

These Little Ones Which Believe

A Plea for Early Baptism



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THESE LITTLE ONES WHICH BELIEVE.

A PLEA FOR EARLY BAPTISM.



BY

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A FOREWORD.

THE single purpose of this little book is that of emphasizing the importance and validity of early baptism. While it cannot be denied that in the early church the practice of baptizing infants was universal, not so much can be said of the church of the present. For this, grave misconceptions, both as to the meaning of the sacrament and of what it requires on the part of the recipient, are to blame. Few will deny that a quickening of the conscience of Christian parents touching their obligations in this respect to their little ones is the religious need of the present. But while earnest souls are both laboring and praying for such a quickening, it is certain that it cannot be expected until these misconceptions are removed. To this end this little book aspires to contribute. Its purpose is concrete, rather than dogmatic; it appeals to the Christian parent rather than to the theologian.

But while such is the single purpose, its author

(iii)

entertains no hope of escaping criticism in respect of some of his positions. Indeed, it may be questioned whether a book to which no exceptions can be taken would be worth the writing, for in such a book no new truth, or even an original conception of an old, could possibly find expression. Particularly is this true of all books that trench on the realm of the dogmatic.

To earnest men doctrines are sacred. They are so for the very good reason that doctrine and life are organically related, that sooner or later the former is sure to pass over into the latter. A difference in doctrine makes a difference in life. But, when it is all said, is it not too often the case that it is *my* conception of some particular doctrine that concerns me the most—and *my* conception of some particular truth that is the truest? It is strange that this fact does not make us more charitable in our judgment of others to whom truth is as dear as it is to us—but it does not. So jealous are we of our conceptions, so thoroughly convinced are we that our vision sweeps the uttermost limit, that we suspect every voice struggling to give its own expression to this same truth, but which perchance does not speak with our own ac-

cent. Some day we shall see eye to eye ; some day we shall all speak the pure language of the Canaan—but that will not be until we shall have ceased to know but in part.

That the views presented in this little book are thoroughly Scriptural the writer has no doubt. That they are also in accord with the great confession of the church that he loves is also his sober conviction.

J. A. H.

CANTON, OHIO.

“These Little Ones Which Believe.”

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. FAITH	9
II. MISCONCEPTIONS	17
III. THE OBJECT OF FAITH	27
IV. LOVE AND FAITH	35
V. EVANGELICAL FAITH	47
VI. ARE CHILDREN CAPABLE OF FAITH?	55
VII. THE UNIVERSAL NECESSITY OF REGENERATION	69
VIII. REGENERATION AND BAPTISM	79
IX. INFANT BAPTISM	93
X. THE BENEFITS OF INFANT BAPTISM	107

The Reformation failed to purge out the rationalistic leaven contained in the definition of faith. The rationalistic reaction toward the close of the seventeenth century brought the old intellectualistic conception of faith into renewed currency. Unfortunately, it still survives.
—LEWIS FRENCH STEARNES.

THESE LITTLE ONES WHICH BELIEVE.

CHAPTER I.

FAITH.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.—HEBREWS XI. 1.

WHAT is faith? Few questions have been so frequently asked or so often answered. And the reason is that in the fields of religious inquiry no question is of greater importance. Sometimes faith has been defined as a faculty. Sometimes as a sixth sense, by means of which spiritual realities are known. Sometimes it has been regarded as the verbal equivalent of belief. Indeed, the definitions that have from time to time been given of faith are both multitudinous and widely different.

Nor ought this to surprise us. Some things because of their very nature are indefinable. Such

a thing is love. Definitions of love may serve to enlarge our conceptions of its real nature, but it is not within the power of speech to tell all that love is. Love is always something greater than any definition can make it. John tells us that "Love is of God" and that God Himself is love. And these facts place it beyond the limits of any possible definition. It is so with faith. It persistently refuses to be circumscribed by the limits of definitions, and is always something greater, higher, wider, deeper than words can make it. The greatest thinker, however gifted in conception or facile in speech, in the attempt to tell what faith is must at last lay aside his pen and acknowledge that it is vastly more than he has or can describe it as being. No doubt the best definition of faith that has ever been given is the one given by Paul—"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." But who can tell us the full meaning even of these words?

