

ORIGINAL SIN.

The fifth verse of the fifty-first Psalm, which reads, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," is sometimes quoted: "Behold, I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity," and often used to establish the doctrine of "original sin,"—a weapon used by the atheist against Christianity, as God in His judgment, by making the innocent soul suffer for the guilty, is unjust.

But the advocates of original sin, in order to make it appear palliative, teach that God has instituted the rite of baptism, and the child soon after birth is baptized on the faith of its parents, and thereby freed from it.

Now, suppose the parents die before the baptism of the child takes place (and this is not an uncommon occurrence), on whose faith is the child to be baptized? Where is the precept or apostolic example for such a procedure? What is to become of all the children who have never been baptized in any way? These must be accounted for.

Baptism having been enacted by the Saviour for the remission of the sins of the believing and repentant sinner (Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 5. Acts ii. 37, 38, xxii. 16.) the fact is, to make infant baptism in any way acceptable and not a meaningless rite, the doctrine of original sin has been instituted, not by God but by men.

Henry Ward Beecher, in administering the rite of infant sprinkling, recently, said: "We do not perform this ceremony with any belief that it has any immediate effect on the child. It is an ordinance that has come down to us from a faith that in our denomination has ceased to exist. It was originally that ordinance by which the old Mother Church hoped to cure original sin which all mankind was thought to have inherited from Adam. There never was such a sin, and it never did them any good and never did them any harm. We don't administer it because it was enjoined. We found the ordinance and have continued it." This is a frank and candid statement made by but very few Pedo-baptists.

But to preserve this doctrine of original sin, another position is laid down by a certain class of religionists. It is admitted by these that there is original sin, but the child is regenerated from its sinful state by the Spirit. Now, there is a striking analogy between the natural birth and the birth into the kingdom of God. There are two parents to every birth—a father and a mother; the former begets and the latter brings forth the child.

So in being born sons of God, Jesus teaches there are two parents—the Holy Spirit by which we are begotten, and the water by which we are brought forth. Hence He says to Nicodemus, "verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit he can not enter the kingdom of God." The reason the Spirit comes last in the order named by Jesus, is, a child is not said to be born of the father before it is born of its mother. If the child is freed from the original sin by the Holy Spirit alone without water baptism, then we have a birth of one parent, a thing not agreeable to the words of Jesus to Nicodemus. (John iii. 5.)

When a person is born into the natural kingdom once, he can not be born a second time into it; and when a son is born of his parents he is always their son; he may be a good or bad son. If a good son, his father will be pleased with and reward him, but if a prodigal, and spends his father's goods given to him, in riotous living, he will be left in his poverty to which he is sure to come unless he repents and does well.

Now, when we become citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we are not born into that same kingdom a second time; also, when we become children of God we are such for all time—may be, prodigals, spending our part in riotous living, but will be left in our poverty to starve and die unless we return to our Father, confess our sins, and be received into His confidence to serve Him anew. Now, those who teach that a child is freed from original sin in its infancy, have two births into the same kingdom;

for they urge the same children to be born again when they come to the years of the knowledge of good and evil. Surely this is a second birth into the same kingdom; and twice born of the same parents!

But suppose we are freed from original sin by the Holy Spirit alone. Why make that a matter of dispute or a point of doctrine? As we have nothing at all to do in the matter, it being entirely a work of God who will attend to that as well as all things else with which He has to do.

But, by the way, if the Spirit of God frees me from original sin, how is my child subject to it? Has the holy Spirit not perfected His work in me? If He has, then my child is not subject to original sin. For how can I impart that to my child which is not in me? If my child is subject to original sin, then I take it the Holy Spirit does not perfect His work. This certainly is *reductio ad absurdum*.

But it is said, there will be no persons in heaven but those who can praise God through the blood of Christ, and if there be no original sin from which to be regenerated, there will be some in heaven who cannot praise God through Christ, as there are many children who die very young. What benefit shall they receive from Jesus?

