

# The Fenelon Falls Gazette.

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FENELON FALLS, ONTARIO, FRIDAY, JANUARY 3RD, 1890.

No. 46.

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The Fenelon Falls Gazette.

Friday, January 3rd, 1890.

COMMUNICATIONS.

ANOTHER VIEW OF BAPTISM.

(Continued.)

SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION.

THE Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are an organic growth—not a boulder, but a plant. The whole Gospel is in Genesis. The third chapter, the Protevangelion, contains the whole counsel of Jehovah in germ, and the other books are but growths therefrom. The plant or organism grows. This is apparent from Leviticus, the Psalms, Isaiah, and, finally, Paul's Epistles. Abraham and David rejoiced, as well as Paul, in the Messiah. They looked forward, and he looked backward, as we do now. This being so, a law of life rules and reigns supreme within the Bible. Life always comes by incarnations. This is a divine as well as a human law. Without incarnation religion is impossible. Hence, we must live without religion, without God and hope in the world, or receive the mystery of the Incarnation. "The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us." Before we can apprehend Scripture truth, there must be a second incarnation of the Word, Jesus Christ, within us. Being spiritually quickened, enlightened, and guided, we should ever approach the Scriptures as to a sanctuary with awe and reverence, and with a collected mind and a solemn docile heart, because Christ reigns there from first to last. The stars are many, but the heavens are one; the flowers are innumerable, but they are all warmed and nurtured by one sun. Adolph Monod has well said, "They are heaven speaking upon earth; in them we hear the voice of the living God." The two testaments are the lips of Jesus speaking to the human race. God has given humanity the written Word and the living Logos. The one incarnated in human speech, the other, in human flesh. Thus God allures the soul "to brighter worlds and leads the way." Let us keep these principles clearly in view throughout this article.

Your correspondent in his letters, as far as I have observed, has not even recognised the first of these principles, namely organic unity. His quotations are exceedingly erratic. They have no visible orbit. Is it just to determine the character of a man by a single feature of his personality—a feature detached and viewed apart? You may have a Bible, and yet have no revelation; just as you may have a quarry, but not a temple. It is easy to pile a huge mountain of proof-texts, and yet have no Bible. You might gather the stars together and form a heap, but could you make a cosmos of them thus? No. You must place them astronomically, i. e., at their proper distances, and surround them with their own atmosphere. So, in the work of Biblical interpretation or criticism, there must be an eye that can take in the whole landscape, and a judgment which can allow for distance, light, and colour. There is not a single monstrosity in the religious world that does not defend itself by some stray lines of Scripture. Such partial interpretation is distinctly and repeatedly forbidden in the Bible. Poor Book, thou art sadly and severely torn and disfigured at times. Thou art terribly mutilated in the house of thy friends! Thy visage is oftentimes marred; thy music rendered discordantly; and thy glorious and inspiring light obscured by the various "isms." Be of good cheer, however, thou too shalt have a resurrection; like thy Author, on the third day. The golden age is still in the future. Watch and wait with us!

"We shall know each other better,  
When the mists have rolled away."  
Blessed Book, gift of the Eternal in Time, and our Teacher for the Hereafter, thou dost speak to us with a new accent every time we hear thee. Thou hast a Gospel for every pain and ache and sorrow and sore agony!

Your correspondent, further, wrests his proof-texts from the context, and places his own interpretation or that of his school upon them. Combination is itself an excellence. But if we want to see all the colours of the rainbow, we must wait till the sun turns the storm into a rainbow, until God blends the colours on His palette. The first thing, therefore, the expositor has to do is to renounce himself. He must not limit himself to his own little power of invention and expression. The light, the genius, the spirit, of interpretation must come from eternity, from the invisible God. Now, the context bears somewhat the same relation to the text or verse what an adjective, clause, or adjunct bears to the noun which it may qualify or limit. The adjective in limiting the term employed throws an intensive and expressive force upon it; so in reference to context with verse. The context is the environment of the verse, and thus, naturally, determines its nature and scope of application. To select a verse here and there (as, for example, your correspondent's method), irrespective of the soil from which it has sprung, is, to say little and mean more, unscientific. It is contrary to the principles of sound exegesis, or systematic or biblical theology. The philologist looks at roots, not at branches, to determine the radical import of words. Shall the theologian begin where he ends? If so, his crude system will be destructive and not constructive. It will produce a theological Babel! This explains, to a certain extent,