For these reasons the term faith has been used in almost every conceivable sense. The superstition of the African or Hindoo, the belief of the savage in charms and incantations, have sometimes

been spoken of as faith. The confidence which enables the astronomer to await with calm certainty the verifications of his mathematical computations has also been spoken of as faith. Columbus directing his caravels westward over an unknown sea, assured that the evidences of the existence of a western land were entirely trustworthy, has frequently been cited as an illustrious example of faith. The certainty of a fixed order in nature which moves the husbandman to sow his fields, confident of a harvest ; Abraham, denying the instincts of fatherhood, binding his son upon the altar, in the firm belief that God would raise him up ; the little child going out into the night, with its hand in that of its father and on that account fearing no evil, each and all are but a few instances which might be given of the wide and diversified uses to which the term faith has been and is at present applied. No doubt, in each of these instances, faith in some form is present ; perhaps in every act of belief faith in the lesser ranges of its activity is operative. But belief, however firm, so long as it involves merely the intellect, is not Scriptural faith. The belief of the husbandman in the fixed order of nature never

rises to the dignity of faith, for at best it but prompts to toil, looking for seed-time and harvest. The confidence with which the astronomer looks into the heavens, doubting not that his carefully computed tables will be verified in the onward march of the heavenly bodies, is not the thing of which the writer of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews so eloquently speaks. Even the intellectual conviction that rests upon abstract truth as its basis is not one in nature with evangelical faith. The invariable characteristic of such faith, a characteristic by which it is distinguished from all else that may bear the name, is that it alone rests on a personal being, whom it beholds back of all and in His righteousness and truth finds the ground of its certitude.

And this is to say that in the Scriptures the term faith is used in a specific sense and carries with it a meaning that it does not possess in secular literature or in common speech. Nor is this exceptional. Terms descriptive of spiritual realities seldom if ever have or can have a fixed meaning. Their meaning varies with the subject treated and the conceptions of the author who uses them, and the meaning that any such term may have in

any instance is to be determined in the light of the subject treated and the thought which it is designed to express. Even the familiar term, light, has not always the same meaning. As used in common speech and by the untrained, it stands for the absence of darkness. But as used by the scientist, in its strictly scientific sense, it may have no relation to darkness at all, for when the scientist speaks of light he thinks not of darkness, but of the pulsations of ether, for his superior knowledge has taught him that the absence of darkness is but an accident that may or may not attend the presence of light. In determining, therefore, the meaning of the terms, we need to be in touch with both the thought of the writer and the subject of which he is speaking.

And this is pre-eminently true in respect of the term faith. As used by inspired writers and in the discussion of themes purely spiritual, it carries with it a meaning other than any that it may possess in uninspired poetry or secular literature. It could not be otherwise. Either new words must be coined or old terms used in other than their ordinary sense when themes spiritual and eternal become the subject of discussion. But

the theme of the New Testament is specific and altogether unique. Its writers are not, in the ordinary sense, either scientists, historians, or philosophers. Nor are the themes which they set forth the same as those that make up the subject matter of secular thought and literature. The single theme of the Scriptures is : God's plan for saving man. Its history traces the special line of God's action, continued through time, looking to that end. From first to last the Bible is a record of God's gracious action among men, continued in the course of history through the ages until it culminates in the great revelation of God in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself through His death upon the cross. And this truth must not be lost sight of for a moment. The habit of thinking of the Scriptures as merely a revelation of truths, or doctrines, or precepts recorded in a book, has done immense harm. It has always, when persisted in, tended to arrest the thought so that it stops short, and is in danger of resting on the book with its propositions and doctrines instead of passing through these to the living God. The Bible is not an arsenal of proof texts, or a repository of doctrines, or even a collection of

precepts and rules for the government of the life. It is not, except in a secondary sense, even a revelation of truth. From Genesis to the Apocalypse of John it is a revelation of a personal God as an All-wise, All-loving, and All-righteous Being, and contains a disclosure of the relations into which, through Christ, He desires to bring all men with Himself.

It is, therefore, in the light of the subject treated and a knowledge of the thought which the inspired writers are aiming to convey, that we are to determine the meaning of the term faith as used in the Scriptures. What faith in its ordinary sense may be or what it may help man to achieve in things secular and temporal are of no concern to the inspired writers. Dealing with things spiritual and eternal a new and enlarged meaning is given to the term, and the question for us to determine is, What conception had they of faith and what would they have us regard it as being?

There is a belief that it is mere intellectual assent founded on evidence that satisfies the mind, or, if direct evidence is wanting, on the testimony of someone who knows. When the act of believing is represented as a Christian duty and privilege, these inferior forms of belief are too easily accepted as sufficient. But faith is not mere intellectual assent—it is not mere belief on testimony. It is not even the intellectual acceptance as true of what God has said. Faith is not faith without the element of personal confidence, self-commitment—trust.—CLARKE, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, page 357.

