

LETTER No. XIII.

MONCTON, N. B., May 24, 1878.

REV. D. G. McDONALD, Charlottetown. Dear Sir and Brother,—

I have had the privilege of examining your Bible Baptisma, in which you have referred, occasionally, to my Catechism of Baptism. I do not propose to review your work; and yet, by way of acknowledging your kindness in speaking as you do of my Catechism, I may be allowed to call your attention to one point, at least, which otherwise might pass unnoticed. In your book we have an illustration of the fact that it is not difficult, generally, to say a great many things on the wrong side of a great question. We have further illustrations of this, sometimes, in political discussions. The daily issues of leading newspapers may contain columns of reading matter, relative to the strength of the political parties of the day. The discussion may continue long. There is a practical way, however, of making an end of the controversy, and that is by a resort to figures. Let the ballots be deposited, and counted. The result may then become apparent to all men.

So it may be, to some extent, in religious controversy. Discussions may be protracted. Books may be written. There is nothing, however, like coming to the point. You have ventured to do this, in giving a number of syllogisms in your book. Please allow me to say that, in my judgment, those syllogisms are the best parts of your volume. Arguments, that to many minds would be inexplicable, or misleading, may be made clear by a well-constructed syllogism. I admire your boldness in allowing your arguments to be subjected to so practicable a test. Let us look at some of these.

XIX. IMMERSIONIST SYLLOGISMS:

On page 49 of your book, you have given the following syllogism:

"1. In giving the commission Christ chose not ransio—not cheo but baptizo. "2. The primary, literal meaning of baptizo according to all the learning of world, is to immerse, or its equivalent.

"3 Therefore in giving the commission Christ commanded his disciples to immerse those whom they baptized.

It may be well here to remind the general reader that every regular syllogism contains three and only three propositions, called—(1) The Major premise, (2) The Minor premise, and (3) the conclusion.

The unsoundness of your argument as indicated in this syllogism, is apparent for several reasons, a few of which may be indicated as follows:

1. The minor premise (2) is ambiguous, in saying "immerse, or its equivalent." This indefiniteness shows that the syllogism is fatally defective. It ought to be apparent to any person, even at a superficial glance, that neither dip, nor plunge, nor overflow, is the "equivalent" of immerse. An island may be immersed, without being either dipped or plunged; and the primary cause of the immersion may be the sprinkled rain. A very moderate application of the scientific method of reasoning is sufficient to show that neither dip, nor plunge, can be the "equivalent" of immerse.

2. Your Minor premise (2) is also irreparably defective, in saying that the "primary" meaning of baptizo, is "to immerse," or, etc. Let me refer you to the Southern Baptist Publication Society Report of the Carrollton Debate, p. 33-36, from which you have largely quoted in your book, where you will find proof, abundant, that baptizo never meant to immerse until several hundred years after it had been in use by Greek writers; and where you will also ascertain that its primary meaning was to sprinkle.

3. Your Minor premise (2) also contains a statement which betrays, either a lamentable want of knowledge, or a sad inability to discriminate between right and wrong, on the part of him who constructed the syllogism. Your syllogism says, "all the learning of the world" shows that baptizo means immerse. The cause which compels its advocates to utter such palpable absurdities in its defense, must be defective, from bottom to top, and from centre to circumference.

4. Your minor premise (2) being defective, it follows inevitably that your conclusion can not be true. Hence, Christ in giving the commission did not command his disciples to immerse those whom they baptized.

On page 153, of your book, you have given another syllogism, as follows:

"1. If Christ intended that baptism in the Christian church, should take the place of circumcision in the Jewish nation, there would have been some intimation of the change given in the New Testament.

"2. But the New Testament is silent upon any such change, therefore.

"3. No such change was intended by Christ."

The defect in this syllogism is that its minor premise (2), has not been proved

and can not be proved. Paul, in speaking of baptism, and not merely baptism with water, but the higher—the real baptism, calls it circumcision—(See Col. 2 and else where). Hence, the argument, of which the above syllogism is the climax, is unsound, and misleading.

Let us look, however, at this syllogism, from an anti-Baptist standpoint; and slightly altered, so far as the major premise is concerned. Let us read it as follows:

(1) If Christ had intended that infants, in the Christian Church should not be received into its fold as in the former dispensation, and by the proper mode of baptism, there would have been some intimation of the change given in the New Testament.

"(2) But the New Testament is silent upon any such change.

"(3) Therefore, no such change was intended by Christ."

The force of this syllogism, will be manifest at a glance. It indicates clearly, according to your own reasoning, the propriety of baptizing infants.

