

The Christian.

SAINT JOHN, N. B., NOVEMBER, 1886.

EDITORIAL.

THE SALVATION OF DYING INFANTS

Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.—JOHN I. 29.

The Bible enlightens us on our own duty as accountable persons who have sinned against God, and shows us how we may obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, but does not treat so largely on the salvation of dying infants. Whatever may be their destiny we have no power to influence them for future merit or woe. We have no Gospel for them as they are unable to receive it or discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil. But our mission is to those who are capable of hearing, being converted and saved through Christ. Hence, the salvation of men and women is more largely treated than that of dying infants. While this is true there is enough light vouchsafed to us to show us plainly that those who die before they know the difference between good and evil pass to be with Jesus, that while we, whose minds are warped with error and stained by sin, are left on this side of the river to be converted, purified and trained for heaven, He takes these innocents away from all that can encumber and corrupt to grow in His own nursery on the other side. We should gratefully accept the light the Saviour has given us on this interesting subject.

It is a privilege to pass unnoticed some of the theories on the state of dying infants, they being so completely opposed to the teaching and practice of Jesus, and so shocking to the finer feelings of humanity as to be wholly discarded by reflecting minds. At present the impression largely prevails that all who die in infancy are saved. Many, however, think that they must undergo a moral regeneration, and not a few regard baptism as essential to their future salvation. In this article we propose to show—

1. That the moral regeneration of infants is unscriptural and absurd.
2. That their regeneration is unnecessary.
3. That Jesus teaches that dying infants shall be saved.

1. That the moral regeneration of infants is unscriptural and absurd. By moral regeneration we understand that change produced by the Spirit of God on the heart and mind of the subject which causes him to love what he once hated and hate what he once loved.

This change is called the *new birth* or being born of God. It is evident to every reflecting mind that living seed goes before every birth. In the animal and vegetable kingdoms this law holds good, and will so abide till the end of time. In the beginning God made man without father or mother, made animals without parents. He made the oak without an acorn, wheat without seed. But He ordained that from that day everything should bring forth of its kind, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work. It is, therefore, absurd to speak now of a man who had no parents, wheat without seed and soil, or of a birth without seed.

The Scriptures speak emphatically and elaborately of the seed which produces the new birth or regeneration, and also the soil in which that seed grows. In the first recorded parable of the Saviour He plainly tells what the seed is, and also what is the soil on which it grows to perfection. Luke 3rd chapter. "The seed is the word of God." Paul in 1 Cor. iv. 15, says, I have begotten you by the Gospel. These persons were begotten by the Holy Spirit who used Paul as an instrument and the Gospel as the seed. Paul preached the Gospel

to the Corinthians, and wherever it fell into good and honest hearts it remained until they were saved. James says (i. 18) Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth So also (Peter i. 23.) "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. The word of God then, is the seed, not a seed, but *the seed*, the only seed

Jesus also tells what the soil is: "But that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience" Luke viii. 15 Just in proportion as the word of God fell into honest hearts it grew and multiplied. (Acts xii 24.)

But the Gospel was not preached to infants, their minds could not receive it. Where then was the seed or the birth with them? Wherever we see wheat grow we may affirm there was seed and also suitable soil. Where we see a man we may affirm he had parents. And whenever we see regenerated persons we may affirm the word of God was sown into good and honest hearts. This is not because God could not create a man without parents, or regenerate a person without His word, but because these are His well established laws, and He has given no intimation that He will depart from them in any case.

Upon him who affirms that God regenerates infants in contravention of his well established laws rests the burden of proof, and until this proof is forthcoming we deny such regeneration as unscriptural and absurd.

