

# BAPTISM.

An Essay, by Arthur Popham Stanley, D. D. Dean of Westminster.

In those feeble eras, in those inconclusive movements, there is the first stirring of the giant within;—the first dawn of that reasonable soul which will never die; the first budding of the spiritual form which is the deep of that little chaos sleep.

Thomvestment of this first beginning with a religious and solemn character teaches us that, as we must grow from infancy to manhood, so also we must grow from the infancy, the limited perception, the narrow faith, the stunted hope, the imperfect knowledge, the strained affections of the infancy of this mortal state to the full grown manhood of our immortal life. It suggests that we have to pass from the momentary baptism of unconscious infants through the transforming baptism of fire and the Spirit—that is, of Experience and of Character—which is wrought out through the many vicissitudes of life and the great change of death.

4. There are many other changes consequent on the substitution of infant baptism. The whole institution of sponsors is of a later date. In the early centuries the answers were made for the child as a general rule by the parents. The creation of a new series of spiritual affinities was the result of transferring to the child the dramatic form which had been originally used for grown up converts. This modern system of sponsor doubtless has its social and moral advantages; but it was with the view of meeting the obvious difficulties which so complex an arrangement awakens in the minds at least of the uneducated, that the Royal Commissioners on the Rubrics on one occasion recommended that the whole of that part of the Baptismal Service should be made optional. This, with many other sensible proposals, were rejected by the Lower House of the Southern Convocation. The connection of the Christian name with Baptism is also a result of the change. Properly speaking, the name is not given in Baptism, but having been already given, the person baptized is then publicly recognized as the bearer of the name which stamps his personality. In the case of the adult baptism of the early ages this was obvious. Flavius, Constantius had always been Flavius Constantius, and Aurelius Augustinus always Aurelius Augustinus. It was only when the time of the name-giving and of the baptism, as in the case of infants, so nearly coincided, that the two came to be confounded.

Confirmation, which once formed a part of Baptism, has been separated from it, and turned into a new ordinance, which in the Roman Catholic Church has been made into another sacrament. Along with this distinction between Confirmation and Baptism has taken place another change—the absolute prohibition throughout the Western Church of infant Communion, which in the early Church was, as it still is in the East, the inseparable accompaniment of infant baptism.

In early ages, as in the Eastern church, Confirmation was the title given to the unctum which accompanied baptism; in the later Roman Church, and in most of the Protestant Churches, it is the title given to the open adoption of the Christian faith and life in mature years.

Another curious series of changes has taken place in regard to the persons who administered Baptism. In the early centuries it was only the Bishop and this is probably the origin of the Canon by the Episcopal order of that part of the old Baptism which, as we have just said, is what we now call Confirmation. Thus as the Episcopate became more separate from the Presbyterate, as the belief in the paramount necessity of Baptism became stronger, as the populations of Christendom increased, the right was extended to Presbyters, then to deacons, and last to Laymen, and, in defiance of all early usage, to women. And thus it has happened, by one of those curious interversions of sentiment, which are so instructive in ecclesiastical history; that whilst in Protestant Churches which lay least stress on the outward rite, the administration is virtually confined to the clergy; in the Roman Catholic Church, which lays most stress on the rite, the administration is extended to the laity and to the female sex. It is a formidable breach in the usual theories concerning the indispensable necessity of the clerical order for the administration of the sacramental rites and it is difficult to see what is the difference in principle in the Roman Catholic Church has so rendered the practice with regard to one sacrament so exceedingly lax, with regard to the other so exceedingly rigid.

Such are some of the reflections suggested by the revolutions through which the oldest ordinance of the Church has come down to our day. They may possibly make that ordinance more intelligible both to those who adopt and to those who have not adopted it. They may also serve to show in one instance, the transformation both of letters and spirit which have taken place in many other examples.

## THE END.

### FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

There is no subject connected with matters of religion of greater importance than forgiveness of sins, and of all Bible questions, this appears to be the least understood, judging by much of the teaching and preaching of the present day.

