

**THE THREE INFANT BAPTISMS
OF OXFORD, GLASGOW,
AND MANCHESTER AND THE
NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM**

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The Three Infant Baptisms of Oxford, Glasgow, and Manchester and the New Testament
Baptism by Edward White

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EDWARD WHITE

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THE
THREE INFANT BAPTISMS

OF
OXFORD, GLASGOW, AND MANCHESTER;

AND
The New Testament Baptism

OF
REPENTANCE FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS;

WITH CONSIDERATIONS ON
THEIR RESPECTIVE BEARINGS ON PERSONAL RELIGION AND THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH.

To which is prefixed,
**A BRIEF DEFENCE BOTH OF IMMERSION
AND POURING.**

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE GALLERY OF THE FINE ARTS ACADEMY,
BRISTOL.

BY EDWARD WHITE,

AUTHOR OF FOUR DISCOURSES ON LIFE IN CHRIST.



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EVANS AND ABBOTT, CLARE STREET, BRISTOL;
AND JOSEPH JONES, HEREFORD.

1850.

"IT IS IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE PROBABLE THAT THE PRACTICE
OF INFANT BAPTISM WAS UNKNOWN AT THIS PERIOD."

Neander on the Apostolic Church.

PREFACE.

THE question of Baptism has in the lapse of ages become entangled with manifold worldly and party interests, in the shape of trust deeds, church and chapel property, ministerial salaries, and the dignity of ecclesiastical corporations; and so vast is the amount of gold and silver that weighs in either scale of the argument, that, from the frailty of human nature, it is difficult for men to handle it in a serious and unprejudiced spirit, notwithstanding the honesty of their general character and intentions. The measure of angry bigotry which prevails in relation to this subject, can be fully estimated by those alone whose inquiries have been specially turned in that direction. Among the defenders of infant baptism this evil spirit of theological animosity exists, not always, yet more frequently, in a latent form; among the Baptist communities, as is the wont of reformers, it is more loudly expressed. Some few of the latter, particularly in the country districts, appear to exult over the baptism of a proselyte more than over a conversion. The occasions of the administration of the sacred rite are

not seldom taken, with singular bad taste and judgment, as opportunities for controversy, and for throwing out bold, exciting challenges to the opponents. Now and then, as recently in Wales, a spirit of baptism seems to break out in a neighbourhood, which might strike an observer as betraying a strong family likeness to the spirit of a gross and vulgar Puseyism. The aim then appears to be to conquer the Independents, rather than to conquer sin: and many are urged to be baptized, who have not perhaps been first sufficiently urged to repentance. In matters of opinion it is well known that we are more likely to be in bondage to ourselves than to any other man. It is a sore trial to sacrifice the dignity of our own judgments, by admitting that we did not start in life in a state of omniscience. It costs most men a severe struggle to abandon an opinion which has been often and earnestly defended. This struggle is rendered doubly severe by the anti-pædobaptist tactics referred to. Ill feeling begets ill feeling. The voice of brotherly correction in righteousness is superseded by the tone of an unscrupulous partizanship, and since both parties are composed of fallen men, a similar manifestation from the adversary generally ensues. True zeal for God, however, is love in action. The genuine love of truth is inseparable from the love of God and man. The love of our own opinions may exist in conjunction with a very sincere dislike of those who oppose them. Until the leaders in such unholy warfare are visited with the sharp rebuke of the masses of moderate men of either opinion, there is but little hope of the useful prosecution of this or any other controversy.

Among persons who are animated by a sectarian spirit, assent to every article of their creed is usually demanded

as the pre-requisite to ministry and communion. Sectarian theology runs upon its own railway. It knows no change of gauge. The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Little, I fear, will it avail an inquirer in the eyes of such to profess conviction of the sole apostolicity of the baptism of believers elder or younger, unless he be also prepared to admit the sole apostolicity and lawfulness of immersion as the mode. For all those learned persons who conscientiously maintain the latter opinion, it behoves us to entertain due sentiments of respect: but it is perfectly unwarrantable to represent the practice and prejudice of the masses of un instructed members of the Baptist denomination as founded on an adequate and critical conviction. They hold that immersion only is lawful, not because they understand Greek, but because they have been taught that βαπτίζω signifies nothing but to *dip*. Men adopt opinions in bundles without much examination. Believers in infant baptism always maintain the mode of sprinkling or pouring; the opponents always and everywhere believe only in immersion.

