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Peace on Earth—Good Will among Men.

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### REPLY TO BROTHER MELISH

It is with more than ordinary pleasure that we recall the special attention of our readers to the article recently published in our columns from *The Journal and Messenger*, a Baptist paper published in Cincinnati, and edited by T. J. Melish.

The article compares our teaching on the relation of baptism to remission of sins with that of Baptists, and aims to show that ours is erroneous and that of Baptists scriptural. Its most important feature, however, is the exegesis which it offers of Acts ii, 38, which is intended as a refutation of the interpretation which we have usually given that much controverted passage. We entertain the most pleasant memories of our acquaintance with Bro. Melish, in the long years ago, when our religious position and associations were the same; and while our convictions of truth necessarily caused us some surprise and regret, at the subsequent change of his set we have ever esteemed him a sincere man, and cheerfully recognized his perfect right, with all men, to follow his own convictions of truth and duty.

Our readers will remember the proposition of Bro. Longan called out by a paragraph in the *Recorder*, published at Louisville, Ky.; also, Bro. Melish's acceptance and his promise to give us an exegesis of Acts ii, 38, that would show the incorrectness of our interpretation: They have now had placed before them the fulfillment of that promise and need not, therefore be further detained on the history of the controversy.

Bro. Melish intends in his statement of our teaching, to do us full and impartial justice; and it affords us a peculiar pleasure to recognize the spirit of fairness in which he seeks, to convince us of our errors. It is however too much to expect that any one from his stand point with any degree whatever of fraternal kindness toward us, could state our position without bias or coloring, understanding them precisely in the sense in which we do, when we state them ourselves. For instance, this sentence, "That justification is not by faith without baptism, but by faith and baptism." This statement expresses no doubt exactly the Baptist conception of our position, but not ours. I have not heard any intelligent brother state our view of justification in this way. When we speak of justification, we say in the style of the New Testament, it is by faith; never, so far as I have heard or read, by faith and baptism. We teach as we think Paul does, that the faith upon which God "May be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," includes baptism, as it does repentance, and baptism need not therefore be added, when justification is spoken of.

The position of Bro. Melish and his brethren is, that the faith upon which a sinner is justified is one which *excludes* baptism. We can easily understand why it is that Baptists sincerely take this position: It arises from their entire misapprehension of the spiritual nature of this ordinance. They continually speak of it as a work of law. Bro. Melish says "they (Baptists) teach that justification is without works of either Jewish or Christian law," and in another part of the article under the heading "Justification purely of faith," still showing why Baptists reject baptism as a condition of forgiveness, he says: "God gave a system of law to the Jews, whose cardinal principle was: 'He that doeth these things shall live.'" "The law by reason of sin was a failure as a plan of justification; no one was ever justified by his perfect obedience." This shows in what class of things baptism is placed by Baptists.

"Works of law," "Things which a man doeth." While baptism has in it not a single element of a work of law, and except in a very modified sense, is not a thing which a man doeth. It is placed by its nature as far from the volition of the subject as his faith, his repentance, or any other act of his religious life. If a work at all, it is a work of faith, not of law.

If Disciples regarded baptism as a work of law, as Baptists do, they would be compelled to reject it as having to justification the relation in which they now place it. Disciples teach justification by faith as fully and unreservedly as do Baptists, they mean too as much by the term faith as Baptists mean, and we think something more.

For it is not only the belief "That Christ died for our sins," that "He tasted death for every man," "Believeth with all the heart," "The whole affections of our nature," but they teach that faith must be strong enough to move the will; the will which carries with it the whole man; inner and outer man.