CHAPTER II.

MISCONCEPTIONS.

Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well. The devils also believe and tremble.—JAMES XI. 19.

WE have just been saying that the term faith when used in its evangelical sense possesses a specific meaning. In its nature Christian faith is *sui genesis*. Whether regarded in the light of its origin, of the object upon whom it lays hold, or considered from the standpoint of the work that it accomplishes, it stands alone and unique. And this is so, because it is Christian faith. It is characteristic of the religion of Christ that it exalts everything with which it is brought into relation. In the realm of experience it perpetually repeats the miracle of Cana—changing the ordinary into the extraordinary, turning the common water of earth into wine. And what it does in the realm of experience it does in respect of our powers; all find in this religion their normal field of activity and for this reason also their highest development.

It is so with the power of faith. Christ tells us that it is the gift of God. And being His gift, it has not only its specific purpose, but finds in this purpose its perfect life. If the life of the body were all, if life were no more than meat or the body than raiment, the gift of faith would not be needed. The instinct that makes it possible for the bird to secure its food, that teaches it to build its nest and guides it in its unerring flight from "zone to zone," would have served every purpose of man. It is because his destiny is beyond, because God is his home, because the things for which he has been created and with which he needs to be brought into vital touch are unseen and eternal, that he needs faith. For these purposes and for these alone has faith been given, and in the working out of these purposes do we see it in the Scriptures. Instead, therefore, of the usual inquiry, "What is faith?" we must substitute the more specific question, "What is Christian faith?"

Let us hasten to own that Christian faith is not mere intellectual assent to any truths as such. Possibly, in the case of the immature Christian, faith may rise but little above the assent of the intellect to truths put in verbal form. But even

then, such assent is secondary and subordinate. Upon truths alone, faith cannot lay hold with the full power of its life or derive from them the necessary stimulus for the accomplishment of its divine task. It accomplishes its higher and truer work when it unites the believer with Christ, and through such union makes him partaker of the divine life. In the nature of the case simple assent to creeds or systems cannot be the appointed work of Christian faith. It is not truths that save, but the Truth. "I," says Christ, "am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." After all, the highest expression of truth is the Perfect Person. Jesus not only gave utterance to truths, He Himself was "the Truth" in its concrete and essential form. Systems may contain truth. Truth may find its expression in creeds, but it is the personal Truth who alone has power to save. The failure to recognize this has done and is yet doing untold harm. It has forced Christ into the background—has divided christendom into a multitude of warring sects, zealous indeed for truths, but too often losing sight of the personal Truth, Christ Jesus, in whom all believers are to be made one, even as He and the Father are One.

It cannot be stated too plainly, or with too great insistence, that it is not truths wrought in creeds or confessions that become the true object of saving faith, but the personal Truth, even Jesus. In the Apostles' Creed we have what is without doubt the most concise and generally accepted of all the confessions of the church. So really is it an epitome of the great truths of the word of God, as that, having studied the New Testament, it becomes impossible to formulate its teachings without using the terms of this oldest of the confessions. Yet it is possible to assent to each of its statements, and yet be devoid of faith. No doubt every article of this confession is true. Every such article confessedly rests solidly on the word of God. But truths alone, and as such, are not the basis of saving faith.

It is at this point that we need clearly to distinguish. Truths, even the truths of the Scriptures, are not the object of Christian faith. Even the Bible, if not rightly conceived, may become a vain object of belief. The moment it is regarded as a revelation of truths that are to be believed, to the saving of the soul, it becomes a false anchorage. He who though sometimes unrecognized,

but who yet lives and moves on every page of the inspired word, He who is the true content of the Scriptures, must be laid hold of, for until the soul finds Him it misses the very kernel of the Scriptures on the side of its saving revelations. Appropriate here are the words of Prof. L. F. Stears, in his recent book, entitled "The Evidence of Christian Experience." He says: "A very common definition makes faith intellectual assent to the truth of certain doctrines. But while faith may involve such assent, this is secondary and subordinate. The rationalistic tendency, so manifest in the theology of the last century, nowhere comes more plainly to light than in this definition, inherited as it is from the Roman Catholic Church. It reduces the most sacred and spiritual act of religious life to a matter of intellectual acceptance. Neither is faith a conviction of the reality of what is unseen. The belief of the man of science in the existence of atoms and energy and ether, which he cannot see, may be a kind of faith, but it is not the kind which we have in our analysis of the Christian experience. It resembles Christian faith in so far as both are concerned with a region beyond the discovery of sense. But that is all.

