

INFANT BAPTISM.

EXTRACTS FROM REV. N. DOANES' BOOK ON THIS SUBJECT.

OBJECTIONS MET.

I. It is objected, "There is no Scripture precept—no express command—for baptizing infants; therefore the authority upon which they are baptized is not that of the Scriptures."

In answering the objection, it is admitted that there is in the Scriptures no plain, positive command, in so many words, to give the ordinance to infants; but the inference of "no Scripture authority," which the objector has drawn from the premises, does not follow.

It would be gratifying to be furnished and fortified with a "thus saith the Lord," for all that we believe, teach and practice; but in the absence of "express command," legitimate inference, founded upon obvious warrant of Scripture, may indicate the will of God as unmistakably as it is possible for express precept to do it.

No Church waits for express command in all matters of faith or practice; but all classes of Christians proceed upon evidence merely inferential, in matters as important as the administration of the sacraments. We have, for example, nothing like express command for giving either Christian baptism or the Lord's supper to females, and yet no Church withholds these ordinances from this class of its membership. The Church, therefore, that would withhold baptism from infants for want of "express command," would for the same reason, to be consistent, withhold both the sacraments from its female members.

II. "It can do no good; what good can it do to sprinkle a little water upon the head or in the face of an unconscious babe?"

It might as properly be asked "what good will it do to baptize any person in any manner?" It is not our business to ask "what good," or how much or how "little good," it will do to administer baptism to any. We are not required to baptize on the ground that we can estimate the good that may come of it, either directly or indirectly. It is sufficient to believe it to be the will of God; and upon this ground, and no other, can we be justified in giving the ordinance either to infants or adults, or in withholding it from either. There can be no doubt as to the benefit or usefulness of the divine institutions, but our opinion of their utility is not the ground on which we are either to receive or administer them. Abraham might not have been able to pronounce upon the good of circumcising his sons, but he did well in complying with what he believed to be the Divine will in placing the sign of the covenant upon them.

III. "Infant baptism takes away the liberty of the child."

Mr. Woolsey, Baptist, author of a treatise on baptism, says: "Infant baptism deprives the subject of the rights of private judgment." He descants like a patriot upon the "noble and evangelical sentiments of the framers of the Declaration of American Independence, 'That men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty,' etc. He talks of 'our parents' having not the right to take 'advantage of our infancy,' etc.

The whole thing looks like making a man of straw to shoot at. The "liberty of the child," the "right of private judgment," and the "inalienable rights of liberty," are phrases which in their proper connection, indicate an endowment of which none may deprive us without injustice; but in the connection in which Mr. Woolsey has placed them they must mean either, first, "The liberty" of choosing between baptism and no baptism, which is really choosing between religion and no religion, in which case the objection would be equally against all religious teaching of the youthful mind, as the tendency of such teaching is to bias and preposses it in favour of religion, to which no Christian could object; or, second, it must mean "The liberty" of choosing between different modes of baptism.

Now, it is a significant fact, that no class of Christians object to infant baptism (unless it be the Quakers) but those who baptize exclusively by immersion; and they, of all people, should be the very last to declaim about the injustice of "depriving the subject of the rights of private judgment" in the matter of baptism. Do they allow the subject or candidate the right of private judgment in choosing a mode of baptism? Far from it! The objection comes with ill grace from such a quarter. The truth is, we may as well object to a parent proposing to instruct, or in any way endeavoring to pre-engage the faith and affection of the child in favour of any particular system of religious teaching or doctrine, as to object to its baptism. But that it is the duty of all Christian parents to instruct their children, and to train them up, in accordance with their own views of religion, no one will deny, and none are more tenacious of the right than those who urge the objection under consideration.

IV. "Many persons baptized in infancy are dissatisfied with their infant baptism; it should therefore be dispensed with."

No; few persons, comparatively, are dissatisfied with their infant baptism. That the great majority are entirely satisfied with it, it is evident from the fact, in the great majority of the most populous Churches, that the number of infants annually baptised is constantly increasing. The Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1865, baptized 32,891 infants. There was a uniform increase up to 1871, when the number baptized was 54,517, an aggregate increase in six years of 21,626. Since 1869 the number baptized each year is considerably in excess of 50,000. This is probably a fair sample of the increase in American Pedobaptist Churches. These facts do not indicate much "dissatisfaction" with the practice. It is presumed that none would be dissatisfied if they were properly instructed, unless their minds were perplexed and perverted by the selfish intermeddling of proselytizers. Efforts have not been wanting in some communities to disturb the mind of some by the suggestion: "In case you are not satisfied with your infant baptism, you can be baptized again."

