

Sproules

THE
GLORY AND DESIGN

OF THE
SACRED ORDINANCE

OF
BELIEVERS' BAPTISM;

LIKewise
The Vanity and Absurdity of the Popish Institution

OF
INFANT SPRINKLING,

BRIEFLY CONSIDERED;

TOGETHER WITH
A FEW SCRIPTURAL MARKS OF SOME

Ministerial Characters,

IN
A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

MR. S. PARROTT,

MINISTER AT SALEM CHAPEL, READING;

In reply to a Book lately published by him.

By **WILLIAM CLARKE.**

"For we are not as many, which corrupt the Word of God."
PAUL.

READING:
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1816.

To Mr. S. Parrott.

SIR,

HAVING lately seen a Publication of your's, and having observed some very gross perversions of Divine Truth, relative to the holy Ordinance of Believers' Baptism, which you have not only confounded with Infant Sprinkling, but have used a great deal of sophistry and absurd reasoning in order to deface the glory of that divine institution; I shall, without making any apology (and I am persuaded every lover of truth will be justified in thus standing forward in its glorious cause) first make a few remarks, and draw a few characteristics from God's Word relative to some who pass for Ministers of Christ, and yet will never be owned by him, notwithstanding all their splendid performances.

Now it is very easy for a letter-learned man to draw up and devise as sound an or-

thodox creed as you have done, and preach all the doctrines it contains, and even contend for them as far as it serves their own interest and yet never participate one grain of their blessedness. It is an awful truth that the learning and preaching of many in our day only serve to accelerate the cause of Satan, in the propagation of errors and perverting the Scriptures of Truth; and this is done in such a plausible way, that many of the Lord's people are not aware of their cunning craftiness; and there is more danger in those preachers who have most resemblance of Gospel Ministers than those who hold and preach the most flagrant errors, because the latter are not concealed; but our Lord tells us, with respect to the former, that if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect, because they come as wolves in sheep's clothing: they can put on such a splendid garb of holiness and mock sanctity, yea, and such is the dexterity of these Ministers of Satan, that they can fit to a hair with a counterfeit Gospel, and, like the jackdaw, can make a very fine appearance when they have plumed themselves with peacocks' feathers; and there are a great many fine preachers who come forward with very little else than what they

have plundered from the shelves of authors. And our Lord tells us further, that they are ravening wolves; and Paul says concerning such, that they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own bellies, and so voracious are they, that one or two hundred pounds a year will scarcely suffice them. This is in general a sure mark of those hirelings, intruders, and wolves: they were swarming in the Apostles' days and much more so in our's, as Paul says in the last days perilous times shall come, and evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, and they are described by all the Apostles; and as they were particularly concerned for the honor of their divine Master and the welfare of his dear people, they gave counsel, warning, and caution to beware of these emissaries of Satan, though they seem to cut a great figure for awhile, yet sooner or later they are discovered by wresting, perverting, and trifling with the Scriptures: this is a sure evidence that they are not of God. And there are many, our Lord says, who are only mere pretenders: they can preach a sound orthodox sermon in his name that few if any can find fault with; they can cast out Arius, Socinius, and Armenius, and other incarnate

devils, in his name, and pretend by this that they are warm advocates and strenuous defenders of his cause, and also perform many wonderful works: they can draw up a sound creed—ransack the Scriptures to favor infant sprinkling—prescribe rules and laws to govern the Church—and give charge to the Deacons to see the Minister's salary regularly paid—and insist upon it that none shall partake of the Lord's supper but those who can give undeniable proof of their religion, and yet give all the world a right to what they call baptism: these are some of the wonders they can perform, and gain great popularity and esteem by them, and yet never be owned as the Servants of Christ at last.

These things, Sir, will not give you undeniable proof that you are a Servant of Christ; and, for my own part, I would not give a single brass farthing to hear a man, though he could preach like an Angel, that is a known perverter and corrupter of the Scriptures; and Elymas the sorcerer did not act a baser part than you have done, for you seek by this performance of your's to turn away God's Deputies from the faith, by perverting the right ways of the Lord, and this is done to maintain that Idol of Popularity—that

Darling of the Day! O what efforts, artifices, and schemes will not the Tools of Satan use to support this Idol upon its throne! They will barter with truth—corrupt the truth—pervert, wrest, and deface the truth, rather than their Idol should be dethroned; and why? because, like Diana's craftsmen, they obtain their wealth by it.

