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**Communications.**

**BRIEF THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM.**

(Continued from page 224.)

But it may be asked, of what use is baptism? An inquiry that may be prompted by two very different states of mind. If it proceed from a temper determined to regard the ordinance as destitute of authority, unless its use be perceived and acknowledged, it deserves severe animadversion. Does it become creatures to dispute the propriety of appointments made by their Creator? Is it for us, who are but of yesterday, to question the wisdom of any institution ordained by the great Jehovah? Should it not be deemed sufficient to satisfy our minds that an appointment is both wise and useful, to be informed that it is his appointment? Neither its wisdom nor its utility can be affected by the dulness of our perception. These properties are independent of our apprehensions; they remain precisely the same whether we perceive them or not; just as light is light, whether the human eye see it or not. Humility becomes us; and it should always be sufficient to silence every objection, to know that the Lord hath commanded or appointed a thing.

But the question may proceed from a very different state of mind; from a disposition to understand the purpose for which this positive

institution has been appointed by the Great Head of the church, and a desire to derive the benefit for the conveyance of which it was designed to be the vehicle. In this case, it merits respectful notice. In reply to this inquiry we shall just hint at two purposes for which baptism was instituted.

One is, to afford to adults a favourable opportunity for making a solemn and public dedication of themselves to the service and glory of God. All who sincerely and properly receive this sacred rite, will have previously made this act of devotion in private. But this by no means renders a public repetition of it unnecessary. It is well known in the experience of exercised Christians, how much it contributes to their stability in religion, frequently and daily to renew their covenant engagements with God: And if benefit result from this act when done in secret, may we not anticipate more from the performance of it in public, attended by circumstances calculated to deepen on the mind the remembrance of the interesting transaction, and to strengthen the ties by which we bind ourselves to our God?

Nor is the advantage arising from such a solemn act of public devotion confined to the recipient of the ordinance. It may do good to spectators. For when baptized Christians witness the dedication of another to the service of God, they are reminded of the sacred engage-

warm and sincere attachment to his generous patron, whose heart, like his own, was formed for friendship, devoid of selfishness, often led him to act beyond his abilities; until, through the accumulated woes of life, and the repeated attacks of the last enemy, he sunk down to that mansion where the weary are at rest, while his immortal spirit winged its way to the throne of God.

“Happy! ah, happy then, the immortal soul,

That safely anchored in Redeemer dear,  
By precious faith, by new and heavenly birth

Stands safely guarded from eternal wreck,  
Amidst the dark, tempestuous waves of earth.

That universal storm, all must ride out,  
Or perish, overwhelm'd! Thrice happy soul!

Blest with the favour of the Great Supreme,

And in the arms of sovereign Deity  
Embraced, the reconciled arms become  
His rest, his centre, and exceeding joy!”

G. C. P.

FOR THE PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.

#### RECREATIONS

*In the Intervals of Divine Service on the Sabbath.\**

“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”

Dearest Redeemer, before whom angels bow in humility, by whom all things were made, whose power and love govern the destinies of universal nature; great arbiter and controller of all! it was not possible that the bitter cup, mingled with the sins of the guilty race of Adam, whom thou hadst undertaken to redeem, should pass away, consistently with thy holy promise. Deplorable, indeed, would have been the lot of man, if, when he had wilfully plunged himself in sin and consequent misery, he were left to him-

\* Written by James Engle, Esq. who departed this life January 5th, 1821, in the 64th year of his age.

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

self to work out his own release: Jesus, only, in his place and stead, could answer the demands of his Father's justice, by drinking to the dregs the cup of bitterness. He alone could bear in his body, the dreadful arrows of divine justice. Man has nothing by which to atone for his sins: wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores are his covering, until he is washed, and sanctified, and justified in the all-atoning blood of the Redeemer. “Thy will be done,” exclaimed the dear Redeemer, and drank the cup of trembling. Then, indeed, a way was opened, wherein a holy God, might be just, and justify the ungodly who believe in Jesus. Now he is inviting us to come in his name, and take of the water of life freely. Oh! for the outpouring of the spirit of grace, that we may come in faith, believing that the Lord is God, and that he is the rewarder of all those who diligently seek him.

