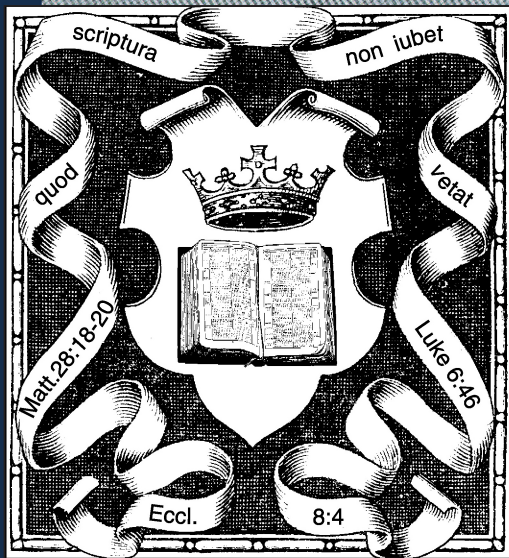


The Baptist Distinctives Series      Number 26



# Lectures on Baptism

Preface by C.H. Spurgeon

William Shirreff



## *Quod scriptura, non iubet velat*

The Latin translates, “What is not commanded in scripture, is forbidden:”

**On the Cover:** Baptists rejoice to hold in common with other evangelicals the main principles of the orthodox Christian faith. However, there are points of difference and these differences are significant. In fact, because these differences arise out of God’s revealed will, they are of vital importance. Hence, the barriers of separation between Baptists and others can hardly be considered a trifling matter. To suppose that Baptists are kept apart solely by their views on Baptism or the Lord’s Supper is a regrettable misunderstanding. Baptists hold views which distinguish them from Catholics, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Pentecostals, and Presbyterians, and the differences are so great as not only to justify, but to demand, the separate denominational existence of Baptists. Some people think Baptists ought not teach and emphasize their differences but as E.J. Forrester stated in 1893, “Any denomination that has views which justify its separate existence, is bound to promulgate those views. If those views are of sufficient importance to justify a separate existence, they are important enough to create a duty for their promulgation ... the very same reasons which justify the separate existence of any denomination make it the duty of that denomination to teach the distinctive doctrines upon which its separate existence rests.” If Baptists have a right to a separate denominational life, it is their duty to propagate their distinctive principles, without which their separate life cannot be justified or maintained.

Many among today’s professing Baptists have an agenda to revise the Baptist distinctives and redefine what it means to be a Baptist. Others don’t understand why it even matters. The books being reproduced in the *Baptist Distinctives Series* are republished in order that Baptists from the past may state, explain and defend the primary Baptist distinctives as they understood them. It is hoped that this Series will provide a more thorough historical perspective on what it means to be distinctively Baptist.

The Lord Jesus Christ asked, “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46). The immediate context surrounding this question explains what it means to be a true disciple of Christ. Addressing the same issue, Christ’s question is meant to show that a confession of discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ is inconsistent and untrue if it is not accompanied with a corresponding submission to His authoritative commands. Christ’s question teaches us that a true recognition of His authority as Lord inevitably includes a submission to the authority of His Word. Hence, with this question Christ has made it forever impossible to separate His authority as King from the authority of His Word. These two principles—the authority of Christ as King and the authority of His Word—are the two most fundamental Baptist distinctives. The first gives rise to the second and out of these two all the other Baptist distinctives emanate. As F.M. Jans wrote in 1894, “Loyalty to Christ as King, manifesting itself in a constant and unswerving obedience to His will as revealed in His written Word, is the real source of all the Baptist distinctives:’ In the search for the *primary* Baptist distinctive many have settled on the Lordship of Christ as the most basic distinctive. Strangely, in doing this, some have attempted to separate Christ’s Lordship from the authority of Scripture, as if you could embrace Christ’s authority without submitting to what He commanded. However, while Christ’s Lordship and Kingly authority can be isolated and considered essentially for discussion’s sake, we see from Christ’s own words in Luke 6:46 that His Lordship is really inseparable from His Word and, with regard to real Christian discipleship, there can be no practical submission to the one without a practical submission to the other.

In the symbol above the Kingly Crown and the Open Bible represent the inseparable truths of Christ’s Kingly and Biblical authority. The Crown and Bible graphics are supplemented by three Bible verses (Ecclesiastes 8:4, Matthew 28:18-20, and Luke 6:46) that reiterate and reinforce the inextricable connection between the authority of Christ as King and the authority of His Word. The truths symbolized by these components are further emphasized by the Latin quotation - *quod scriptura, non iubet vetat*— *i.e.*, “What is not commanded in scripture, is forbidden:’ This Latin quote has been considered historically as a summary statement of the regulative principle of Scripture. Together these various symbolic components converge to exhibit the two most foundational Baptist Distinctives out of which all the other Baptist Distinctives arise. Consequently, we have chosen this composite symbol as a logo to represent the primary truths set forth in the *Baptist Distinctives Series*.



**LECTURES**  
**ON**  
**BAPTISM**



LECTURES  
ON  
BAPTISM

BY THE LATE

WILLIAM SHIRREFF,

*Minister of the Gospel, Glasgow*

*With a Biographical Sketch of the Author by John Franklin Jones*

INCLUDING A

PREFACE BY C.H. SPURGEON.



