

# THE ACADIAN

HONEST, INDEPENDENT, FEARLESS.

DEVOTED TO LOCAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE

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No. 8

## THE ACADIAN.

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## WOLFVILLE.

Looking on a hillside dark with wood  
And orchards ripe and red the lovely lines,  
Her spreading folds of dress of many dyes,  
Trill in the waters of the murmuring brook.  
About the meadows, when the sun had  
And yielded her glow. Where rays of  
glowing, melting into farther skies,  
The sun over-arches her beautiful  
And beauty, peace and knowledge, stole  
And a happy way 'mid Syrian scenes.  
The fresh salt breezes mingle with the  
Of sweet fields and ripened hay bodes.  
And birds so happily sing in their  
To man surrounded by a higher spirit.

J. F. HERBIN.

## THE ANGLICAN CHURCH AND HOLY BAPTISM.

Sermon preached by the Rev. Canon Brock,  
D. D., President of King's College, in  
St. John's Church, Wolfville, N. S.,  
on Sunday evening, Sep. 25, 1887.

Jesus said—

"Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God."

1. The Church of Christ existed on earth for twenty-five or thirty years before one line of our New Testament was written. The Church of Christ was planted by the holy apostles in Jerusalem and Judea, in Samaria and Galilee, in Tyre and the Syrian Antioch, in Asia Minor and Greece, before one Gospel or one apostolic epistle was committed to writing. She had her three-fold ministry, her two great sacraments, holy baptism and the holy communion, her sacramental ordinances, such as confirmation, her public worship and her weekly observance of the Lord's day, and her regular organization all established and at work before the New Testament was begun.

Now I want you to ponder over and try to understand what this fact involves. There is no denying the fact. For almost the lifetime of a generation the Holy Catholic Church was planted, was growing, was making progress, in large cities and in extensive provinces, and the Christian Scriptures were not. The different books of our New Testament were written between A. D. 60 and A. D. 100.

Supposing then that between A. D. 30 and A. D. 60 such questions as these were asked—Is it right to keep the first day of the week holy instead of the seventh? Is it right to admit Christian women to the Holy Communion? How many orders of ministers are there in the Church? Which order has the power of ordaining others? Is it right to baptize the infant children of Christian parents?—how would the Christians living at that age of the Church answer these questions? They could not then ask, "What saith the Scriptures?" for the Christian Scriptures which alone could throw any light on questions like these connected with the Christian Church did not exist. If such questions were raised, as no doubt they were raised, what would be the only possible answer? This.

What is the practice of St. Paul, St. John, St. Peter, and the rest of the apostles? What are the customs and regulations prevailing in the churches founded by the apostles? Take the last of the questions I mentioned. Was it the practice of St. Paul and the other apostles to baptize the infant children of Christian parents? Was it the custom in the churches founded by the apostles to admit the children of Christians to membership in Christ's Church by holy baptism?

Church history enables us to answer these questions with a very decided affirmative. I presume no one will doubt that the Christian fathers and teachers, who lived within three or four hundred years after the death of St. John, are likely to be better informed on a matter of this kind, which is a simple matter of fact, than we are who are separated by nineteen centuries from the times of Christ's apostles. Let us listen to their testimony. It is very full. I will select one witness from each of the four centuries following the apostolic age.

Augustine, the most learned man of his time, was consecrated Bishop of Hippo in North Africa in A. D. 395; his episcopate continued till his death, A. D. 430. He is thus separated from the age of St. John by an interval of only 200 years. In his controversy with Pelagius, who denied the doctrine of original sin, he declared, "The baptism of little infants is held by the Universal Church, and not instituted by councils, but ever in use, handed down by none other than apostolical authority."

