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**North Road Chapel (Evangelical)
BIDEFORD**

Lessons from John's Gospel

chapter seventeen

"I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word" (John 17:6).

In the first five verses of this chapter, Christ is praying for Himself; as the chapter continues, He is seen to be praying for His disciples and those of future generations who would believe through their word. It is significant to note in this prayer that whether it was for Himself, the disciples or all future believers, the predominant theme is that God might be glorified. This is seen in the first verse, "*Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee*". Here is a practical application for every Christian, that in all our prayers, the prime object must ever be the glory of God.

In our consideration of this verse, we note that the persons prayed for by Christ, are the men given to Him out of the world. Whilst this has special reference to the disciples who were with Him in the upper room as He prayed, it was not exclusive to them.

'Those that Thou hast given Me' are words often found in Holy Writ, even in this chapter compare verses 2, 9 and 24, and they refer to all God's elect, all those redeemed by the Saviour and regenerated by the Holy Spirit of every generation. Here we concentrate upon the apostles, for it is obvious as the prayer continues that they were uppermost in the Lord's mind at this particular moment. "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through **their** (the apostles') word*" (v.20). The apostles held a unique role in the New Testament economy; it was to them that Christ manifested His name in a special way. By the term 'His name', we

are to understand this includes all that God **is** and all that He has **planned** in His eternal counsels.

Under the Old Covenant, the revelation given was somewhat mysterious; it was by types, symbols and analogies, plus the writings of the prophets. *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son"* (Hebrews 1:1,2); *"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son"* (Galatians 4:4). Upon His appearance, John the Baptist, the herald of the Mediator of the New Covenant, made a clear declaration, *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, **He hath declared Him**"* (John 1:18). The Son of God incarnate, declared and set forth the eternal purposes and explained the mysteries of the kingdom. However upon the completion of Christ's ministry, which culminated in His death and resurrection, He was to return unto His Father. What then of the truth which He had declared? Would it be lost? Would it be forgotten? No! Christ had twelve men who, amongst all those who figured in the vast election of grace, were unique and unparalleled in their role - **the apostles**. The Holy Spirit came upon these men in a special manner; they were endued with supernatural gifts, one of which was to recall and put into writing without error or mistake, **all** truth pertaining unto the kingdom of God and to set forth with clarity the eternal counsels as declared by Christ.

The doctrine of Holy Scripture was not fabricated by the brains of men, it was brought out from the bosom of the Father by Christ, His Son, who communicated it to the apostles and by them it was conveyed to us. All that the Mediator had manifested of the **Father's name**, these apostles transmitted. The words first spoken by the **Lord**, was confirmed unto **them** (the apostles), God also bearing **them** witness both with signs and wonders and divers miracles of the

Holy Ghost (cf Hebrews 2:3,4). This Divine communication has been sovereignly preserved; God Himself said that it would never pass away (cf Mark 13:31). Never will it be destroyed. In the kind providence of God, we have this infallible communication in our possession - the Scriptures of Truth, given that we might have knowledge and understanding of the mystery of Christ, "*which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is **now** revealed unto His holy **apostles** and prophets by the Spirit*" (Ephesians 3:5).

This introduction should help us to appreciate that the apostles had a particular interest in the Mediator's words, "*I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world*". In this special connection, it is important to note two words, "***the men***".

Although some sections of non-conformist Christianity have had female preachers for many years, the practice of women's ministry is now escalating. This is an innovation which is totally unscriptural. No woman was ever entrusted with the writing of Holy Scripture. The Lord did not choose any woman as an apostle. What is more, the great Head of the Church, through His inspired writer Paul, categorically stated, "*I suffer not a woman to teach*" (1 Timothy 2:12). This clear command carries no appendage such as, 'to a mixed audience, but is permissible in a segregated company'. The mandate is free of ambiguity, "*I suffer not a woman to **teach***". At the commencement of the New Testament Church, Christ appointed twelve men and although theirs was a unique role, it signifies the principle that '**men only**' are to hold office in the Church and to minister throughout all generations.

