

BAPTISM.

An Essay, by Arthur Pen-
 nant, D. D., Dean
 of Westminster.

But whereas the withholding of the cup produced the long and sanguinary war of Bohemia, and has been one of the standing grievances of the Protestants against the Roman Catholic Church, the withdrawal of the ancient rite of immersion, decided by the usage of the whole ancient church to be essential to the sacrament of Baptism, has been, with the exception of the immersion of the Anabaptists of Munster, adopted almost without a struggle. It shows the wisdom of not imposing the customs of other regions and other climates on those to whom they are no congenial. It shows how the Spirit which lives and moves in human society can override even the most sacred ordinances. It remains an instructive example of the facility and silence with which, in matters of form, even the greatest changes can be effected without any serious loss to Christian truth, and with great advantage to Christian solemnity and edification. The substitution of sprinkling for immersion must to many at the time, as to the Baptists now, have seemed the greatest and most daring innovation. Now, by most Catholics and by most Protestants, it is regarded almost as a second nature.

Another change is not so complete, but is perhaps more important. In the apostolic age, and in the three centuries which followed, it is evident that as a general rule those who came to baptism came in full age, and of their own deliberate choice. We find a few cases of the baptism of children; and in the third century we find one case of the baptism of infants. Even among Christian households the instances of Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Ephraim of Klessa, Augustine, Ambrose, are decisive proofs that it was not usual, not obligatory, but not usual. They had Christian parents, and yet they were not baptized till they reached maturity. The liturgical service of Baptism was framed entirely for full-grown converts, and is only by considerable adaptation applied to the case of infants. Gradually however, the practice spread, and after the fifth century the whole Christian world, east and west, Catholic and Protestant, Episcopal and Presbyterian (with the single exception of the sect of Baptists before mentioned), have baptized children in their infancy. Whereas, in the early ages, adult baptism was the rule, and infant baptism the exception, in later times infant baptism is the rule, and adult baptism the exception. What is the justification of this almost universal departure from the primitive usage? There may have been many reasons, some bad, some good. One, no doubt, was the superstitious feeling already mentioned, which regarded baptism as a charm, indispensable to salvation, and which insisted on imparting it to every human being, with or without consciousness. Hence the eagerness with which Roman Catholic missionaries, like

St Francis Xavier, have made it the chief glory of their mission to have baptized heathen populations wholesale, in utter disregard of the primitive or Protestant practice of previous preparation. Hence the capture of children for baptism without the consent of their parents, as in the celebrated case of the Jewish boy Mortara. Hence the curious decision of the Sorbonne quoted in Tristram Shandy. Hence in the early centuries, and still in the Eastern Churches, coextensive with Infant Baptism, the practice of Infant Communion, both justified on the same grounds, and both based on the mechanical application of Biblical texts to cases which by their very nature were not contemplated in the Apostolic age.

But there is a better side to the growth of this practice which, even if it did not mingle in its origin, is at least the cause of its continuance. It by deep in early Christian feeling that the fact of belonging to a Christian household consecrated every member of it. Whether baptized or not, the Apostles urged that, because the parents were holy, therefore the children were holy. They were not to be treated as outcasts; they were not to be treated as heathens; they were to be recognized as part of the chosen people. This passage, whilst it is conclusive against the practice of Infant Baptism in the Apostolic age, is a recognition of the legitimate reason and permanent principle on which it is founded. It is the acknowledgment of the Christian haintiness and union of family life. The goodness, the holiness, the purity of a Christian household, of a Christian marriage, of a good deathbed, extends to all those who come within its reach. As we are all drawn still nearer to each other by the natural bonds of affection, so we are drawn still nearer when these bonds of affection are cemented by Christianity. Every gathering, therefore, for the christening of a little child, is truly a family gathering. It teaches us how closely we are members one of another. It teaches parents how deeply responsible they are for the growth of that little creature throughout its future education. It teaches brothers and sisters how by them is formed the atmosphere, good or bad in which the soul of their little new-born brother or sister is trained to good or to evil. It teaches us the value of the purity of those domestic relations in which from childhood to old age all our best thoughts are fostered and encouraged. It also surmounts and avoids the difficulties which encompass Adult Baptism in any country or society already impregnated with Christian influences. If the New Testament has no example of Infant Baptism, neither has it any example of adult Christian Baptism: that is, of the baptism of those who had already been born and bred Christians. The artificial formality of a Baptismal service for those who in our time have grown up as Christians is precluded by the administration of the rite at the commencement of the natural life.

