

CHRIST A BAPTIST

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Our Saviour's teaching and example harmonize with the denominational tenets of no people save those of the Baptists; and it is not exceeding the bonds of sober fact to say that Christ's statement of doctrine, tested by Romish or Pedobaptist standards, must be considered heresy. It is, moreover, within the province of sober fact to assert, reversing the proposition, that Romish or

Pedobaptist standards, tested by Christ's statement of doctrine, must in turn be pronounced heresy. The student of ecclesiastical history knows but too well that the noble army of Baptist martyrs endured persecution and exile, or else suffered, when the will of their enemies so decreed, the barbarities of fire and sword for believing and practising what our Lord clearly taught. Was Christ, then, a Baptist? If He is to be numbered with the people He chose, and to be identified with the doctrines He taught, an affirmative answer must be given. Ponder the eloquence of facts. He founded a Baptist Church; He taught Baptist doctrines; He established Baptist ordinances; His teachings condemn the distinctive doctrines of all Pedobaptist bodies. A few points will suffice for illustration:

I. Christ, by His example and precept, emphatically condemned *infant baptism*. Our Lord was not baptized in infancy; but He waited thirty years to submit to the holy rite at the hands of John, thus throwing the whole force of his example against the baptism of babes. Had He designed to give sanction to the baptism of infants, it is impossible to account for His conduct in passing His entire youth in disregard of such an ordinance. Divine providence had sent a messenger to prepare His way before Him, and to make His paths straight, but none of those paths was infant baptism; and indeed, it was so ordered in the divine purpose that John being six months older than Jesus, could not possibly have administered the rite, which thus stands forever precluded by the fore-ordained conditions of the early life of our Lord. So Christ's baptism was purposely deferred until He was ready to enter upon His public work. This is Baptist doctrine. Baptism indicates the beginning of a new life, the consecration of the soul to God, and should not be administered until the candidate proposes to devote him-

self to the divine service. Christ still further showed that the baptism of infants never occurred to Him, when He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not;" for the disciples, having not the slightest conception of such a rite, had rebuked the parents of the children; and yet, the Saviour did not take advantage of this, *the best opportunity of His life*, to inculcate the ordinance which Pedobaptists base on these words. The diligent reader of the passage will note that these children were not brought to Christ *to be baptized*, but "that he should touch them;" that not a word is recorded, but He "put his hands upon them and blessed them;" that they were brought to Jesus, who never baptized any one, and who, in this case, did all that was done, blessed the babes and sent them away unbaptized. See Mark 10:13-16. It cannot be controverted, then, that Jesus never made mention of infant baptism, nor ever said or did anything from which it might be inferred; but on the contrary, He excluded it from His church with peculiar emphasis by the very nature of the church itself as a regenerated body.

2. That Christ was immersed is admitted by all the best ecclesiastical authorities. No first-class late lexicon or encyclopedia will defend any other act as the primitive practice; and no living author whose reputation for scholarship is well established, will deny that the Greek word for baptism primarily means immersion. The testimony of scholars of every land, every denomination, and of every tongue, is unambiguous and overwhelming that Jesus never instituted or sanctioned as an ordinance in His church either pouring or sprinkling. Those persons who think that the rite may be changed on the ground that it is non-essential, receive no support from the Saviour, since it was his first public act. It was, indeed, His significant inauguration to His redemptive office and the keynote of His splendid ministry. Previous to His baptism, He preached no sermon, spoke no parable, wrought no miracle, saved no soul; but after receiving that ordinance, He healed the sick, raised the dead, preached the gospel, founded the church, saved the lost, redeemed the world. Furthermore, whenever our Lord used the word it was fraught with most wonderful meaning. For instance, when He said, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved," He associated baptism with faith and salvation; and surely no man, no church, has a right to separate the ordinance from this holy company. Faith and baptism are placed side by side in the Scriptural economy, and had they never been divorced by the rude hand of man, the monstrous doctrine of baptismal regeneration would never have cursed Christendom. He made, however, baptism the potent symbol of His tremendous and overwhelming agonies as He suffered and died to ransom

the world, saying, "I have a baptism to be baptized with." To suppose that sprinkling or pouring could represent the divine plunge into the sea of darkness, is to belittle the atonement, and to mock the heavenly sufferer. It is noticeable that our Saviour's last thoughts were occupied with baptism as one of the great features of His kingdom; so that, just before His ascension to glory,

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He commanded His disciples to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Here we have the only act ever required to be done in the name of the Trinity—baptism. It is also true that the only occasion on which the Trinity ever appeared sensibly to men was at Christ's baptism. With so august a prestige, we dare not, at the peril of our fidelity to the great Head of the church, tamper with an ordinance that has been given to men with the full weight of His kingly authority.

3. The Saviour Himself received baptism before He instituted the *Supper*, and never by precept or example did He authorize what is commonly known as *open communion*; for, all of His followers being of the same faith and belonging to the same organization, such a thing would have been impossible; and further, had His commands been obeyed, no discussion on this subject would have arisen. When our Lord instituted the Supper, He took special pains not to give a general invitation to all Christians, of whom there were quite a number in Jerusalem at the Passover, besides the Apostles; but in an upper room, spread His table in the presence of His disciples only, all of whom there is every reason to believe had been baptized. Thus no unbaptized person sat at the Lord's table when the Lord Himself presided; and we need not feel called upon to be more liberal than He. The law of the ordinance is given in the Saviour's touching command, "This do in remembrance of me." The Supper evidently was not designed to express our fellowship with one another, but fellowship with Christ; nay more, it was intended to commemorate the sufferings and death of our Redeemer, as the elements themselves clearly demonstrate, but in nowise to show our affection to our fellow Christians. Fellowship with one another at the *Lord's table* is entirely subordinate and incidental, while the supreme purpose of the ordinance is, by communion with the divine Sufferer, to "shew the Lord's death till he come."

4. Christ declared that none but regenerated persons should become members of His church when He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he can-not see the kingdom of God;" and later He promulgated this fundamental law in the memorable proposition, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." He propounded religious liberty when He said, "One is your master, even Christ;" and again, "The truth shall make you free." He enjoined church discipline when He said, "Tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." He taught election when he asserted, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." He taught free-agency when He said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He taught the perseverance of saints when He said, "They shall never perish," and, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." He taught the existence of hell when He said, "It is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." He taught future endless suffering when He said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." He forbade popery and episcopacy when He said, "Call no man master." When He ascended on high, He gave some pastors, some teachers, some evangelists; but He never gave anybody popes and modern bishops. Thus Christ, in word and deed, was a Baptist.

(What Made Me A Baptist, pp. 7-12, 1901 edition).