LONDON:

PASSMORE AND ALABASTER,  
PATERNOSTER BUILDINGS.

1878



**The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.**

NUMBER ONE IRON OAKS DRIVE • PARIS, ARKANSAS 72855

Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;  
that it may be displayed because of the truth.

-- *Psalm 60:4*

*Reprinted 2006*

*by*

**THE BAPTIST STANDARD BEARER, INC.**

No. 1 Iron Oaks Drive  
Paris, Arkansas 72855  
(479) 963-3831



**THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM**

*lux lucet in tenebris*

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

ISBN# 1579785018





## PUBLISHER'S FORWARD

---

“I know of no surer way of a people’s perishing than by being led by one who does not speak out straight, and honestly denounce evil. If the minister halts between two opinions, do you wonder that the congregation is undecided? If the preacher trims and twists to please all parties, can you expect his people to be honest? If I wink at your inconsistencies will you not soon be hardened in them? Like priest, like people. A cowardly preacher suits hardened sinners. Those who are afraid to rebuke sin, or to probe the conscience, will have much to answer for.... And yet is not a mingle-mangle of Christ and Belial the common religion of the day? Is not worldly piety or pious worldliness the current religion? ...such seek out a trimming teacher who is not too precise and plain spoken, and they settle down comfortably to a mongrel faith, half truth, half error and a mongrel worship half dead form and half orthodoxy.... There can be no alliance between the two... ‘No man can serve two masters.’ All attempts at compromise or comprehensiveness in matters of truth and purity are founded upon falsehood, and falsehood is all that can come of them. May God save us from such hateful double-mindedness.” Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol.27 (Pasadena, Texas, Pilgrim Pub., 1973), p. 562.

It is our intention to “speak out straight” and be as “precise and plain spoken” in our Publisher’s Forewords as both candor and conviction will allow. That this book will “start” Christians arguing about infant baptism, we deny. The fact is, they already argue about it, and have done so for centuries. Should this book provoke more controversy, we shall not be upset, as long as it is conducted in the proper Christian spirit of meekness and love, in the interest of truth, and for the glory of God. Controversy marks the

## PUBLISHER'S FORWARD

presence of deep convictions and therefore, usually, thinking minds. If controversy sets men searching the Scriptures, it is by no means a bad thing.

We do not expect to convince everyone who considers the arguments contained in the following book by Mr. William Shirreff, however we categorically declare that this is our hope and our aim. If we did not seek to convince others of what we, as Baptists, believe, it would indicate that we are not fully persuaded and committed ourselves. Since we are convinced that infant baptism is a gross perversion of one of the ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, are we not entitled, yea, rather, is it not our duty to oppose it and forthrightly declare what we consider to be the truth? We are not so vain as to suppose that we have all the light. But we know that every additional witness is useful in a disputed legal case. We wish to strengthen the hands of the rising generation of Baptists by shaping in their minds a standard doctrinal identity and showing them that we have no reason to be ashamed of our opinions. At the same time we wish to give the promoters and defenders of infant baptism (and particularly the more aggressive, conservative, Reformed and Presbyterian people) the witness of a former Presbyterian, in the hopes that they, by the blessing of God, will see that the Scriptural arguments in this matter are not, as they suppose, on their side. One of their own, an Anglican bishop, J.C. Ryle, said: "It is impossible to handle this question without coming into direct collision with the opinions of others. But I hope it is possible to handle it in a kindly and temperate spirit. At any rate it is no use to avoid discussion for fear of offending. Disputed points in theology are never likely to be settled unless men on both sides will say out plainly what they think, and give their reasons for their opinions. To avoid the subject, because it is a controversial one, is neither honest nor wise." Knots Untied, c. 5, p.75.

In all honesty, we would not make a brother "an offender for a word" (Is. 29:21). We desire to "walk together" (Amos 3:3) "in truth" (3 Jn. 4) with "all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (Eph. 6:24), who "rejoiceth in the truth"

## PUBLISHER'S FORWARD

(1 Cor. 13:16), and who have determined in their hearts to “prove all things” and only “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). On the other hand, we shall call no man master. We hold no man’s “person in admiration because of advantage” (Jude 16). We seek not “honor from men” nor “one of another” (Jn. 5:41, 44). If we know anything of ourselves, we desire “truth in the inward parts” (Ps. 51: 6). Therefore, regarding this infant baptism controversy (or any other controversy), God being our Helper, we shall not purchase peace at the expense of truth.

Since the early 1800’s, the Baptist people in America, for the most part, have departed from the evangelical theology and ecclesiology of their forefathers. We emphasize that the “majority” of professed Baptists have done this --- certainly not all Baptists, for there is “at this present time also ...a remnant” (Rom. 11:5). In their desire to fulfill the Great Commission, the New School Baptists have plunged deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of Arminianism and Pragmatism. Corrupted alike by the Universal Atonement view of Andrew Fuller and the compassionate — but erroneous — evangelistic zeal of William Carey, Luther Rice and Adoniram Judson, the New School Baptists departed further and further from the “Ancient Landmarks” which their fathers had set (Pr. 22:28); for, while professing and preaching an ecclesiology that demanded a separation between the regenerate and unregenerate in the New Testament Church, they devised and implemented pragmatic practices which guaranteed the very opposite. In disdain for, and opposition to, their more numerous and popular New School counterparts, the Old School Strict Baptists have recoiled more and more into criticism, Antinomianism, and Sandemanianism. Both groups find themselves today in a deplorable and disastrously effete condition doctrinally and practically, and at a loss with regard to defending their distinct identity in controversy.