The words of inspiration declare that "all have sinned," and if we die in our sins we can never reach the abode of the holy and pure in the presence of God. No question then can be of greater importance to all than "How can I know assuredly that my sins are forgiven? If I am in doubt here I am unhappy. A question which embraces my peace and happiness here, and all the pleasures and joys of an ETERNITY world, should demand my deepest thought, and most earnest and careful attention.

In order to my happiness here, and in the future life, I must become a child of God and know that I am such. The effect of sin is that the sinner is guilty and liable to punishment—forgiveness does not destroy the FACT that he sinned, but it cleanses the guilt, and dismisses the penalty. He whom I sin against is the only party who can forgive me, I cannot by any process of penitence and tears forgive myself. These statements require no proof, they are self-evident facts. I may sin against another, or against society, and a society may sin against me, and all may sin against God. In all cases the one sinned against is the only one who can forgive. Suppose I sin against A, if I am forgiven A must do it, and before I can believe I am forgiven by A, he must in some manner impart a knowledge of the fact to me. My forgiveness is in the mind of A first as a PROMISE, next as a PROMISE, and lastly it becomes a fact. But it is yet with him and must so remain until he chooses to reveal it to me. I must await his WILL, and the act by which the knowledge is imparted that I am forgiven. 1st. He MAY impart it directly or immediately to my consciousness. 2nd. He MAY convey it to me by some sensible sign previously agreed upon as the proof of my forgiveness. 3rd. He may forgive me through a law of stipulated terms or conditions, upon complying with which I can rest assured of the FACT that he has forgiven me. 1st. Is the first supposition true? No, I am not conscious of what transpires outside of myself. The Act of forgiveness belongs to A, it therefore takes place outside of me, and I am not conscious of pardon while it remains in the mind of another. 2nd. Is this hypothesis true. Is it some feeling, emotion, or some SENSE perception, that has been determined upon as the proof of my forgiveness? If so, what is the particular FEELING or SENSATION? Everyone experiences feelings, and emotions, Catholic and Protestant, Hindu and Pagan, saint or sinner, how may I know which feeling, or which emotion, is the one that is proof of my forgiveness? Is it a feeling of peace or an emotion of joy—who said that either feelings or emotions were to be accepted by me as proof? Clearly, God never said so, and as the idolater possesses the same feelings and emotions as the seeker after the true God (each believing firmly in his God) it is conclusive that feelings or emotions are no proof whatever. Paul was conscientious, and FELT that he was doing right when he persecuted and wasted the churches of Christ, as much so as when he afterwards preached Christ and him crucified. In order that any condition of feeling might be accepted as satisfactory proof, it must be ANTECEDENTLY declared to be evidence by him alone who is to forgive, and it must be distinctly set forth so that I could not mistake it, or be at a loss to select it from others, which I may experience. This it appears to me would be next to impossible.

3rd. God has selected a different and more satisfactory mode of assurance. He has given me a law regarding salvation, containing certain conditions clearly set forth, upon compliance with which, He promises to forgive all my sins. More than this I do not require, and can not have, God's promises are sure, and can never fail. The law which God has given me is the Gospel, "The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus." He says if I will comply with His law, I shall be pardoned. I believe him with all my heart, and do comply, and I forgive myself. I do not, it is because I do not believe his word. If my faith (which comes by hearing God's word) is strong, my emotions of joy will be great. I feel right, because I have done right, (done God's will), not that I am right, because I feel right, this is a common fallacy, there is a vast difference between forgiveness of sins, and reformation of life. Much confusion exists in the religious world at this point, to illustrate, a man has lived a life of wickedness, his chief offence has been theft, he is warned of the terrible destiny of the wicked, becomes aroused and alarmed, decides to reform, says I will quit sinning in this manner, and get a living honestly. A great change is noticed in him, his neighbors are astonished, and the church say he has "got religion," he realizing the change in his life feels good, and believes he has been forgiven. Man always feels as he believes—if he is pardoned, he has forgiven himself, by his reformation of life, he believed he was wrong, and turned from his wrong doing to a better life, from that point his life is changed, he is a different man.