In all governments, human and divine, this is the point at which legal action for (justification) and against (condemnation) occurs. It must therefore be an element in that faith on which justification rests. But will moved by faith, (it having worked love in the heart,) conveying with it the whole man, testifies its surrender to Christ in baptism. Disciples teach justification by faith, and they teach baptism for the remission of sins, and so far from there being any disagreement between them. The latter is contained in the former and completes it. Faith, in full possession of the mind and of "The whole affections of our nature," is translated by baptism into the life. The soul is quickened by faith in Christ, and when quickened, it moves, and baptism is its movement. We have said this much here to prevent misapprehension, and to save time and space on other points.

Let us now notice the three "Grave objections which lie against the doctrine of baptism in order to the forgiveness of sins in the minds of most Baptists." First, if baptism be a condition of forgiveness to the sinner, it ought to be clearly revealed—So far from this being the case, it rests on the authority of isolated texts, whose meaning is in perpetual dispute among christians. This objection is so sweeping, that it cannot appear even to Baptists to be well taken. What does the writer mean when he says, "It ought to be clearly revealed." Does he mean that it ought to be so revealed that it cannot be a subject of dispute among christians? If it will be kind enough to inform us what had ever been so revealed? The meaning of the texts on which rests the doctrine of justification by faith, the divinity of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the general judgment, has been and continues to be in perpetual dispute among christians. Are these clearly revealed? If so, and these disputes are to be referred to the moral obliquity of human nature, and the consequent obscuration of the human mind, then why make the relation of baptism to remission of sins an exception? And if they have not been clearly revealed, whose fault is it? The texts on which rest the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and the judgment, are fully as isolated as those which teach the relation of baptism to remission of sins. And why is not the "authority of isolated texts" in the Word of God, as binding as those not isolated? Brother Melish has often heard the same objection urged against immersion, in almost his own language. If immersion is the right mode of baptism, "it ought to be clearly revealed; but it rests on texts whose meaning are in perpetual dispute." Will he accept this as a valid objection against the practice of immersion among Baptists? And yet, the design of baptism seems to us to be as clearly revealed as its mode. He, in the very next paragraph quotes six of those isolated texts, of which there are at least twice six, which we think clearly reveal the relation of baptism to remission of sins. Our space does not allow us to repeat them, but they are familiar to the reader. The real point of this objection lies against the Revelation of all truth, not against those at whom it is aimed.

Second, "Christ in his own personal ministry never required baptism as a condition of forgiveness in a single instance. If John baptized in order to forgiveness, and the Apostles, after forgiveness, always baptized in order to forgiveness, it is strange that the ministry of the Saviour should not follow the same rule." This objection rests on a misapprehension of the personal ministry of the Saviour, and of its relation to the ministry of the Apostles. It is nearly always stated as if it were the chief end of the Saviour's personal ministry to forgive sins, and his daily work. Brother Melish says: "He never required baptism as a condition of forgiveness in a single case." This is intended to make the impression that there was a vast number of cases, and in no one of them was baptism so required. Now, there were two cases in