Apply the healing balm, O God of grace!  
In Jesus' purchase, give our souls a place:  
Remove our sins, a grievous, heavy load,  
And bring us near our Saviour and our God.  
We groan beneath the burden: Thou alone,  
Hast power and love sufficient to atone,  
For all our sins. Our helper and our friend,  
When death assails us, and this life must end,

In our last moments, give us peace with thee,

And guide us safe to blest eternity.  
On God our peace, securely we rely,  
He bought us peace, and joy, and victory.

J. E.

#### HINTS TO CANDIDATES FOR THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

The cries for learned and pious teachers become louder and louder in our country; and ought to rouse the souls of Christians to greater importunity in prayer, that the Lord of the harvest would raise up, qualify and send forth multitudes of labourers into his fields, which are rapidly whitening for the garner. It is no wonder that many young men, of hopeful piety, are

ready to exclaim, "Here am I: Lord send me." We commend the zeal, which would induce them to leave all worldly business, and devote themselves to the ministry of reconciliation. We would also urge it upon persons, who have the qualifications requisite to constitute a call in providence for them to seek the office of a bishop, or of an evangelist, to perform their duty, and have mercy on the destitute of their own country, and of foreign lands. We need a thousand ministers to fill the vacant churches already subsisting in the Presbyterian church in the United States; and had we such a number, of the right description of talents, who would make the proper exertions to build up waste places, and strengthen the weak things that remain, we have no doubt, that in less than three years they might all obtain pastoral charges, which would furnish them with a comfortable subsistence, while performing their Master's work.

But not every youth, who desires to be considered as a *candidate* for the ministry, has a sufficient warrant even to commence the preparatory studies. There may be zeal, without, and even contrary to knowledge, on this, as well as other subjects. The words of the pious and eminently useful BAXTER on this subject, deserve to be seriously pondered by every one who thinks of becoming a *candidate*. He says,

"God, who has instituted the sacred office, and who, by his Spirit, qualifies men for it, usually works according to their qualifications. As in the natural world he operates according to the fitness of natural second causes, so in the moral world, according to the suitability of moral causes. Holiness, though in many respects it be a supernatural work, is usually wrought by holy means. Able and faithful ministers therefore are very great blessings. They are the 'lights of the world, and the salt of the earth.' Never was the gospel well propagated or continued in any country but by their means. God uses them as his instruments for convincing, converting, edifying, comforting, and saving of souls. Herein they are co-workers with Christ the great Saviour of souls, and with the Holy

Spirit, who regenerates and sanctifies them. How many thousands of happy spirits in heaven will for ever rejoice in the effects of their labours, and bless God for them! In a word, churches, states, and kingdoms, are chiefly blessed and preserved by the faithful part of the ministry. They are the means of subduing 'sin, which is the destruction of a people,' and promoting 'righteousness, which exalteth a nation.'

"On the other hand, unfaithful and wicked ministers are the worst and most hurtful men. Though they may be furnished with the same notions and words as godly teachers are, (though this is not usually the case) yet they will be greatly wanting in that serious delivery, which is ordinarily necessary to make the hearers serious Christians. That seldom reaches the heart of the hearer, which comes not from the heart of the speaker. Constant experience tells us how different is the success of reading or saying a pulpit lesson, in a dull, or merely affected manner; and that of the judicious, serious explication and application of well chosen matter, which the experienced preacher well understands, and which he utters from the feeling of his soul. Neither the love of a benefice, nor of applause, will make a man preach in that manner which the love of God, the lively belief of heaven and hell, and the desire of saving souls, will do. If a stage-hypocrite should learn the art of preaching with an affected fervency and seeming zeal, yet art and paint will not reach the power of beauty and nature; nor will it hold out so long. Affectation usually betrays itself, and when it is discerned, the hypocrite is loathed. But if he should carry on his stage-affectation with plausible art, the rest of his ministerial work will not be discharged in a manner answerable to it. Since it is from men that he expects his reward, in their sight only he appears in his borrowed glory; in his private conversation and conduct, he makes a different figure. He will not set himself to instruct the ignorant, to save men from their sins, and raise their minds to heaven, by praying with them, by holy discourse, and heavenly deportment: he will not be at much cost or labour to do any kind of real good."