On page 175, of your work, you have another syllogism, as follows:

"(1) Paul taught the Ephesian church "all the counsel of God."

"(2) Paul said nothing about infant baptism.

"(3) Therefore, infant baptism is not found in all the counsel of God.

The defect in this syllogism is chiefly in the Minor (2) premise. How do you know that Paul said nothing to the Ephesian brethren about infant baptism? You have assumed what can not be proved. In your Major premise you use the word "church" as if you sought, thereby, to create the impression that Paul had, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, declared "all the counsel of God." Paul did not declare all the counsel of God, in his Epistle to the Ephesians. A great deal of the counsel of God, is contained in other parts of the Bible, and not in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Paul said a great many things in his preaching to the Ephesians that are not in his Epistle. As the Minor premise in this syllogism is incapable of proof the conclusion is not true.

On page 182, of your book, you have this syllogism:

"(1) The ordinance of baptism is a positive command. (See Matt. 28: 19, etc.)

"(2) The baptism of infants is not commanded in the word of God, ergo.

"(3) The baptism of infants is not of God."

In this syllogism you make what is called the commission, (Matt. 28: 19) the positive command. To whom is the command given? In your argument, of which this syllogism is the objective point, you get curiously mixed on the "positive command" question. You argue as if the command was given to adults, or adult believers, and that they are commanded in the commission to get baptized. You seem to forget that the commission is to properly authorized ministers, and that they should make disciples of all, baptizing and teaching them.

How can the ministry of a church baptize all persons, or all nations, if they do not baptize infants?

The weakness of your Minor premise (2) is apparent from the fact that the commission is to ministers, and is general, and includes all, and does not discriminate, against infants, and in favor of adults. The manifest fallacies of your syllogism show that your argument against infant baptism is unscriptural and untrue.

There are other syllogisms in your volume which are equally open to objections, but to which it is not necessary to refer.

XX. CLOSING WORDS.

There is a paragraph on page 119, of your book, wherein you quote from my Catechism of Baptism; and wherein you have the following sentence: "Come out from among them and do as the Baptists do—as the Apostles did—baptize the people because they are saved, and not in order to save them." Let me remind you that this is one of the grounds upon which infants are baptized—"because they are saved." They are partakers of saving grace through the atonement; and dying in infancy are "caught up into heaven." Infants are as clearly entitled to baptism, as the believing adult who has never been baptized. Baptism no more saves one than coronation makes one a king. Coronation can only make one a king who is a king already. Coronation is the outward and visible sign, and seal, and authoritative declaration, of what already exists. It is the symbol of a true and real kingship. So is the baptism with water. In the baptism of an infant and seal, and authoritative declaration, of the grace of which the child is a partaker through our Lord Jesus Christ. The baptism of water is a symbol of the real baptism of the Holy Ghost, whereby the child is made a subject of the Kingdom of Heaven. There may sometimes, very properly, be serious doubts

about the propriety of baptizing some adult persons. But there never need be a doubt as to the propriety of baptizing an infant, "because they are saved"—of such is the Kingdom. If Simon Magus had been baptized in infancy, it would have been perfectly proper, for he was then in the Kingdom. But it was a mistake to baptize him, as an adult, upon the profession of his faith, because he was not, after all, really a saved man, but was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity.

The discussion of this subject, through the pulpit, the platform and the press, in the Province where you reside, has not been in vain. It has especially been my privilege to hear of excellent results that followed the labors of the late Rev. Albert Stewart DesBrisay, who eloquently defended the truth, in several discussions of the baptismal question, in different parts of Prince Edward Island. Many, through his masterly presentations of the truth as it is in Jesus, were led to embrace more excellent theories on the subject of baptism, than those that are held by the Baptist churches.

Our gifted DesBrisay was called to his reward while yet the dew of his youth was upon him; and while eloquent teachings were waiting to leap from his lips. May our discussions of this irrelative question be always, in all Christian sincerity, as his were; and may we be evermore looking for the truth, as he was; and beneficial must be the results.

Your's truly D. D. CURRIE.

A CHARGE

DELIVERED BY REV. JOHN GOODISON, PRESIDENT OF THE NEWFOUNDLAND CONFERENCE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE ORDINATION OF NINE YOUNG MINISTERS, AT WHOSE REQUEST IT IS PRINTED:—

(Concluded.)

We notice that they are called BISHOPS OR OVERSEERS.

Such we are told by the apostle should be blameless in all manner of life. They are to be examples to the flock. They are to watch over as those that must give account. When St. Paul was on his way to Rome the last time, being at Miletus he sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church, and O how faithfully and with tears, did he urge upon these men to watch over the interests of the church when he would be no more among them. And what havoc has been caused in the church of Christ by the conduct of those who instead of building up that church have torn it to pieces by their unholy lives, or covetous practices. Brethren let it be your aim and purpose so to watch over and care for each member of the flock as you will wish you had when you stand in the presence of the Great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls at the last day.

