

Reasons I Became A Baptist

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It is not my design in this communication, to enter largely into the discussion of my subject, but rather to state the circumstances, and reasons which led me to abandon Pedobaptism, and to adopt those sentiments advocated by the Baptists and to my mind clearly exhibited in the Holy Scriptures.

About three years ago, I proposed to my wife, who was a Baptist, to have our little daughter sprinkled: she remarked, that she had serious objections to it, but yet, if I was determined to have it done, I might bear the responsibility. This declaration astonished me not a little, for I thought that Infant Sprinkling was an ordinance so well attested by every shape and manner of evidence, scriptural, historical, traditional and reasonable, that the most ignorant and prejudiced, when the facts were properly presented would be compelled to adopt and advocate Pedobaptism. My first step then to the accomplishment of my purpose was, to overthrow and dissipate my wife's conscientious objections to this scriptural and reasonable ordinance; and I set myself to work immediately, to cull and select from every source within my reach the arguments for its support. I searched, read, selected, considered and finally rejected almost every argument presented to my mind. The solid, ancient, adamant foundation upon which I thought my superstructure was built, seemed now to exhibit some time-worn rents, which no art could fully repair. I could not see distinctly the bearing of those arguments for Infant Sprinkling, and it was indeed too plain that they required great labor, and a patient and diligent effort of the mind to render them at all intelligible. The apparent weakness of the arguments presented by my Authors, I attributed to a deficient understanding of their subject. I took up the Assembly Confession of Faith, turned to the article "Baptism," page 120, hoping to find here, everything satisfactory to dissipate my doubts, and to reassure my mind. I read that Baptism was, "a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins," and that "by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only *offered* but really *exhibited* and *conferred* by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) &c.

I asked myself, can Baptism mean all this? Surely, I have been greatly in the dark upon this important subject! Is it possible that by its right use, promised grace is not only *offered*, but really *exhibited* and *conferred* by the Holy Ghost? I had often denied the intrinsic and essential importance of Baptism, but here it is exhibited as the very essence of salvation, in the clearest, and most emphatic manner, and although Romans vi: 3-5 arose to my mind, yet I inclined to think that I did not understand the subject, and that the Assembly of Divines, the most learned body of Theologians in the world, knew better than I could possibly know, and that Baptism meant all they said and nothing less. I consoled myself with the reflection that if I were not able to prove and maintain the ordinance in question, I could easily refute the argument and objections brought against it, not thinking, that of necessity the *onus probandi*, fell to my lot. I took up Pengilly's "Scripture Guide to Baptism," because it represented to embody in a small compass the views and arguments of the Baptists on this subject, fully determined to consider and refute step by step, for I felt that this would be a light and trifling task. I read it partly, but instead of finding its refutation an easy task, I found it to my surprise so filled with God's revelation and Christ's own words, that I laid it aside for the present, with the resolve, that at some future period I would give it an impartial and attentive consideration. I was not satisfied in my mind, yet I communicated my feelings to no one at this time. Reflection after reflection arose as

circumstances favored, and in despite of all my efforts, to the contrary, my doubts and objections increased, so that I no longer felt that I was omitting an important duty, by not having my child sprinkled.

A few months since I went to work, to investigate the subject, desiring to be guided by what Christ would say, and determined to receive, believe and, obey whatever in my judgment the scriptures would present. I turned to Matthew iii: and read of John baptising "in the Jordan," and to Mark i: 5 "in the river of Jordan." This language, so fully, and explicitly declares what was done, that to my mind it needed no comment. Matthew iii: 11 next presented itself, "I indeed baptize you with water," and the corresponding passages in Mark i: 8, Luke iii: 16, John i:26, Acts i: 5, and all these translated "with water." I placed these passages in connexion with, "in Jordan" and "in the river of Jordan, " and a manifest inconsistency apparent to me in the translation. It does not express a continuation of the same, but an idea quite different. To say John baptised "in the Jordan" and still more explicitly "in the river of Jordan," and then as a continuation of the same idea, that he baptized "with water," conveys a great inconsistency, and carries with it its own refutation. The passages above cited, translated by *in water*, would exactly accord in idea, and is the proper and literal rendering of the Greek. We can with propriety say "with water," not taking it in connexion with "in the Jordan," but if, "in the Jordan" had been translated *with the Jordan*, as it should have been to accord with, "with water," the absurdity would have been too glaring to have been received.

But the 16th verse directly strengthens and establishes the same construction, for "Jesus when he was baptised went up straightway out of the water," and again Acts viii: 38-39, "and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptised him. And when they were come up out of the water," and again Romans vi: 4-5, "therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death," &c. How exactly in accordance are the above quoted passages! what a beautiful continuation of the same idea! How irresistibly does *immersion* force itself upon us as the only idea implied! I care not for nicely spun theories, and long and detailed reasonings upon the subject: the language is sufficient; complete, and perfectly intelligible. I next examined the commission, Matthew xxviii: 19-20 "Go teach (*matheteusate*) all nations, baptising them;" the question occurs me, how can *infants* be taught? Instruction here is a pre-requisite to baptism. I might be mistaken and I turned to Mark xvi: 15-16, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised" &c. How can I be mistaken - could language be language be more clear, and intelligible. How can we avoid the conclusion; first, that the gospel must be preached; second, that, the person must believe; third, that he must be baptised. If such language, were used in the common transactions of life, nine hundred and ninety-nine in one thousand would form a like conclusion.' I could see no grounds whatever here for infant sprinkling, for they cannot understand if they are preached to, neither can they believe, if the truth were presented ever so plainly.