Since the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, there has been an upsurge in the interest in, and publication of Puritan theology, for most of which, we might add, we are grateful.

## PUBLISHER'S FORWARD

But with the exposure to Puritan theology, there has also come an exposure to Puritan, or Protestant ecclesiology, which basically is the same as Catholic ecclesiology, i.e., both being without Biblical basis; the former is founded upon assumption, the latter upon tradition. With this upsurge in Puritan and Protestant publications, the Protestants have been strengthened, renewed and emboldened. The circumstances with the Baptists have been far otherwise. With the passing of time; the death of the older defenders of the Baptist faith; the liberalizing of the Baptist schools; the decline in availability of the writings of the old Baptist authors upon the public bookshelves, and the negligence in republishing the same; the almost complete turnover to Fullerite Arminianism; the emphasizing of pragmatic methodology and glorification of the American goddess of size and success; the "Ancient Landmarks," or historic distinctives of the Baptist faith, have all but disappeared from public memory. In this situation of the weakening and well-nigh silencing of the witness of Baptist ecclesiology, the Protestants have renewed the ancient controversy between themselves and the Baptists. This is nothing new or strange, for as John Gill points out: "The Paedobaptists are ever restless and uneasy, always endeavouring to maintain and support, if possible, their unscriptural practice of infant-baptism; though it is not other than a pillar of Popery." Infant Baptism, A Part and Pillar of Popery, (Boston, 1766). Strengthened by the multiplicity of Protestant publications in the last 25 years and emboldened by the timidity and inadequacy of the present-day Baptist rebuttal, the Protestants have thrust forward their champions, who, assuming their invincibility like Goliath of old, hurl forth slander and reproach, while the Baptists, like the army of Israel, cower down fearfully in their trenches. It appears to those who are ignorant of the issues that this controversy is just a matter of disagreement about the amount of water used in baptism. This is far from the major issues involved.

## PUBLISHER'S FORWARD

As far as we are concerned, the practice of infant baptism in Protestant ecclesiology contains within itself at least the following evident errors and inconsistencies:

- (1) a ***violation*** of the basic laws of hermeneutics and a subtle ***repudiation*** of the fundamental principle of the absolute necessity for scriptural warrant, and the final authority of the Scriptures in all matters of faith and practice;
- (2) an ***invasion*** and ***usurpation*** of the crown rights and sole prerogatives of Christ as the only King and Lawgiver of the New Testament Church;
- (3) a ***defamation*** of the Goodness and Wisdom of the Divine character;
- (4) a ***confusion*** of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace and the Abrahamic Covenant of Circumcision;
- (5) a ***nullification*** of the doctrines of original sin and total depravity/inability;
- (6) an ***abrogation*** of the true nature and evidence of Sovereign saving grace and the doctrine of Regeneration;
- (7) an ***obliteration*** and ***perversion*** of the proper subject, mode and purpose of New Testament baptism;
- (8) a ***destruction*** of the scripturally-required spiritual nature of Christ's New Testament Church (Jn. 18:36), because there is an amalgamation of the world with the saints, the lost with the saved, the believers with unbelievers, and the regenerate with the unregenerate by means of infant-baptism;
- (9) an ***association*** and ***integration*** of the spiritual church with the political government, completely unjustified by the New Testament;
- (10) a ***renunciation*** of and ***opposition*** to true individual liberty of conscience and private judgment.

## PUBLISHER'S FORWARD

Therefore, the practice of infant-baptism annuls the basic theological foundations of Christianity. In a word — “grace is no more grace” (Rom. 11:6). Such obvious errors must be opposed. The differences between us are no minor differences.

In 1821, in the preface to his book entitled, *Lacon*, C.C. Coulton said: “There are three difficulties in authorship [and, we might add, in publishing]:

1. to write anything worth publishing;
2. to find skillful and honest men to print it, and
3. to find sincere, diligent and thoughtful men who will read it.”

We believe we have found the first two, in Mr. William Shirreff's book entitled, Lectures on Baptism and in our current printer/binder. We look now for the third! Will you, my dear friend who now holds this book in your hand, be a “sincere, diligent and thoughtful man who will read it”? That it may be so, is the prayer of the Publisher. We feel it is important to always remind our readers that we do not necessarily agree with **everything** found in the books we publish. Duty requires that we warn and remind our readers to “prove all things,” from the Scriptures and “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Tim. 2:7).

