

## Administration of the Ordinance of Believers' Baptism at the Surrey Tabernacle 1850<sup>1</sup>.

ON Wednesday, December 12th, the ordinance of Believers' Baptism was administered by Mr. James Wells to forty-four persons in the above place.

For a long time previous to the doors of the chapel being opened, the avenue leading to the chapel was crowded with persons anxious to obtain admittance. A great number of persons took tea at the chapel; and as soon as the doors were opened, the place was nearly filled; and before the service commenced was crowded in every corner, and at the time the ordinance was being administered, there could not have been less than from twelve to fourteen hundred persons present.

At a quarter to seven the service commenced by singing the well-known hymn,

“Jesus! and shall it ever be-  
A mortal man ashamed of thee!” &c.

After which Mr. Wells offered up a prayer; another hymn was sung; and Mr. Wells then proceeded, from the waterside, to address the congregation.

Mr. Wells, without taking any particular words for his text, said, he should first show the truth of this ordinance from the Word of God. Secondly, say a few words about “Strict Communion” and lastly, show why they attended to that ordinance.

He (Mr. W.) said that baptism prefigured the death and resurrection of Christ, and the death and resurrection of his people by him. He next showed that the word, baptism from the Greek word, *baptizo*, throughout the whole Bible, means to *immerse*, and in no one case sprinkling.<sup>2</sup> He next showed the glaring inconsistencies of a certain Greek Lexicographer, who was a sprinkler. Mr. Wells also showed that by a little literary twisting, the translators (who, it is well known, were nearly all sprinklers had substituted the word with for in;<sup>3</sup> as in the passages found in Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26, 33. But he challenged all to deny that the Greek word meant any other than the word in, He then said that we have baptism throughout the whole of the Old Testament as well as the New. As instances in the Old Testament, he cited the cases of Noah and family in the ark, the Israelites passing through the wilderness, Aaron and his sons, who were to be washed before they ate of the holy things, Naaman the leper. In all these and many other instances Mr. Wells observed that none other than baptism was shown forth. We find that the Old

---

<sup>1</sup> E.V. January 1850 pages 18-19

<sup>2</sup> A. The Meaning of *báptō* and *baptízō*. *báptō*, “to dip in or under,” “to dye,” “to immerse,” “to sink,” “to drown,” “to bathe,” “wash.” The NT uses *báptō* only in the literal sense, e.g., “to dip” (Lk. 16:24), “to dye” (Rev. 19:13), and *baptízō* only in a cultic sense, mostly “to baptize.” From The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume

<sup>3</sup> The Greek word *én* (en) can be translated in Matthew 3:11 and similar passages as in, with or by. Many translations recognize this by using a footnote when they use “with” to let the reader know that this is a subjective choice.

Testament closes up with John the Baptist, and the New Testament commences with John the Baptist, and we there find him baptizing in Jordan. In the Old Testament we find many baptisms, but in the New they are all concentrated in this one; and as the baptism in the Old Testament was for the washing away of the filth of the flesh, and for the healing of all kinds of diseases; so, all the diseases of the church meet a remedy in Christ; and in this one ordinance the whole of the baptisms of the Old are concentrated. Some argue that John's baptism stopped when Christ was baptized. Let us see; John takes up baptism from the Old Testament, Christ comes and takes up John's, and now "Jesus comes from Galilee to Jordan [a distance of one hundred miles,] to be baptized of him." It is a part of the outward righteousness of the church thus publicly to own Christ, and to disown the world and sin. And when Christ came up out of the water, the heavens opened, and a voice spoke, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Thus, was divine authority stamped upon this sacred ordinance. But when the Savior took it up, what did he do with it? Put it down? No! Let's see. In Matthew 18:19, after his resurrection, we hear him saying, "Go ye, therefore, teach all nations, BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." So, you see he included it in his commission. Well, and what did the disciples do with it? Mr. W. here referred to the day of Pentecost as also the baptism of Lydia. and her household. Some advocates for infant sprinkling will tell you that nowhere in the New Testament will you find any mention of so-and-so's son or daughter being baptized, which they take as a proof of their having been sprinkled in their infancy; but their argument is easily set aside by this answer: that in no one case do we read of so-and-so's son or daughter sitting down at the Lord's table. Therefore, if we take the Lord's authority from the one, we must for all.

Mr. Wells now came to state a few things respecting "Strict Communion;" and said, you will ask: Do you find strict communion also in the Old Testament? Yes. And in the New? Yes. Strict communion is the order of heaven, for through Jesus Christ alone is there admission there. In the Old Testament, the first instance we have is of the ark, for it was in and by that alone that Noah and his family could be saved from the flood. Again, in the fourteenth of Leviticus you will see strict communion to be plainly written. None were to eat of the holy things without washing. Many other instances Mr. Wells referred to in the Old Testament, but we pass on to the New. Mr. W. said: Come we now to John the Baptist in the Wilderness, a friend comes to him and says, John, I like your doctrine and I like your declaration, but I don't like that baptism. Would he not say: what! you like the doctrines yet not like the things which the Master has commanded? Suppose again we had gone to the apostle Paul and said: can't we be admitted to the church without being baptized? What does he say? "Keep the ordinances as they are delivered unto you." To bring it to a point (says Mr. W.) in order to have any other way you must have another Bible.

Thirdly: your reasons for attending to this ordinance, first: Because the Lord commands us. 2nd, Because of the wonderful things associated with this ordinance; 3rdly, Because of the kingdom to which it belongs. 4thly, Because of the greatness of the salvation from which Christ has delivered us. 5thly, because we have to obey the Lord, for "to obey is better than sacrifice."

Mr. Wells' having concluded his address another hymn was sung, and he then proceeded to immerse in the watery flood twenty-seven females and seventeen males, after which, Mr. W. concluded the service with prayer.

We understand that this is the first time that the baptistry in Surrey Tabernacle has been opened for two years.