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"Infant Baptism and the Sacrament"

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“INFANT BAPTISM AND THE SACRAMENT.”

BY ELDER GEORGE REYNOLDS.

There appears in the December number of the ERA an article with the above title, treating on the right of unbaptized children to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. With the conclusions of the writer on this point, I am in entire accord, but with some of the historical statements with which he strengthens his argument, I cannot agree.

He says:

Now, I find that the Savior did not scruple to administer the sacrament to children, or, for that matter, to grown men and women who had not been baptized. An account of his visit to this land is found in III Nephi, commencing with the 9th chapter. Chapter 11: 21 reads as follows: “And the Lord said unto him, I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people *when I am again ascended unto heaven.*” Prior to his ascension, and consequently before any of the Nephites had been baptized, he commanded the multitude to be seated, and administered to them bread and wine and instituted the sacrament. This multitude numbered “about two thousand and five hundred souls, *and they did consist of men, women and children,*” none of whom had been baptized. (III Nephi 17: 25; 18: 1-9.) It was not until after this, (Chapter 19: 11, 12) that the twelve disciples were baptized.

My position is that when the Redeemer after his resurrection, visited the Nephites on this continent, he found The Church in a partially disorganized condition by reason of the terrible calamities and great destructions that had befallen the people at the time of the overwhelming catastrophies that marked his death; but that

The Church had been in existence all the time, in more or less completeness up to the hour of his coming, and that many of those who were baptized by his direction had previously received this holy ordinance; or, viewing the question from another point, he did exactly what President Brigham Young did when in these last days the Saints reached these valleys after the expulsion from Nauvoo, he called upon them to renew their covenants.

To strengthen my position, we will go back in the history of the Nephites for, say forty years; as that period may, for our purpose, be regarded as covering a generation. That is to the year B. C. 6, as the Savior appeared in the 34th Nephite year after the signs were given to that people of his birth in the land of Jerusalem.

In the first named of these years (B. C. 6,) Samuel, the Lamanite, appeared on the walls of the city of Zarahemla and delivered his momentous message, with all its glorious, its wonderful and its terrible prophecies. The greater portion of the people rejected the word of the Lord which this prophet brought. Others accepted his message, and of them it is said:

As many as believed on his word, went forth and sought for Nephi; and when they had come forth and found him, they confessed unto him their sins and denied not, desiring that they might be baptized unto the Lord.

But as many as there were who did not believe in the words of Samuel, were angry with him; and they cast stones at him upon the wall, and also many shot arrows at him, as he stood upon the wall; but the Spirit of the Lord was with him, insomuch that they could not hit him with their stones, neither with their arrows.

Now when they saw this, that they could not hit him, there were many more who did believe on his words, insomuch that they went away unto Nephi to be baptized.

For behold, Nephi was baptizing, and prophesying, and preaching, crying repentance unto the people; showing signs and wonders; working miracles among the people, that they might know that the Christ must shortly come. (Helaman 16: 1-4.)

Six years later, or in the year of Christ's birth, we read:

And it came to pass that Nephi went forth among the people, and also many others, baptizing unto repentance, in the which, there were a

great remission of sins. And thus the people began again to have peace in the land. (III Nephi 1: 23.)

The Nephi here spoken of is the son of the Nephi mentioned in the previous quotation. He succeeded his father in the custody of the sacred records, was the leading spirit in The Church, and was the first chosen by Jesus to be one of the Twelve Disciples. Of this Nephi it is written:

And it came to pass that Nephi, having been visited by angels, and also the voice of the Lord, therefore having seen angels, and being eye witness, and having had power given unto him that he might know concerning the ministry of Christ, and also being eye witness to their quick return from righteousness unto their wickedness and abominations;

Therefore, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, and the blindness of their minds, went forth among them in that same year, and began to testify boldly, repentance and remission of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

* * * * *

And Nephi did minister with power and with great authority.

And it came to pass that they were angry with him, even because he had greater power than they, for it were not possible that they could disbelieve his words, for so great was his faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, that angels did minister unto him daily;

And in the name of Jesus did he cast out devils and unclean spirits; and even his brother did he raise from the dead, after he had been stoned and suffered death by the people;

And the people saw it, and did witness of it, and were angry with him, because of his power; and he did also do many more miracles, in the sight of the people, in the name of Jesus. (III Nephi 7: 15-20.)

The above is a portion of the Nephite record of what took place in the 31st year of the Savior's mortal life.

More than a year later, or in the commencement of the year immediately preceding the crucifixion of the Redeemer, we are told:

And Nephi did cry unto the people in the commencement of the thirty and third year; and he did preach unto them repentance and remission of sins.