which the Saviour, in his personal ministry, explicitly forgave sins; one in which it is implied, and a fourth which is doubtful. Let us see what was required in these cases. The first is the case of a man afflicted with palsy, recorded Matthew ix, 2-6; Mark ii, 5-9; Luke v, 30-25. The ground on which this man's sins are forgiven is thus stated in the same connection: "When He saw their faith," that is, the faith of those bringing the unfortunate man to the place where he was. "The object of it is in these words: 'That you may know the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.'" There is nothing required of this man whatever. His own faith, even, is not mentioned. Nothing is said of repentance, prayer, confession, experience, nothing that Baptists or ourselves require of men, to enable us to look upon them as forgiven. The second is the case of a woman who came to him while being entertained in the house of a Pharisee—penitent to Luke vii, 47-48. This woman stood behind him while at table, and it is said washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. There is no requirement made of her at all. It is true she expresses penitence for her past life, which, as a word used to denote it, was not required. It is also true, that the Lord said to her, "But it was not the faith that 'Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again for our justification.'" The third is the thief on the cross. Nothing at all is mentioned in this case as required. The man nailed to a cross, dying. What he knew of Christ as a human being knows or can know; what idea of his kingdom was in his mind, is equally uncertain. It is likely that he had a better idea than the immediate disciples of the Saviour, who, after his resurrection, were still ignorant that he believed the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and that repentance and remission must be preached in his name. The case we have called doubtful. It is recorded in John v, 14. This is the case of the man at the pool of Bethesda, who had an infirmity thirty and eight years; whom the Saviour healed, and of whom it is said, when accused by the Pharisees, as to who bade him carry his bed on the Sabbath day, "he that was healed wist not who it was." When Jesus afterwards found him in the Temple He said to him "Thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." The man's affliction had most likely been bro't on him by his vices, and this is simply a warning to him not to relapse into them. But if it is claimed that this is an instance of forgiveness, then there is nothing required here, not even that the man should know him. These are the cases Bro. Melish refers to and each one of them had in view a special object that referred to the occasion and circumstances in which it occurred. The suppressed promise in this objection brought out, will expose its fallacy at once. The argument is this: Whatever was not "required" by the Saviour, during His personal ministry, as a condition of forgiveness, is not so "required" by Him in order to forgiveness.—Therefore baptism is not so required now. I cannot think that in view of the facts, as recorded in the gospels, and as we have mentioned them above, Bro. Melish will affirm the major premise of his own argument. It is hard to believe that any one intelligent in the Scriptures will affirm that there is nothing required after Jesus said it is finished, and the plan of redemption, through his atonement, now complete, was placed by the Holy Spirit in the hands of the Apostles, to be proclaimed by them to every creature not required by the Lord in person, in the few special cases, whose sins He forgave. The commission of Jesus to the Apostles, to baptize believers, was not given until after His personal ministry. St. The Apostle Paul—gives us two or three Epistles, Romans, Galatians and perhaps, Hebrews, whose burden is to teach how the sinner is justified before God, and never is baptism mentioned as one of the conditions. The silence of the Epistles, when speaking on the specific subject of forgiveness, to mention baptism, is a convincing evidence that Paul did not consider baptism, is conditions.—Every statement in this paragraph surprises me. They all seem to me to be inaccurate, and some of them precisely opposite the facts to which they refer. It is not possible, as we

to say that there is any Epistle in the New Testament "whose burden is to teach how the sinner is justified before God." It is inaccurate to represent the Epistles as "speaking on the specific subject of forgiveness." The Epistles have no such specific import. The Epistles were all written to men and women already justified. The "burden" of the letters mentioned, is to teach christians to understand better, and to enter more fully into the nature and meaning of the religion which they had already embraced. It is true they treat largely of justification. This was made necessary by the fact patent in the letters themselves, that the churches to which they are addressed, being composed to some extent of converted Jews, were in danger of being fatally ensnared to Jewish legalism,—that righteousness which is by the law,—and thereby losing the rich blessings of that which is "by the faith of Christ." It cost the apostle Paul the largest part of his labor and suffering to affirm that the one was of law that it might be by works, and the other of faith that it might be by grace. But, in treating of justification by faith, it was not necessary that he should make prominent the details comprehended in that faith, and baptism being so comprehended it is not of course the main topic of those letters, but being the representatives act by which the faith of the heart is translated into the life, that by which faith reaches its end, it is so mentioned in each of these Epistles. "Baptized into Jesus Christ;" "Buried with Him by baptism into death," are all found in Romans. And if the transition from a position not in Christ, to one in Him, if being brought into relation to His death, from one not having any such relation, and if being brought into a state of death to sin, does not refer by necessary implication, to forgiveness of sins, to what can it refer? Again, in Galatians, we read: "For you are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Now if to be put into the relation of Christ to the Father, the relation of a son, to receive His spirit, the spirit of a son and to put on His character, if to pass into these from a position not in them, does not refer to the subject of forgiveness, we are unable to see how forgiveness could be referred to. But in Hebrews we have: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." If sprinkling the heart from an evil conscience, in connection with washing the body, is not a "mention" of baptism, in connection with forgiveness, how could it be done? In view of these clear statements in each of these Epistles, we feel justified in saying it is not true that "the Epistles are silent when speaking on the subject of forgiveness to mention baptism." It is mentioned in all three of them, and by clear implication, referring to the subject of forgiveness each time. "We think we have now sufficiently answered the objections, and will attend to the main point in the exegesis of Acts 2, 38."

