

LECTURES ON CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

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Lectures on Christian baptism by Thomas McCrie

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THOMAS MCCRIE

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CHRISTIAN BAPTISM**

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CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

BY
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HISTORY," ETC.

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TO THE
ELDERS AND MEMBERS
OF THE
CONGREGATION OF THE ORIGINAL SECESSION,
DAVE STREET, EDINBURGH,
Three Hymns,
SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR THEIR BENEFIT,
-
ARE NOW RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR
AFFECTIONATE PASTOR.

PREFACE.

THE following Lectures are published at the urgent request of many who heard them delivered. They are given nearly as they were spoken, though it was found necessary to introduce alterations in the phraseology and framework, which all who are acquainted with publication must have found more or less required, in preparing for the press what was originally intended only for the pulpit. Notwithstanding these adaptations to the character of a book, the Lectures, I am aware, still abound with those re-statements which naturally characterise productions brought forth at distant intervals, and adapted to a popular audience. Even this, however, which may be regarded as detracting from the merit of a regular treatise, may have its advantages in the present instance. What has hitherto rendered the discussion of Christian Baptism so dry and uninviting, has perhaps been the formal and didactic aspect it has assumed, and its being too often mixed up with the interminable replies and duplies of personal controversy.

The author is not so vain as to imagine that he has added any new or original arguments to a controversy which has been so often handled. What he has now published is the result of the readings and reflections of many years, and he must have unconsciously borrowed much from his predecessors. In one place, at the close of the Fourth Lecture, he has borrowed from himself, having, in the improvement, given the substance of an article written some time ago in a religious periodical. Nor is he ambitious enough to expect that he will make converts from the ranks of confirmed Baptists. He has long ceased to expect that any impression can be made on those who have fairly got within the disturbing influences of this "wind of doctrine." Such persons view every thing from a different position, and through a peculiar medium; and from them he expects nothing but a repetition of the old queries which have been so often answered, and the misrepresentations which have been as often exposed. The author begs, however, to repeat here what he stated at the commencement of his course, that his object is not to make converts, but to instruct and establish those who may be adhering to the truth without sufficient investigation, and to guard them against rashly renouncing what they may have too lightly adopted.

On the subject in general, it is to be feared much ignorance and misapprehension prevail. The first and simplest of the Christian institutes has been involved in a labyrinth of metaphysical subtlety and theological dis-

cussion, the very aspect of which deters many from examining it. Public attention, however, has been lately turned to the question by two very opposite causes,—the secession, on the one hand, from the Church of England of a clergyman, who, from his gifts and graces, as well as his rank, formed one of its brightest ornaments, and who was at one time fondly expected to prove one of its most efficient reformers, but who has chosen to throw his influence into the scale of dissent, and is now expending his strength in battling for the peculiarities of anti-pædobaptism; and the threatened ejection, on the other hand, of another clergyman by the party holding the heresy of baptismal regeneration. To these sources of public interest, the author is inclined to trace the popularity of the Lectures when they were delivered; and they may still contribute to invite attention to them in their present form.

The question, though largely handled, seems still to admit of being discussed in a plain, popular, and practical manner, adapted to the comprehension of all. It is extremely difficult to speak on the point at all without offending cherished prejudices; and it is our special unhappiness in this question, that we are brought into collision with brethren whose personal piety and public zeal in the cause of Christ entitle them to the highest praise. But the interests of truth (and this seems eminently a part of "the present truth") require that we should take up the question under this disadvantage; and it has been the author's intention, how-

ever he may have succeeded in carrying it out, to avoid all uncharitable invective and needless irritation.

Into the Appendix he has thrown a few remarks on topics presently controverted, which could not so well be admitted into the Lectures.

In fine, the author commends these Lectures to the blessing of the Great Head of the whole family in heaven and earth, and to the candid perusal of all, with one of the Prayers anciently used at the celebration of baptism in the French and Scottish Churches:—
“Hear us, Father of mercy, that so the Baptism which we dispense, according to thy institution, may produce its fruit and virtue, in such sort as thou hast declared to us in thy Gospel!”