By his faith and repentance he has become changed in heart and life, but his previous life remains unchanged, he was in a state of guilt under sin. Has he been forgiven the sins of all his former life? If so, who has forgiven him? He was guilty of theft, what has taken away that guilt? It is not taken away. God only can reach the past and forgive his sins, this he does on our complying with the terms of His will. If the sinner has been forgiven without this, then he has been without the blood of Christ, and without the atonement of Christ, as all the change has been produced by his own reformation, and he can now reform because of his fears and anxiety, on account of the threatening penalty of the broken law of his God, and not on account of any love for Christ whatever. As with the Salvation Army and many others like them, by a series of prayers, excitements, songs and shootings, a change is produced in the feelings and emotions, which they believe and teach is forgiveness wrought in the heart by the Spirit, they feel to be saved, hence they believe they are saved. They rest upon the state of their feelings as a proof of their forgiveness, instead of resting upon the promises annexed to the terms of forgiveness contained in God's word.

The apostles taught that he that believed Christ with all his heart turned from his sins to God by repentance—was buried with Christ by Baptism, was saved, forgiven, pardoned, his heart changed by faith, his life changed by repentance, his state changed by baptism, by these steps he has reached the blood of Christ, where God pardons. Christ's blood was shed at his death, and he reaches that death in his emblematic burial (by baptism) with Christ, being thereby baptized "into His death," and arises to walk in a new life, which begins at that point. He is now a new creature, being "in Christ," he was an alien, he is now naturalized, has become a "fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God. He has the promises of God's word to rest upon, doubts and fears are strangers to him, he knows he has believed and obeyed the Gospel, and he believes God has forgiven him, because He promised to do so, on the condition with which he has now complied. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." God gives remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to them who obey Him. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

U. J. BANCLAY.

### A CONVERT FROM CHINA.

At the Central Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky, U. S. A., to-night, July 19, in the presence of an overflowing audience, I baptized Jen Hawk, a Chinese. He came to America four years ago. He can now read and write our language very well. He speaks, I understand, English intelligently. He has attended a secular night school in this city a number of months, besides having been taught the Bible every Sunday afternoon, for two years past, at the Y. M. C. A., by Miss Sue Robinson, a devoted member of the Central Church. I have had a number of talks with him before he came to confess and obey Christ to-night. I found him earnest and determined in purpose to become a Christian. He has a clear view of, and firm

grip on, the essential truths and facts of the gospel, with a distinct understanding of his duty to obey Christ, some eight or ten of his Chinese friends were present and occupied seats as a token of their respect for their companion's solemn step in a new life. While many came, doubtless, out of curiosity, Jen Hawk's earnest spirit in confession, and reverential approach to the waters of baptism, lushed all to a solemn stillness. So far as I know this is the first Chinese ever baptized in one of our Churches. It may be that God has a work for this man in connection with our contemplated work in China. Let many hearts pray that he may grow in faith and knowledge in the heart of his useful teacher, who witnessed this whole scene. Almost three years ago she took this heathen boy as her only pupil, he unable to understand a word of hers and she unable to understand him. Every Lord's day, through the heat of summer and the cold of winter, she travelled over a mile to teach this one heart, for which Christ died, the way of life. Her heart of faith never faltered, and to-night she saw the work of her faith, the labor of her love, bear fruit in the confession and obedience of her pupil. Wherever duty and opportunity calls, let others, by this example, take courage to go and work, and leave it with God to give the increase in His own way and at His own time. [Standard.]

The Christian is required to always abound in the works of the Lord. We should endeavor to do something for the cause of Christ each day we live; and if we spend our life thus we shall enjoy the consolation of a quiet conscience and the bright prospects of a home in a purer and brighter world than this. Then let us always abound in the works of the Lord, since the Scriptures teach that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

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