But there is a further reason

to be found in the character of children. This is contained in the Gospel which is read in the Baptismal Service of Infants throughout the Western Church. In the early ages there probably were those who doubted whether children could be regarded worthy to be dedicated to God or to Christ. The answer is very simple. If our Divine Master did not think them unfit to be taken in His arms and receive His own gracious blessing when He was actually here in bodily presence, we need not fear to ask His blessing upon them now.

Infant baptism is thus a recognition of the good which there is in every human soul. It declares that in every child of Adam, whilst there is much which needs to be purified and elevated, there is much also which in itself shows capacity for purity and virtue. In those little children of Galilee, all unbaptized as they were, not yet even within the reach of a Christian family, Jesus Christ saw the likeness of the Kingdom of Heaven; merely because they were little children, merely because they were innocent human beings. He saw in them the objects, not of divine malediction, but of divine benediction. Lord Palmerston was once severely attacked for having said, "Children are born good." But he, in fact, only said what Chrysostom had said before him, and Chrysostom said only what in the Gospels had been already said of the natural state of the unbaptized Galilean children, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven." The substitution of infant baptism for adult baptism, like the change from immersion to sprinkling, is thus a triumph of Christian charity. It exemplifies at the first beginning of life that divine grace which hopes all things, believes all things, endures all things. In each little child our Saviour saw, and we may see, the promise of a great future. In those little hands folded in unconscious repose, in those bright eyes first awakening to the outer world, in that soft forehead unwarmed by the slightest ruffle of care, he saw, and we may see, the undeveloped rudimental instruments of the labor, and intelligence, and energy of a whole life. And not only so—not only in hope, but in actual reality; does the blessing on little children, whether expressed in the Gospel story, or as implied in Infant Baptism, acknowledge the excellency and value of a childlike soul. Not once only in His life, but again and again, He held them up to His disciples; as the best corrective of the sins and passions of mankind. He exhorted all men to follow their innocence, their unconsciousness, their guilelessness, their truthfulness, their purity. He saw in them the regenerating, sanctifying element of every family, of every household, of every nation. He saw, and we may see, in their natural unaffected, simple, unconstrained acts and words the best antidote to the artificial, fantastic, exclusive spirit which beset the Pharisees of his own time, and must beset the Pharisees, whether of the religious or of the irreligious world, in all times. Infant Baptism thus is the standing testimony to the truth, the value, the eternal significance of what is called "natural religion," of what Butler calls the

constitution of human nature.

It is also in a more special sense still the glorification of children. It is the outward expression of their proper place in the Christian Church, and in the instincts of the civilized world. It teaches us how much we all have to learn from children, how much to enjoy, how much to imitate. It is the response to all that best of children in our days has been specially consecrated by Wordsworth and Keble.

When we think of a child—how helpless, how trusting, how hopeful—the most hard end of men must be softened by its presence, and feel the reverence due to its tender conscience as to its tender limbs. When we remember that before their innocent faces the demons of ambition and impurity, and worldliness, and uncharitableness are put to flight; that for their innocent souls there is a place in a better world, though they are now and will for months and years be ignorant of the theological problems which rend their elders asunder, it is possibly teach us that it is not "before all things necessary" to know the differences which divide the Churches of the East or West, or the Churches of the North or South. When we think of the sweet repose of a child as it lies in the arms of its nurse, or its parter at the font, it may reveal to us the true attitude of humble trust and confidence which most befits the human soul whether of saint or philosopher. "Like as a weaned child on its mother's breast, my soul is even as a weaned child." When he meditates on the imperfect knowledge of a child, it is the best picture to us of our imperfect knowledge in this mortal state. "I am but of a little child," said Sir Isaac Newton, "picking up pebbles on the shores of the vast ocean of truth." "When I was a child, when I was an infant," said St. Paul, "I spoke as an infant, I thought as an infant," but when I became a man, the thoughts and the spirit of an infant were done away." It is a pledge to us of a perpetual progress. The baptism of an infant, as the birth of an infant, would be "holding" were it not that it includes within it the hope and the assurance of all that is to follow after.

