

# THE ACT

OF

# CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

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## CHAP. V. THE EFFECT OF BAPTISM.

1. **Negatively**, it does not procure for us the remission of past sins.

Christ has not proposed **two** ways for this blessing to be attained, nor is the way proclaimed in the New different from the one taught in the Old Testament, and that was undoubtedly by faith alone, disconnected with any overt act:

"To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth on him shall receive the remission of sins." (Acts x :43.)

2. Nor by baptism do we wash our sins away, save in a **figure**, for—

"The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from **all** sin." (i John i:7.)

3. Nor by baptism are we regenerated or born again:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be **born from above**, he can not see the kingdom of God."—*Christ*.

4. Nor are we made the children of God by baptism:

"For we are all the children of God **by faith** in Jesus Christ." (Gal. iii: 26.)

Nor is baptism even a means or a sacrament by which, or on account of which, we have access to Christ, through whom we alone obtain every needed grace:

"Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom, also, we have access by faith into this grace, wherein ye stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. v:1.)

It is constantly asked of Baptists, What good does baptism do if it in no ways secures you salvation?

I answer, Much every way, and chiefly because—

#### **I. By submitting to the act he appointed we obey Christ.**

No words or thought can express or conceive the obligations we are under to love Christ and to obey him. The slave that is bought with the gold of the master is under obligations to serve him, or the captive whose life has been saved or redeemed by the sacrifice of another is under weighty obligations, **to love**, and to gratify the reasonable wishes of his redeemer and savior. The child is under the highest earthly obligations to love and do the will of his father, and for it to refuse is to violate all filial obligations. But Christ redeemed us, when captives, from the enemy of our souls ; and when he found us sold under sin he not only redeemed us by laying down his own life for us, but through him we have been adopted into the heavenly family, and made sons and daughters of the Most High God. Our obligations to obey Christ are infinite, and, as certainly as we are his children, we will desire to obey, and we will love to obey; and the language of our hearts will be, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" The characteristic spirit of Christ was that of obedience; and the Holy Spirit saith, " He that hath not the mind of Christ is none of his." Baptism is the first and most important act of obedience Christ requires of his child—an act without which we can not obey several other important commands of Christ.

## 2. By baptism we honor Christ.

It is not by our words and professions that we put the highest honor upon Christ. Indeed, if we stop at words and professions he will not accept us. The highest honor we can reflect upon Christ is to cheerfully obey him in all things whatsoever he commands us. He abominates mere lip service. How severe the reproof he gave this class when in the flesh: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and **do** not the things I command you?" "Ye hypocrites, well, did Isaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." (Matt, xv: 7, 8.)

What a privilege of being allowed by any act to put honor upon Christ before men and angels! A child of God will consider this his highest joy.

## 3. By obeying Christ in baptism we secure many and special blessings.

David testified that in keeping the commandments of his God, there was **great reward**, and that reward is both here and hereafter. If we are a friend of Christ or child of God we desire to honor him. But in no way possible can we honor Christ or offer him more sincere worship than by obedience to his commands ; and he has said, "They that honor me will my **Father honor**." Who can estimate the value and the blessedness of being **honored** of God before men **here** and angels hereafter:

"If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John xiv: 23.)

"Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

What more or greater blessings for time can be desired than are implied in the above two promises? And then when we meet him at last we hear him say:

"Well done good and **faithful** servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

What more of heaven could be expressed than are implied in these words? We may assure ourselves that Christ will not tell an untruth to save any one. The **willingly**, no more than the **willfully** disobedient will hear those words.

Then there is a special blessing promised that none but the truly baptized do enjoy, namely, "**The answer—satisfaction—of a good conscience toward God.**"

Baptism has no part in making a good conscience. The quickening of the Holy Spirit and the enlightenment of the word make a good conscience, that can only be quieted and satisfied when full obedience to Christ's command has been rendered; and therefore no other act for baptism but the one Christ commands will ever satisfy a **good** conscience. Tens of thousands have testified to this, and thousands yearly, ministers and members, testify that nothing but being buried with Christ in baptism, to show forth his death, burial and resurrection for their salvation, avails to satisfy their consciences.

**4. We profess our faith, confess our discipleship, and evidence our friendship for Christ before men.**

These acts Christ requires of every friend,—

"Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies bathed in pure water, let us hold fast the profession of our faith." (Heb. x.)

"If thou wilt openly confess with thy mouth, that Jesus is Lord, and wilt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Heb. x: 9,10.)

"For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he shall come in his glory," etc. (Luke ix:26.)

"And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me can not be my disciple. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John xv :14.)

### **5. By baptism we are introduced into a local church, and thereby into Christ's visible kingdom:**

"Christ has a **kingdom** on earth, and he has **churches**. No one of his churches is his kingdom, but each one is an integral portion of his kingdom."—Dr. A. P. Williams.

The visible churches, then, compose his kingdom, and by entering a church we enter his kingdom. We are baptized into a visible church.

On the day of Pentecost three thousand were added to the church by baptism. They were baptized, and there is no intimation of any intervening act. Baptism, then, according to the record, if it is full, was the consummating act. Christ said to Nicodemus, "Unless a man be born of water, and [added to the birth] of the Spirit, he could not enter his kingdom." Paul says: "For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body;" *i. e.*, some local church, like that at Corinth; and lest any one might conceive that by one "body" he did not mean a local church, but some one universal, general body, in the twenty-seventh verse, he expressly tells them: "Now ye are a body of Christ and members in part," *i. e.*, fellow-members.

The oldest Articles of faith put forth by our fathers are those of 1120. In the seventh article, after stating that they regarded baptism as an outward sign of an invisible grace, read:

"And by this ordinance **we are received into the holy congregation of God's people.**"

Dr. Dagg says: "The opinion has been held, almost as a theological axiom, that baptism is **the door into the church**," and we add, not by Baptists, but by all denominations.

Dr. Harvey's work on "The Church," issued by the American Baptist Publication Society, says:

"Baptism is the rite of admission to the church, the public act of separating from the world and uniting with God's people. It is the door of the house of God."