

James Harding on (Re)Baptism

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June 28, 2019
Bryant Perkins
Article

We celebrate Independence Day this week, a time to reflect on the beliefs and actions of our Founding Fathers. In a similar way, I think it is profitable to occasionally consider the views of our fathers in the faith. James Harding was a preacher, writer, and educator in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; Harding University is named for him. This is from the July, 1900 edition of his publication "The Way" in response to a letter from a fellow editor on the "rebaptism" question that was then confronting many churches. For those in our Sunday morning Bible class, this article touches on some things we discussed about baptism last week. I commend it to your attention not only because it is good for us to be grounded in our history, but more importantly, because it is biblical. BP

To demand that a man shall understand that baptism is in order to forgiveness of sins as a prerequisite to baptism, and to stop with that, is the perfection of inconsistency; and, worse still, it is the adoption of the principle that caused all the creeds in Christendom; it is rank sectarianism. As we have repeatedly shown in these columns, the very word ("eis") that connects baptism with remission connects it also with another and a greater b

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Spirit. Baptism is the marriage ceremony in which we are united to Christ, in which we receive the family name, the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the name “God,” so that we are henceforth called “the sons of God;” then, having been thus brought into the divine family, we begin to receive the promises of God, the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit; the daily protection, guidance, and blessing of God; the constant readiness of God to hear and answer our prayers, and

so on. Paul exhorts the Colossians to give thanks unto the Father, “who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.” In baptism, he who believes with his whole heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light; he is delivered out of the power of darkness, and is translated into the kingdom of the Son of God’s love, in whom he receives the forgiveness of his sins: “For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us.” ([2 Cor. 1:20](#).)

How any man can fail to see that it is inconsistent, unreasonable, and unscriptural to demand that the candidate for baptism must understand that baptism is for (eis) the remission of sins, and not also demand that he must understand that he is baptized into (eis) the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy spirit, when the fact has been explained to him that the relationship in the two cases is expressed by the same word, “eis” (into), is one of the things hard for me to understand. I doubt if anything but the stupefying power of prejudice and party passion, of sectarian zeal, could also blind a man...

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presumes to require of him who would enter into the divine family more than God himself requires. He exalts himself above God by assuming that he can complete that which God, for some cause, left imperfect. He is too wise, too good. To such a one Solomon wisely says: “Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself otherwise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?”

Of the man who has not been immersed, but who desires to be, we have the right to ask: Do you believe with your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and do you confess him as your Lord? (See [Rom. 10:9, 10](#).) And of the man who has been immersed, and who desires to work and worship in fellowship with us, we have a right to ask: Did you believe with your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and did you confess him as your Lord? Who cannot see that the same state of mind and heart that prepares a man for baptism at my hands prepares him to receive the institution at the hands of any other?

The trouble with those people whom Paul immersed again at Ephesus ([Acts 19:1-7](#)) was, they did not believe that God had raised Jesus from the dead, nor had they confessed him as their Lord. They had only been baptized into John’s baptism for (into) the remission of sins. They had been baptized into John instead of into Jesus... When we find people who have been immersed; but who did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, and who did not take him as their Lord, we ought to instruct them in the way of the Lord more perfectly; and when they do so believe and confess, we ought to re-immerses them. But no man has a right to re-immerses another who was baptized believing in Jesus as the resurrected Son of God and confessing him as his Lord. He who does it is “right

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rather than in taking from, the requirements of Christ.

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