The continuing gifts to the Church of elders and deacons immediately followed the apostles; this includes the teaching elder or minister, who is to teach and preach the Word as it was communicated to the

apostles by Christ. This is the God-ordained means for setting forth Divine Truth - **preaching**. To many, this is looked upon as a foolish method, but it pleases God through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (cf 1 Corinthians 1:21); preaching is the power of God to them that are saved (cf 1 Corinthians 1:18). Not that there is any power or efficacy in the preacher himself; he is nothing more than the earthen vessel; the power is in the Word preached. The treasure is in the earthen vessel, the power is of God (cf 2 Corinthians 4:7). Because the excellency of the power is in the truth preached, Paul said, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"* (Romans 1:16).

In this method of communication, namely preaching, Divine wisdom as well as mercy is seen. What if God had chosen to thunder out New Testament truth as at Sinai? Should not we react as did Israel of old time by saying, *"Let not God speak with us"* (Exodus 20:19); or as the Roman guards who were so frightened that they became as dead men when He sent angelic spirits to the Saviour's tomb (cf Matthew 28:4). It is in kindness as well as wisdom that the truth of God has been entrusted to ordinary men to communicate to their fellows, men of like passions to ourselves and with whom we can freely converse. It was said of our Lord, *"The common people heard Him gladly"* (Mark 12:37). He was no religious professional, He wore no distinguishing attire, or bore any title during His ministry. In this, as in all things, He has left an example that we should follow His steps (cf 1 Peter 2:21). Any form of ostentation is incongruous to a minister of the gospel. In the main, it was ordinary men from everyday life who were anointed of the Holy Ghost and committed with the truth; fishermen, tax collectors and such like; men with whom others could freely approach and talk.

A very simple but meaningful analogy is found in the Old Testament, "*As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man*" (Proverbs 27:19). By looking into a tub of clear water on a bright sunny day, we see a reflection of ourselves. The face in the water answereth to our face. In the same way the heart of one man answereth to the heart of another. This is the case, as the truth of God's Word is set forth, whether it be to believer or unbeliever, it affects us personally, and secretly we have to say, 'That's me'. The fact that this truth is coming through man, to man, greatly emphasizes the reality. To many it may appear foolish for one sinner to be speaking to another sinner, yet when the one has been regenerated and converted, with understanding and conviction he can preach to his fellows; he can enter right into the mind of the listener, for he is of like passions; the same make-up; heart speaks for heart.

Can we not see the **wisdom** of the Great Head in appointing fellow humans to preach? How we should bless God that He has manifested His name to the apostles and given to **us** His Word through them, and that today through the preaching of that Word by His ministers, who are **ordinary** men, it pleases God to save sinners, edify believers, and maintain a witness in an evil world to the glory of His name.

This sixth verse of John chapter seventeen will be continued in the next edition, God willing.

W.H.Molland

"Hence sprung the apostles' honoured name,
Sacred beyond heroic fame;
In lowlier forms, to bless our eyes,
Pastors from hence, and teachers rise".

P.Doddridge

Baptism

As set out in Holy Scripture

The commission given by Christ, the Great Head of the Church:-

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).
Amen - so be it!

There is carefully calculated detail in this commission:

1. Teach; preach the gospel (cf Mark 16:15).
2. Baptize.
3. Teach them to observe all things commanded.

This command was given to *"all nations"*, *"every creature"* (Mark 16:15), and it stands for all time, *"even unto the end of the world. Amen"*. This is how **it is to be** throughout the New Testament age until the second advent of the Great Head. No mortal has any right to alter, adjust, or leave out any part of this clear, authoritative instruction which is fundamental to the teaching and practice of the New Covenant age. Any who would dare to do so, should seriously ponder the manner in which Almighty God finalizes His Word. *"I testify unto every man that heareth the prophecy of this book, If any man shall **add** unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall **take away** from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Revelation 22:18,19). The eternal God

will not have His mandate tampered with by, either addition or subtraction. The consequences of doing so are serious in the extreme.

The disciples to whom this great commission was first communicated, duly transmitted it to the new converts (see article on John 17 in this edition); the early New Testament Church continued in the apostles doctrine (cf Acts 2:42), which was first spoken by the Lord (cf Hebrews 2:3). In this way was the gospel of the saving grace of God preached and upon saving faith, all were baptized. *"Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:41-42). This is a clear example of the great commission seen in practice.

