

**AN ESSAY ON BAPTISM: BEING
AN INQUIRY INTO THE
MEANING, FORM, AND EXTENT
OF THE ADMINISTRATION, OF
THAT ORDINANCE**

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An essay on baptism: being an inquiry into the meaning, form, and extent of the administration, of that ordinance by Greville Ewing

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GREVILLE EWING

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ESSAY ON BAPTISM;
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THE MEANING, FORM, AND EXTENT
OF THE
ADMINISTRATION, OF THAT ORDINANCE.

By GREVILLE EWING,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, GLASGOW.

WITH AN APPENDIX;

CONTAINING A VINDICATION OF THE EXPLANATIONS IN THE AUTHOR'S
GREEK GRAMMAR, AND GREEK AND ENGLISH SCRIPTURE LEXICON,
ON THE SAME SUBJECT, IN A LETTER TO THE AUTHOR, FROM A
LITERARY CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

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ERRATA.

Page 50, line 21, dele "now."

150, line 20, dele "it."

159, line 13, insert the following sentence. "Or, rather, the singular, being, in that dialect $\kappa\omicron\upsilon$, the plural would be $\kappa\omicron\upsilon\iota$."

89, Expunge the Note, which, through inadvertence, and trusting to a detached quotation, contains an erroneous statement. Tertullian mentions the practice, but does not recommend it.

ESSAY ON BAPTISM.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Ordinance of Baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is connected with the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It must to all nations be matter of surprise, that they, who preach to them the gospel, should so widely differ from one another, respecting the accompanying ordinance, which they are called to administer. They not only dispense it in different forms, and to different descriptions of persons; but some of them maintain, that the rest of their brethren have not been baptized at all.

While this difference may prove detrimental to the propagation of the gospel, it perplexes the minds of the disciples of Christ. Many have become divided on this point alone, who had been previously united in the most comfortable and edifying Christian fellowship. Many churches of the saints have received from it a denomination, which appears not, as a mark of distinction, among any of the scriptural titles of the people of God.

Reasons may be assigned, though not to justify, yet to account for, much of the ignorance which prevails among Christians, respecting Baptism. When they first have their attention directed to the observance of Ordinances, they do not usually take much notice of Baptism, which they believe they have already received, but rather of the Lord's Supper, which they desire to partake of, as the highest privilege of saints on earth. Some have probably thought very little on the subject of Baptism at all, till they have been assailed by the controversy of which that subject is the occasion. In such circumstances, they are likely either to be carried away in triumph by the experienced disputant; or to resist on grounds calculated to injure the cause, which they endeavour to defend. Unequal as the contest frequently is, it is wonderful that it continues to be so firmly maintained. But persons, who can perhaps say little in the way of argumentation, may nevertheless see that they have a divine warrant, for refusing to abandon the position which they hold.

The discussion of the questions usually agitated on the subject of Baptism, requires, on both sides, to be improved. The very quantity of that discussion is itself an evidence of its insufficiency. When a point is thoroughly investigated, it is set at rest: when it ceases not to be agitated, neither party has yet been able to ripen it for decision. I am aware, that many have been long ago shouting victory in this contest. The duty of immersing in water those who are to be baptized, and of requiring that none shall be bap-

tized till they have made a profession of the faith, is alleged to be so plain an article of Christian doctrine, that the man who hears the *gospel* and rejects that article, must be wilfully disobedient. But it may well abate this confidence, and should humble us all, to see the battle continuing to rage, without the smallest appearance of termination.

Christians are actually beginning to despair of any result from the existing controversy. Even among Protestants, whose principle it is, that the scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith and practice, several churches have been, of late years, formed on an understood acknowledgment, that the word of God gives no explicit instruction to his people, on so rudimental a subject as the ordinance of Baptism. Every member is therefore left to do respecting it that which is right in his own eyes: and it is agreed, that whatever each may think or do for himself, that ordinance shall, in no form, and in no case, be admitted into any part of their public worship. Thus they profess their faith and their scepticism at the same time. They would preach the *gospel*, and make disciples out of all nations; but they own that they cannot baptize them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Where this principle is not avowed, the practice is frequently the same, and the same consequence generally follows. If people are willing, on other grounds, to join the communion, no objections are made on account of any sentiments they may hold concerning Baptism; and it soon becomes a delicate matter to observe that

ordinance, or to speak particularly of it, in the church.

While I confess, that I am chiefly struck with the inefficacy of the discussion on both sides, I mean not to deny, that Antipædobaptist sentiments have, for several years, been making considerable progress. It is not wonderful, if this progress be regarded by those of that persuasion, as a proof that their sentiments are supported by the force of truth. To me it appears to be a consequence of the mixture of error, and of inconsistent practice, in those who before held the truth generally on the controverted subject. It is the tendency of error in one extreme to produce error in another. If Infant Baptism had not been so much abused, it had not been so much disputed.

What can be more impious, ridiculous, and disgusting, than the manner in which this Ordinance is said to be observed in the church of Rome? I copy the following account of it from the third Edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Article Baptism.

“As to the present form of administering baptism, the church of Rome uses the following. When a child is to be baptized, the persons who bring it wait for the priest at the door of the church, who comes thither in his surplice and purple stole attended by his clerks. He begins with questioning the god-fathers, whether they promise, in the child’s name, to live and die in the true catholic and apostolic faith, and what name they would give the child. Then follows an exhortation to the sponsors; after which the priest, calling the child by its name, asks it as

follows: *What dost thou demand of the church?* The god-father answers, *Eternal life.* The priest goes on: *If you are desirous of obtaining eternal life, keep God's commandments, thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c.* After which he breathes three times in the child's face, saying, *Come out of this child, thou evil spirit, and make room for the Holy Ghost.* This said, he makes the sign of the Cross on the child's forehead and breast, saying, *Receive the sign of the Cross on thy forehead, and in thy heart.* Then taking off his cap, he repeats a short prayer; and laying his hand gently on the child's head, repeats a second prayer: which ended, he blesses some salt; and putting a little of it into the child's mouth, pronounces these words, *Receive the salt of wisdom.* All this is performed at the church door. The priest with the god-fathers and god-mothers, coming into the church, and advancing towards the font, repeat the Apostle's creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Being come to the font, the priest exorcises the evil spirit again; and taking a little of HIS OWN SPITTLE!!! with the thumb of his right hand, rubs it on the child's ears and nostrils, repeating, as he touches the right ear, the same word (*Ephatha, be thou opened,*) which our Saviour made use of to the man born deaf and dumb. Lastly, they pull off its swaddling clothes, or strip it below the shoulders, during which the priest prepares the oils, &c. The sponsors then hold the child directly over the font, observing to turn it due east and west: whereupon the priest asks the child, *Whether he renounces the Devil and all his*