

LETTER BOX

INFANT BAPTISM A SIN.

Before showing that the practice of baptizing infants is a sin, let us ascertain from the Word of God what sin really is. There are four distinct definitions of sin given in the New Testament. The first definition is in James iv., 17. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." According to this, sin, which literally means missing the mark, is negative, and is something beyond a condition or state. It is sin not to do good when knowledge, power and opportunity are possessed for doing so. Failing to do right is sin. Not doing what we are told to do is just as much sin as doing what we are not told to do. The one is as much disobedience as the other, and has appropriate penalty attached, as found in Luke xii., 47. Infant baptism is doing what we are not told to do, and, according to this passage, is sin. The second definition of sin is found in I. John v., 17. "All unrighteousness is sin. Unrighteousness is a departure from that which is straight, upright, or exactly right. It is a coming short of the end, failing to attain unto the will of God as expressed in His Word. This departure may be in thought and desire as well as in act and speech. It may be negative as well as positive. According to this definition, infant baptism is a sin, as it is a departure from that which is straight, even the mind and purpose of God, as declared in His truth.

The third definition is given in I. John iii., 4. "For sin is the transgression of the law." Sin is lawlessness. It is the refusal to obey. Man, who realizes sin in act, manifests the assertion of a selfish will against paramount authority. The will of God is applied to our personal being as well as to our relation to man, to things without, and our duty to God. The law of Moses took notice of man's dealings with himself, with other men, with animals, with harvests, and also of his duty to God. Any violation of any or all of these laws was sin. When, therefore, anyone acts in disregard to God's will there is lawlessness or transgression. The human will becomes the ruler and there is no respect for authority outside of self. The Christian should have his eye directed upward to his Lord, and not inward to his own will. He should permit God, through His Word and Spirit, to choose his path and direct his steps. To refuse to be thus guided by the will and word of God is transgression, or the widest missing of the mark possible to man. Infant baptism, according to this definition, is transgression, or lawlessness, because it is not either directed or sanctioned by the will or word of God.

The fourth definition of sin is found in Romans xvi., 23. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Faith has three elements, each succeeding term of which includes and implies the preceding. There is (a) an intellectual element, or the recognition of the truth of God's revelation as an objective fact, as given in His Word; (b) an emotional element or an assent to that revelation as applicable to the character and conduct; (c) a voluntary element or the surrender to, and appropriation of, that revelation as the source of pardon, peace and life. Faith, in this passage, includes all the elements of true trust, and, according to Romans x., 17, has its source in, and basis upon, the Word of God. The apostle means that whatsoever doctrine, practice, or conduct has not its source in, or basis upon, the Word of God is sin, or missing the mark. Infant baptism has not its source or foundation in the Word of God, but only in tradition. It is therefore sin.

There are yet other reasons for affirming that infant baptism is a sin. 1. It is expressly contradicted in the Scriptures by the pre-requisites of faith and repentance as signs of regeneration. Matthew and John—Matt. xxviii., 19; John iii., 2—speak of baptizing disciples; Mark speaks of baptizing believers; Mk. xvi., 16; Peter speaks of baptizing only those who have first repented and received the word, Acts ii., 38-41. Luke speaks of baptizing men and women who had first believed the good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Acts viii., 13, Acts x., 47, speaks of those being baptized who had first received the Holy Ghost. Infants are none of these.

2. It breaks the connection between the ordinances. No reason can be assigned for restricting to intelligent communicants the ordinance of the Supper which could not equally restrict to intelligent believers the ordinance of baptism. The ordinance of baptism tells of life imparted, the ordinance of the Supper tells of life sustained; and accordingly, if baptism should be administered to unconscious babes, they should also partake of the Lord's Supper. This course is logically consistent, and in the Greek Church has led to infant communion. No argument can be advanced for infant baptism which has not equal weight for infant communion.