1. The gospel was preached.
2. Upon the obedience of faith in response to the gospel, all were baptized.
3. Added to the church, they were taught, and in the teaching they continued.

If this is not clear, then words have little, if any meaning. Nor was this an isolated incident, for the book of the Acts of the Apostles, if read consecutively, will show that this was the continuing pattern. *"When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women"* (Acts 8:12). Note carefully, Philip preached, men and women believed, they were baptized. *"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell*

from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized" (Acts 9:17,18). The same order; first converted, then baptized. So it was in the house of Cornelius, Peter preached the Word, the Holy Spirit came in power upon those who heard it, then were they baptized. Peter **commanded** that this should be so (cf Acts 10:44-48). Further examples continue to be given: Lydia (Acts 16:14,15); the jailor at Philippi (Acts 16:30-33); Crispus at Corinth (Acts 18:8). This was the continuing and unaltering pattern of the New Testament Church. Preaching the gospel to **all**, baptizing **all** upon profession of faith, and teaching the converts to observe **all** that the Holy Scriptures enjoined.

Baptism is mandatory, not optional, therefore the Biblical guidelines on how it must be administered are to be followed. The word 'baptize' in its Greek form means 'immerse', 'dip', 'engulf', 'submerge'. However men try to convince others that sprinkling or pouring is a valid means of baptism, it does not alter the meaning of the word 'baptize' - **immersion**. John Calvin, in his efforts to establish the validity of infant sprinkling, had to admit that, correctly defined, baptism was to immerse. He wrote, "The very word baptize, however, signifies immerse; and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church" (Calvin's Institutes IV.v.19). The Westminster Confession chapter 28, section 3 concerning baptism states, "Dipping of the person in water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person". As proof of this statement, Hebrews 9:10,19-22, is cited, a portion of Scripture which has nothing whatsoever to do with New Testament baptism; the Westminster teaching on this matter is a fallacy.

Various narratives in the New Testament concerning baptism give positive indication that converts were immersed. *"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John*

*forbad Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway **out of the water.** (Matthew 3:13-16). The Lord Jesus went down **into** the water; it was deep enough in which to be immersed. This is substantiated by another Scripture, "After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judaea; and there He tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was **much water there**; and they came and were baptized (John 3:22,23). Why go into this place where there was deep water if sprinkling from a bowl was sufficient? In another incident it is recorded, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both **into the water**, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:35-38). Not in these Scriptures, or indeed, **anywhere** in the New Testament, will sprinkling or pouring be found, or even hinted at; always it is as the word 'baptize' signifies - immersion.*

Seeing that it is imperative for all believers to be baptized, and the only valid mode is immersion, what is the great significance? This is explained in understandable language in the Holy Scriptures. At regeneration the repentant, believing sinner is delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (cf Colossians 1:13); he is born again (cf John 3:3,7); he is "*in Christ*". As such he is "*a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Henceforth

the converted sinner lives unto God as it is expressed in Holy Writ, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20). Being crucified with Christ entails death to the rudiments of the world (cf Colossians 2:20) and being dead to sins (cf 1 Peter 2:24). These are some of the amazing truths which are an integral part of the wondrous transaction of the conversion of the sinner in spiritual birth.

When by the grace of God, this has taken place, it is required by commandment, that a visible, tangible expression shall be given. For this, God Himself instituted the ordinance of baptism, which in a most profound manner demonstrates outwardly and openly that which has been effected by His Holy Spirit inwardly in the life of a poor, depraved, fallen mortal.

Baptism by immersion symbolizes death, burial and resurrection. Going down into the water sets forth death to the old nature, the crucifying of the old man. By being immersed the water divides, opening up the watery grave, signifying that the former manner of life in the flesh is buried. Coming up out of the water expresses resurrection, the evidence of that new life imparted by the Holy Spirit. This is summarized in the epistle to the Romans, *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:3,4). This is an eloquent statement, nor could anything be more appropriate to demonstrate the conversion of a fallen child of Adam than this ordinance. To conform to this is obligatory, it is an integral part of the commission. Not to teach and practice believer's baptism is as serious as not to preach the gospel.

