

BAPTISM

“ Discovered plainly and faithfully, according to the Word of God, wherein is set forth the glorious pattern of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, the pattern of all believers in his subjection to baptism. Together with the example of thousands who were baptised after they believed. ”

DOCTRINES OF GRACE **JOHN NORCOTT**

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Discovered plainly and faithfully, according to the Word of God, wherein is set forth the glorious pattern of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, the pattern of all believers in his subjection to baptism. Together with the example of thousands who were baptised after they believed.

By

JOHN NORCOTT

17th century Particular Baptist pastor

Jer 6:16. Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

Isa 30:21. This is the way, walk ye in it.

1 Cor 11:1. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Matt 3:16. And Jesus, when he was baptised (or immersed), went up straightway out of the water.

Luke 7:30. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised (or immersed) of him.

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Publisher's Foreword

This plain little book was written by the early Particular Baptist preacher, John Norcott. He succeeded John Spilsbury, who was the first pastor of the first English Particular Baptist church, which had been formed in 1633 and which met in Old Gravel Lane, Wapping, London. John Norcott died, in middle age, in 1676. Benjamin Keach esteemed him highly, preaching his funeral sermon, which he printed as, *A summons to the grave. Preached at the funeral of that most eminent and faithful servant of Jesus Christ Mr John Norcott.*

This edition was published in 1911 by Farncombe & Son. They used the version produced by C H Spurgeon in 1885, to which they added the short account of John Norcott from Ivimey's *History of the English Baptists.*

J K Popham, in a 1912 review in the Gospel Standard, wrote, 'A remarkable book, handed down to us from the 17th century, when the Baptists were under great oppression, and the author himself suffered persecution

apparently from brethren. [*Norcott published it whilst in Holland, where he had been driven by religious persecution.*] We rose from a careful reading of it feeling that no other work we have ever read on the same subject conveyed to our heart and judgment with equal clearness and conviction the nature, mode, and obligation of baptism. ... Two things characterise it:

1) The fulness of the Scripture teaching on the subject. ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ is on every page, in every argument, every plea. Hence the force, the light, the clear shining of truth. The reader is everywhere met by authority in divine, distinct command, and in example, both from and in the Lord Himself and His apostles and disciples. Thus the ordinance, the true mode of it, the proper subjects for it, are set before him ... in the luminous, beautiful light of the Word itself. Therefore no reader of John Norcott need fear that his mind will be confused or his capacity outrun by abstruse reasoning.

2) The second thing which, in our judgment, marks the book before us is the gracious spirit which pervades it, the unction with which it evidently was written. The writer had the rivers of water promised by Christ, John 7:38–39. This so noticeable a feature in it attracted us. And we doubt not many will notice and *feel* it, even if not convinced of baptism. For the weapons used in the contention are not carnal.

Sincerely do we hope that many of the Lord's people who acknowledge that believers' baptism is Scriptural, but have not hitherto *felt* the obligation of it, may be led to feel it by reading this important work.'

F J Kirby, in a 1912 review in the *Christian's Pathway*, wrote, 'It is to these truly noble men—our fathers in the faith once delivered to the saints—that we Strict and Particular Baptists owe so much, under God, for the privileges we enjoy today. ... This work, so pointedly, yet so kindly and encouragingly written, is just the book needed at the present time. It reminds us that our denomination has gone through persecution for maintaining the ordinances of Christ in their purity, and shall *we* be less obedient to Christ's command?'

In the current edition, the personal pronouns and verb forms have been modernised, except the Bible quotes.

Author's Introduction

COURTEOUS READER,

When you by reading go to search out the mind of God, let your cry be, *Lord, anoint mine eyes with eye-salve, that I may see*; and if it has been the day of God's power with your soul, I fear not but you will bid truth welcome, in whatever dress it comes; and think more upon what is comprised in the *letter*, than the poor clothing of the *messenger*; especially, knowing that it comes from one whose name is 'The great God.' Therefore in handling this truth of believers' baptism, as it was practised by Christ and the primitive churches, my great request to you, is, That you will read what is said without prejudice. And whatever you find according to truth, receive it as that which is more precious than your life, and judge of it according to the Holy Scriptures; for when all is said that can be, the Holy Scriptures must be judge in all controversies of religion.

