anxious care which a gracious God hath put into my heart for the sanctification of the soul of his own precious Gift, even from the first moment of his existence, may in after life, when I am gathered to my fathers, contribute to interest him in the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE ordinance of Baptism has long been a matter of controversy in the Church of Christ, and probably will ever be so. I recently had occasion to consider the subject, and seeing the formidable array of authorities, I first applied for advice to one who is deservedly eminent in the Church for his piety and learning. The answer was in all kindness, but it was not satisfactory; it merely referred to the doubts which had been raised, and to the leading writers on both sides, and then left me to form my own judgment. I looked into some of the modern authors, but I soon found that no honest opinion could be formed without going much further. I found that both parties contend for the authority of the fathers, and that Hooker (*venerabile nomen!*) is "judicious" enough to please both. I saw if I relied upon human authority, it would be necessary to trace the subject from the earliest antiquity; and that, not merely by verifying the extracts produced by the disputants, but by considering the context of the writers, ancient as well as modern. For this task so appalling, I have neither strength nor leisure. What was to be done? I thought, surely if this be God's ordinance, as I know it is, he cannot have involved it in so much learning and difficulty, as utterly to prevent the wayfaring man having intelligent *communio*

with him through it. It cannot have been established merely as an observance for dark and superstitious ignorance. I then determined to collect and weigh the testimony of Scripture on the subject ; and with the Bible in my hand, and prayer in my heart, I have made the attempt, and I am thankful for the result ; for I have arrived at conclusions I dare not mistrust, for they are very plain deductions from God's own word, and they embody and set forth his covenant love. During my progress I have referred to Calvin's Institutes, and an analysis of Bishop Bethell's work on Regeneration, and have cursorily examined some other works, but my time has not permitted me to study any. I should have been glad to have compared my results with those of the many learned men who have written on the subject, but it cannot be, and it is a very sufficient satisfaction to my own mind to know that I can give a full and most cordial assent to the twenty-seventh article and baptismal formularies of the Established Church. " We have great reason to be confident as to our own part of the question ; but it were also well if our knowledge would make us thankful to God, and humble in ourselves, and charitable to our brother. It is pride that makes contention, but humility is the way of peace and truth."—BISHOP TAYLOR.

NOTES ON HOLY BAPTISM.

GRACIOUS GOD! Thou hast mercifully assured us, by thy holy servant James, that if any lack wisdom, it shall be given him, if he ask it of Thee in faith. Bow down thine ear O Lord, and hear me, for I am weak and ignorant. Lord, I believe thy word, help thou mine unbelief. Give me wisdom in this inquiry. Give me the light of thy truth, that my thoughts and words may be according to thy will. Give me thine own promise, most gracious Father, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, that He may guide me into all truth. Blessed Jesus, be thou my Prophet! Be thou the Alpha and the Omega, the author and the finisher of my work! Amen.

PART FIRST.

The baptism of John whence it was we know, and what it was we now propose to inquire, by the light of God's truth, believing that the result will show the nature of our blessed Saviour's own ordinance,—*Go ye and teach* [or, make disciples of] *all nations, baptizing them in* [or, into] *the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Matt. xxviii. 19.