Now, Sir, it is plain that you have trampled upon the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, as king, lord, and lawgiver in his Church, by violating his sacred institution, and have rebelled against him by espousing the cause of Antichrist.

It is not my design to enter at large upon the whole of your fallacious performance and absurd reasonings therein relative to the ordinance of baptism, but I shall be as brief and as plain as I can, in order to distinguish between the holy ordinance of believers' baptism and that of infant sprinkling, and shew the grand end and design of the former, and the emptiness and absurdity of the latter; as I do not profess to understand Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, I cannot therefore make use of it in support of argument, but I am persuaded that our venerable translators knew it much better than you do; neither

shall I have recourse to authors, for the Scriptures themselves are so plain as to need no human support saving the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Now I shall proceed to shew from the Scriptures what the Church of Christ in all ages realized in this glorious ordinance, and shall first observe that all those divers washings and sprinklings which you have set forth to represent infant sprinkling, bear no allusion whatever to the ordinance of baptism, as there are but two figures borrowed from the Old Testament to represent this ordinance; the one by the Apostle Paul, which you have grossly perverted, and the other by the Apostle Peter, which you have not mentioned, and they both signify one and the same thing. The Apostles have not set the Scriptures to confront each other as you have done. I shall take notice of what the Apostle Peter says, as you have said nothing about it: and I have no doubt but he understood the figure that he introduced. He says when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water, the like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away

of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Thus, Sir, it appears that the antediluvian Church was saved by water, which is a figure of the New Testament Church being saved by baptism; now this the Apostle clearly proves: then the antediluvian Church was baptized into Christ, of whom the ark was a beautiful type, and was therefore saved; and no doubt the ark was many fathoms under water, yet they passed safely through the flood. Now what reference can this have to sprinkling, when the waters were sufficient to drown the whole world. Again, the ark resting upon Mount Ararat is a type of the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and all his Church with him: this the Apostle Paul proves very clearly when he says in his Epistle to the Colossians, that we are buried with Christ by baptism into death, and likewise are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God; that is, we believe the same Spirit that raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead will also quicken our mortal bodies: this we anticipate by faith when we attend to the ordinance of baptism; but sprinkling neither represents death nor

yet a resurrection ; therefore is totally without support from the Scriptures. There were, no doubt, many of the antediluvians that looked upon Noah's undertaking as a foolish whim, like many in our day who set light by the ordinance of believers' baptism, and with their scoffing cant, say, they can be saved without it, and their infant sprinkling is baptism enough for them ; and others again will say if they are baptized with the Holy Ghost they have no need of water baptism, the Apostles indeed were baptised with the Holy Ghost, in order that their mission might be confirmed, and the works and miracles they performed, proved that their mission was stamped with divine authority, and their writings are likewise the substance of the infallible teaching of the Holy Ghost, but no one since the Apostles' days can claim this extraordinary influence.

I shall now take notice of the other figure introduced by the Apostle Paul, where he says, all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea : Now your absurd reasonings upon this passage are so glaring that a refutation is needless ; however it is clear that Moses was

a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Israelitish Church was baptized unto him : it does not say they were sprinkled with the sprays of water, which is a perversion of the meaning of the Holy Ghost, who says expressly, they were baptized in the cloud and in the sea. Now it is not to be supposed that they were actually immersed : it was only a figure of it ; for had they been actually immersed, it could not have been a figure ; and if they were sprinkled, as you say, how then can your present practice be a figure of it ? One would think you had not even common sense. However it is plain that the Israelitish Church were saved by water, for it proved walls of salvation unto them, and they were considered as under it, for the water was high above their heads ; and I may likewise observe the perilous situation of the Israelites ; and as Pharaoh and his host was a type of the Devil and the enemies of our salvation, which would certainly have completed our eternal destruction had it not been for the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and the rod in Moses's hand was typical of the rod of the Lord's strength, and by it he divided the waters of death, and made a safe passage through death

for his redeemed people ; and their being landed safe on shore is an emblem of the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Church with him ; and John in his Revelation alludes to this, who saw the Church in her triumphant state, and says, that they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, which is the song of victory and triumph over death and all our enemies : so then as the ark overcame the flood, and Noah and his family was saved, and Moses with his rod overcame the waters of the Red Sea, and the Israelites were saved, so our Lord Jesus Christ, by his death (into which we are baptized, and of which baptism is an emblem) overcame death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and wrought for his Church a complete salvation, and overwhelmed all his enemies with eternal destruction, and they sank like lead in the mighty waters ; and such was the love he had to his dear people, that many waters could not quench it, neither could the floods drown it.