**THE BAPTIST STANDARD BEARER, INC.**

*(Ps. 60:4,5; Is. 59:19; 62:10-12)*

Stonehaven, Paris, Arkansas

July 20, 1987

## CONTENTS.

---

	Page
INTRODUCTORY LECTURE. Importance of Positive Institutions, and Observations on the Ordinance of Baptism ... ..	1
LECT. II. Nature of the Evidence required ...	9
LECT. III. The New Testament the only Rule in regard to the Positive Institutions of the Gospel ... ..	19
LECT. IV. Our Practice must be determined by those Passages of Scripture which more directly treat of the subject of Inquiry... ..	34
LECT. V. Positive Proof essential to Worship in Baptism ... ..	46
LECT. VI. Estimate of the Value of Inferential Reasoning on the subject of Baptism	57
LECT VII. Presumptions against Infant Baptism ...	70
LECT. VIII. Further Presumptions against Infant Baptism ... ..	80
LECT. IX. Further Presumptions against Infant Baptism ... ..	93
LECT. X. Further Presumptions against Infant Baptism ... ..	108
LECT. XI. Concluding Presumptions against Infant Baptism ... ..	126





## PREFATORY MEMOIR.

---

IT is meet that a memoir of the author should precede these Lectures, but it must of necessity be brief, since no life of him has been written, nor do the magazines of the period contain any information as to his life and work. It is more than 50 years since Mr. Shirreff left the Presbyterian Church and was baptized, and hence there are few surviving personal memories to fall back upon. We are, therefore, unable to do more than arrange the materials kindly furnished by our beloved friend, Miss Mary Shirreff, of Rothesay, who is his only surviving daughter. True daughter is she of the man who left all things for Christ's sake: her memorial abides in the hearts of the members of the Baptist Church in Rothesay, to whom she has long been a mother in Israel. To her suggestion, encouragement, and assistance the republication of these Lectures is due.

From a very careful study of his Lectures we should conclude that Mr. Shirreff was a true gentleman as well as a sincere Christian; a man as far removed from bigotry as from indifference. He appears in his writings to be sensitive but not censorious: a man who would be very scrupulous as to his own conduct, but very generous in his estimate of others. In these Lectures

there are no hard words, opprobrious epithets, or cutting taunts. He argues, as we think, most convincingly, and his logic is inexorable, but there is not a drop of bitterness in the whole book. Order is apparent almost to rigidity, and hence there is a measure of repetition; but order is evidently one of the writer's virtues, and is so much a part of the man that he must have his way in it even to an extreme. He is determined carefully to prove all things, and hence he boldly *weighs* those arguments of his opponents which at first sight appear to be conclusive, and when he has them in the scale their apparent force vanishes, and they rise into the air as trifles light as air. God's word was evidently Mr. Shirreff's only law, and he tested everything by it, paying no deference to antiquity, tradition, or ecclesiastical certificate. He felt that he must be on the side of Scripture, even if he stood alone. What it cost him to follow his Lord in baptism he best knew, only it is clear that he never regretted the step, but with unclouded brow and easy conscience pursued his even course till "Well done, good and faithful servant," sounded in his ear.

The Lectures are, to our mind, singularly likely to conciliate and win those who already hold sound views upon the great doctrines of the gospel. They were clearly meant to be an appeal to the author's old friends, the Presbyterians. They are thorough and uncompromising, but, at the same time, calm and judicious. Evidently the track laid down is that which had led the author's own mind to his own definite conclusion, and he is sanguine that others will try the path and reach the same end.

We most of all admire in these Lectures the clear determination of the lecturer to obey the will of the Lord, cost what it may. He never wavers, and never imagines it possible for him to compromise with conscience and evade the force of a text in order to avoid self-sacrifice. He is constructed of such stuff as martyrs are made of, with more of the gentle spirit of "the faithful and true witness" than has usually been seen in self-sacrificing confessors. We see the man so well in his communications that we could almost construct a memoir out of our own perceptions; but we are so little given to speculation that we forbear.

Mr. William Shirreff was born at Coldstream, Berwickshire, in 1762. He was an only child: his parents gave him a good education, and he wisely improved his advantages. He determined to excel, and was unremitting in his application to his lessons, having from his earliest childhood a conscientious desire to do right. On one occasion, failing to win a prize, he went to a gravestone and cried till he was ill, but at the same time he resolved to do better in future. While yet young he was the subject of frequent religious impressions, and he was wont specially to recall the struggles of his heart while he was twelve or thirteen years of age, when hearing one of his parents read in the family extracts from the works of the Puritan divines. How much benefit might accrue to all our families if there were more of such solid reading! At sixteen William Shirreff partook of the Communion in the Scotch Established Church. In his diary he says he was serious then, but relapsed.

At seventeen his father's death brought back his religious impressions, and decided his life-course. After the death of his parents he went to Edinburgh, and underwent a long course of study at the University. He was considered an excellent Greek, Hebrew, and Latin scholar, and attained considerable proficiency in the modern languages; he studied mathematics and the other branches of human learning, but he became most of all interested in divinity. To the end of his life he studied theology so earnestly and profoundly that he richly deserved the reputation which he gained of being a great divine.

At the age of twenty-six Mr. Shirreff received a call from the people in the parish of St. Ninians, Stirling, to become their minister. The heritors and people actually paid a very large sum of money to the patron to be allowed to have the man of their choice for their pastor. Strange as this reads to us, we suppose that it was by no means uncommon in those times, and at its worst was only a feeble imitation of the sales of livings, which are the shame and curse of the Church of England. Mr. Shirreff remained at St. Ninians, a faithful and beloved minister of the gospel for many years.