A few years earlier than Augustine comes St. Chrysostom, the eloquent priest of the Syrian Antioch, and afterwards the Archbishop and Patriarch of Constantinople. He writes thus: "Our circumcision—I mean the grace of baptism—gives cure without pain, and has no determinate time as that had (the eighth day), but it is lawful to one at the beginning of life (first day of his birth), or in the middle of it, or in old age, to receive this circumcision made without hands." He also mentions the benefits of baptism, and adds, "For this cause we baptize infants also, though they be not defiled by sin," that is, actual sin.

I pass up from the 4th and 3d centuries after the apostolic age to the 2d. In A. D. 253, about 150 years after the death of St. John, a council of about seventy Bishops met at Carthage in North Africa. This council was presided over by the celebrated St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, afterwards a martyr for Christ. To this council was submitted the question, whether it would not be better to delay baptism to the eighth day after birth, than to give it to children so young as two or three days old. This council decided that it was better not to defer baptism, "lest by such delay some might die without it."

One more witness will bring us down to the apostolic age. Justin Martyr was converted to Christ within about thirty years of the death of St. John. He may possibly have seen and conversed with the last surviving apostle. He tried all the various systems of heathen philosophy and found them wanting. He became a Christian philosopher, and taught at Rome from A. D. 138 to A. D. 163, when he suffered martyrdom for Christ. In one of his apologies for Christianity which he presented to the Emperor, he says: "I know many of both sexes, sixty and seventy years old, who were made disciples to Christ from children." These persons, to whom Justin Martyr refers, must have been baptized in childhood in the apostolic age, as there is no other way to make children disciples of Christ but by baptism. Justin Martyr also tells us that "Christians receive their circumcision in baptism;" he calls baptism, "Christ's circumcision." Justin Martyr thus testifies first to the baptism of many children in the apostolic age; secondly to the right of little children to baptism, because baptism has taken the place of circumcision as the initiatory rite of the New Covenant.

Did time allow I could multiply these four testimonies of Augustine, Chrysostom, Cyprian, and Justin Martyr by a score: for the present however let these suffice to show what was apostolic practice, what was the rule to the churches which apostles and their successors founded in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

2. I wish you to notice something further in this matter. The New Testament was written when the Christian Church had been at work for nearly thirty years: it was written by churchmen and for churchmen; that is, for those who understood the Church's ordinances and requirements: therefore we ought not to look for any formal proof of the change of the Christian weekly festival, of the three-fold ministry, or of infant baptism.

It is quite enough if we find indications that such and such things existed. St. Paul, for example, in writing a letter to the Church at Ephesus, did not think it necessary to tell the Christians in that city that they should bring their children to Christ in holy baptism; he takes for granted that they did so; and as we shall presently see, there is the strongest inferential proof in that epistle that children were admitted into Christ's Church as early as by the Sacrament of baptism.

Therefore when a Baptist (or to use the more correct term) when an Anabaptist says to me, point out to me a plain command in the New Testament to baptize infants, I would answer, the New Testament, you must remember, was written by churchmen, and for churchmen, for those therefore who did not need to be told what their privileges were, who knew them, and acted accordingly. But this I will say to those who deny infant baptism: Point out to me one single passage in the New Testament forbidding us to

baptize the children of Christian parents, then I will admit that you have some ground for your unkind procedure by which you would exclude our dear little ones from the blessings of the Christian covenant.

Remember who wrote the New Testament. All the writers (except perhaps St. Luke) were Jews; and the first Christian churches were largely composed of Jewish converts. Infant church-membership had been the rule of the patriarchal church from Abraham to Moses: infant church-membership had been the rule of the Jewish Church from Moses to Christ: therefore unless an express command was given to the contrary, the apostles, and the majority of those to whom their writings were addressed, would naturally and legitimately conclude that infant church-membership was to continue in the Christian Church, especially as that Church was one of larger privilege and wider blessing than its precursors under Abraham and Moses.