As Christ is the foundation upon which whoever builds,

shall never be confounded, 1 Cor. 2:2, I shall therefore first make a few observations concerning our Lord Jesus Christ's being baptized; and herein I would have you take careful note how exact the Holy Scriptures are to set down the circumstances of his baptism, that we might not lack an exact pattern, and might the more easily attain to the happiness of those concerning whom it is written, "*These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.*"

Chapter One

Christ was baptised in the river of Jordan

Concerning the baptism of Jesus Christ you may read it at large, in Matt. 3:13–17. ‘*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him.*’ Every word has emphasis:

Then—before he entered upon his public ministry, as you see in Matt. 4:17, ‘From that time Jesus began to preach.’

Cometh—he might have commanded John to have attended him; but in token of his subjection he comes.

From Galilee—many miles, and ’tis likely on foot; every step we take for God is acceptable, and one day shall have a glorious reward.

To Jordan—where there was a river, where thousands had been baptized, for it was a suitable place for John to dip Christ in, as will be seen hereafter.

Now I shall take notice of eight things concerning the baptism of Christ.

First, Concerning his age, 'tis said, Jesus being baptized, Luke 3:21, *began to be about thirty years of age*, verse 23. Here you see that Christ himself was baptized at grown years. If any might be baptized in infancy, why not Christ? Christians, be not ashamed, your Captain is gone before you; he was thirty years old when baptized. Christ is not ashamed to call you brethren, Heb. 2:11.

Secondly, Another thing to be observed in the baptism of Christ, is the administrator of this holy ordinance, *John*, who confesses of himself that he was not worthy to unloose the latches of his shoes, Mark 1:7. Now if Christ would receive baptism from such an unworthy instrument never think slightingly of the ordinance, because of the unworthiness of the administrators. Let your eye be on Christ your example.

Thirdly, Note the repulse, *John forbid him*, Matt. 3:14. Difficulty in duty must be no excuse; we must take no denial in following God. Strive to enter in at the strait gate, Matt. 7:13.

Fourthly, Note, *John's* argument, Matt. 3:14. *I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?* Some will not be baptized except it be proven that they have need of it. Their carnal argument is, May I not go to heaven though I be not baptized? Is it of necessity to

salvation? Now this is selfish and unholy. Is this like your Lord and Master? Was not he a perfect Saviour? Was not the Spirit poured on him without measure? He had no sins to be washed away, and yet he was baptized; wherefore see your example, he does it not of need but of obedience to his Father's will.

Fifthly, Note the excellent terms which our Lord Jesus gives to this ordinance of baptism.

1. He calls it *righteousness*, Matt. 3:15. 'Tis righteous and just that I should be about my Father's business.
2. He declares it to be a comely thing, *it becomes us*: Oh it is a very comely thing in God's children, to have respect to all the commandments of God.
3. He mentions a conjunction between himself and his people. This is implied in the word *us*—*Thus it becometh us*. He means "you and me, and all my followers." John 12:26, *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be*.
4. He speaks of it as a completion, it is a *fulfilling*. We are to aim at this, 2 Cor. 10:5–6, "*bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; verse 6, having a readiness to revenge all*

disobedience, when your obedience shall be fulfilled.” Obedience must be fulfilled.

5. He uses the universal term—*all righteousness*. Baptism is one part of the *all*. Christ reckons it so, You cannot walk in all the commands, nor fulfil all righteousness, if this be omitted.

Sixthly, Note, Concerning Christ’s baptism the form of administration, Matt. 3:16. *And he went up straightway out of the water.* *Straightway*—because baptism is *once dipping*. *Up*—had he not been down, it would not have been said that he went up. *He went*—and therefore he was not carried in arms as infants are. *Out*—if he went out of the water then he must have been in it: we never say one goes out of the house when he never was in, so Christ could not be said to come out of the water, had he not been in. *He went up out*—had a little water been brought to him in a basin, he had not been said to go up out of it. *Of the water*—this water was the river of Jordan: Christ stoops to notice small things because they were mixed up with a divine ordinance.