Mr. Haldane tells us that "Mr. Shirreff was, for many years, one of the most learned, popular, and impressive preachers in the Church of Scotland. He devoted himself much to study, and eagerly perused the writings of the Fathers, to which, besides those in his own valuable collection, he had access, through the Library which Archbishop Leighton had established at Dunblane,

when he presided over that diocese. So much was Mr. Shirreff engaged in this study, that it was a common remark, when he was absent from the meetings of Presbytery, 'He is at home with his Fathers.' In the progress of his researches, he became satisfied that the attempted union of Church and State is Anti-Christian; and he was not disobedient to the heavenly oracle, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate.' He resigned the charge of the parish of St. Ninians, in the Presbytery of Stirling, which he had held during thirty-five years," when he changed his views upon the subject of baptism and had to tear himself away, that he might maintain a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man.

In 1823 he was baptized by the late Dr. Innes in Edinburgh, and received a call from the Baptist Church, meeting in Albion Street, Glasgow, to be their Pastor.

When he left St. Ninians, he had intended to reside in Edinburgh, but wishing to follow the leadings of Providence, he went to Glasgow, and laboured there for nine years. It was natural that he should wish to explain both to his old friends at St. Ninians, and to the community among which he had been a Presbyter, the reason for his change of views upon Baptism. *Hence the preparation and delivery of these Lectures*, which he delivered weekly on Wednesday evenings, in Albion Street Chapel, shortly after his settlement there. But though his courage and consistency required him to deliver these lectures, he did not feel bound to print them, and accordingly, as far as he was concerned, they would have passed away in the hearing, had not other

voices prevailed after his decease. His full reliance upon the truth of believers' baptism made him feel that the New Testament was quite sufficient by itself to convince any intelligent Christian that believers should be immersed, and therefore he refused to publish his Lectures, or to prepare them for the press. It was a wise resolution which led to their being issued after his decease under the willing editorship of J. A. Haldane, Esq., who speaks of having corrected "trifling inaccuracies." We could have wished that Mr. Shirreff had been his own editor, for we have been compelled to grumble not a little at our esteemed predecessor for overlooking inaccuracies which were by no means trifling. Perhaps, however, some one else may follow *us* with the same criticism. An author can never be so well set forth as by himself. We have in a few passages found it difficult to guess at the Lecturer's meaning; and in the later lectures there are many omissions and abbreviations, which create obscurity and weaken force. How much we wish that Mr. Shirreff had superintended the press himself! Yet we have no difficulty whatever in sympathizing with his unwillingness to commit his lectures to the press. Often have we felt weary of the whole controversy, and utterly sick of the irrelevant matter dragged into it. It seems so clear. A New Testament appears to us to be the only argument needed, yet good people do not see what seems to us as clear as the sun at noonday. To be forced to argue year after year that ten and ten make twenty would not be more tiresome than to be forced to prove over and over again that which in the Scriptures of truth is written as with a sunbeam.

To return to Mr. Shirreff: in peace and happiness this good and great man laboured on in his new sphere till he entered into his rest in 1832, being then about seventy years of age; a shock of corn fully ripe.

So far we have sketched Mr. Shirreff's life; we cannot now do more than give remarks and incidents very much as we received them. It is too late in the day to attempt to make a biography or even an orderly record of leading facts.

Dr. Muir, of St. James', Glasgow, was accustomed to call Mr. Shirreff one of "the three mighties" in the Church of Scotland. Dr. Muir was at one time his assistant in the parish of St. Ninians. When preaching his trial sermon he said within himself "I am sure Mr. Shirreff and all the people are admiring me"—he had been studying elocution, and was displaying it. Mr. Shirreff waited for him when he came out of the pulpit, and taking his arm, said "Young man, if that is your style of preaching, you and I will not be long together; you have been preaching yourself, not Christ." To the honour of Dr. Muir let it be said, he did not resent this plain dealing, but profited by it, and became a thoroughly evangelical preacher. He often told the anecdote when in company, and said that Mr. Shirreff was the means of making him an efficient preacher.

In 1796 Mr. Charles Simeon attended a communion service in Stirling. On the Saturday he appears to have heard two preachers in succession, and by the time Mr. Shirreff had given a "further word of exhortation," four hours and a

quarter had been spent in the services. Mr. Simeon seems to have thought that those who could profit by such lengthy services must have been made of different materials from himself, but he says of Mr. Shirreff's address, it was "short and affectionate, and seemed to arouse the congregation out of their lethargy; indeed, it was more to me than all the rest."

On the following Sabbath Mr. Simeon says, "Mr. Shirreff began the service, and preached a useful sermon from Hebrews x. 10. After preaching above an hour, besides prayer and singing, he left the pulpit and went to the head of the tables. There he gave an exhortation respecting the sacrament, which to me was more excellent than his sermon. He had some ideas that were new to me, viz., that on the day of atonement the high priest alone slew the sacrifices, intimating that Christ alone should perform the office of atoning. The other was, that before the offering of the incense, he had on the common garments of the priests, but afterwards his golden garments, intimating that Christ should be raised in a glorified body."

Mr. Shirreff appears to have asked Mr. Simeon to preach, but the elders made strong remarks in reference to "black prelacy," and it was not generally liked by the people. Mr. Simeon favours us in his letters with various criticisms upon Scotch worship, but he was probably unaware that he himself was being weighed in the balances by the sons of the Covenanters, with a result which would have startled his equanimity had it been communicated to him.