We answer: Just what they lost in Adam. God said to Adam, "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," and after Adam did what the Lord commanded him not to do, God appeared to him in the garden and spake as follows: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying: 'Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field: in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken. For dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.'"

And the Lord God said: "Behold the man is become as one of us to know good from evil, and now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever. Therefore the Lord drove them forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken." (Gen. iii. 22, 23.)

And to prevent them from going back into the garden a cherubim and a flaming sword were placed at the east of the garden to keep the way of the tree of life. Life was in the garden, death outside of it. Now, being left outside of the garden, in the region of death, formed of the dust of the ground, "to dust must we return," as did Adam. And to restore us to life and immortality is the work of Jesus who died and rose again the third day—according to the Scriptures—which He shall accomplish when He descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first and be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." Among these shall be the little children who have died before they came to the knowledge of good and evil. They, with all the rest of the redeemed from death and the grave shall sing: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

There is not a passage in the word of God that teaches the soul of an innocent babe is responsible before God for what Adam did. It is enough that the ground has been cursed; in sorrow shall we eat of it and suffer a natural death for what Adam did, without losing our souls, which is certainly the case if they are born in sin.

When David said: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," such a thing as being born in sin is not mentioned. There is not a word about a birth. A child must be brought forth before it is born. David is giving an account of the state of his mother before his birth, at the time of his conception. That she was in sin, as all are who knowingly and wilfully put forth their hand, as did

Adam in the beginning, and pluck of the forbidden fruit by breaking the commandments of God.

If we are born in sin, as is submitted by some, on account of the sins of our parents, then Jesus also must have been born in sin. Now, we believe He was without sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. And we conclude the child born to-day into the world is as pure as was Adam when he came forth from the hands of his Maker in Eden. But when the child comes to the years of the knowledge of good and evil, and on account of the sinful condition of society in which he lives he puts forth his hand, as it were, and breaks the laws of God, then sins, and is under condemnation until he accepts of Jesus, "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," where there is no condemnation, but freedom and the promise of life evermore into the enjoyment of which he shall come if faithful unto death; for it is "he that endureth unto the end that shall be saved."

But the question is asked, what does the Lord in Ex. xx. 5 mean, where he says, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me," if there is no original sin? If so, then the Word of God is inconsistent with itself. For in Deut. xxiv. 16, the Lord declares, "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin." Then how are we to determine what the Lord wishes to teach?

The object against which the Lord legislated at that time was the worship of false gods. The effect of this worship was injurious not only to the souls of those who worshipped but also to their bodies. What is the history of those nations who served false gods?

In the first place these gods are represented to us as being very corrupt. Even Jupiter, chief of the celestial deities, who gathers and disperses the clouds, casts forth his lightning, stirs up his thunder, sends down rain, hail and snow, and his ambrosial locks, causing the whole of Olympus to tremble; even he has a notorious number of mortal as well as immortal spouses evidencing his sensuality and lasciviousness. Besides, Jupiter, Apollo, Mars and Venus, the highest objects of their worship, were adulterers, fornicators and prostitutes of the most infamous kind.

What would be the effect on those who worshipped those gods?

Public prostitution formed a considerable part of their worship. They were accustomed in their prayers to request the gods to multiply the number of their prostitutes, and, in order to express their gratitude to their deities for the favors received, they bound themselves by vows to increase their number, for commerce with them was neither esteemed sinful nor disgraceful. Paul in Romans says: "They worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections, for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature, and likewise also the men * * * working that which is unseemly and receiving in themselves that recompense of their errors which was meet, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, covetousness and maliciousness." Such profligacy of conduct debasing them far below the beasts that perish would have an effect upon their children, to make them sickly, deformed, miserable creatures: all the days of their life a reproach to their parents, and living movements of their iniquity, practiced under polytheism.

If we are to believe that the iniquities of the fathers were literally visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations of the children,