3. It forestalls the voluntary act of the child baptized, and thus practically prevents his personal obedience to Christ's commands. The child is made the subject of an act and thereby becomes the member of a church which it may afterward spurn. More than fifty per cent. of those baptized as believers were baptized in infancy. The person baptized in infancy has never performed any act with the intent to obey Christ's command to be baptized. In I. Peter iii., 21, it is declared that baptism gives a good conscience before God. What "conscience" can an infant have in this matter?

4. It obscures and corrupts Christian truth with regard to the sufficiency of Scripture and the inconsistency of an impenitent life with church membership. Infant baptism in England is followed by confirmation as a matter of course, whether there has been any conscious abandonment of sin or not. In Germany a man is always considered a Christian unless he

SILENCE!

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expressly states the contrary; in fact he feels insulted if his Christianity is questioned. At the funerals even of infidels and debauchees the plate used is the dead that die in the Lord." They are believed to have died in the Lord because of their baptism in infancy. Confidence in one's Christianity and hopes of heaven, based only on the fact of infant baptism, are a great obstacle to evangelical truth.

5. It destroys the church as a spiritual body by merging it into the nation and the world. It opens wide the gates and fills the church with a corrupt mass of unregenerate humanity. This practice has always gone hand in hand with the state church and the unbiblical doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Its rise in the history of the church is due to sacramental conceptions of Christianity.

6. It induces a superstitious confidence in an outward rite as possessing regenerating efficacy. Stanley says the French peasants still regard infants as mere animals, members of the brute creation, until baptized. The haste with which the priest or minister is summoned to baptize the dying child, which in some cases is prematurely born, shows that superstition still lingers in many an otherwise evangelical mind in our own country. In the Catholic Catechism, on page 69, we read that baptism is "A sacrament which cleanses from original sin, makes us Christians and children of God, and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven," and that without it one cannot enter into the kingdom. In the Catholic Review we read, "Unbaptized, these little ones go into darkness; but

where there is no law there is no transgression—Rom. ix., 15. What does Paul mean here? Does he mean that there is no sin where there is no law? He does not mean that, for in Romans v., 13, 14, he affirms that in that long period between Adam and Moses, when there was no written law, man was yet in sin. Fourteen years before the sign of law was given to Abraham, while he was yet in heathenism and knowing absolutely nothing about the covenant of works, he was a sinner for it was then that God justified him—Rom. iv., 10, 11. Sin was in the human race long before the law of Moses was given. By a comparison of Romans iii., 20; v., 13, 20; Gal. iii., 19, 21, it will be clear that the apostle means that without written law there can be no knowledge of transgression. Where there is no applied plumb-line there is no revealed crookedness. The law was designed to give a manifest form to the latent sin that dwelt within. Man has always been slow to believe in the deity of the fountain of sin that dwells in human nature for he only fixes his eye upon detached actions of evil. Let us suppose a physician who wishes to convince his patient that a deep seated insidious deadly disease lies rooted within his system. The man is unwilling to believe it. He gives him, then, a medicine which brings to the skin, in numerous ulcers, the evil disorder that lurks within. Now the disease is evident to the eye. The medicine did not produce the disease but only brought it out to view. When there was no applied medicine there was no manifest disorder. This is the idea that the apostle has in mind when he says "Where there is no law there is no transgression."

Man is not excused from sin because of ignorance. There are many who believe in and practice infant baptism in good faith, thinking that it is authorized in the Scriptures when it is not. Are they, therefore, guiltless? No, they are as surely under sin in that practice as those people were during that long period between Adam and Moses.

Does the writer of "The Rev. J. J. Ross vs. Infant Baptism" still believe and affirm that infant baptism has Scriptural authority? He is challenged to produce it. One plain positive declaration of God's word, in principle, precept or practice, will be sufficient, but do not try to build your doctrine upon a type or an inference for by such alone it cannot stand. Your Biblical students are noted; your numbers are many, and surely you are able to find only one place in the Scriptures where the ordinance is described, where its method of administration is given, and where its results are stated. If the Rev. J. B. Scott does not speak "by his silence he gives consent" that such a practice is exclusively a tradition and therefore a sin.