In 1804, Mr. Shirreff married Mary Russell,



daughter of Mr. Russell, minister in Stirling. She was one of the excellent of the earth, and greatly increased his usefulness. They often united in setting apart time for spreading out all their concerns before God. When any special matter called for it, days of fasting or thanksgiving were kept. Their minds, strengthened by communion with God, were strong for service or for suffering.

Mr. Shirreff was an early riser: from his diary it appears that he rose in summer at five o'clock, thus securing time for walking, and a certain number of hours each day for study, visiting, and prayer. When he went out before breakfast for his walk he was accustomed to go for some time, before he returned home, into a retired spot. As he remained there a long while every morning the curiosity of some who saw him was excited. A man followed him one morning and found that he, like Nathanael under the tree, made that his place for prayer. The man came away awe-struck.

In the evening he sometimes made one of the family circle, and read aloud a history, or some useful book. He took the trouble to teach his children Latin, Greek and French, and they soon found out that he was much more strict than their teacher at school. He conducted family worship three times a day—morning, noon and night. When his children were old enough, he took one of the questions of the Shorter Catechism at the end of each service, and instructed them in its meaning. They would gladly have dispensed with the exercise at the time, but in after life they found the instruction they had thus received invaluable:

their minds having been filled with good, sound scriptural doctrine, they were not carried away with the numberless errors of those with whom they came in contact in later years.

Mr. Shirreff aimed at excellence, not only in religion, but in everything else. We learn from his diary, in which he made an entry every day, how unreservedly he sought to bring all his powers of soul and body into complete subjection to the divine will. Though he had great gifts as a preacher, and was very highly esteemed and almost idolized by his people, yet during the first years of his ministry he had not that light and peace and joy which he afterwards realized. Often did he cry out with the apostle Paul, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" Perhaps this experience was partly at least caused by the peculiar constitution of his mind, which would receive nothing without very clear and positive proof. He took occasion in after years to warn his family against the error into which he had fallen in this matter ; for he had been tempted to question all the grand doctrines of the Gospel, and to examine the ground of the commonest truths of the Word. He studied hard in order to satisfy himself with regard to the evidences of Christianity, and the authenticity of the Scriptures, and as the result of his investigations he told his children, and also wrote in his diary, that he was thoroughly satisfied concerning the internal and external evidences of Christianity, and other questions about which his mind had been exercised, but that he had suffered much mental anxiety before he could arrive at that conclusion in

consequence of his habit of requiring such convincing evidence of the point under consideration. Through the teaching of the Holy Spirit the issue to him was a full conviction of the truths which he held and taught, but he admitted that it was a dangerous path to follow,—a way in which the self-confidence of a man is more likely to be seen than the simple loving faith of a little child. Probably this explains how it was that in the earlier part of his ministry he did not receive the full assurance he desired, although he spent much time in prayer, and whole days in fasting and seeking direction from the Lord. This painful experience, however, was a grand preparation for his after work. The truths which he delivered were not his at second hand, but they had been wrought in him by the Spirit of God. By this process he also learned sympathy with the inward conflicts and mental doubts of those under his care. He preached as one who was intimately acquainted with the secret workings of his hearers' hearts, and in speaking to mourners in Zion he was peculiarly gentle and comforting. His own heart was very tender, and when speaking of divine things his feelings frequently overpowered him.

In reading the Scriptures the tones of his voice were most impressive. One person who heard him read the inspired account of the Lord's supper received therefrom her first right impressions of the nature and design of the ordinance. Once, when preaching about Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, his tone and manner in repeating the words of the Lord, "He had another spirit with him, and hath

followed me fully," gave to one of his hearers a life-long impression of the wisdom of following God, whatever the multitude might do. He wrote out his sermons, but he never read them in the pulpit, and he did not like to hear other ministers read their discourses. He said that whatever labour it might involve he would really preach to the people. No doubt this helped to increase his popularity and usefulness. His library was well selected, and equally well used ; the works of the old divines were his special favourites, and he made himself master of their contents. He was very fond of the writings of President Edwards, and often quoted one of his rules—"Resolved, to serve God, though no one else should do so."

Mr. Shirreff had a large Bible class in St. Ninians into which he admitted none younger than fifteen: many married people attended, while the assistant instructed the children. The larger catechism was the principal text-book, and much profit was derived from its study. The late Mr. Peter Drummond often spoke of the good received in this class, and formed one of a deputation from the class to present a testimonial to Mr. Shirreff after he had removed to Glasgow. As St. Ninians was a large parish, Mr. Shirreff had occasional meetings at different points within its bounds. On one occasion, visiting at a house where the servants were his hearers, although the master was an Episcopalian, he had a longing desire for the conversion of that gentleman, and prolonged his discourse hoping to reach his heart. At the close, Col.—, with great kindness, urged him to stay to dinner, though he seemed to be unaffected by the truth. Some

time afterwards a young woman came to the manse, and applied to become a communicant at the Lord's Table. Mr. Shirreff was struck with her conversation, and asked when she had first begun to think about her soul. She said, "Do you remember, Sir, that day when you were at P——? I was in the dining-room of the house, and from that time I was awakened." After she had gone out Mr. Shirreff remarked to his wife, "How wonderful are the ways of God : I wished for the master, but he has given me the servant!"