Seventhly, Note, Concerning Christ’s baptism, the Father’s acceptance, Matt. 3:16–17. *The heavens were opened*—some of Christ’s followers have found glorious openings of heaven in baptism. *The Spirit descended*—the very same that is promised to believers in their

baptism, Acts 2:38. *Repent, and be baptized every one of you, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost.* (Objection. *But does every one receive the Holy Ghost that is baptized?* Answer. If not, the defect lies not in baptism, but in the want of faith and repentance; without which no ordinance is effectual.) *And lo, a voice from heaven, This is my beloved Son*—Christ, as Head of his Church, was sealed for the whole body; and in baptism the sonship of his members is held forth. *In him I am well pleased*—not only in all he has done and does do, but in this very act of baptism, as an act of obedience to my glorious will, I am well pleased, and so is the Lord well pleased with the same act of obedience in all believers, wherein *from the heart we obey the form of doctrine delivered to us*, Rom. 6:17. This same voice bore witness to the blessed Son of God in the mount, saying, *This is my beloved Son: hear him*, Luke 9:35. Hear him in his commands and appointments. Hear him now in his baptism. Oh, says Christ, thus it becometh *us*; you that have my Father for your Father, you that have my God for your God, thus it becometh *us* to be baptized and to fulfil all righteousness. *He is God's beloved Son, hear him.*

Eighthly, Note, How in Christ's baptism the Trinity meets as it were; the Father speaks with a voice, the Son is baptized in person, the Holy Ghost descends like

a dove: and surely it is one reason why baptism in special is to be administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, because he who sincerely believes, and is baptized, has the whole Trinity, the Father, Son, and Spirit, for his portion. The glorious union of the Trinity, in Christ's baptism, is in every believer's baptism commemorated, and therefore it deserves to be reverently thought upon. He that despises an ordinance in which that sacred name is named should beware lest he be found guilty of taking the name of the Lord in vain.

Chapter Two

The great commission for believers' baptism

As you have heard something concerning your great pattern, the Lord Jesus: so now I shall show something concerning his command, Matt. 28:19. And I pray you note what is said of our Lord Jesus in Acts 1:1. Christ is said both to do and to teach: 'tis good for teachers to imitate their Lord both to do and teach. In verse 2 we read, *He was taken up, after that he through the Spirit had given commandments to his apostles;* of which commandments, this of believers' baptism is certainly one, as you see in Matt. 28: 18–20. The great God gave him to be *a commander and leader to his people*, Isa. 55:4. Christ is a gift as a commander. Oh what mercy it is to have such a wise Commander, whose commandments to believers are not grievous: *in keeping his commandments there is great reward*, Ps. 19:11. Now in this command there are eight things very notable. Let us read it in full that we may see them. *'And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and*

teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.'

First, Note, whence Christ came when he gave forth this great commission. Why! He came out of the grave, a risen Jesus: And God raised him from the dead, and sent him to bless us, Acts 3:26. Surely this blessed Jesus would not appoint anything but what is good for his people; he is a blessed Jesus, and he gives blessed commands; Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city, Rev. 22:14. We should remember that it is a risen Saviour who says, Go, teach and baptize.

Secondly, Note, Christ himself came and spake unto them. Now should an angel appear and command men to be baptized, who would stand against it? But here you have the glorious Son of God in his own person appearing, and saying, Go, teach and baptize.

Thirdly, Note what authority he comes with, Matt. 28:18. All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; all power to command both in heaven and earth is given to me; and all power to dispose of heaven and earth. I have

angels and men at my command; I am able to protect you, to stand by you, and to be with you both in the fire and in the water, *therefore go ye teach all nations*; I have all power, *Go therefore, teach and baptize*. Fear no enemies, but *Go, teach and baptize*.

Fourthly, Note the command itself, Matt. 28:19. Christ says, *Go therefore, teach and baptize*. Christ said to the legion of devils, *Go*, Matt. 8:32, and they ran violently; and shall believers be less obedient than devils? Shall not believers be a willing people in the day of his power? The centurion did but say *Go*, to his servants, and they did go; and he did but say *Come*, and they came; and he did but say, *Do this*, and they did it. And shall Christ's servants be worse to him than the centurion's servants were to their master? No, let us obey at once, for Christ says, *Go, teach and baptize*.

