THE MODE AND SUBJECT OF BAPTISMS. FOUR SABBATH EVENING LECTURES ON THE MODE AND SUBJECTS OF BAPTISMS, PREACHED IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, 1834, BEFORE THE CHURCH AND CONGRE GATION

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The Mode and Subject of Baptisms. Four Sabbath Evening Lectures on the Mode and Subjects of Baptisms, Preached in November and December, 1834, before the Church and Congre Gation
by Orin Fowler

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ORIN FOWLER

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Trieste

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LETTER TO THE AUTHOR.

Fall River, Jan. 5, 1835.

DEAR SIR,

The undersigned were appointed a Committee of the church to convey to you the following resolutions:

"1. *Resolved*, That in the opinion of the church, the series of Lectures recently delivered by our Pastor, on the mode and subjects of Baptism, contain a plain and just exhibition of the truth on these subjects; and having been, as we believe, kind and forbearing towards our brethren in Christ who differ from us on these points of Christian duty, we most heartily approve of the spirit manifested, and the sentiments and arguments therein set forth.

"2. *Resolved*, That as in our opinion, the publication of these Lectures would be the instrument of good in allaying unkind and unholy feelings — in correcting erroneous impressions, and in establishing the truth; therefore, our Pastor be requested to furnish a copy for publication."

We will only add as these resolutions express our own sentiments and desires, we hope your convictions of duty to the cause of Christ, will lead you to consent to the request of the church.

Very respectfully, we are your brethren in Christ,

DAVID ANTHONY,
DAVID OLNEY,
SYLVESTER C. ALLEN,
WILLIAM SHAW,
MATTHEW C. DURFEE.
} *Committee of the Congregational Church, Fall River.*

REPLY.

Jan. 10, 1835.

DEAR BRETHREN,

Your Note of the 5th inst. communicating the resolutions and wishes of the church, and your own sentiments and desires, that I will consent to furnish a copy of my Sabbath Evening Lectures on Baptism for publication, is before me. The responsibility connected with printing — as also the fact that abler treatises are already before the public, furnish strong reasons for refusing my consent: but on the other hand, the hope that these Lectures may be read by some who will thus become more thoroughly acquainted with important Bible truth, together with a strong reluctance to withhold from the church what they seem sincerely to desire, have decided me to comply with their request. A copy shall be in readiness for the press as soon as they can be transcribed.

Affectionately your friend and servant in the Gospel,

O. FOWLER.

A favorable opportunity having occurred for submitting these Lectures to a few brethren, the following kind notices have been put into the Author's hand.

"*Rochester, Mass. Jan.* 13, 1835.

Having examined the following Lectures in manuscript, I am happy to observe that the *mode* of Baptism practiced in the Congregational and other Pædobaptist Churches, and the *duty* of Infant Baptism, are judiciously discussed, and shown to be supported, as they unquestionably are, by the word of God and the history of the Church of Christ.

THOMAS ROBBINS,
Pastor of the Congregational Church, in Mattapoisett, Rochester."

"Dear Brother,

I thank you for the opportunity of examining your Lectures on the mode and subjects of Baptism. I have no hesitation in saying that you have a right view of the whole subject, and have sustained your positions by arguments which never have been and never can be overthrown. For those who differ from me on these points, I have the kindest Christian feelings; but twenty-five years' examination and observation have convinced me that God is a covenant God, and blesses such as honor him in the dedication of their children. For the universal spread of right views and Christian feeling, we will ever pray.

Yours,

S. HOLMES,
Pastor of the Congregational Church, New Bedford."

Rev. O. FOWLER.

"*Providence, Jan.* 20, 1835.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

The mode and subjects of Baptism involve questions of paramount importance, in the organization and discipline of the Christian church. A mistake on either of these points, cannot but be connected with disastrous consequences. He then, who in the fear of God, and the full light of Scripture, and history, and experience, plants both feet on the everlasting covenant of grace, and by force of argument unimpeachable and unanswerable, dispels perversion and ignorance, as you have done, deserves the thanks and approbation of every individual, who by spiritual relationship is a child of Abrahamic promise. Especially is this true at this day, when providential movements, in relation to little children and parental influence, are hailed as among the most brilliant tokens of the approach of that day when all shall know the Lord, and when the child shall, in attainment and blessing, die, being an hundred years old. May your laborious and very critical exposition of this unspeakably interesting subject, be, under God, eminently subservient to the hastening of that time, when all parents, like Noah, shall come with their whole house, into the ark of the covenant of salvation. May your efforts quicken ministers, churches and parents, to hold fast the promise, which has been revealed in the hope of glory to thousands, and tens of thousands of hearts: '*I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee.*' For the perusal of your Sabbath Evening Lectures on these topics, with which you have been so kind as to favor me, accept my acknowledgments. I probably feel more interest in them, as they are fitted for circulation among the thinking, anxiously inquiring, and quick discerning people of Rhode Island. I can assure you, my dear sir,

that there are thousands in this State, who are calling for light on a subject over which darkness and perversion have so long reigned.