No practice of the Church has, in these modern days, met with fiercer opposition from certain classes of professed Christians than that of infant baptism, and the reason is obvious. Unless the baptized in infancy can be disturbed in their belief of the evangelical character of the ordinance thus administered, they can never be proselytized.

V. "Faith is required in order to baptism, (Mark xvi. 16.) 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;' but infants cannot exercise faith; they should not, therefore, be baptized."

Faith, in order to baptism, is required of adults only. The impropriety and injustice of applying the rule (requiring faith in order to baptism) to infants, is seen in the fact that if it be thus applied, it would as surely debar them from salvation as from baptism; because it is said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

We do not believe that infants should not be saved because they cannot believe; why should we believe that infants should not be baptized because they cannot believe? Can a Baptist give an answer to this objection, on the ground of the above question? If (in the light of Mark xvi. 16) not believing be no barrier to an infant's being baptized? "It's a poor rule that won't work both ways." "That which proves too much, proves nothing."

SCRIPTURE WARRANT.

Household Baptisms.

(1.) Acts xvi. 15. "She was baptized, and her household." Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, hearing the apostle preach, was converted and baptized. We can find no other believer in that family, and yet "her household was baptized."

(2.) Acts xvi. 33. "And was baptized, he and all his straightaway." The jail keeper at Philippi and his family were baptized immediately upon his conversion. Though "all his" were baptized, there is no record of the faith of any other person but that of the jailer.

(3.) 1 Corinthians i. 16. "I baptized also the household of Stephanas." Neither Paul nor Luke, his historian, tells how many infants there were in these families; but,

(a.) Of the nine recorded cases of Christian baptism by the apostles, three—a third of them—were household baptisms.

(b.) There were probably as many infants in these three families as there would be in three others, selected at random in these communities.

(c.) During the more than sixty years of the apostles' ministry, we have no account of the baptism of an adult person, who had been brought up by Christian parents, or in a Christian family. A fact rather remarkable, if, in the apostolic age, Christians did not have their infant children baptized. But it would be easily accounted for, and inevitable, on the hypothesis that their infants received the ordinance. In an anti-Pedobaptist community such a thing could never occur, where persons were converted to the Christian religion.

HISTORIC EVIDENCE.

The following is an epitomized statement of the leading facts in the history of infant baptism, embodying conclusions founded upon long and thorough examination of the subject by Dr. Wall, than whom there is no higher authority. And they are hereby commended to the careful attention of the reader:—

"Lastly, as these evidences are for the first four hundred years, in which there appears one man, Tertullian, that advised the delay of infant baptism in some cases; and one Gregory, that did, perhaps, practice such delay in the case of his children, but no society of men so thinking or so practicing; and no man saying it was unlawful to baptize infants: so, in the next seven hundred years there is not so much as one man to be found that either spoke for, or practiced, any such delay. But all on the contrary. And when, about the year 1130, one sect among the Albigenses declared against the baptizing of infants, as being incapable of salvation, the main body of that people rejected their opinions, and they of them that held that opinion quickly dwindled away and disappeared, there being no more heard of holding that tenet till the rising of the German anti-Pedobaptists, A. D. 1522."—Wall, vol. ii, chap. x, p. 501.

The foregoing presentation of the case, it is believed, will amply justify the following conclusions:

1. It is certain that infant baptism was not a debated subject in the apostolic or primitive times. No man appears to have questioned its divine authorization until the twelfth century after Christ. There was not a word of controversy upon the subject, so far as history shows, until the time of Peter Bruis, A. D. 1128.

2. This state of things could not possibly have existed, unless it had been either universally practiced or universally ignored, from the time of Christ down to the time in which the early fathers made undoubted reference to it.

3. It could not possibly have been universally ignored from the time of Christ, to the time these Fathers thus referred to it; being observed by them without objection, and then have found its way into recognition and practice by all classes of professed Christians, by the time of Origen, A. D. 230: unless the ever vigilant and faithful pen of history had taken cognizance of it as an unwarranted innovation.