It is to take away from the words of this Book (cf Revelation 22:19), a fearful thing to do. At the beginning of the New Testament Church the preaching was, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you*" (Acts 2:38). This was not optional; as repentance was commanded, so was baptism. This was how the Church started and this is how it is to continue, "*even unto the end of the world*" (Matthew 28:20).

In conclusion let the following question be asked, What has baptism to do with infants? The answer is, Nothing! Where do infants figure in this ordinance? They do not! When examined in the light of New Testament truth, that which is known as paedobaptism is a gigantic myth which is a lasting shame to those who propagate it (see Editorial).

W.H.Molland

*Extracts from various writers concerning
paedo-baptism*

"Infant baptism necessitates an alteration in the meaning of Christian baptism. Additions to the Word of God invariably lead to alterations. The fact that it is necessary to alter the New Testament teaching respecting baptism in the case of infants, is in itself evidence that infant baptism is an addition. If infant baptism were abolished and believer's baptism restored, man would have little difficulty in understanding the meaning of Christian baptism (p.96). Infant baptism destroys the appointed way of professing faith in Christ. Experience teaches that it is necessary to have some way of confessing Christ before men, some badge of discipleship. The appointed badge is baptism. Those who baptize infants do not re-baptize upon profession of faith, and thus the unscriptural practice of infant baptism nullifies the Scriptural practice of believer's baptism.

.... Infant baptism is ruinous to the souls of thousands. It is not infant baptism of itself, but the mistaken views regarding its efficacy and significance which leads multitudes down the broad road to destruction (p.98). ("Baptism not for Infants" by T.E.Watson)

"Biblical Baptists regard the kingdom of Christ as a purely spiritual organization, separate and distinct from the world. Acting upon this conviction, they admit none to baptism and membership but such as profess their faith in Jesus Christ and give satisfactory evidence that they have *"passed from death unto life"*. They recognize no hereditary claims to the covenant of grace. They claim no 'holiness' for their offspring arising from their natural birth, which entitles them to a place in God's spiritual temple; but regarding them as carnal, depraved and unholy, they constantly feel the importance of urging upon them their own personal obligation to *"repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ"*. Infant baptism is not that harmless, innocent thing which many suppose it to be, but the parent of gigantic evils; the fruitful source of the existence of state churches and most of the corruptions flowing therefrom. The instigator of all the persecutions which have ever been waged in the name of Christianity; a lying refuge and hiding place of falsehood to ensnare and ruin souls; in short, the originator and propagator of Popery.

Infant baptism is an error from beginning to end, corrupt in theory and corrupting in practice; born in superstition, cradled in fear, nursed in ignorance, supported by fraud and spread by force. With a tyrant hand it has shed the blood of martyrs in torrents in all lands. The introduction of infant baptism was the death-knell of religious liberty in the Christian communities where it was practised. The first persecutions ever raised in the name of Christianity, were waged by the advocates of infant baptism against those who, adhering to the teaching of Christ and the apostles, denied its validity.

The council of Carthage (A.D.414), passed the following canon: "We will that whosoever denies that little children by baptism are freed from perdition and eternally saved, that they be accursed". The edict of Honorius and Valentinian III (A.D.413), forbids re-baptism throughout the Roman empire under penalty of death. This of course was aimed at those who considered infant baptism as unscriptural, and immersed believers after they had confessed faith in Christ, even though they had been baptized in infancy. Under laws like these, enforced as they were in the middle ages, with new and most sanguinary edicts in all the states of Europe, what multitudes must have become martyrs may be conjectured, from the fact that at the time of the 'Reformation', baptist martyrs were counted by tens and even hundreds of thousands" (p.81-84). ("Baptists Thorough Reformers" by J.Quincy Adams).