Yours fraternally, and in the bonds of the eternal covenant,

T. T. WATERMAN,

Pastor of the Richmond Street Congregational Pædobaptist Church, Providence, R. I."

"*Pawtucket Jan.* 20, 1835.

DEAR SIR,

I take this opportunity to acknowledge your kindness in affording me the privilege of perusing your Sabbath Evening Lectures on the MODE and SUBJECTS of baptism. Permit me to say, I am highly pleased, with the candor and Christian spirit which they breathe — with the clearness and force of the arguments — with the critical research — with the philological views which they contain, and with the scriptural and other undoubted authorities by which your positions are so fully supported. These Lectures are well calculated to promote the cause of evangelical piety — to establish the wavering, and to convince those who may be convinced. I am glad, dear sir, that the principles of the eternal covenant of grace are beginning to be better understood in Rhode Island. The views presented in your Lectures are, in my opinion, based upon the immutable oracles of God, and such as were clearly and fearlessly, enforced by the Pilgrim Fathers, and Pædobaptists generally. Yours in the faith and atonement and privileges of Jesus Christ.

BARNABAS PHINNEY,

Pastor of the Congregational Pædobaptist church, Pawtucket."

REV. O. FOWLER.

PREFACE.

These Lectures are PRINTED because the Author could not deny what seemed to be a sincere and reasonable request of the church to which he ministers. They were PREACHED, not because he was publicly assailed; (this he could have borne in silence;) but because truths which he deems of great importance to the welfare of Zion, were publicly calumniated, and his own sentiments touching those truths publicly misrepresented. These circumstances, unpleasant and unforeseen, seemed to demand of him a serious and thorough discussion of the matters in question. Such a discussion, if prosecuted for the love of truth, and with the forbearance of charity, he hoped, might to some extent, defend from perversion an important institution of the gospel; and thus subserve, both the religious improvement of the people of his charge, and the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Critical, calm, and kind discussion, was demanded. It is this kind of discussion alone, that ever advances the cause of truth. In personal controversy, the Author could not consent to embark. In preparing these Lectures, it has been his aim, to avoid all personalities — to state fairly the questions at issue — and to debate these questions honestly, manfully, and in the fear of God. That he has spoken like one in earnest, he acknowledges — but hopes his earnestness has been inspired only by the love of truth, and the settled conviction that the views he attempts to defend, are according to the word of God. If there be aught in the spirit and temper of these Lectures which any one can justly censure, it has escaped his notice, and when discovered, will be sincerely regretted.

The Author cheerfully makes the *common* acknowledgment, that many as well as abler treatises have already appeared; and he pleads the *common* apology that these Lectures were prepared under the pressure of weekly pastoral labors — but still he hopes they may be of *local* and *temporary*, — if not of *general* and *permanent* service to the cause of truth and piety. The numerous references they contain have been made with care and labor, and he thinks may be relied on as correct. Original sources of information have been sought and improved, as far as possible. The best works on both sides of the controversy, within his reach, have been consulted. Mosheim, Milner, Calvin, Wall, Doddridge, Bald-

win, Dwight, Pengilly, Scapula, Hedericus, Pond, Ripley, Woods, Edwards, Stuart, Judson, Reed, Concord, Lathrop, Wardlaw and many others have been carefully and freely consulted. To Wall's History of Infant Baptism, Calvin's Institutes, and Pond's Treatise, he is particularly indebted.

In some instances he may have unconsciously used the thoughts of others without due acknowledgment. Indeed, it would be difficult to ascertain to whom many valuable thoughts on this subject originally belonged. In examining the meaning of *Baptizo*, it has been, of course, necessary to introduce Greek and Latin words, but in all instances translations are given, so that the English reader may omit these words, without perplexity or loss. For the sake of convenience, Greek words are printed in English characters. The local circumstances, connected with this discussion, required the examination of several topics, which, to the distant reader, may seem foreign to the main subject; but the Author hopes even these topics will not be found uninteresting.

The imperfections of these Lectures he hopes will be rendered harmless, and their merits, if they possess any, useful through the blessing of God, and the kindness and candor of his readers. Such as they are, they are affectionately inscribed to the church and congregation before whom they were delivered, with the hope and fervent prayer that they may promote their spiritual prosperity, as well as that of all others into whose hands they may fall. *

ORIN FOWLER.

Fall River, Mass. Jan. 20, 1835.

* See Appendix. [Note A.]