"But alas! by far the greatest part of unexperienced preachers have not so much as the hypocrite's seeming zeal and appearance of religion to cloak their sins, and profit their people. The misbehaviour of such, is likely to make them exceedingly hurtful. By their ignorance, ambition, covetousness, and other sins, they render themselves contemptible in the eyes of many, and by that means render the church and all religion so too. A scandalous clergy will be a scorned clergy; and a scorned clergy will prepare for the scorn and

destruction of true religion. Alas! what wretched work have hypocritical, unexperienced, proud; worldly, voluptuous, ignorant ministers been making in most Christian nations, these fourteen hundred years! Wo! wo! wo! to the church that hath such pastors! that hath wolves instead of shepherds! Wo to the land that hath such! Wo to the princes and states that follow such counsellors! Wo to the souls that are subverted by them! From a corrupt clergy have sprung the greatest calamities of the church in all places to this day.

“And let it be remembered, the sins of such men will not prove less mischievous to themselves than to others. Their guilt is aggravated by their perfidious violation of their baptismal and ordination vows, as well as by their nearness to God in their office; and they are condemned out of their own mouths. Such persons are with greater difficulty brought to repentance than others; because by wit and study they have bended that doctrine to defend their sin, which should be used to bring them to repentance; or because pride will not suffer such persons as they are, employed in so holy an office, and possessed of such titles, learning, and reputation, to suppose themselves in an unholy state; and whoever accuses them of sin or reproves them for it, will be represented as an enemy to the church. Their ulcers are as a *noû me tangere*, and fret as a gangreen unremedied. Their profanation of holy things makes them worse, and more impenitent than other men; partly as they have more notoriously forfeited the grace of God which should work repentance in them, and have caused him in righteous judgment to forsake them; and partly as they have hardened their own hearts, by long abuse of that truth which should have sanctified them. For when persons have long ‘imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness,’ and long played, as hypocrites, with what they professed to believe, custom will so harden them, that their knowledge will have little power on their hearts.

“And now do I need say any more to show young men designed for the ministry, of what importance it is that they be well qualified for it? God can, and sometime does, turn wolves into faithful shepherds, and convert those, who while they were unconverted themselves, undertook to convert others; but this is not ordinarily to be expected. First notions lie deepest, and make way for others that are connected with them. False opinions, as well as true, are usually linked together, and the chain is not easily cast off or broken. Those that have received errors have also received their defensives. These are like the shell-fish, which carry their house about with them. They that

have received them, have studied what to say for them, but not what can be said against them. But supposing that you have so true notions in your heads, if they come not with power upon your hearts, and do not make you new, spiritual, and holy men, they will not qualify you to propagate faith and holiness. Now it is that you must get those eminent qualifications of knowledge and holiness, which you are afterwards to use; for how can you use what you have not? Though some prudent hearers will encourage such men as they think are hopeful, yet most will judge of persons and things as they find them. The ignorant, dry, and lifeless orations of unexperienced preachers, will not be esteemed by such as know what judgment and seriousness that sacred work requires. Few will praise, or feed on unsavoury food, merely to flatter and praise the cook. Then when you find yourselves slighted, your resentment will rise against those that slight you because they are not contented with your unholy trifling, but all your enmity will turn against yourselves, and, like that of satan against the members of Christ, will be but self-tormenting.

“Let me then seriously caution all persons against being too hasty in resolving for the sacred ministry. I would not discourage pious, prudent desires and purposes, but I must say, that many parents, in this respect, prove greatly injurious to the church. I do not mean only worldly men, who look upon the ministry merely as a trade to live by, and send their sons to the university in order to their worldly maintenance and preferment; but even honest godly parents, who ignorantly think it a good work to design their children for the ministry, and call it ‘devoting them to God,’ without duly considering whether they are likely to be fit for it or not. When the children of such persons have been some years at the university, they think a living is their due. Ordained they must be; what else have they studied for? It is now too late to change their purpose, when they have been at so many years cost and labour to prepare for their ministry. They are too old, or too proud, or too idle, to go to any manual labour, and have not time or opportunity to prepare for any other learned profession. So that there is no way left but, for a benefice, to become church mountebanks, or spiritual quacks, and undertake the pastoral charge of souls; though they scarcely know what souls are, for what they were made, or whither they are going; at least, how they must be conducted and prepared for their endless state. And bad as they are, they can find persons bad enough to recommend and ordain them. How deplorable is the case of the poor people’s souls over whom they are to preside. Digitized by Google