[Concluded next week]

### You can not serve God and Mammon.

BROTHER CAMPBELL.—In all the vocations of life, man must, of necessity, have energy. Without this it is impossible to be successful in any enterprise in which we may engage. But I frequently see persons who exhibit an amount of energy in some things that I think is needed for amongst Christians.

I have seen professors so greedy after the riches which moth and rust will corrupt, that they work so hard during the week, they are frequently sick on Lord's day so they can not get out to Sunday School, or meeting. They rise very late on Sunday morning, with a terrible sick head-ache, or a severe pain in the back, or shoulders; or the old symptoms of that liver complaint, which they had twenty-five or thirty years ago, suddenly comes back, and of course, they can not think of going to church. This sickness fortunately wears off by Monday morning so that they are ready to engage in the week's work with a hearty good will.

Others again have to labor so hard that they can not find time to go visiting until Saturday evening or Sunday morning, and by that means they succeed admirably in keeping themselves and some one else away from the house of God. There is still another class of professors tried and true, thanks be to our Heavenly Father! who exhibit due energy in maintaining their families, and still, when Sunday morning comes, they are always ready to hitch up their teams and take their families to Sunday school or meeting of both, as the case may be.

Their hands are ever stretched out to raise the fallen and to succor the weak and helpless. Their purses are ever open to help the needy and for all benevolent purposes. They are they who pay those who labor in the word and teach—that is if they are gaged at all—for if you would go to one of those Sunday-school professors to get him to give something for the support of the ministry, or some brother who has to labor, all through the week to procure the necessities of life for his family, and has to get up at night from ten till two o'clock studying the word of God so that he may not fail, when Lord's day comes, in his duty of persuading sinners to flee the wrath to come; they will begin by putting up a poor mouth—they are very hard up (to use their own expression)—they are in debt to the enormous amount of fifty dollars, when they are probably worth their five, eight or ten thousand dollars; having good farms well stocked; yet you might almost as well try to get blood out of a turnip.

They will generally wind up with, "I do not think he ought to preach for money, he ought to preach for souls." He does; but is not the laborer worthy of his hire? He can not live on souls, my good friend, and especially the kind that you have. But enough of this.

Central church still lives, and although there has been no accessions lately, the brethren, most of them, seem to be looking to Jesus as the author and finisher of their faith. We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved we have an house not made with hands eternally in the heavens, whose maker and builder is God. And if we are but faithful in the discharge of our duties toward God, our Father, we will soon, very soon, out-ride the storms of adversity and anchor in the harbor of eternal rest.

Brethren and Sisters, is not the Christian hope worth striving for—the hope that is stronger than death, deeper than the grave and reaches to that within the veil, whither the forerunner hath for us entered? Is it not worthy of our greatest energies? We can not all grace the pulpit, but we can preach as effectually by our every day walk and conversation as the minister in the pulpit.

Yours, in hope of eternal life,  
A BELIEVER.  
Albany Precinct, May 23d, 1871.

Chicago boasts a musical critic who has performed the somewhat extraordinary feat of writing up a concert, rebuking the spathy of the public, who did not attend in satisfactory numbers, and criticizing the various performers, when the concert did not take place until the next week.

It is said that negotiations in London for the new French loan have been suspended.

The women have got into over 300 post offices, so far.

A "lady horse thief" has been convicted in North Carolina. Another says in his new manuscript.