To be Continued.

MARRIAGE.

At the residence of the bride's mother, Big Bay, June 10th, by George Muir, Mr. Alexander Campbell, to Miss Amanda Walker, all of the township of Keppel, County of Grey.

OBITUARY.

Rev. Law & Whitelaw,
 The church of Christ in Everton has lately been called upon to mourn to the narrow tomb, two of its members, showing that death is surely doing its work.

Bro Robert Morton, Sr., departed this life July 2nd. He was well known throughout Erie and Eramois, being an old resident of the latter township. He was also a consistent member of the church of God, and when health permitted was generally found at his post on the first day of the week, and for a great many years he led the singing in the Old Centre meeting house and also in Everton. Bro Morton lived his allotted time, being over 70 at the time of his death. His partner had gone before a few years. Deceased leaves behind him a grown up family of one son and four daughters, all members of the church, which must have been a comfort to their father on his dying bed. Bro Morton passed away in peace and his remains

were laid in the grave on the 4th of July, there to await the resurrection morn, when father, mother, brother, and sisters may meet around the throne of God to enjoy his presence forever.

Bro John Abbott, a young brother aged 34 years, with a life of usefulness before him was called away on the 2nd of July after a serious illness of some months. To pass shortly, but mortal this was a sad event, but God's ways are not as our ways.

Deceased was the son of Bro. William Abbott and wife, both of whom are now through age and infirmity, drawing near to the end of their journey, and who were looking to this son to be with them and watch over them through the remainder of their days, but God who does all things well ordered otherwise.

The deceased was blessed with greatly pious parents, parents beloved by all, whose example, if followed would lead their family to the lives of usefulness, holy lives, which would secure to them an entrance into that everlasting rest prepared for all God's people.

Our dear brother leaves a wife and three small children to mourn his loss. May that strength, support and comfort Sister J. Abbott, her little ones and the aged parents, in this sad affliction.

The writer was acquainted with the deceased from early childhood and can bear testimony to his honest, upright, consistent christian life. A great advocate of temperance, a good citizen, a kind neighbor, a loving father and husband, and a son in whom his parents were well pleased. The funeral was the largest ever witnessed in this section. About 175 conveyances followed his remains to their resting place. Bro J. Kilgour conducted the services and Bro. Shepherd did likewise.

at Bro Morton's funeral.
 Your Brother
 W. T.
 Everton, July 6, 1855.

For the Workers.
 On the morning of June 2nd, Bro Archibald McKewin fell asleep in Jesus at his mother's residence near Pricieville, aged 23 years. He obeyed the Saviour in his boyhood, was baptized by Bro Glasgow, and has been Secretary for the church ever since Father's death. No one will miss him as much as the aged mother. May the God of all grace, comfort, cheer and strengthen her, to be patient in tribulation. The funeral service was conducted by the writer at the family residence, Bro King offering a fervent prayer at the grave.

Your brother in Christ,
 D. FRASUON.

Died at her father's residence near Stayner, on the 2nd of April, Sister Catherine McArthur, daughter of Bro. Archibald, in her 24th year. Our sister was baptized by Bro McAlaird in 1878, since which time her quiet christian character, has held the respect of all who knew her. The funeral was largely attended by sorrowing friends. May we so live that we shall meet her in the land beyond.

W. J. R.,
 Stayner.

Pricieville, June 16-85.
 Bro King has received the sad news of the death on 14th April last of Bro. A. McDonald, who left here a year ago for Santa Rosa, Cal. He obeyed the Gospel during Bro McAlaird's meeting here in August, 1879. His sister and aged parents will miss him greatly. May they also be ready to meet their God in peace as the prayer of their brother.

D. FRASUON.

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