"Every English sovereign from Henry VII to James II, took the sternest measures against all sectaries, and Baptists especially suffered. Reformers such as even Cranmer, Hooper and Ridley were unsparing in denunciation and unrelenting in persecuting, even unto death by burning. Some of these experienced under Mary, a painful fulfilment of our Lord's warning which they had disregarded, "*With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you*" (Matthew 7:2). It is a sad testimony to the superficial and imperfect character of the 'Reformation', that it effected so little change in the spirit of its leaders. Their **mind** was altered on various vital matters, such as salvation by grace and justification by faith, but their **spirit** frequently remained hard and cruel. Calvin could burn Servetus; Melancthon could attend Baptists to execution and attribute their constancy to Satan-infused obstinacy; Zwingli fully endorsed severe penal measures against Baptists at Zurich. Sometimes it was not otherwise with non-conformists when they attained to civil power. In the middle of century seventeen, the Presbyterians were as intolerant

and fierce as Papists and Episcopalians" (p.237). ("Original Christian Baptism" by Johannes Warns)

"New Testament baptized churches refused to know men either as Jew or Gentile, because in Christ Jesus there is no race. Then what had circumcision to do with the question anyway, when baptism affected only "*a new creature*"? As to New Testament silence on the subject of infant baptism: Did the apostolic Christians understand that whatever Christ did not forbid, they were in duty bound to incorporate into the Christian system? Then any rite, service or practice, superstition or dogma whatever, might have been introduced, unless expressly forbidden. This casts all the bulwarks of purity to the four winds and is the essence of Romanism" (p.143). (Vol 1 of "A History of the Baptist" by Thomas Armitage)

"The Puritans were in the ascendancy during the 1640's since they had at last got their hands on political power, and being convinced of Constantinian principles, they were determined to make the utmost use of it. They were greatly disturbed by the rapid growth of the Baptists; indeed they hated them and poured much abuse upon them. Naturally they included no Baptist in their Assembly which met at Westminster from 1643, called to determine a uniform religion. On the contrary the Puritans were severely intolerant of the very existence of Baptists and did all they could to get rid of them and their 'pestilential' doctrines, as they labelled them. Some Lancashire Presbyterian ministers declared that their 'toleration would be putting a sword into a madman's hands; a cup of poison into the hands of a child; a letting loose madmen with firebrands in their hands; a laying a stumbling block before the blind; a proclaiming liberty to the wolves to come into Christ's fold to prey upon the lambs!' Even as gracious and Godly a man as Samuel Rutherford could bring himself

to say that he "denied absolutely the moral principles underlying religious toleration. There is but one true Church and all who are outside it are heretics who must be destroyed". Baptists apparently, were heretics, beyond salvation and ought to be destroyed!" (p.438). ("Battle for the Church" by David Gay).

"Presbyterianism, Rutherford submitted, has been declared to be the true religion of England and it must undertake without fear or compromise, the discharge of its high and exclusive function (p.293).Rutherford would go so far as to argue that Independency was manifestly a false and heretical faith. Presbyterianism constitutes the sole true faith, while Independency borders upon atheism in its damnable doctrine of liberty of conscience. Independency must be disavowed and put down (p.294). An heretic, the Scottish author held, is technically guilty of soul murder and should accordingly be cut down by the civil magistrate under the guidance of the Church (p.295). The Church, the Presbyterians submitted, is robbed of half its strength unless it enjoys the assistance of the 'Christian' magistrate (p.299). There must be a sword to punish error (p.301). Those who will not be won or those who will not be subdued by the weapons of the spirit, must be cut down by the magistrate at the direction of the church. That which the water cannot wash out, the fire will burn out. The State must cause the discipline of the true Church to prevail absolutely and universally (p.307). The death penalty was seriously urged by representative Presbyterian apologists for errors which, as defined by the Presbyterians, would have included substantial portions of the nation (p.309). Presbyterian thinkers defined with precision the limits of the true Church which, they held, could not permit the slightest traces of dissent. They were therefore frank in the denunciation of all religious groups that did not share their ideal of a Calvinistic State Church (p.311).

The Presbyterian apologists were even more bitter in their denunciation of the Baptists, who were normally regarded as heretical by the Puritan extremists. The sect, it was charged, had advanced the most damnable errors under the licence of religious freedom. They were held to be weeds in the garden of the Church, which was choking out God's own planting. The Baptist stood convicted of gross error on many points. The Baptist heresies are a blemish upon the spotless garment of Christ's Church which must be eradicated before the reformation of England can be complete" (p.312). (Vol 3 "The Development of Religious Toleration in England" by W.K.Jordan).