We notice they are called "Ambassadors." This very exalted idea of the work of a minister of Christ is given by St. Paul in writing to the Corinthian church, 2 Cor. v. 20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." How important your duty when viewed in the light of an ambassador. As such it is expected that you will always do your utmost both for the Prince that you serve and they to whom ye are sent. O, when you think that you are in the stead of Christ to beseech men to be reconciled to God, how earnest, zealous and indefatigable your exertions should be to win souls to God. The persons to whom you are sent are the rebels of the Prince that you serve. It is your duty to get them to become reconciled, to lay down their weapons, to submit to the authority of the Saviour. In doing this how necessary it is for you to leave no means untried to accomplish this great end. You will the more readily do so when you remember the many efforts put forth by the ambassadors of the cross on your own behalf. But you will find, dear brethren that you will need to exercise great patience, and a vast amount of forbearance in this great work. You must not forget that those to whom you are sent the god of this world hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. Let me urge upon you therefore to bear with them. Do not aim to terrify, but try to draw them to the Saviour. Beseech men to be reconciled to God. This was the method adopted both by Christ and his apostles. Those ministers of the church of Christ know little how to dispense the word of life who are continually dealing out hell and damnation to their congregations. Our God is a God of love. His Gospel is the Gospel of love. When Christ could not convince the Jews he wept over them, and St. Paul that prince of the apostles says, "Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men." Do you so act by following such illustrious examples and your ministry shall be the means of winning many, very many precious souls to Christ.

Again we notice they are called SERVANTS: Servants of the Lord Jesus Christ

and his apostles. And you are always to remember this in all the duties devolving upon you. You are not to lord over God's heritage, but to act as he did who took upon himself the form of a servant who humbled himself, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. No doubt a consideration of this fact will at all times conduce to your being clothed with humility. And, wearing this garb you will be more acceptable unto God and more influential among the people of your charge. Nothing is so obnoxious in the eyes of the Lord as the pride and arrogance of those who profess to be his servants. And nothing will hinder you from finding favor in the sight of the people more than by being lifted up by a spirit of pride. You will be called to exercise your ministry among the fishermen of this Island. Let them see that you take a lively interest in their temporal as well as their spiritual welfare. Do not neglect the poorest of your flock. Remember your Master was emphatically the friend of the poor. Do not be above speaking to your people as you meet them from time to time, and give them to see by your whole deportment that you are their friend and servant. Thus your heart and theirs will be knit together in the bonds of Christian love, and as result great and lasting good will be accomplished. Your names, after you are dead and gone will be cherished by a loving people. It is so now in many parts of this Conference in reference to those devoted servants of Christ who have preceded us. Their names are as ointment poured forth. Let it be ours to emulate them in thus being the servants of our God.

In conclusion upon this head of our discourse I pray that God may thus make you workmen "needing not to be ashamed" either by unskillfulness, unfaithfulness, or laziness. Let it be seen that you mind your work, and that you do your work in such a manner that you will never be ashamed either before men or God.

III. We notice that our text urges upon him to Rightly divide the word of truth. In dealing with this part of the text allow me to say dear brethren that it is impossible for us to overestimate the value of such an injunction as this, and especially so when we consider we live in such an age as the present. We live in an age when the truth of God is subserved to suit the ideas and inclinations of almost every class. Many portions of God's word are so wrested, twisted and distorted as that we are scarcely able to recognize them as portions of the Divine revelation. Hence we see how necessary it is for us to consider, and act upon the advice given to us by an inspired apostle in this clause. Its importance is equal if not superior to that which is given in the two previous parts of the text.

To rightly divide the word of truth dear brethren is the grand work in which your lives are to be spent. This is a work in which it will be necessary for you to devote all your time and talents for its proper accomplishment. Do not think this work in any way unimportant. An angel mind could well be engaged in such a work. Some of the greatest men that have ever lived have devoted themselves to this service, and have been obliged to acknowledge how inadequate their powers of mind to discharge this important duty. The preacher's throne then is the pulpit, he is to be pre-eminently a dispenser of the "word of truth."