Now then it appears that there are three dispensations in the Church of Christ, and the two former are the figures of the latter ; and the New Testament Church is baptized into Jesus Christ, the true antitype ; so then

the Church of Christ in all ages is made to appear to be a Baptist Church from first to last, as is evident, by the glorious things they who are now around the throne realized ; as well the Church in her militant state now anticipates in the holy ordinance of baptism ; that is our Lord's triumph and victory over death, and all the enemies of our salvation ; and when the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are baptized according to the original mode, that is to say to be actually immersed in water ; if their views are scriptural they realize by faith these important truths.

But again, the Prophet Jonah was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection, and he was saved by water ; for it was by water that the fish swam to the shore ; and our Lord himself represented his own burial and resurrection by his being baptized in the river Jordan ; and he set a plain example of it to his people ; and it is said, when he was baptized he came up straightway out of the water ; which proves he went a considerable way into it, besides being immersed in it by his servant John.

Now your argument, in order to constitute infant sprinkling the true mode of bap-

tism, is, with all your Greek learning, so weak, foolish, and absurd, that a child in spiritual knowledge may overthrow it altogether: thus then the Apostle Peter wrote plain upon the subject when he said, we are saved by baptism, which represents the grand things that accomplished it. Thus water is set forth as an emblem of death, and the rising out of it the triumph and victory over death by a glorious resurrection. And it is further evident that this ordinance was instituted by our Lord himself, when he said, thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness; and further, it is his express command—it is the royal mandate of Heaven which is strictly enjoined upon all believers, and is instituted as a standing memorial for his Church down to the end of time, to represent the glorious achievements that he wrought, and the triumphs that he won, and the complete deliverance he hath obtained for his Church over sin, death, and hell.

Now there are great rejoicings when victories are obtained, but the King of Glory, the Lord of Hosts, mighty in battle, hath obtained a victory, and thereby hath laid the foundation of eternal rejoicing and triumphs, which will be re-echoed and resounded thro'

the triumphal arches of Heaven: and, as the poet sings—

Thy victories and thy deathless fame
Through the wide world shall run,
And everlasting ages sing
The triumphs thou hast won.

Now these things are the joy, the boast, and song of all the real followers of Jesus, as he hath passed safely through the flood, Death, his beloved bride, has only to pass through the shadow of it, and shall appear in all her pristine beauty and glory with him on the resurrection morn, and then as it was with the Old World and Pharaoh's mighty hosts, the flood-gates of divine vengeance will be pulled up, and will overwhelm the ungodly world in everlasting destruction and perdition, together with all who have trampled upon and despised his divine authority.

Now I do not say but many will go a great way apparently in contending for the Lord's honor and truth in the earth, but it must be no more of it than will suit their interest and maintain their popularity. Thus Saul, King of Israel, went a great way in executing the Lord's design upon the city of

Amalek, and congratulated Samuel when he met him, and satisfied himself that he had obeyed the commandment of the Lord; but, said Samuel in reply, what meaneth the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? So it is not declaring a part of God's counsel, but all the counsel of God. You know Saul paid dear for it; and it will be an awful thing to have these things testify against you another day; and you may as well try to expunge the ordinance of the Lord's supper out of the Church, and you will not be less guilty of sacrilege than you are now: Thus much for the ordinance of baptism.

I shall now take a little notice of infant sprinkling, and shew its absurdity and vanity. Now it first derived its origin from the Church of Rome in its corrupted state, and is one of the rites of that Church which was introduced long after primitive Christianity had been established on the earth. So you call yourself a Minister of Christ, and have set up, in opposition to his express command, a Popish Institution, and have even not shewn what benefit is derived from it, or else you are at a loss to do it. And I want to know, in the name of common sense, what all the

infants, which you say have a right to it, were ever the better for it? And I will defy any man to point out the least spiritual benefit they obtain from it: and there are millions that have been sprinkled, that never had faith nor never will: and without faith it is impossible to please God: and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

You may please yourself and others with men's devices, and vaunt with an air of triumph with those who have taken part with you in writing so ably in support of his Holiness; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord shall stand and nothing else.