"In order to prevent any from intending the work of the ministry who are not qualified, I will briefly mention the necessary qualifications for it. The work is so high, and miscarrying in it is of such dreadful consequence, that no one should be resolutely devoted to the ministry who hath not the following endowments.

"1. A good natural capacity. It should be somewhat above the ordinary degree. Grace supposes nature; and by sanctifying it, turns it the right way; but does not use to make wise teachers of natural drones, or weak headed lads who have not sense enough to learn.

"2. A competent readiness of speech. One who cannot readily speak his mind in common things, is not likely to have that fluent delivery which is necessary to a preacher.

"3. He must be hopeful for godliness. He must be captivated by no gross sin. He must not only have a love to learning, but religion; to the word of God, and good company; to prayer, and good books. He must show that he has a serious concern about his soul, and the life to come; that his conscience is under some effectual convictions of the evil of sin, and the excellence and necessity of a godly life. The youth that hath not these qualifications, should not be devoted to the ministry. To devote an incapable, ungodly person to such an holy work, is worse than of old to have offered to God the unclean for sacrifice. To do it under pretence of hoping that he may have grace hereafter, is a presumptuous profanation, and worse than to design a coward to be a soldier, or a wicked, unsuitable person for a partner in life, in hope that they may become fit afterwards.

"If therefore your parents have been so unwise as to dedicate that to God which was unfit for his acceptance, it concerns you quickly to look better to yourselves, and not to run into the consuming fire. You ought to be conscious of your own condition. If you know that you want either natural capacity, or readiness of speech, or serious piety and heart-devotedness to God, do not meddle with that calling which requires all these.

"Perhaps you will say, 'What shall we do with ourselves? We have gone so far, that we are fit for nothing else.' I answer; You are less fit for the ministry than for any thing. That which requires the highest qualifications, will most shame and condemn you if you want them. If you are not for physic or law, seek something else. You had better become servants, or turn to the basest employments, than to run into the sad case of *Hophni* and *Phineas*; or of *Nadab* and *Abihu*, to the utter undoing of yourselves, and to the loss and danger of many others. But remember, if

your unfitness be your *ungodliness*, whether you are ministers or not, you will be for ever miserable, unless your hearts and lives be changed. When that is done, I would not discourage you; but, (believe me) it is far better to be a cobbler or a chimney sweeper, or to beg your bread, than to be an ungodly minister, though with the greatest preferments, riches, and applause.

"Perhaps parents will say, 'If we devote none to the ministry till godliness appears in them, few will be so devoted, since children seldom discover much savour of religion; and some turn out bad, who when young, promised exceeding well.' I answer: Children cannot be expected to show that understanding in religion which men may; but if they discover not a love to it, a conscientious regard to God's authority, and the life to come, and a dislike of ungodliness and sin, you have no reason to presume they will be fit for the ministry. You can judge but upon probabilities; if they prove bad after an hopeful profession, it will not be chargeable upon you. But we all know that a hopeful youth is a great preparation to an honest age."

These are weighty sayings; and if they deserve the attention of those youth who are able to support themselves, while prosecuting their studies, much more should they be prayerfully examined and applied by those, who, if educated at all, must be maintained for several years by the charitable funds of the church. A youth may be pious, and yet may be very destitute of good common sense, of an aptitude to learn, of the common readiness of speech, of the ordinary share of self-possession, of the bodily health requisite for study and ministerial labour; and in every such case, should be advised to serve God faithfully, in some other profession than that of a public preacher.

E. S. E.

A Word to the Rev. J. R. Willson.

We have seen an angry publication of the *Rev. J. R. Willson*, complaining that a review sent by him was not inserted in our Magazine. He appears to have misunderstood the meaning of a notice on the cover,