

The Church Guardian

— EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR: —

L. H. DAVIDSON, D.C.L., MONTREAL.

— ASSOCIATE EDITOR: —

REV. EDWYN S. W. PENTREATH, Winnipeg, Man.

Address Correspondence and Communications to the Editor, P.O. Box 504. Exchanges to P.O. Box 1968. For Business announcements See page 14.

Special Notice.

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CALENDAR FOR JULY.

- JULY 3rd—4th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 10th—5th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 17th—6th Sunday after Trinity.
 " 24th—7th Sunday after Trinity.—*Notice of St. James.*
 " 25th—ST. JAMES. A. & M.
 " 31st—8th Sunday after Trinity.

TRACTS ON THE SACRAMENTS.

HOLY BAPTISM.

One of the last commands that our Lord Jesus Christ gave to His Apostles before He ascended into Heaven was, that they should go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all people and baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He added that those who should believe and be baptized should be saved.

We find that His Apostles obeyed this command; when asked by those who believed their teaching what they were to do to gain the benefits which Christ offered them, they replied, 'Repent and be baptized,' (Acts ii: 38). We read that all who received their message were baptized (Acts ii: 41; viii: 12-38; xvi: 33, &c.). Even those who had received some special call from God, as Saul, Cornelius, &c., had to be baptized before they were considered fully admitted into the fellowship of the Church (Acts ix: 18; x: 48; xxii: 16). All this shows that Christ and His Apostles placed the highest value on Holy Baptism. There must be some special grace bestowed by it if it is thus placed among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. (Heb. vi: 2). Our Lord Himself is evidently speaking of it when He says that it is necessary that we should be born again; for, being asked for a further explanation, He adds that we must be born of WATER and the Spirit. St. Peter tells us that baptism *both now save us*, (1 Peter iii: 21); he means that it places us in a state of salvation. It does this because it unites us to our Lord Jesus (Gal. ii: 27), through Whom alone is salvation. By nature we are not in a state of salvation, but of condemnation; this we inherit from our first parents, Adam and Eve. God created them in holiness; but by wilful disobedience they threw his holiness away, and so could not bequeath to their children. Our Lord Jesus came to give us back the holiness which Adam had lost. By His death He atoned for our sins, and from Him we can now receive a Power which will help us to conquer our sins. This Power is the Holy Ghost. By a right receiving of Holy Baptism we are joined to Christ, and thus obtain the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost to enable us to live holy lives.

Thus Holy Baptism is the *new birth*, because it implants in us that gift which by nature we cannot have. This does not mean that all who have been baptized are certain to live a godly life and to receive heaven at last. Experience proves the contrary. It is quite possible to receive God's gifts, and then to neglect them or misuse them so that they are lost. In Baptism the seed is sown, but if the ground is in an unfit state it cannot bring forth fruit. God gives natural life to thousands of infants who never come to maturity, because by neglect or disease their life is lost. So in Baptism, God implants the first germ of spiritual life in thousands who afterwards neglect it or rebel against it, and so it dies out.

It may be that you have never been baptized. If so, you should seek for it. But REMEMBER THIS: *You must have the real desire to be one of the people of Jesus Christ and to be joined to Him, and you must be willing to live the life of one of His disciples, before you can think about being baptized.*

If you seek Holy Baptism without this, you will only be guilty of a mockery which will bring further guilt upon you.

But if you have this desire, then remember that you are not enrolled among the disciples of Jesus until you are baptized. Two people may desire to be married to one another, but the desire does not make the marriage. The desire comes first, then comes the ordinance of Holy Matrimony, and the marriage is thus completed. You want to be joined to Christ; it is necessary that you should have this desire; and it is necessary, too, that you should be baptized: for it is by Holy Baptism, that this union you wish for will take place.

But you must not seek Holy Baptism lightly. You will not find much benefit from it unless you come *duly prepared*. This preparation must be God's work in your soul. And for this you must pray, and pray earnestly. You must pray for (1) Faith, and (2) Repentance; for these are necessary for a right reception of Holy Baptism.