Now, Sir, it does not appear that you ever asked counsel or direction of the Lord in this spurious work of your's; and what the Holy Spirit never indited, to that the seal of Heaven will never be affixed; and I am sure it is none of his work to corrupt and pervert his own Word. Now you observe, with respect to the ordinance of the Lord's supper, that none have a right to partake of it but those who can give undeniable proof of their religion. And pray Sir, what warrant have you, even supposing sprinkling to be baptism, to give all the world a right to it, without any prerequisite whatever saving the foolish

preamble of godfathers and godmothers, when faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is strictly enjoined upon it, as much so as it is with the Lord's supper. Are they not both sacred and divine institutions, supposing, as I said before, sprinkling to be baptism? But infant sprinkling, being a worldly institution, the world have a sole right to it, and all the good belonging to it if there be any; and those who endeavor to blend or confound human traditions and divine institutions together, are mongrels in divinity, and God will never own them.

Now Sir, it appears plain that you have joined affinity with the whore of Babylon, by setting up a Popish Institution in opposition to the royal mandate of Heaven; and all who do this, do well to recollect that it is partaking of the sins of the great whore, and unless they come out of her, must expect to receive of her plagues. But again, infants have not the answer of a good conscience; but the believer not making a Christ of the ordinance, but realizing Christ in the ordinance, can stand forward and give a universal challenge, and, in the language of the Apostle, can say Who is he that condemneth: it is Christ that died, yea rather is risen again.

The death and resurrection of Christ is the grand basis of our faith: for the Apostle says our faith is vain without it.

These truths are realized in the ordinance of baptism, and are the two main pillars of our faith; herein was all the grand designs of the Eternal Jehovah relative to man's salvation accomplished; herein was all the promises of God fulfilled! Now, shall I scorn this holy ordinance, in which by faith those glorious things are realized, and submit to the innovations of men, and the idle trash and trumpery of the Church of Rome?

Now Sir, can this be doing the work of an evangelist, to plead for such things as these? Can this be fulfilling the ministry, in defacing the glorious institution of Jesus Christ? Can this be a man that has received his credentials from the Lord Jesus Christ, that has borne testimony to the whore of Babylon?

You do not recollect, Sir, that it is at your peril to deface any part of divine truth. Our Lord, with the fan in his hand, will purge his floor of this popish chaff: and likewise he came to bring a sword to divide human traditions from his divine institutions; and as he came to bring fire on the earth,

it will go on to consume the Antichristian whore, for she shall be utterly burned with fire—for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

Now Sir, I shall close with an observation or two, which is, if your conscience is not made honest to recant errors, it matters not what your attainments are, as they will only add to your guilt.

I am very sorry you should so stain your ministerial character, which I once held in esteem, not then knowing you was so grossly attached to such monstrous absurdities, and even to plead for and defend them in open violation to truth; I have no doubt but I shall incur the censure of many for thus writing, but every lover of truth will justify me; however, be that as it may, I commit it into the hands of the Great Head of his Church, and pray for his seal and sanction to his own truth, of which I hope never to be ashamed; and remain,

SIR,

Faithfully, your's, to serve in
the Cause of Truth,

W. C.

P. S. I have added a few lines in verse, which I wrote a few years since, as they are not inapplicable to this subject.

O Ye Resisters! Opposers of Truth!
Contemners! and Scorers! O what a sad proof
That all your profession of faith is in vain
While you treat the Scriptures with so much disdain!

By some disregarded—by others revil'd—
By some 'tis perverted—corrupted—defil'd;
All these in rebellion together conspire
To fight against truth, and make God out a liar.

O fatal delusion! 'tis awful to say
That they are determin'd to walk the broad way
Who put light for darkness, and darkness for light,
And vainly presuming that they are all right.

It pleases proud nature, and self gratifies,
To walk in this way, and Christ's cross to despise:
They call the truth evil, and their errors good:
By these hath the Scriptures been always withstood.

F I N I S.