Editorial

The vital matter of believer's baptism which forms part of Christ's commission to the Church just prior to His ascension, is a fundamental tenet of the Christian faith, yet it is treated indifferently by many, and stoutly opposed by others. Sadly, very few are rising to the defence of this most important aspect of the faith.

Believer's baptism is not attacked today by bitter persecution and ruthless savagery as in past centuries, by Romanists and later by Protestant Reformers and Puritans; now there is a much more subtle effort to disparage the Biblical teaching and Christ's command on this matter. Those who designate themselves 'Reformed', claiming to be guided by 'The Regulative Principle', have gradually eroded the true meaning of baptism. Originally the term 'Regulative Principle' was a cliché almost entirely peculiar to the Presbyterians and others of like persuasion, and means that matters of faith or practice not found in the Word of God are to have no place in the life of the believer, or in the practice of the church. 'The Westminster Confession' and 'The

Heidelberg Catechism' set out that which is considered to be 'The Reformed Doctrine'.

It does not require an in-depth study to discover that these 'handbooks', whilst good and sound in many respects, are glaringly at variance with Holy Scripture in others. Therefore such phrases as 'Scripture Alone' as used by the Protestant Reformers, and 'The Regulative Principle' by the Puritans is inaccurate. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the matter of baptism where these manuals advocate unbiblical practice.

It is staggering that those who believe and practise believer's baptism by immersion, eagerly seize upon this appellation 'Reformed', which contradicts that which they profess and execute. As well as wishing to be called 'Reformed', there is an evident, increasingly sympathetic drift towards corporate link-up. *"Can two walk together, except they be agreed"?* (Amos 3:3) - only by compromise! True 'Reformed' and 'Westminster' men invariably take to themselves unbiblical titles and wear some kind of distinguishing attire, their form of church government being far removed from the independency of a Bible-based baptistic church.

'Covenant Theology' is one of the most laboured dogmas of these Confessional adherents, namely that children of one believing parent are in the covenant of grace. This is the reason why infant sprinkling is imperative for their offspring. Sung praise must essentially be in the Old Covenant language of the Psalms, otherwise it is unacceptable to God. These matters demand close scrutiny to prevent becoming influenced, as many baptists appear to be at the present time.

There can be little doubt that the vast amount of literature written by ardent paedo-baptist Reformers and Puritans reproduced over recent

decades, together with the advent of the 'Reformed Movement' has occasioned this revival of 'Reformed Theology'. These writings have shed light on such important matters as the eternal counsels and purposes of God, His sovereignty in all things, including man's salvation and the importance of the Law. For this one is thankful, but in the embracing of these Biblical truths it has occasioned in some a tolerance, if not acceptance of that which is totally unbiblical. This is tragic. Believer's baptism, separation from the state, independency, simplicity in worship and church order, abolition of clerical titles, were all things secured by non-conformists, often through persecution and death. Reformers as well as Romanists, instigated this persecution; nor were many of the Puritans innocent, as history testifies.

Believer's baptism has always been the great point of cleavage down through history. The fact that many paedobaptists and immersionists can happily fellowship together today, is due to the fact that the mode and meaning of the ordinance is not forcefully and authoritatively preached and contended for by those who claim to hold to Biblical practice. It is becoming increasingly common for ministers of Baptist and Presbyterian persuasions to exchange pulpits, but only on the understanding that certain subjects will not be touched upon. Can it ever be God-honouring for a minister to put himself into a position where parts of Divine truth have to be suppressed? Sadly infant sprinklers are looked upon by many immersionists as those who may have made variations, but they are 'good men', therefore their erroneous practices must be overlooked.

Personalities or friendships cannot be the controlling factor in this matter. The ordinance of baptism and what it signifies is of **fundamental importance**. Baptists who disagree with this, evidence a lack of conviction in their professed belief. It is totally incongruous for a Biblical Baptist to countenance infant sprinkling, for the

ceremony and dogma which lies behind it is totally unbiblical. It is as Dr. John Gill states, "There being then neither precept nor precedent in the Word of God for infant baptism, it may be jointly condemned as unscriptural and unwarrantable". Alas, many treat this matter with impunity today.