J. J. ROSS.

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baptized, they rejoice in the presence of God for ever. In the English Church Book of Common Prayer it is declared that the infant is "made a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven," in baptism. In the Presbyterian "Confession of Faith," which is the doctrinal standard of the church, on page 91, S. S. I., baptism is called a "seal." A seal is that which secures or makes certain. According to the Confession, baptism seals, secures or makes certain four things for the candidate, there named "his ingrafting into Christ," "regeneration," "remission of sins" and "his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life."

According to Romans iv., 11, circumcision was a "seal," and being such it secures for the flesh, or self-life, the responsibility of obtaining justification by works. Baptism, on the contrary, puts the flesh, or self-life, under condemnation before God as utterly useless, consigns it to death and, as a sign, declares that justification before God now is through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

Speaking of the efficacy of baptism on page 92, S. S. vi., the confession declares that "by the right use of the ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and bestowed by the Holy Ghost." This makes baptism instrumental in regeneration, which is opposed to Scripture. In James i., 18, I. Pet. i., 23, the word of God alone is declared to be the instrument by which the Holy Spirit regenerates. The Holy Spirit is the sole agent in regeneration; the word of God is the exclusive instrument in regeneration; and faith directed to Jesus in His sacrificial capacity is the sole condition of regeneration—John i., 13. How then are those children regenerated who die in infancy? It is not known. Baptism does not save. Salvation is only through the once shed blood. Jesus was no more God's son after His baptism than He was before it. It did not make but only "manifested" disclosed or made known as God's son—John i., 31, 33. There is not a church or body of people who hold to the practice of baptizing unconscious infants but claim that the rite in some way and to some degree possesses saving efficacy. Were an adult convinced that by being baptized he obtained salvation was rendered more secure and should put confidence in that and die in his sins, baptism would be a damnation to him.

It has been shown that the traditional practice of baptizing infants is a sin. Two little words will answer the letter entitled "The Rev. J. J. Ross vs. Infant Baptism." The writer of that article is unfair in that he demands "Thus saith the Lord," as "the ultimate standard of appeal," meaning, of course, direct proofs from Scripture for each statement made, while he himself takes the fathers as "the ultimate standard of appeal." Their divine authority of the fathers is "not accepted as valid," is the Rev. J. B. Scott, of Buxton, the Presbyterian minister there, a Roman Catholic? The doctrine of baptismal regeneration, the real presence transubstantiation. Invoking the Saints, praying for the dead, etc., all have their origin and authority in the fathers. They claim that Jesus taught and believed such things. If the fathers be accepted as divine authority for infant baptism why not for these other erroneous doctrines?

Where there is no law there is no transgression—Rom. ix., 15. What does Paul mean here? Does he mean that there is no sin where there is no law? He does not mean that, for in Romans v., 13, 14, he affirms that in that long period between Adam and Moses, when there was no written law, man was yet in sin. Fourteen years before the sign of law was given to Abraham, while he was yet in heathenism and knowing absolutely nothing about the covenant of works, he was a sinner for it was then that God justified him—Rom. iv., 10, 11. Sin was in the human race long before the law of Moses was given. By a comparison of Romans iii., 20; v., 13, 20; Gal. iii., 19, 21, it will be clear that the apostle means that without written law there can be no knowledge of transgression. Where there is no applied plumb-line there is no revealed crookedness. The law was designed to give a manifest form to the latent sin that dwelt within. Man has always been slow to believe in the deity of the fountain of sin that dwells in human nature for he only fixes his eye upon detached actions of evil. Let us suppose a physician who wishes to convince his patient that a deep seated insidious deadly disease lies rooted within his system. The man is unwilling to believe it. He gives him, then, a medicine which brings to the skin, in numerous ulcers, the evil disorder that lurks within. Now the disease is evident to the eye. The medicine did not produce the disease but only brought it out to view. When there was no applied medicine there was no manifest disorder. This is the idea that the apostle has in mind when he says "Where there is no law there is no transgression."

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