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John Calvin-And Infant Baptism

By Rev. Wm. C. Robinson, D.D.*

In a recent Saturday edition of the Chattanooga Times there is a paid ad published by the Church of Christ under the caption **Infant Baptism**. This ad asserts that Calvin is among those who deny the practice of infant baptism. Fortunately, the ad gives book and page for its quotation from Calvin which makes it easy to check the reference. Indeed, it also uses quotation marks. And the quotation is accurate, but as so often occurs the ad is guilty of the fallacy of quoting a sentence out of its context. In the sentence quoted Calvin is leading up to a statement of the Anabaptist position in order in the paragraph following to answer and refute it.

Here is the quotation carried in the ad under a picture of A. Hugh Price, Minister, Church of Christ:

"As Christ enjoins them to teach before baptizing, and desires that none but believers shall be admitted to baptism, it would appear that baptism is not properly administered unless when preceded by faith." John Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, Vol. III, p. 386—Founder of the Presbyterian Church.

Those who would know Calvin's true view on this subject, however, must continue to read from the same page, thus:

"On this pretence, the Anabaptists have stormed greatly against infant baptism. But the reply is not difficult, if we attend to the reason of the command. Christ orders them to convey to **all nations** the message of eternal salvation, and confirms it by adding the seal of baptism. Now it was proper that **faith** in the word should be placed before **baptism**, since the Gentiles were altogether alienated from God, and had nothing in common with the chosen people; for otherwise it would have been a false figure, which offered forgiveness and the gift of the Spirit to unbelievers, who were not yet members of Christ. But we know that by **faith** those who were formerly despised are united to the people of God.

"It is now asked, on what condition does God adopt as children those who formerly were aliens? It cannot, indeed, be denied that, when he has once received them into his favour, he continues to bestow it on their children and their children's children. By the coming of Christ God manifested himself as a Father equally to the Gentiles and to the Jews; and, therefore, that promise, which was formerly given to the Jews, must now be in force towards the Gentiles, **I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed after thee**, (Gen. 17:7). Thus we see that they who entered by faith unto the Church of God are reckoned, along with their posterity, among the members of Christ, and, at the same time, called to the inheritance of salvation. And yet this does not involve the separation of **baptism** from faith and doctrine; because, though infants are not yet of such an age as to be receiving the grace of God by faith, still God, when addressing their parents, includes them also. I maintain, therefore, that it is not rash to administer baptism to infants, to which God invites them, when he promises that **he will be their God.**"

If anyone wishes to follow Calvin's thought on this subject further he can do so by reading his celebrated *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, chapter 16. Calvin devotes this whole chapter to showing that infant baptism is perfectly consistent with the institution of Christ and with the nature of the sign.

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Jesus Feeds The Multitudes

By Rev. Harold L. Lundquist, D.D.*

The stories of Jesus feeding two groups of people (Mark 6:35-44; 8:1-9), reveal the right attitude toward man's need. In two approaches to the problem the disciples were wrong. Then Christ showed them the right way.

"Send them away"—that was the plea of the disciples when the multitude of those who had followed Him became hungry. The Church has followed their example in dealing with the social problems of the people down through the years. The result is that being denied fellowship, comfort, and help by a church which was too busy building up a vast organization or a beautiful order of worship, the common people have responded to the appeal of political leaders who have provided a substitute for what the church should have given them.

When Jesus put upon them the direct responsibility to feed the people, the disciples changed their slogan and said: "We should like to help, but we cannot." Reckoning hastily on what a small boy had brought for his lunch, the disciples soon demonstrated that it was impossible to feed this vast throng.

Logic is such a devastating thing when it operates apart from faith in God. They were absolutely right in their reasoning and in their calculations, but they had forgotten the one factor that really counted. Jesus was there, and Jesus is Good, and God is omnipotent.

Let us not forget that all we have comes from God, and that He is able to do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). The Christ who multiplied the loaves and fishes is our living Lord today, and ready and able to do it again.

"He commanded . . . and they did all eat." When God speaks, all the limitations of the finite disappear, and the needs of men are fully met—with "twelve baskets full of fragments" left over! Let those who labor in difficult places with limited resources take heart—and trust God.

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