the origin of the confusion and the antagonistic systems in Scriptural science. Permit me, further, to define the word *Contextus*. It signifies literally a weaving together, and is appropriately used, therefore, to denote the web of a writer's discourse. The scope is the end which a writer proposes to accomplish; the context gives the form and manner of its accomplishment. Is it wise to break this web? I honestly think not. The sober interpreter, then, must have constant reference to the context, as well for the signification of particular terms as for the general sense of the passage under review. To interpret without regard to the context, is to teach exaggeration for truth. The question may very naturally be asked at this point—Within what limits is the context to be consulted? The answer must be, that no definite limits can be prescribed. The entire web of discourse must be carefully studied, including the more remote as well as the nearer context; for the inspired writers do not, as a general rule, proceed according to formal division and sub-division. Both the germinal and the terminal points of the subject must be carefully studied, before verdicts can be pronounced or conclusions drawn. In this way alone can we place ourselves in the writer's position, and look at the subject under discussion from his point of view. We can thus enter into his modes of thinking and reasoning, and qualify ourselves to be the expounders of them to others. Bridges lays down a good orthodox principle when he says, "Inferences from Scripture that appear to be strictly legitimate must be received with the greatest caution, or, rather, decidedly rejected, except as they are supported by explicit Scripture declarations." Moreover, if we come to the Scriptures with any preconceived opinions, and are more desirous to put that sense upon the text which coincides with our sentiments rather than with the truth, it then becomes the analogy of our faith rather than that of the whole system. In this substitution of the analogy of our faith for the analogy of Scripture lies the foundation of sectarian controversy. Is it not so? Until this is removed, the world will never have the opportunity of exclaiming— "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" If they say it now, it is in the great spirit of irony. Let us differentiate. The term *Exegesis*, so harmless in form, awakens in all who study Ecclesiastical History, sad thoughts and tragic memories. Who is not tempted to believe that the words, *exegesis*, *gloss*, *sophistry*, *distortion*, are synonymous terms? Talleyrand has said that nothing prepares so well for diplomacy as theology!

Let us now examine a few of your correspondent's interpretations and quotations on the subject of Infant Baptism.

II.—THE INTERPRETATION OF CERTAIN TEXTS  
ADDED IN SUPPORT OF INFANT BAPTISM.

1. Greek Prepositions. These seem to cause your correspondent some trouble in labouring to translate them. Now, they express exact geometrical relationship, and are mathematically precise. This being so, how is it that they are mistranslated? Hereby hangs an instructive moral. Interpreters and translators should carefully distinguish between the primary and secondary meanings, the latter being evolved by regular laws from the former. An arbitrary exchange of prepositions, therefore, is to be carefully avoided, and is fatal to exact interpretation. Allow me to illustrate my meaning by one example from among the many. "He shall baptize (immerse, not sprinkle) you with (in) the Holy Ghost, and with (in) fire." Our English translation weakens the force of John's words by translating "with water, with the Holy Ghost," instead of "in water, in the Holy Ghost." One of the most accurate of recent commentators (Meyer), for instance, in his remarks on this verse says that the preposition here "is to be understood in accordance with the idea of baptism, that is, immersion; not as expressing the instrument with which, but as meaning in, and expressing the element in which the immersion takes place." Did your correspondent carry out these principles in his letters? Test and seal!

2. Bearing on the former point slightly is his attempt to explain Paul's view of Baptism in his Epistle to the Romans. If he had taken the above facts into consideration, his interpretation would not have been so crude. Permit me to quote from one authority, whose interpretation is sensible and just. Dean Goulburn, in his *Rampton Lectures of 1850*, presents there the truth with great justness and force in the following sentences:—"There can be no doubt that baptism when administered in the primitive and most correct form, is a divinely constituted emblem of bodily resurrection. And it is to be regretted that the form of administration unavoidably (if it be unavoidably) adopted in cold climates should utterly obscure the emblematic significance of the rite, and render unintelligible to all but the educated, the Apostle's association of burial and resurrection with the ordinance. Were immersion, which is the rule of our Church in cases where it may be had without hazard to the health, universally practiced, this association of two at present heterogeneous ideas would become intelligible to the humblest. The water, closing over the entire person, would to us *preach* of the grave which yawns for every child of Adam, and which one day will engulf us all in its drear abyss. But that abyss will be the womb and seed plot of a new life. Animation having for one instant been suspended beneath the water, a type this of the interruption of man's energies by death, the body is lifted up again into the air by way of expressing emblematically the new birth or resurrection."