In their essence the two kinds of faith are radically different, in correspondence with the difference of the two spheres to which they belong. Christian faith is a much simpler matter. It is the act of trust in God by which we receive and trust Jesus Christ alone for salvation.”

And so, too, a knowledge of the historic Christ—a knowledge of all that He did and said—may be possessed and faith still be wanting. Without question, the scribes and Pharisees knew more of the outward, the historic, Christ than do we. Of most of the audiences to which Christ spoke, they formed a part. Persistently they followed Him from place to place as He made the tours of His earthly ministry. They crowded themselves with utter immodesty into the seclusion even of His private life. They were witnesses of most, if not all, of His miracles. They also knew the teaching of the prophets concerning His coming, and how completely in Him these prophecies were fulfilled. They were witnesses of His shameful trial, and around His cross they stood, beholding the darkness at mid-day. They were witnesses of the earthquake and the mighty happenings in testimony of the divinity of the One who there

gave up His life. Nor were they ignorant of His resurrection, on the morning of the third day, for it was these very men who conceived and put into the mouths of the watchers beside the tomb the lie concerning the stealing of His body by the disciples. None, not even the intimate associates of Jesus, knew better than did the Pharisees the minutest detail of Christ's claims and history, for no eyes are so keen as those of hate. And, knowing these facts, they also believed them. For the mind has no choice between believing and disbelieving what is known to be true. But, knowing all these things, they were without Christian faith. The intellect, constrained by evidence that could not be disputed, was convinced, and, as a consequence, belief was engendered, but the heart, without which no one can believe "unto righteousness," refused to love, and the faith which is "wrought by love" remained unborn.

To contend, therefore, that a system of truth must first be mastered before faith can come into being is to betray ignorance, both of the nature of faith and also of the relation of faith to knowledge in the experience of men.

It is against this error that Martensen protests in

these earnest words, "If we hold fast the truth that salvation is an individual thing and yet are not satisfied with simple faith in the Redeemer as the ground for our salvation, we shall be in danger of reposing in a certain set of propositions, trusting that if we hold them we may be indifferent to everything else." So also said the thoughtful Julius Muller, "We must regard the conviction that the faith which saves does not consist in the adoption of a series of articles of faith, but in an absolute and trustful surrender of one's self to the personal Saviour, a surrender of which the simplest child is capable."

So, likewise, Dr. Jacobs in his "Elements of Religion:" "Faith has its intellectual side; but it is not mere assent to any doctrine or to any number of doctrines. It is essentially a matter of the heart and will. It is the sinking of my will into God's will, the harmonizing of my heart with God's heart."

We never will get right on the question of evangelical faith until we accept, without reserve or qualification, the truth that "with the heart," and not with the head, man believeth unto righteousness. The question as to the existence of

faith in any given case can never be determined by an inquiry into the degree of intellectual knowledge that may be possessed, nor is the presence of such faith in the heart conditioned on either age or experience.

The object of faith is Christ in the totality of His person, not merely a particular work or suffering of Christ, still less the fruits thereof. Faith enters into a substantial, mystical union with the whole person.—DORNER.

CHAPTER III.

THE OBJECT OF FAITH.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.—
ACTS XVI. 31.

SINCE faith is a living thing and since its seat is the heart, a study of its object logically precedes a study of its nature. Experience proves that different objects are known by means of different faculties. Thus ideas appeal specifically and primarily to the intellect. To the mind they become objects in a sense that they do not and cannot to the sense or to the heart. On the other hand, material qualities appeal more particularly to the sense. Weight, color hardness, indeed all the various phenomena of matter, are known through the sense and become objects to no other knowing power of man. The heart also has its specific objects. The heart helps us little in the solution of purely intellectual questions, and it is just as helpless in making known to us material qualities. Its distinctive realm is that of the

spiritual and the personal. Whatever belongs to the realm of the personal and spiritual becomes an object to the heart, for the reason that by the heart these realities can best be known.

Accordingly, when once the object apprehended is known, it becomes easy for us to locate the particular faculty or power by which it is apprehended. It is, therefore, for the sake of the light that the inquiry touching the object of faith throws on the nature of faith itself that we here consider it. What, then, is the object of Christian faith? We have tried to make it clear that it is not a set of propositions. That truths, even the truths of God's word, are not the object of saving faith. To have read the Scriptures, however carelessly, is to have learned that Christ, and Christ alone, is the object, the true content, of Christian faith. It is not truths, therefore, but a person that is laid hold of in every saving outreach of the soul.