(1) There must be Faith in God as He has revealed Himself to us; God the Father, your Maker; God the Son, who for your sake became Man and died on the Cross; God the Holy Ghost, Who will dwell in you to sanctify you and enable you to keep your baptismal vows. There must be Faith that all your sins are forgiven by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and that this forgiveness is sealed to you in your Baptism; and there must be faith, that in Baptism you will receive the new Birth and be made a member of Christ.

(2) There must also be Repentance. There must be a turning away from all the careless or sinful habits that you may have fallen into during your past life. There must be a sorrow for sin and a determination by God's help that you will serve Him faithfully for the time to come. When you are baptized you will pledge yourself to keep God's commandments; that is, to love Him, to pray to Him, to worship Him, to keep His Holy Day, to be honest, truthful, pure, sober, kind, gentle, patient, obedient, diligent; to keep from all words and thoughts and deeds that displease Him. Is all this too hard for you! If so, you are not sufficiently in earnest to be baptized.

Holy Baptism rightly received will join you to Christ, and will place you on the road to Heaven. And He Who has once made you His own will not lightly let you go. He will help you by His Holy Spirit if you are but true to Him.

Prayers that may be used in Preparation for Holy Baptism.

GRANT, O Lord, I beseech Thee, that Thy Holy Spirit may prepare my heart to receive Thy grace in Holy Baptism, so that I may be made a true member of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and receive forgiveness for all my sins; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O LORD God, Who dwellest on high and yet

hast respect unto the lowly, Who didst send Thy only Son Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world, look down upon me, Thy servant, who desires to be admitted into Thy fold through Holy Baptism. Make me ready to receive the new birth, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Join me to my Blessed Saviour, and grant that when I have received Him I may never again be separated from Him by my sins. Guide me through all the temptations of this life, and bring me at last to life eternal; for Jesus' sake, my Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Pray also in your own words, and tell God about your sins and difficulties.

WHY DO WE BAPTIZE INFANTS?

Because by nature we are born in sin (Psalm li: 5; Rom. v: 12; Gal. iii: 22). This means that we now naturally possess the nature of our first parent Adam after he had fallen, and not that upright nature in which God created him. This is not our fault, it is a necessity of our birth; in the same way as it is a necessity that we are born human beings and not angels. Human nature is fallen, of itself inclined to that which is evil, and therefore every human being must share in this fallen nature. It thus becomes necessary for every human being to undergo a *second birth* (St. John iii: 3); this second birth takes place by our union with Christ (1 Cor. xv: 22); the Holy Spirit is then given to us and we are *born again*. The means by which this union takes place is HOLY BAPTISM; we are to be born of Water and the Spirit (St. John iii: 5); these two must act together in one new birth; they are not to be separated as though we could be born of water at one time and of the Spirit at another. St. Paul joins them together in Titus iii: 5.

Are infants capable of receiving the benefits which Baptism bestows? We are quite willing to allow that there is no direct command to baptize infants given in the New Testament, and that there is no clear instance of infant baptism recorded there. Undoubtedly, *young children* were baptized; for in the Epistle to the Colossians St. Paul writes to young children (Col. iii: 20), and he says that those to whom he was writing were "buried with Christ in baptism" (ii: 12). Still these were evidently intelligent children, and not mere infants. The reason why we have no record of Baptism in the New Testament is because the New Testament tells us the history of the first few years only of the Christian Church, during which time there were but few Christian parents; and until the parents had become Christians and been baptized themselves, they would not bring their infants to be baptized. No one would go now to a heathen country and commence baptizing the infants before any of the grown up people were converted. Infant Baptism can only be the custom in a settled Christian community; and we cannot expect to find much about it in missionary churches, such as those mentioned in the New Testament. But at least it seems to have been the custom that when the head of a house was converted and baptized the rest of his household were baptized also (Acts xvi: 15, 23; 1 Cor. i: 16); we certainly have no proof that there were any infants in these households, but the passages quoted show us that it was customary for the family to follow the example of the parents when they were admitted into the Church. When God first instituted the rite of circumcision, which was the entrance into the Jewish Church, as Baptism is into the Christian Church, the first persons who received this rite were grown up, (Gen. xvii: 24, 25); this was necessary at first—but when once the Jewish Church had been set up, Jewish infants were brought into it by the same