Since some may still question the allusion in this passage (Rom. 6. 3, 4) to im-

mersion as the primitive form of baptism, and figure of burial and resurrection, I submit for their careful consideration the following testimonies of learned and judicious men of different communions. Tholuck says, "For the explanation of this figurative description of the baptismal rite, it is necessary to call attention to the well-known circumstance, that, in the early days of the Church, persons when baptised were first plunged below and then raised above the water." Dean Stanley, in his "Eastern Church," p. 44, says, "There can be no question that the original form of baptism—the very meaning of the word—was complete immersion in the deep baptismal waters; and that at least for four centuries any other form was either unknown or regarded as an exceptional, almost a monstrous case." Conybeare and Howson say, "The passage cannot be understood unless it be borne in mind that the primitive baptism was by immersion." Dr. Schaff, in a note to *Lange*, says, "All commentators of note (except Stuart and Hodge) expressly admit and take for granted, that in this verse the ancient prevailing mode of baptism by immersion and emersion is implied, as giving additional force to the idea of the going down of the old and the raising up of the new man." Chrysostom says that "this baptism is the sign and pledge of our descent with Him into the state of the dead, and of our return hence." The value of the ordinance is in their power of bringing truth within the apprehension of all our senses, physical and spiritual. The Rev. A. J. Gordon, D.D., of Boston, in his work "In Christ," says—"How vividly in the momentary chill and darkness of the grave of baptism do we taste His death who suffered for us all! And in the exultant uprising, the quick recovery of the bated breath that follows, how fully do we seem to enter into the joyful experience of His quickening! So closely does the symbol press upon the reality, that Paul in that bold "Know ye not" (in Rom. 6. 3), seems to appeal to the believer's baptism as the *experience* of his Lord's death and resurrection, and as making it thus a subject of memory as well as of faith." What shall you say to these witnesses? Paul, I believe, would be lost in anger if he knew the use that is being made of his name in the Church at this moment. Let us keep within our limits, and our words will be thunderbolts. What miserable work we do when this is not recognised! How frivolous, how vain, how self-involved, how wholly foolish and despicable! "How forcible," says Job, "are words of uprightness!"

Now, the above are sufficient to prove that the position Baptists hold in doctrine and in practice is supported by the most eminent scholars of to-day. Would a body be buried, if a few grains of sand were sprinkled upon it? Reflect and speak out! Ask the grave-digger or a sanitarian!

3. I now come to Circumcision as bearing on Infant Baptism. Here let me ask your correspondent a question: "Was the rite of Circumcision strictly a religious act? Has he studied the subject physiologically, or even consulted a physician as to the effects naturally upon the Jew by this act? If not, the view he now holds must be partial. The whole is always larger than the part."

Again, if God's covenant with Abraham and his seed, and instituting the sign of Circumcision in males, proves the Church membership of the seed of Abraham, it proves (1) that there were only male members; and if so, what about the females, who were not circumcised? and it proves (2) an Ishmaelitic as well as an Israelitish Church of God, and a Church to which ungodly adults, equally with the infants of believers, belonged. Thus, if Circumcision is the seal of admission into the Church, there has not only been a Jewish Church, but an Edomite, a Moabite, an Ammonite Church! Further, if this be so, what inference is possible, but that the infant seed of all from Abraham to Christ, who descended not from Abraham, were heirs of hell? and that it is now, and from the time of Christ has been, the condition of all infants having unbelieving parents!

Your correspondent here makes three sad mistakes in support of infant baptism. (1) Indiscriminate quotations producing theological chaos. (2) that grace is hereditary, and (3) that God's covenant with Abraham was "the Covenant of Grace." This covenant commenced with Adam.

The Bible has been canvassed from end to end for passages which might be made to support this disputed rite, but no text in all God's Word ever suggested it, far less taught it. Dr. Halley, an Independent, along with many others, has surrendered your correspondent's argument (?), and maintains that it can only cumber the argument on behalf of infant baptism. Dr. William Lindsay Alexander, one of the ripest scholars in all Scotland, in his "Life of Dr. Wardlaw," admits that the argument for Circumcision is entirely with the Baptists, and not with their opponents. Many more able divines are saying the same thing. There is, therefore, a general surrender of this argument by eminent Pedobaptist scholars. They are beginning to perceive the incongruity of founding what professes to be a New Testament ordinance on an Old Testament rite. The argument does not sustain the custom, and hence gradually both custom and argument are being given up by those who really think out the subject for themselves. They see that the children of Israel were not circumcised on their father's faith. The father's faith had nothing to do with it. It was the pedigree of the child which determined whether he was entitled to be circumcised or not. In the very face of this fact, the Pedobaptists baptise a child because of the faith of one or both of its parents! They destroy their own analogy, and thus shatter their own cause. Even according to the Abrahamic covenant, it is

Continued on eighth page.