2. The moral regeneration of infants is not required. Although the Bible nowhere asserts that infants are regenerated, the doctrine is inferred from certain things therein stated. In the 3rd of John, Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." From this it is concluded that infants must be regenerated or lost. But Jesus here speaks to a man about men and not about infants. He says at verse 7th "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." Not infants but ye to whom I speak. Jesus also says, Mark xvi 16, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Did He here mean infants? Again He says, Luke 13:5, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Did this embrace infants? But we have the same right to apply the Saviour's words in Luke and Mark to infants as to apply to them His words in the 3rd of John. Infants cannot believe and don't need it in order to be saved; they cannot repent and don't need it; they cannot be regenerated and don't need to be regenerated in order to be saved.

David says in Psalms 51:5, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." Many, fierce and long, have been the battles fought over this passage. One party contending that it has forever settled the doctrine of total depravity and the impossibility of infants being saved without regeneration, and another in his opposing zeal as positively declaring that David meant the sin of his mother and not his own which is equally erroneous as there is nothing necessarily sinful in his birth, so that Jesus might say of it as he had of the blind man in the 9th of John, "Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents" Had either of the above been the true interpretation of the passage David might have leaned upon it as a palliation of his guilt which was most foreign from his mind. He regarded himself as a most deliberate transgressor guilty of known and unspoken criminality, not rolling it off on his parents nor his own total depravity, but standing as an unclerked rebel before God. When convicted of deliberate adultery and murder David uttered these deeply emotional words. How are we to understand David in this passage? Not indeed as uttering a mathematical proposition on which to build a theory of any kind, but using a figure in rhetoric

called *hyperbole*, which figure abounds in the Bible adding greatly to its grandeur and perfection. These figures were not intended to be taken as literal truth and cannot be so used without a manifest wrong on the spirit of truth. For example: Paul when deeply moved by the love of God to himself so unworthy exclaims, "To me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."—Ep. 3:8. To use this literally would exclude Paul from the saints altogether for less than the least of all saints is no saint at all. But to use it as an exaggerated figure of speech to express his deep emotion it answers the inspired purpose of the speaker.

So in Job 4:18, "Behold he puts no trust in his servants and his angels he charged with folly; and (15:15) Behold he putteth no trust in his saints and the heavens are not clean in His sight." What havoc of scripture it would make to take these passages as literal and build theories upon them and argue that God puts no trust in his saints and servants; that He had to censure angels and that heaven like earth was the theatre of sin. In these cases it was the language of deep emotion and must be so understood. David uttered that language when in deep grief over his sin, in the case of Uriah the Hittite. In the verse before he exclaims, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned," which does not mean that I have not committed an offence against man, but rather my crime against a pure and Holy God is so great as to obliterate my sins against every one else. If the passage had anything in support of infant depravity and regeneration David's grief would be over his state before he was a child of God rather than since his sins afterwards.

When the child begotten by David under such circumstances was sick he mourned and fasted, but when it died he arose and washed himself exclaiming, "I shall go to him but he shall not return to me"—2nd Sam. 12:24. Although David's crime had been such that the child must die, yet he had not a lingering doubt of its future happiness and looked rejoicingly forward to the time when the innocent child and the forgiven parent would "strike glad hands" in the presence of Him whose blood cleanseth from all sin. D. C.

(To be continued.)

News of the Churches.

NEW BRUNSWICK.

ST. JOHN ITEMS.

Our young people are taking a special interest in their prayer meetings, the young men taking regular turns in presiding. Their words of encouragement and exhortation are sure to produce good results.

Bro. Capp has been preaching at Nauwigewauk one evening a week during last month. The brethren there are much encouraged, and we hope to see others embracing the truth.

NOVA SCOTIA.

HALIFAX NOTES.

We are thankful to God that we are able to report our little band all well. Also happy to state that we still enjoy the blessed privilege of meeting together to exhort each other and to remember our dear Lord and Master. We all join in congratulating our noble little paper and its editor for supplying us with such a general report of the Annual Meeting. I think I can say for all—We never read the CHRISTIAN with such delight before. We are rejoiced to know that our dear Bro. Crawford remained with the brethren, and was blessed by being instrumental in bringing others into the Church of Christ. Our beloved Brother Carson is with us at present. Recently he has been laboring in the surrounding neighborhood endeavoring to instruct per-