I intended if possibly that not a shadow of a doubt should possess my mind upon the all important truths of the Scriptures, and I referred to the promise, Acts ii: 38-39 "for the promise is unto you and to your children (*teknois*). What promise is it? Baptism? No! but the promise of the Holy Spirit. Permit me here to remark, that I have often, during several years past, in hearing my classes in Greek, me with the word *teknon*, and I have never to my knowledge translated it "infants, " and the sense of the context would be plainly violated to do so. When very young children are referred to, the word *paidia* or *paidion*, a diminutive for *pais* (child) is used; see Greek text, Mark x: 14-15, Matthew xix: 14, Luke xviii: 16, Matthew xiv: 21, &c. But to refer again to Acts ii: 38-39, as quoted above, those

children are mentioned in verse 17 as "sons and daughters prophesying," and verse 38 requires repentance before baptism. I asked myself, can I desire more evidence upon a subject already doubly plain? The sun in his splendor could not more fully enlighten objects within the influence of his rays, than the word of eternal truth enlightened ray mind upon this subject, heretofore so clouded and difficult. That I might be in possession of all the facts relating to this interesting ordinance, I turned successively to those passages considering household baptism.

1. To Cornelius, Acts 10. 2. To Lydia, Acts 16. 3. To the Phillipian [sic] Jailor, Acts 16. **Lastly**, to Stephanus, 1 Corinthians 1. And I could bring to view, not a single passage or idea favoring infant sprinkling, or that any one was baptised without previous belief and regeneration. Christ took little children (*paidia*) up in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them, notwithstanding the opposition, made by the disciples to their parents or friends presenting them. The passage certainly does not say, he sprinkled or immersed them, but that he blessed them. Must I infer that he baptised those infants? My mind refuses to do that, which the plain language denies. I desire to obey the commands of Christ, and when he says one thing, he cannot mean by inference an other. "Of such" is the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 19:14, has been my favorite passage and I have labored, anxiously labored, to make this mean that infants were recognized by Christ as members of his church. Certainly, if infants are members of the church, by the above declaration of Christ, they are so by blessing and not by baptism "Of such" always presented itself to me, like the mirage to the traveller in the desert, the nearer I approached, the more evident the inconsistency. I frequently advanced it in argument, but was compelled as frequently to relinquish it, for some stronger and more tenable point. The evident inappropriateness of the passage, to the maintenance of my argument, I could well reconcile to myself by attributing it to my inability of discussion and ignorance of the subject. Can it mean *of such children*? The laws of language, principles of interpretation and rules of logic, are against such a construction. I can reconcile it to my mind in no other way than that the followers of Christ were to exhibit the humility and obedience of children. As little children, humble, forgiving and obedient to their parents, so the followers of Christ, who receive him in truth and sincerity, will really be, and appear humble and obedient to God their Heavenly Father, - to Christ their Redeemer, - and be willing to submit without a murmur to every divine command. There is one more point which has held an extensive influence over my mind, although, I could never understand it, so as to make it either reasonable or intelligible - the analogy between the Old and New Testament dispensations. Although once a favorite argument, yet I cannot see the analogy between the Jewish congregation and Christ's church; the former carnal and comprising the whole nation; the latter spiritual, arid strictly including only those regenerated, or born of the spirit of God. I cannot, and never could, see the analogy between circumcision and baptism, although I received the latter as coming in the room of the former: and here permit me to remark that I look upon baptism as a positive institution of Christ, which can neither be contracted nor enlarged, and therefore it cannot depend upon analogy, but upon the direct expression of the institution itself. But let us for one moment see how far this resemblance extends: as the male posterity of Abraham, whether believers, or unbelievers were circumcised, so should the male posterity of parents whether believers or unbelievers be baptized; as male children eight days old were circumcised, so at that age should they be baptized: - as circumcision was not performed in the name of the Father, Son and Holy ghost, so the ordinance of Baptism should not be: - as male servants bought with money were circumcised, and that without reference, necessarily of faith and regeneration, so in like manner should male servants be baptised - so circumcision introduced into the Jewish congregation, and entitled the persons, having received that rite, to its privileges, so baptism should entitle to the privileges of Christ's church; but it

does not always do this. Infants are not allowed the privileges of communion in the church to which they belong. They are debarred this, until mature years or years of discretion; when by a profession of Faith in Christ, they are presented to the church as members fit to partake of the emblems of the broken body and shed blood. Is this thing so - and yet will it be charged upon Baptists that they are restricted communionists? Give justice to whom justice is due. And in conclusion it is with deep sorrow and regret that I have left the Presbyterian church, and especially the one to which I have been attached for several years. Raised and educated by Presbyterian parents, surrounded all my life by its influences and affections, my heart is full of the deepest sorrow, at having withdrawn from under its great and wide-spread banner, and from brethren and sisters, whom I have long cherished with a fond and sincere attachment. A candid and earnest investigation of the Word of God, has been the means, which has led to this solemn determination. God's Word is my guide in this life, - it will hold me responsible in the great day of reckoning, and to have obeyed it on earth while surrounded by trial and temptation, will be a source of infinite and unalloyed happiness in the kingdom of God in Heaven.