For my own part, (if a personal explanation in this place may be pardoned,) notwithstanding that Baptism is properly an initiatory sacrament, I have, after much consideration, been baptized; 1st, because it is a command of Him who is made Lord of the universe with infinite authority, and who requires from his ministers that they should "do and teach" His "least commandments;"—2nd, because in all conscientious obedience there is blessedness, and even after many years of religious thought, such an exercise may be rendered exceedingly instructive and consolatory, if it have been previously neglected;—and 3dly, because this was the

strongest possible method of bearing a solemn and public testimony against what I feel constrained to regard as the error of infant baptism, the foundation-stone of the Roman and Anglican theologies. Further, I have been baptized by immersion, not only because I knew of none who would baptize me in any other manner; but also, because I desired to bear witness that this is a Scriptural and the regular ante-nicene mode of "washing with water," as may be seen in the writers of that early age;—because it is very ignorantly and profanely regarded with ridicule by the modern world;—and because, if solemnly, slowly, and, as the Rubric of the Church of England says, "warily" administered, in sufficiently deep water, and without sudden plunging, the rite may be rendered a strikingly impressive image of the extreme defilement of human nature which requires so great a purification, of the death unto sin, and of the resurrection unto life eternal, through the justifying, cleansing mercy of God.

But, at the painful risk of displeasing both denominations of dissenters, by agreeing with both of them, I must here humbly venture to profess the belief, founded upon an attentive perusal of the books of both parties, that the word βαπτίζω signifies to cover with any fluid, either from above or from beneath; and, consequently, that while he who is immersed has, beyond all doubt, received baptism, he also is sufficiently baptized on whom water is copiously sprinkled or poured. In the case of immersion, the image represents burial of the old nature with Christ. In the case of pouring or copious aspersion, the image sets forth, not only the justifying power of the name of Jesus, but also the descent and anointing of the sanctifying and immortalizing Spirit of the living

God. In this manner, as we learn from Cyprian's seventy-fifth letter, the sick and bed-ridden were baptized in the early church; and this martyr-bishop earnestly contends for the completeness of that baptism, and rebukes those who, like our modern Baptist friends, then spoke slightingly of such initiation; quoting such passages also as this: "Behold I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," &c.* Those who, with a competent knowledge of the facts concerning the scarcity of water at Jerusalem, and the absence of any considerable stream—for Kidron was a filthy drain—are able, without hesitation, to suppose that the thousands of Pentecostal converts were all immersed, are welcome to their faith; but it ought to be remembered, that it is in the highest degree improbable, that in that hot and oriental climate persons would have submitted to baptism in the same standing water in which many other men and women had been baptized. The practice is sufficiently repulsive in a cold country; but it would be intolerable nearer the line. At least, therefore, water for a thousand baths would have been required; and, I confess, it seems much more probable that, since there was *not* "much water there," the Jerusalem baptisms were performed by pouring water on the head. In this manner, as may be seen in 'Bingham's Antiquities,' the early martyrs sometimes baptized their keepers in the prison. Be this, however, as it may, it

* *Nec quemquam movere debet quod aspergi vel perfundi videntur agri cum gratiam dominicam consequuntur, quando scriptura sancta per Ezechielem prophetam loquatur et dicat; et aspergam super vos aquam puram, &c.* Unde apparet aspersionem quoque aquæ instar salutaris lavacri obtinere, et quando hæc in ecclesia fiunt, ubi sit et accipientis, et dantis fides integra, stare omnia et consummari ac perfici posse majestate Domini et veritate fidei.