Now I would have you to remember also, that there were none who were brought unto repentance, who were not baptized with water;

Therefore there were ordained of Nephi, men unto this ministry, that all such as should come unto them, should be baptized with water, and this as a witness and a testimony before God, and unto the people, that they had repented and received a remission of their sins. And there were many in the commencement of this year, that were baptized unto repentance. (III Nephi 7: 23-26.)

From the above extracts from the Book of Mormon, it is evident that up to within a few months of the visit of the Redeemer, not only was Nephi himself baptizing the people, but that he ordained other men to this same ministry and to baptize those who repented of their sins.

But it may be asserted that we have no direct proof that any one of those who were baptized by direction of the Lord Jesus had ever before received this ordinance. True, none were mentioned by name, but the presumption is overwhelmingly strong that they were; for the Savior expressly tells those whom he visited that they were "spared because they were more righteous than those who had been destroyed." Then, again, it would be difficult to conceive that such a man as Nephi, who had been officiating in the priesthood, who had been performing mighty miracles, who had been giving authority to others to baptize, and who had been baptizing, was not himself baptized. Such an idea supposes a condition entirely opposed to the regular order of God, and for which no apparent reason can be assigned: there was no necessity for such a departure. I will admit that there are a few cases in the history of The Church where men have received the priesthood before they were baptized; but in these few cases the conditions have been entirely different to those that existed among the Nephites during the period which we have been considering. We will say nothing of those who were ordained, as was Jeremiah (Jer. 1: 4, 5,) before they came upon this earth. Such ordinations have nothing specially to do with our argument; but there are others to which attention may be drawn. The Book of Abraham tells us that the grand key words of the holy priesthood were revealed to Adam in the garden of Eden. (Explanation of circular cut.) Yet in the writings of Moses (Pearl of Great Price, page, 34, edition of 1888,) we are told that Adam "was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the

water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water. And thus he was baptized." This was after his fall and expulsion from the garden.

There is another remarkable case wherein a prophet of the Lord baptized himself at the same time that he baptized another. It cannot however be definitely determined from the record whether he had beforetime been baptized; all that can be said is that nothing is mentioned of his previous baptism. We refer to Alma, the elder. It is written:

And now it came to pass that Alma took Helam, he being one of the first, and went and stood forth in the water, and cried, saying, O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart.

And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said, Helam, I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead, as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world.

And after Alma had said these words, both Alma and Helam were buried in the water; and they arose and came forth out of the water rejoicing, being filled with the Spirit. (Mosiah 18: 12-14.)

This took place at the waters of Mormon about 150 B. C. You notice that Alma claims to have authority from the Almighty God, and nowhere is that authority disputed in any of the sacred scriptures.

Then we come to John the Baptist. Of him it is recorded:

Therefore he [that is the Lord] took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also;

And the lesser priesthood continued, * * * which the Lord in his wrath, caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John, whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb;

For he was baptized while he was yet in his childhood, and was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power. (Doc. & Cov. 84: 25-28.)

Certainly it will not be claimed that John was baptized before he was eight days old.

This same John came in these last days and conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon two men—Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdrey—neither of whom had been baptized. At the same time that he conferred this power, he commanded them to go and be baptized, and gave them instructions that Joseph should baptize Oliver, and that afterwards Oliver should baptize Joseph. This they did as they were commanded. (See Pearl of Great Price pp. 105, 106.)

There needs must be a beginning to all things on earth; and when the Lord opened a new gospel dispensation, he permitted necessary departures from established rules, even if the Holy Spirit had to baptize a man, or the man baptize himself, or angels be sent to confer the priesthood, as in this latter dispensation; but there was no necessity for such departures on the occasion that Jesus ministered to the Nephites.

MUSIC.

It has been observed, "A man often forgets his friends, his native land, and sometimes his language, but the songs of childhood and youth never fade from his memory." Goethe bears testimony that in music the worth of art is most apparent, since it requires no material, no subject-matter whose effect must be deducted. It is wholly good and pure, raising and ennobling whatever it expresses.

"It is a strange thing," fitly exclaims Lady Eastlake, "the subtle form and conditions of music. When the composer has conceived it in his mind, it is not there; when he has committed it to paper, it is not there; when he has called together his orchestra and choristers from the north and south, it is there, but it is gone again when they disappear. It has always, as it were, to put on immortality afresh. It is forever being born anew—born, indeed, to die and leave dead notes and dumb instruments behind. No wonder that it should have been men with shallow reasoning powers and defective musical feelings, who in the fugitiveness of the form have seen only the frivolity of the thing and tried to throw contempt upon it accordingly."