In rightly dividing the word of truth it will be necessary for you to carefully and clearly distinguish it from error. God is spoken of in his Holy Word as a God of truth, his word is truth, his Son as the Way, the truth and the life. In doing this also dear brethren it will be absolutely necessary for you to be firm believers of the truth of God." Believing this to be so, the next thing we think necessary on your part is to be ever ready with clear and convincing arguments to prove to others that God's holy word is "the book of Divine truth." The course of study through which you have passed has, we have no doubt equipped you with mighty weapons in defence of the truth of God, and it is to be hoped that whenever called upon to use those weapons it may be seen that you have made great proficiency in this respect. To rightly divide the word of truth is also to distinguish it from the mere opinions and speculations of man. Men's opinions may on many subjects be courted, but here mere human opinion or speculation must never take the precedence of the word of truth. God's word is truth, and it needs nothing human to support it, or to attest its veracity. All human opinions must be subservient to Divine utterances. Consequently in rightly dividing the word of truth you must always see to it that God's word of truth is supreme authority and that all human opinions however good are only of a secondary nature. We are then not to invent a new Gospel but to rightly divide that grand old Gospel committed to our trust. And we are so to divide it that all may have "their meat in due season." And

O what wisdom, what care will be requisite to accomplish this, especially when you consider the different classes of persons to whom you are called to minister the word of life. Some ministers fail in the proper division of the word of truth. They seem to be suited to one class only and the consequence is that the greater part of their congregations are left without spiritual food. The minister of Christ has to "Comfort the mourner in Zion, to strengthen the weak, to guide the wayward, to convince the impenitent and to win the children to the Saviour." How necessary then that he should know how to rightly divide the word of truth that he may be successful in his great work, and that he may be made a blessing to his people.

In rightly dividing the word of truth seek also to know what is the mind of the Spirit concerning those passages of God's holy word which you endeavor to explain. Remember God has promised to take of the things of God, and reveal them unto us. Seek then his Divine assistance and gracious aid and He will impart it unto you, and your congregations shall from time to time be fed with the portions of divine truth which their several states require.

But dearly beloved brethren all this is to be accompanied by a continual and earnest course of study, study. To show thyself approved unto God. STUDY to be workmen that need not to be ashamed. STUDY to rightly divide the word of truth. You are then to be students, life long students. We would not have you think that now your probationary course is ended, there remaineth "no more need for more study." It is expected that as long as you fill the sacred office of a Christian minister you will be thorough students. And such is the nature of your work that you will require to do this. If you wish to be workmen needing not to be ashamed. If you wish to keep abreast of the times. If you wish to be useful in the church the means of saving precious souls. If you wish to have the well done of the Master "YOU MUST STUDY."

We know there are some charges which would have their ministers always on their legs, but such charges forget that a minister's first duty is to preach the gospel, and that without close attention to the study the pulpit is sure to suffer, while the sermons will not be worth listening to. Let me urge upon you dear brethren to have your proper time for study, and let nothing interfere with you in your preparations for the pulpit. Then when you come forth to deliver the message God has entrusted you with, it will be seen that both you and the people are gainers considerably by observing such a line of conduct. And again. Don't put off to the end of the week your preparations for the Sabbath, but begin at the beginning. Remember the Lord does not want unbeaten oil in His sanctuary. And let all your studies be conducted as in the presence of God, for the advancement of his kingdom and the promotion of his glory, and then thus prepared to enter upon his work God will set his seal upon your labours in his vineyard."

Study then the word of truth in the original and you will be the better able to rightly divide it. Study with all the help you can from those who have distinguished themselves in Biblical Science and you shall be greatly assisted.

But study especially in humble dependence upon the help of the Divine and ever blessed Spirit of God and he will abundantly bless you and make you a blessing.

I pray God to make you able ministers of the New Testament, and I pray also that your ministry may be crowned with success. Amen.

WHAT CAME OF PRICKING A FINGER.

Mr. Edison gives the following account of the invention of his wonderful instrument the "phonograph." "An apparatus that takes a permanent mould of a person's voice and will reproduce the same voice and tones at any time afterward: The manner in which the principle of the speaking phonograph was discovered is this: "I was singing to the mouthpiece of a telephone, when the vibrations of the voice sent the fine steel point into my finger. That set me to thinking. If I could record the actions of the point, and send the point over the same surface afterward, I saw no reason why the thing would not talk. I tried the experiment first on a strip of telegraph paper, and found that the point made an alphabet. I shouted the words 'Halloo! halloo!' into the mouthpiece, ran the paper back over the steel point, and heard a faint 'Halloo! halloo!' in return. I determined to make a machine that would work accurately, and gave my assistants instructions, telling them what I had discovered. They laughed at me. That piqued me a little, and I told them (a man named Adams, and the man who made the machine) that I would give them two dollars apiece if I didn't make it work first time without a break. I tried it and succeeded. That's the whole story. The discovery came through the pricking of the finger."