Fifthly, Note, what is precedent to baptism: *Go teach*. There must be teaching. God is a Spirit, and he seeks such to worship him, that worship him in spirit and truth, John 4:24. Therefore *teaching* must go *before baptism*, or else they will never worship him in spirit and in truth. *Go, teach and baptize*. I confess many men say the word *teach* in the Greek, is, *Make disciples*, and I dare not say against it; for I find it the very practice of Jesus Christ, he did first make disciples, and then he baptized them, John 4:1. *Jesus made and baptized more disciples*

than John. Here was first a making disciples and then a baptizing them. How many poor souls ignorantly baptize those who never were made disciples; but, Christ says, *Teach and baptize them.*

Sixthly, Note, The extent of the command, *Teach all nations and baptize them.* Go into all nations, whether it be *a hot or a cold climate.* Go to *Jews and Gentiles, to male and female,* and when you have taught them, then baptize them. Now the middle wall of partition is broken down. Now God is no respecter of persons; now let none think to boast that they have Abraham for their father. No, no, go into all nations, publish the glad tidings of the gospel to every creature, Mark 16:15–16. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.* When you have taught them, then baptize them. *Go, teach all nations, baptizing them.*

Seventhly, Note the words of institution, Matt. 28:19. *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Note first *baptizing them in the name of the Father*—such as receive the Lord Jesus on gospel terms, God will be a Father to them, and they are to be baptized in his name. Go give them a call; *Come out from amongst them,* from unbelievers, and such like, *and be separate, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters,* 2 Cor. 6:17–18. Stand

awhile, and wonder here you that make nothing of the blessed ordinance of baptism. Here below a thing done in the king's name carries power; but here's the great GOD's name; Yea, here's the name of the mysterious Trinity, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, and do you think baptism has nothing in it, when it is done in that glorious name which is so worthy to be adored and admired? Trifle no longer, but hearken to him who says, *Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

Eighthly, Note the glorious promise annexed—*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* He says, *Go baptize, and I will be with you*, verse 20. Christ is a good companion; you that love his company should seek it where he promises it; *Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls*, Jer. 6:16. Is there any rest for the soul short of Christ? No, no; *in his presence is fulness of joy*, but nowhere else. Would you have his presence, do like *Zaccheus*, get into the way: believe and be baptized, for he comes this way. *Baptize*—and I will be with you always to the end of the world. *Amen*—an *Amen* follows; they are the farewell words of our best Friend. *Baptize disciples, and I will be with you, Amen.* Shall we not prize and practise these last words of the well-beloved?

Chapter Three

Examples from scripture

Scripture furnishes us with examples of many thousands who were baptized in rivers, all of them persons who professed faith and repentance, and were of years able to answer for themselves.

First Example: When we read of those that Christ is said to have baptized, John 4:1, it is said, *He made them disciples, and baptized them.* First, they were disciples, then they were baptized; they were *made* disciples, not born disciples, that is to say, they were made disciples by the preaching of God's Word, and then they were baptized.

Second Example: You have an example in Acts 2:41. *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.* The occasion of this you have in verse 37: *They were pricked in their heart:* they knew not what to do, the sense of sin lay heavy upon them, and they cried out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* The apostle answered them, verse 38, *Repent, and be baptized every*

one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, verse 41. Mercy is sweet to a wounded soul. Such a soul sticks at no duty: now he hesitates no more, but with all joy he is plunged in water at Christ's command. The glad believers were willing to obey their Lord at once. *And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls,* verse 41.

Third Example: Another example you have in Acts 8:12, *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.* Note, When *they* believed— *They of Samaria,* verse 5; and, for ought we know, some of those whom the disciples would a little while ago have called for fire from heaven upon, Luke 9:52–54. Yet when these *believed, they were baptized, both men and women.* Oh, if you be never so near hell, yet believe and be baptized; there's mercy for you. But note well that those who were baptized professed to be believers, and were men and women.