At another time he was feeling unusually discouraged through not hearing of conversions amongst his people. He was riding out shortly afterwards to a distance to preach, and not knowing the road well he stopped to ask at a cottage. The person who opened the door said to him :— "I think, Sir, you are a clergyman; would you come in to see a dying man?" He went in, but he did not recognize the sick man, who seemed at once to know him and to brighten up. "Do you know me?" Mr. Shirreff asked. The man said, "I do not know your name, but I know your face; your sermon at Kippen, where I heard you preach, was the means of leading me to Christ." He deeply felt the goodness of God in permitting him, when desponding, to hear such good news of the blessing accompanying the word.

Mr. Shirreff kept a diary till the end of his life, but from 1796 it was written in short-hand, and with so many contractions of his own as to be illegible even to his sons, who were taught the same system that he used. It is therefore impossible to tell when he began to entertain

doubts of the scripturalness of infant sprinkling. Afterwards when speaking of his altered views he affirmed that he set himself in earnest to ascertain the truth, and though he found it difficult in the midst of his manifold duties to devote so much time to the search, he took the trouble to examine all the classical writings which he had in his library, to find out the meaning of the word *baptizo*. Like Dr. Carson, he collated all the passages, and proved the meaning to be immersion. He most carefully examined the New Testament, and when he found that believers' baptism was of Divine appointment he at once resigned his charge. This, as we have before mentioned, was in 1823.

The Presbytery, unwilling to lose a minister so distinguished for piety and popular gifts, tried by every means to retain him, sending two ministers weekly to try to win him back. He had, however, counted the cost, and it was useless to seek to persuade him to withdraw his resignation. In the meantime, many infants were waiting to be baptized, and as the assistant minister, not being ordained, could not baptize them, and Mr. Shirreff would not, the poor little dears were left for awhile as Christ intended them to remain until they grew up, and believed on him. Mrs. Shirreff, who did not then fully understand her husband's change of views, said that there was a great talk in the country about his refusing to baptize the infants, and she thought as the Presbytery would not accept his resignation that he should in the meantime baptize the children. His reply was a right noble one, "How can I stand up to baptize an infant *in the name*, which means amongst other

things, by the authority of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, although there is no such authority, and *I know there is no such authority?* I would not do it for the world."

She never asked him again, but was herself afterwards baptized according to the scriptural fashion.

Some of the ministers were very angry with Mr. Shirreff for resigning his charge, especially one or two of the "moderate" clergy, who would have "censured" him, but the other members of the Presbytery would not suffer it, but accepted his resignation.

It was a painful season when he parted from his beloved people, many of whom were bound to him by spiritual ties; giving up his large income, leaving the manse which had been built for him, and meeting with reproach; but "he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." He preached his farewell sermon from Acts xx. 32: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." The large old church, always full when he preached, was crowded. The sight of the preacher's face was touching, as he stood up with hands uplifted in prayer: his quivering lips and faltering voice showed that he was scarcely able to control his emotion, but God graciously strengthened his servant, and enabled him to preach in his usual faithful and impressive manner.

The people waited for him, and lined all the road to the Manse. He was unable to speak, but covered his eyes with one hand, and held out the other to his dear people.

He went to Edinburgh in the beginning of the same week, and was there baptized by the late Dr. Innes.

As we have already intimated, he had purposed retiring to Edinburgh, but the Baptist Church, meeting in Albion Street, Glasgow, sent him an invitation, which he accepted. On one occasion one of his people from St. Ninians hearing him preach on "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves," came into the vestry after service and said, "Oh, Sir, I hope they are not using you ill here." He assured her that the people in Glasgow were kind to him. A singular incident occurred in connection with his leaving St. Ninians. The godly people there had formed prayer meetings, the men meeting with Mr. Shirreff, the females with Mrs. Shirreff. The members of these prayer meetings were sorely grieved about their pastor leaving, and spoke in such a way as to grieve Mrs. Shirreff. She told them that "it was not to fill a Professor's chair that he was leaving them, but for conscience' sake." One of the members of Mr. Shirreff's meeting was loud in his complaints, and the utterances of such a godly man increased the bitterness of the trial of the conscientious minister.

This old gentleman had a son in Glasgow, a doctor in good practice, and, after Mr. Shirreff settled in Glasgow, this gentleman, who was a Unitarian, sent to say that he wished to see his father's late clergyman. Mr. Shirreff called on him, and found him ill in bed. He explained that he had sent for Mr. Shirreff to repay a small sum of money he borrowed from him at college. Mr.



Shirreff had no recollection of it till he told him, but said "We will now speak of more important things," and began gently to open a conversation about spiritual matters. The sick man kindly invited him to return the next day, and each day begged to have another interview. At last he told his servants to tell his own minister (a Unitarian) when he called that he could not see him, as Mr. Shirreff was visiting him. One day Mr. Shirreff said to his wife, with tears in his eyes, "This is a remarkable case, Dr. B. is receiving the gospel." The gratitude and love of the dying man were very great to the instrument which the Lord had used to his salvation. He died, and on the day of the funeral the aged father came up from St. Ninians, and it was touching to see the aged man, with snow-white hair and tear-filled eyes, go up to Mr. Shirreff, before all the people, and beg his forgiveness for the unkind words he had spoken to him when he was leaving St. Ninians. He said, "Oh sir, I was wrong; if you had not come to Glasgow, my son would have gone to hell."