In a book recently published, "**Baptism**, Meaning, Mode and Subjects" by M.Kimmitt (written from a Reformed point of view), the writer states on p.7 that he is dealing with a "fairly minor matter". On p.47 he speaks of "the unbiblical emphasis placed on baptism"; his final conclusion is, "The defence of the 'Reformed' and Biblical position is forced on us by those who see the matter as of such importance as to set up Baptist churches, appoint Baptist ministers and structure a whole denomination. Historically this whole movement is schismatic".

Lectures are being given by 'Reformed' men on such subjects as 'Why our children should be baptized'. Tapes and literature are circulated on this subject and they should immediately be dismissed, for these things are just **not true**, despite the authors on other points being categorized as 'good men'.

Baptism is not a minor matter and believer's baptism is schismatic only in the sense that it divides in a Biblical manner. There must needs be **division** and a **clear line** of demarcation from those who teach 'Covenant Theology' with its accompanying infant sprinkling. This theology introduces an organic aspect into the Covenant of Grace. One writer of this persuasion writes, "Those who deny infant baptism are blind to that fundamental truth of God's covenant, that God never deals with us as mere individuals, but that He gathers His Church organically, that is in line of the generation of believers and their spiritual seed. According to this basic doctrine, children are also regenerated in the line of the covenant. It is in that conviction that

we present our children for baptism, since children are also included in the covenant of God".

This organic conception of the Covenant of Grace is most definitely not 'basic doctrine' and must be totally rejected. The Word of God makes it clear at the commencement of the New Testament that salvation is "*not of blood*" (John 3:13). This was spoken to a man under the Old Covenant, who doubtless would have received the sign of circumcision, yet the word to him was, "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3:7). One has only to go through the Scriptures to see the true seed of Abraham were a remnant and by far the greater part of the circumcision were not of the true spiritual seed at all. So it is today, there are many born of Christian parents who never come to faith in Christ but die in their sins, whereas many of ungodly parentage are gloriously saved by the grace of God.

Another theory of the 'Reformed' is that their so-called baptism of infants is a true, Biblical follow-on from the Old Testament ordinance of circumcision; this is almost too ridiculous to consider. Circumcision was for every "*man child*" (Genesis 17:12). How could it be any other, knowing the nature of the operation. Believer's baptism is for both "*men and women*" (Acts 8:12). If circumcision and baptism are spiritually one and the same, why did the Lord Jesus, who was circumcised according to the law (cf Luke 2:21), come to John to be baptized (cf Matthew 3:13)? Saul of Tarsus also was "*circumcised the eighth day*" (Philippians 3:5); nevertheless after receiving spiritual sight, forthwith he arose and was baptized (cf Acts 9:18). Were there not great numbers of Jews and proselytes present at Pentecost who would all have been circumcised (cf Acts 2:10)? Then why were they baptized (cf Acts 2:41)? Paul and Barnabas were involved in much disputation over the matter of circumcision in Acts 15, but they never spoke of it being replaced by baptism, which would have closed the argument.

Examine paedo-baptism from any angle and it has no Biblical sanction or foundation, whereas believer's baptism not only has full New Testament warrant, it is expressly **commanded** by the Great Head, being bound up with, indeed a very part of the gospel itself. This certainly is no minor matter. Infant sprinkling is **another baptism**. Bearing in mind that the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 is **one unit**, the 'gospel', 'baptism' and 'all things commanded' cannot be segregated; therefore to introduce **another baptism** is tantamount to preaching **another gospel**. This is sobering indeed (cf Galatians 1:6-9). Infant baptism has given a false hope to millions throughout history; it is one of the greatest deceptions ever foisted upon the Church. The line drawn between the 'Baptistic' and the 'Reformed' was sharp and decisive in the past. Alas that now, to some Baptists, this should be a matter of such little importance.

See booklist for further literature on this important subject.

Notices

Mrs. Anne Millar, who has been regularly meeting with us for many months, was received into the membership of the church on Lord's Day, 1 August 1999. We thank God for this further addition to the spiritual family at North Road.

Visiting Preachers D.V.

Lord's Day

10 October 1999	Dr.S.S.Short (Weston-super-Mare)
21 November 1999	Dr.J.R.Hulett (Wool)