4. But history has NOT thus recognized it. Not less than six of the Christian Fathers, namely, Irenaeus, A. D. 178; Hippolytus, 222; Epiphanius, 370; Philastrius, 380; who, according to Mosheim, "travelled nearly all over the Roman Empire, combating and endeavoring to convert, errorists of every sort;" Augustine, 428, and Theodoret, 430, (besides Tertullian and others who wrote less extensively upon the subject), wrote each the history of all the sects, schisms, and heresies that were known to have existed from the days of Simon Magus down to their times; describing minutely, and with a careful hand, the rise, progress, and final issue, so far as known, of every erratic theological opinion and anti-Christian practice.

But they have nowhere mentioned INFANT BAPTISM except as DIVINELY INSTITUTED and UNIVERSALLY RECEIVED.

It therefore comes down to us indorsed with an amount and quality of historical evidence that places its apostolic sanction completely beyond all reasonable dispute. And, though we find in the Scriptures its most substantial and decisive support, so that were every syllable of testimony outside of the Bible destroyed, it would still rest on a firm foundation; yet it is gratifying to trace the clear current of historical testimony from its inspired source down to recent ages and mark the sweep of its flow, as it bears to us the hallowed assurance that INFANT BAPTISM IS OF GOD.

OBITUARY.

SAREPTA T. CROWELL.

Sarepta T., daughter of Judah and Sarah Crowell of Bear Point, was called to her eternal home at the age of twenty years. In the month of March, 1876 she publicly professed Christ and was baptized by the Rev. Jos. Coffin in the following May, and received into the Methodist Church. From that time she was very attentive to the means of grace, especially the class-meeting, always being found in her place if at all possible.

In the autumn of that year while engaged in teaching, she was taken sick and compelled to return home. For four months she glorified God in affliction, and was then in His wise providence restored to a sufficient degree of health to resume the work of teaching. It was but for a little. At the end of nine weeks she was again seized with affliction, and so severely that she could not return to her father's house. Medical skill was at once obtained. Her fond mother hastened to the spot, but neither could stay the progress of disease. In a very few days the Divine Father said, "it is enough," "Come up higher," and her glad spirit "winged its flight to the realms of eternal day."

During her sickness she frequently referred to her trust in Christ and the prospect before her. When her mother reached her bedside, she said, "mother, you must not weep for me, I am willing to die, I have a desire to depart and be with Christ. Not long before her departure, while lying in an apparently unconscious state, her last said, "what is your prospect?" when to the surprise of those about her, she roused from her stupor, and replied, "bright glory, bright glory, bright glory." So completely had she won the affection of the people at Woods Harbor, where she was teaching, that they insisted on sharing the expenses of the funeral, and a large number followed her remains to Bear Point where she was interred. Her life and death at Woods Harbor will we believe bear fruit to the glory of God. Rev. W. Keehan, pastor of the Baptist Church in that place, improved the event by preaching a sermon particularly to the young.

After the return of her pastor from Conference, a sermon was preached at Bear Point to an immense concourse of friends. Her Christian life was one of unflinching trust in Christ, and was thus of inestimable value to the Church of her choice. While mourning her departure, they rejoice in the great grace vouchsafed, and pray that her holy life and triumphant death may lead many to the like precious faith.

F. H. W. P.

MRS. HARRIET A. WEST

Beloved wife of Eben West, of White Point, exchanged mortality for life, June the 28th. Sister West was born in Liverpool, N. S. in 1810. At the early age of sixteen she was drawn by the cords of love to give her heart to Christ and her hands to his people. At once she became a very happy and useful Christian, in connection with the people called Methodists, with whom she ever remained strongly attached. In maturer years she sustained the offices of class-leader and Sabbath school teacher, with acceptance and fidelity. As sister West was unostentatious in other matters, so was she in religion. With a heart overflowing with the "milk of human kindness," and full of tender compassion for the distressed. She was unwearied in her efforts to succor the afflicted. If it be a privilege to live in the affections of the poor, then she was largely privileged.

As a wife and mother, loving and devoted, and ever prepared to welcome the minister and his family. For years previous to the close of life, she was the subject of much bodily affliction, but bore it cheerfully. Her last sickness, "bowel consumption," was endured with great patience and resignation to the Master's will. The hour of her departure at last came; surrounded with sorrowing relatives and friends, she quietly passed away to the rest that remaineth to the people of God.