The late Dr. James Hamilton, of London, when a student in Glasgow, took seats in Albion Street Chapel. He wrote after Mr. Shirreff's death to Mrs. Shirreff, "that it had never been his lot to hear such masterly expositions of Scripture as then."

Mr. Shirreff continued in Glasgow to set apart time for seeking counsel of God: he often said he was saved from much trouble and loss by doing so. On the last day of the year he was accustomed to remain for some hours alone, and after breakfast all the members of the family were called in. He first

read a portion of Scripture containing a confession of sin, with a corresponding psalm, and offered an appropriate prayer, then another portion, thanking God for the mercies of the past year, and closed with a prayer for all needed blessings and direction for the ensuing year.

His prayers on ordinary days at family worship, held twice a day in Glasgow, were usually taken from the chapter read, which he turned into prayer.

He had a great reverence for God. Sometimes in prayer, like Abraham, he threw himself prostrate on the ground before the Most High God.

One Sabbath day, between the services, one of his sons went suddenly into the library, without knocking as usual at the door. He found his dear father in prayer in that attitude, prostrated before God, and the boy came out with tears in his eyes.

It is no wonder that such a parent's holy example and constant self-denial impressed his family.

Though so devout he was not gloomy, but cheerful and witty in company. In his diary he constantly complains of his own want of gravity.

During the visitation of cholera in Glasgow, Mr. Shirreff asked his people to set apart a day for fasting and prayer that the Lord would preserve them from its attacks. Sceptics may question the value of prayer, but the fact remains that not one member of the Church or congregation was attacked by the terrible disease. Verily God does hear the cry of his children.

When Mr. Shirreff's health began to fail he was urged by his son, a medical student, to retire to the country, but he would not be persuaded, and

continued to preach till within five weeks of his death. At the time that his last illness commenced the Church met and fasted, and prayed for his recovery, but it was not the will of God to grant their request. His servant's labours were ended, and he was going home.

When one of his children went into his room during the last week of his life, he said to her, "M——, take care that you are found on the side of truth; take care that you are not ashamed of the truth." She burst into tears as the thought forced itself upon her mind that her dear father believed himself to be dying.

The doctor who was attending him proposed a consultation, as he was suffering from chronic catarrh, and a complication of complaints. When the doctors were with him, one of them said to him, "You will soon be in a better world, sir." He did not answer, but as soon as they were gone he lifted up his eyes and hands to heaven, saying, "O God, I thank thee that this does not give me a painful surprise." At another time he said, "The gospel is our only resource when we come here."

He also took the hand of his dear wife in his, saying, "You have nobly discharged relative duties to me."

On the day before his death his face shone with a supernatural brightness, and he said to Mrs. Shirreff, "Who are these? What fine singing!" She told him that there was no one there, but he pointed to the top of the bed and exclaimed, "They are there. What fine singing!" He spoke constantly till he died, but his speech was inarticulate.

The following morning at nine o'clock he entered into rest, having nearly reached the allotted three-score years and ten.

A man who so lived, and so died, deserves to be heard when speaking upon the subject out of which grew the trial of his life. He being dead yet speaketh : God grant that his voice may be heard.

C. H. S.

---

**“REASONS WHY BAPTISTS OUGHT TO TEACH THEIR DISTINCTIVE VIEWS . . .** First, *it is a duty we owe to ourselves.* We must teach these views in order to be consistent in holding them. Because of these we stand apart from other Christians, in separate organizations. . . We have no right thus to stand apart unless the matters of difference have real importance; and if they are really important, we certainly ought to teach them.”

**JOHN A. BROADUS**

*The Duty of Baptists To Teach Their Distinctive Views.*  
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1881).

“No religious denomination has a moral right to a separate existence unless it differs essentially from others. Ecclesiastical differences ought always to spring from profound doctrinal differences. *To divide Christians, except for reasons of gravest import, is criminal schism.* Separate religious denominations are justifiable only for matters of conscience growing out of clear scriptural precept.”

**J. L. M. CURRY**

*A Baptist Church Radically Different From Paedobaptist Churches.*  
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1889).

“There is something distinctive in the principles of Baptists. They differ from all other denominations; and the difference is so great as not only to justify, but to demand, their separate existence as a people . . . What distinctive mission have the Baptists, if this is not their mission? - to present the truth in love on the matters wherein they differ from Pedobaptists. What is there but this that justifies their separate denominational existence and saves them from the reproach of being schismatics? *If they have a right to denominational life, it is their duty to propagate their distinctive principles, without which that life cannot be justified or maintained.*”

**J. M. PENDLETON**

*Distinctive Principles of Baptists.*  
(Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1882).

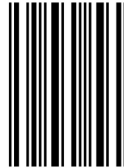
---

The Baptist Standard Bearer, Incorporated is a republication society organized in 1984, and is recognized as a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization. It was founded for the primary purpose of republication and preservation of materials reflecting the Baptist heritage.

ISBN 1-57978-501-8



90000>



9 781579 785017