Fourth Example: You have another example of the baptizing of believers in Acts 8:35. We read of the eunuch that *Philip preached unto him Jesus.* In verse 36 we read, *They came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to*

be baptized? Then, in verse 37, Philip said, *If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.* This *If*, is the *If* we stand upon: *if* you be never so poor, or so vile, *if* God once make you to believe, then you may be baptized; but not else. It was not his godly parents; it was not his reading; it was not his coming to Jerusalem to worship; it was not his willingness to be baptized; but it was his faith—*if thou believest thou mayest be baptized.* The Greek says, *it is lawful*; it is according to Christ's law. It is lawful for none but believers to be baptized. Then next we read, *They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him:* verse 38. Behold a man, the great treasurer of the Queen of Ethiopia, a rich man, an honourable man, a religious man; a man, 'tis likely having many attendants around his chariot. He stops all, and commands all to stand still, till he yields obedience to his Lord and Master in water-baptism. He can now go down into the water for him who had come down from heaven for him; he counts it no disgrace to obey Christ who speaks to him by his poor servant Philip. Oh the condescension of truly gracious souls! No argument works like love. Therefore, *if ye love me keep my commandments.* Here's going down, and coming up, like the glorious ways of Christ; he first casts down, then he raises up; first brings to the grave, and then raises up, saying, *Return ye sons of men.*

Furthermore, we read of the baptized eunuch, *And he went on his way rejoicing*, verse 39. Oh what triumph is in Christ's ways; *in* keeping (though not *for* keeping) his commands there *is* (as well as shall be) great reward. We read, *He went on his way*, and truly it is written, *the righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger*, Job 17:9 How many have stuck in their way, wept in their way, drooped in their way; but when baptized, have gone on their way *rejoicing*. He might have a sad heart, though he was a rich treasurer. Riches could not content him, but, *Being baptized, he went on his way rejoicing*. This also was the case with the jailor, who, being baptized, *rejoiced, believing in God with all his house*, Acts 16: 33–34.

Fifth Example: The next example we come to, is the baptizing of the famous apostle Paul. Read Acts 22:16. *And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins*. Would you have your soul filled with joy? Will you take Christ for your Lord? Then *why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized*; he that appeared to you in the way when you were a persecutor, and stopped you from going to hell when you were running thither, has sent me, says Ananias, Acts 9:15, 17. *And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized*, Acts 22:16. You have been a persecutor, and now I must show

you that you must be a preacher, and a sufferer, Acts 9:13, 16. And, therefore, *why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized*. Accept at once of the terms and tenders of mercy; bid mercy welcome, but do not put it off a day. Why do you tarry? Do you think yourself unworthy and therefore you tarry? Do not let that hinder; I tell you from the Lord, you are a chosen vessel, Acts 9:15. The Lord is willing to forgive all your former sins, and to accept you on gospel-terms, *and now, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins*.

Sixth Example: Another example of believer's baptism, is the baptism of the jailor, Acts 16:30–32. He went to bed in his sins, and might have awaked in hell; but preventing mercy met him when his sword was drawing, and saved both his soul and his body. Paul cried aloud: *Do thyself no harm*, there is hope for you. And he trembling, answered, *What must I do?* The soul that trembles before the almighty God, will not only cry out, *What shall I have, but what shall I do? Believe*, says Paul, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*: And to demonstrate his willingness to yield obedience to the Lord Jesus, and to accept of him on gospel-terms, he is baptized the same hour of the night, verse 33. Note also, *verse 34, that all his household believed and were baptized*. As many as believed, so many were baptized.

Seventh Example: Another example you have of *Lydia*, Acts 16:14, a godly woman, a praying woman. God opened her heart to attend his word by *Paul*, and being at the river she was baptized. When the heart is shut, how backward are souls to obey Christ! One draw from Christ makes the soul run, Song 1:4. *The Lord opened her heart, and she was baptized.* If the Lord has opened your heart to believe the gospel, you may be baptized, but not else.

Eighth Example: We have another case in Acts 18:8. *Crispus*, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized. *Crispus believed, his house believed,*—all depended on their believing, and then they were baptized. All the examples are cast in this mould.

Thus you have pattern and precept; if command or example be of any force, here's both. Beware lest you sin against such plain teaching. He who sins against both precept and example sins indeed.