J. JOHNSON.

Port Mouton, Oct. 4, 1877.

HON. CHARLES PERLEY.

Died at Woodstock, N. B., on Sunday, Sept. 23, 1877, Hon. C. Perley. The deceased was born at Manguerville, Sunbury County, January 8th, 1797. When 29 years of age, however, he removed to Woodstock, where he resided till the time of his death. He was actively identified during the greater part of his life, with the agricultural and commercial pursuits of Carleton County which he represented in the House of Assembly for about 20 years, till 1863, when he was elevated to a seat in the Legislative Council. The deceased was one of the first to seek to introduce Methodism into Woodstock. Having borne a chief part in erecting a Methodist church, which was not accomplished without much opposition, he was the means of securing, from what is now the

Richmond circuit, the services of a local preacher, who preached regularly till a stationed minister was appointed. From that time he became a firm and intelligent adherent of the Methodist Church. The step he then took he frequently mentioned to the writer as one for which he ever felt thankful. Though several times during the past year he was prostrated, by what seemed to be his last illness, he survived till Sept. 23rd, when, amidst much suffering, he passed away calmly trusting in the merits of his Redeemer.

C. H. PAISLEY.

Woodstock, Oct. 4, 1877.

ELVIRA JANE ARMSTRONG

was born in Avondale in 1846, and died at her widowed mother's residence on Sept. 22nd, 1877. From her childhood she was surrounded by religious influences, and these together with the prayers and the diligent training of a pious mother resulted in the formation of a character full of love and sweetness. It was not however, until the spring of 1866, when in connection with special religious services, conducted by the Rev. M. McKeown, that she gave her heart to God, and united with the church.

Though she loved the means of grace, she was not long permitted to meet with the people of God in the sanctuary, as she became the subject of severe personal affliction. It seemed as if the Lord had said of her, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction," for for the space of nine years His chastening hand was on her. At times during these years she enjoyed a brief respite from suffering, yet her health was never such as to permit her to attend church except on one or two occasions. In the midst of all her afflictions she could generally console in the wisdom and love of God, and even rejoice in the blessed assurance of Divine favor. Only once did she seem to falter in her trust, and then it was evident that the adversary had taken advantage of her state of physical weakness, to harass her, and to "sift her as wheat;" but though he gained a temporary triumph, she vanquished him by the power of faith, and from that time to the day of her death she never again doubted the love of Christ or lost her assurance of his presence.

As the time of her departure drew near her sufferings, which before were great, became even more intense, yet she manifested no impatience. No word of complaint fell from her. She simply trusted in God, and waited the hour of deliverance. The writer visited her four days before her death, and found her calm and peaceful. She said she felt that she "was going home." He saw her again the night before she died. She believed herself dying and talked of it with the utmost composure. She had "no fear she said, nay, she rather exulted in the prospect of rest. With much feeling she repeated those beautiful words of St. Paul, (Romans viii. 38-39). "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life," etc. Having given her heart to God in health, and having lived by faith, she feared not to enter the "dark valley," knowing she was "Safe in the arms of Jesus." On leaving her for the night, I remarked, "I hope to find you better in the morning," and she replied, "I hope so," and I did, for before I visited her next morning the messenger came. For some hours before the end came her sufferings were indescribable yet she was sustained. During a paroxysm of pain she said to her medical attendant "Doctor do you think this is death?" and when he said she could not endure it much longer she smiled and seemed pleased that deliverance was so near. As the world resumed its toil on the morning of the 22nd ult., her weary spirit freed from all the trammels of the flesh entered into that blessed rest which remains to the people of God. On the following Wednesday we committed her body to the silent tomb in "sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection." J. S.

WHEN THE BIRDS WAKE UP.

A French ornithologist has lately been investigating the question of at what hour in summer the commonest small birds wake up and sing. He states that the greenfinch is the earliest riser, as it pipes as early as half-past one in the morning. At about half-past two the blackcap begins, and the quail apparently wakes up half an hour later. It is nearly four o'clock, and the sun is well above the horizon, before the first real songster appears in the person of the blackbird. He is heard half an hour before the thrush; and the chirp of the robin begins at about the same length of time before that of the wren. Finally, the house sparrow and the tomtit occupy the last place on the list. This investigation has altogether ruined the lark's reputation for early rising.