3. Thus much I have thought it well to say by way of preface before setting before you the Scriptural grounds on which the Church of England rests the statement in her 27th Article: "The baptism of young children is in any way to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ." Our Church, you are well aware, does not stand alone in this position. All the ancient Churches of Christendom (Roman, Greek, Anglican, Armenian, Coptic, &c.) hold, and have held from the beginning the practice of infant baptism. All the modern Christian communions, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists, all except the Anabaptists hold to the practice of infant baptism, that is, 99 out of 100 Christians believe in infant baptism.

4. But we are told that the New Testament teaches us to regard faith as a pre-requisite to baptism: certainly, and our Church in her catechism teaches exactly the same: and what is more, the New Testament (see Rom. 4, 11) teaches us with equal plainness to regard faith as a pre-requisite for the sacramental rite of circumcision. How then are you going to provide for this faith in the case of infants?

The answer is this—I quote from Dr. Hodge's admirable work on baptism: "Religion always has been, and always should be, a family matter; to deny to little children baptism because they cannot believe, is to object to the wisdom of God's government of his people in all past ages. For they have ever been included with their parents in covenantal blessings with God, and need as much the nurture of the Church under the Gospel as they did under the law. Infants could not of themselves have entered into covenant relations under Abraham, nor were they capable of exercising the faith and inward graces of circumcision as a covenant, any more than they are those of baptism."

Both rites were alike based on faith. Circumcision was not only the mark of nation and race, but the symbol of the circumcision of the heart,—the badge of God's people,—the sign and seal of the righteousness of faith. And yet it was given to little children only eight days old. Baptism can mean no more, and yet it is denied to little children by some because they cannot believe! And the oft-repeated and abused quotation is made, "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham;" as if anyone doubted that by faith, Gentiles as well as Jews are "blessed with faithful Abraham." But this does not exclude their children from being blessed likewise with Abraham's, nor annul the doctrine so frequently taught in the Holy Scriptures, that God will show mercy upon the children of those that love him. We would ask those who suppose that the parent's faith imparts no benefit to his child, if they have never read what the faith of Hannah did for Samuel? and the faith of the nobleman for his son at the point of death? and the faith of the woman of Canaan for her daughter, and other like examples? If so, why try to deprive our little ones of the blessings secured to them under the Gospel covenant?

There came to the Jewish boy a time and an ordinance when he was by

his own promises to take his place as a child of the covenant: and there come to our boys and girls a time and an ordinance, when they are to renew in their own name the promises made for them in holy baptism. The apostolic rite of confirmation is the needful complement to the sacrament of infant baptism. It gives to the Christian youth and maiden, now come to years of discretion, the needful opportunity of showing that they wish to serve the Lord, that they wish as Christ's children to claim the full heritage of grace and blessing which their baptism secured to them. In holy baptism they were enlisted as soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ: in confirmation they are equipped for the Christian conflict by the bestowal of the seven-fold gifts of God the Ghost.

5. Let me now however draw your attention to what Holy Scripture says on the subject before us. And first let me read you the grand commission of our Risen Saviour under which the apostles and their successors were to act in planting the Christian Church in the world: as found in Mat. 28, 18-20. Jesus saith, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth: Go ye therefore and make disciples of 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."

The language of this commission seems to us very general, and yet no doubt to the apostles it was sufficiently definite. Why so? Because of their previous education. Let me explain. Suppose this commission given to missionaries of the Church of England, or of the Presbyterians, or of the Methodists—how could they understand the commission to make disciples of all nations by baptism? Would they not understand that the commission given them meant them to include young children with their parents? Certainly. And why? Because they had always been accustomed to this. But suppose the same commission given to missionaries of the Baptist communion, how would they understand it? Why, that children are not included in it. Why not? Because they had not been accustomed to baptize little children.

