

INFANT COMMUNION.

For the Canada Baptist Magazine.

MR. EDITOR,—It has struck me that a few notices of the customs of the early church may be acceptable to such readers as wish to learn something of antiquity, while they acknowledge the Bible as the only and sufficient standard of faith and practice. If you are of the same mind, you will probably deem the following article worthy of insertion in the Magazine. The work from which it is taken, is considered in Germany to be the best of its kind. The competence of the author, who appears to belong to the Lutheran Church, cannot be impeached, though he occasionally writes more as a partizan than as a historian. You may expect to receive, from time to time, other extracts like the present, from

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The History of Infant Communion, translated from Dr. Augusti's *Handbuch der Christlichen Archäologie* (Manual of Christian Antiquities), vol. ii. pp. 638—641.

The actual communicants are, according to the unanimous laws and observances of the church, all those who have been received by baptism as members of the Christian Church. This was in accordance with the words of Jesus in Mark xvi. 16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The full admission into the religious society of Christians was completed by baptism; and the eucharist, which immediately followed baptism, served as a proof that the new member had entered into the enjoyment of all the rights and advantages of Christians. In connection with the baptism of adults nothing could be more natural than this mode of proceeding, which follows strictly and literally the order, "he that believeth and is baptized," in which, as also in the histories of baptism that occur in the New Tes-

tament, faith is required as the antecedent.

Justin Martyr says: "No one is allowed to partake of the eucharist, unless he believes our doctrine to be true, has received the baptism of the forgiveness of sins and the new birth, and lives as Christ has commanded." This can apply only to grown-up persons.

But the arrangement was altered by infant-baptism. That this was in use so early as the second century, and the beginning of the third, is decided by the testimonies of Tertullian and Cyprian. The objection which Tertullian, in his treatise *De Baptismo*, c. 18, brings against this practice, is remarkable. He says: Veniant, dum adoleſcunt; veniant, dum diſcunt; dum quo veniant doceatur; veniant Christiani cum Christum nosse potuerint. Quid festinat ætas innocens ad remissionem peccatorum?—Norint petere salutem, ut petenti dedisse videaris.* It is also proved by the examples of the Eunuch and the Apostle Paul, that faith was present before baptism.

On the contrary, Cyprian defends infant-baptism. He says (Epistol. lxiv), among other things: Sed æqualitas divina et spiritalis exprimitur, quod pares atque æquales sint omnes homines, quando a Deo semel facti sunt; et possit ætas nostra in incrementis corporum, secundum seculum, non secundum Deum habere discrimen: nisi si et gratia ipsa, quæ baptizatis datur, pro ætate accipientium vel minor vel major tribuitur; cum Spiritus Sanctus non de mensura, sed de pietate atque indulgentia paterna æqualis omnibus præbeatur, &c.†

* Which may be thus rendered: Let them come when they grow up; let them come when they learn; when they are taught where they come to: let them come as Christians, when they have been able to know Christ. Why does the age of innocence hasten to the remission of sins? Let them know how to seek salvation, that you may appear to have given it to one that asked. TRANSL.

† Of which obscure passage this appears to be the meaning in English: But a divine and spiritual equality is expressed, that all men are on a level and equal, since they were once made by God; and