This shows the absolute necessity of going back to the days of the apostles, and trying to make ourselves acquainted with the usages of the Jewish people, to whom they belonged: we have seen how those who immediately succeeded the apostles understood this commission—how Justin Martyr, St. Cyprian, St. Chrysostom, and St. Augustine understood the commission of the Risen Saviour. How did the apostles themselves understand the commission of their Lord? They had been members of the Jewish church in their infancy: they had been accustomed all their lives to regard young and old of the same family as members together of the same church—all alike included in the same covenant, entitled to the same privileges, and heirs of the same promises. With such training and such ideas of Church organization, how would they interpret a commission that made no exception as to young children? As infants had been received into the church from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Christ, is it at all likely that the apostles would now exclude them from the church without specific instructions to do so? The thing is absolutely inconceivable.

Note now the language used by our Lord. He uses two different words for "teach." "Go ye and teach"—literally, "disciple all nations"—hence all that make up nations,—men, women and children. The word for "make disciples of" is derived from a word which means to learn—a disciple is a learner—to make disciples is to make learners. The Church in all ages has been a school—a school must have different grades. Christ's Church is a school carefully adapted to every age. The youngest child may by holy baptism be made a disciple—a learner in Christ's school—and as he grows up, he is to be taught to observe all things that Christ commanded.

6. In the next place let me ask you to mark with the most thoughtful reverence the words and actions of our

blessed Redeemer in reference to little children: I combine the three parallel accounts from St. Mat. 14, St. Mark 10, and St. Luke 19. "And they brought young children, infants, to Him, that He should touch them, and His disciples rebuked them that brought them. But when Jesus saw it He was much displeased, and called them unto Him and said, Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God, as a little child, shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them."

Surely this touching scene in our Lord's earthly life affords most decisive witness as to Christ's mind and will towards our little ones, and the Church which is His Kingdom. Some Jewish mothers probably would bring little children and infants in arms, to our Lord, that they might receive His blessing. The disciples did not choose that their Master should be thus interrupted in His work: and they (like others to-day) would have kept their little ones from Jesus. But when Jesus saw what his disciples were doing he was much displeased with them (as doubtless he is with those who in this follow in their steps to-day), and said "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God." In some 70 places out of 100 where the phrase the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, occurs in the Gospels, it means Christ's Church on earth, which is His Kingdom: therefore when our Lord said of little children and infants "Of such is the Kingdom of God," He asserted their fitness to be received into His Church by holy baptism; and He taught, as plainly as words can teach, that infant baptism is to be normal pattern of all baptism: in adult baptism, which in a Christian land ought to be the rare exception, we are to try, according to our Lord, to secure that disposition which we have ready to our hand in a little child. "Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein."

If, however, any should contend that the Kingdom of God means the Church of God in glory, it makes no material difference. If our little ones are fit for the Church of God in glory, they are fit for the perfected Kingdom beyond, the year fit for the imperfect Kingdom here.

But as if words were not enough to convey on this occasion the mind of our blessed Lord toward our little ones, He added most impressive actions—"He took them up in His arms, He put His hands upon them and blessed them."

Well may our Church comment on these words and actions of our Divine Master, when parents and sponsors are bringing their infants to Christ in holy baptism: "Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe that our Saviour Christ will likewise favorably receive these present infants, that he will embrace them with the arms of His mercy, that He will give them the blessing of eternal life, and make them partakers of His everlasting kingdom."

A few months after these gracious words of our merciful Jesus were spoken He instituted the holy sacrament of baptism to be the door of admission into this Kingdom: and were they to be conducted from that Kingdom, of whom He said "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven?" Were they to be excluded for whose careful tending and nurture in the fold of His Church he made express provision, when He said to St. Peter, as He reinstated him in his apostolic office, not only "Feed my sheep," but also "Feed my lambs?"

7. The commission which the great Head of the Church gave His apostles and their successors to "disciple all nations," coupled with the plain indication of our Lord's mind towards our little ones, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," that is my Church, are more than sufficient to justify the statement of our 27th Article, "The baptism of young children is in any way to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ."

To these positive arguments from Holy Scripture must be added the weighty negative argument from the silence of Holy Scripture. No one word or command in our New Testament forbids the baptism of infants. Infant church-membership by divine command had been the

(Continued on Fourth Page.)