It is true that we sometimes speak of faith in God's word. We endeavor for certain reasons to stimulate in ourselves and in others faith in the promises. But neither the word nor the promises can be the true or ultimate object of evangelical

faith. We speak of faith in the promises because in practical experience it is impossible at all times to use language in strict accordance with the facts, for, in a subordinate sense, faith does rest upon the promises. It is unfortunate that the English word "faith" has no cognate verb, but is dependent for such companionship upon the dissimilar verb "believe." If it were possible to coin an appropriate word—a word that would express the true action of faith—we would be vastly richer for the purpose of expression. We would then not be compelled to speak of faith in the promises at the moment when we desire to express simply our belief in them. Nevertheless, with speech as it is, we recognize that it is only in a secondary and subordinate sense that one can have faith in the promises. A moment's reflection will bring anyone to see that even here faith must ultimately rest upon Christ. It is faith in Him, confidence in His integrity, that inspires confidence in His promises. It is because He is "faithful who has promised" that we regard the promises as trustworthy. We do not believe certain promises because we have no confidence in the person who made them. We do

place implicit reliance in the promises of others because we have confidence in the persons by whom such promises have been made. Confidence in the man gives confidence in the promise. And so in respect of the promises of Christ. His integrity, His trustworthiness, His absolute righteousness, make it impossible that He should deceive. It is, therefore, upon Him that we at least rest, even when we think that we are resting upon His promises. First and last, the object of faith is Christ. It is in this fact that the essential distinction between the religion of Jesus and every other consists. It alone rests upon the personal relationship of the disciple with the Master. Wherever this idea has been departed from, Christianity has lost its power. And so on the contrary, in the precise measure that this truth has been kept in the foreground, has the Christian religion become a transfiguring and all-conquering power. Out of devotion to Jesus have arisen all those enduring forms of heroism that have glorified the history of the church. "For His sake" His disciples have deemed it a privilege to live in solitude and in dungeons, and rejoiced to lay down their lives at the stake. No trial has been too

great for the sake of "the name." And it is this devotion to Jesus that has ever irradiated the private experience of the Christian with the brightness of Sonship. "To me," says Paul, summarizing his religion, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain," for that too is to depart and to be with Him.

Nor is that all. Recognizing that no man hath life in himself, that we live alone as we live in Him, dependent, even as the branch is dependent upon the vine, the believer clings to Christ as his only hope. First and last, the personal relationship of the believer to Jesus is the essence of the religion He inaugurated. "Come unto me, all ye that weary and are heavy laden," are His words to the sin-burdened. "I am the vine, ye are the branches." "He that believeth in me" is the familiar phrase in which He expresses the condition of the new life which He is ever willing to communicate. The personal, ever-living Christ is pre-eminently the object, yea, the only object, of Christian faith.

But this Christ, revealed that we might both know and believe on Him, is the historic Christ. Not a creation of the imagination or one who may

be known apart from His word and the operation of the Holy Spirit, but the Christ of Bethlehem, of Calvary, and of the tomb. "The one who for us men and our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, who suffered and was buried, and the third day arose again for our justification." No other Christ is known in the Scriptures, for besides Him there is no other. He alone has power to save ; and this Christ, in all that for which He stands, is the object of saving faith.

But in determining the object of faith we have also determined the estimate that is to be put upon creeds and confessions. Their value is to be estimated by the help that they afford to a better understanding of Christ and His saving work. Apart from this they have no value. The Christ confessed in the creed, and not the creed, is the essential thing. What the alpenstock is to the traveler in the mountains, affording in slippery places a means of safety as he climbs upward toward the summit, this creed and doctrine are to the believer. They afford safety to the believer

amid the perils to which everyone, however he may flatter himself to the contrary, is constantly exposed in his religious thinking. They put in simple form the saving truths upon which no one dare even for a moment loose his hold. In this light have creeds been regarded by the church. But back of all, eclipsing all, giving meaning to all, is the personal Christ in whom alone faith is to rest.

Faith is a moment in the idea of love.—JULIUS MULLER.

Trust, or faith, is a manifestation of love. Faith, or trust, is the primary manifestation of love to the heavenly Father as it is of a child's love to its earthly father.—PROF. HARRIS, *God the Creator and Lord of All*, page 326.

That which saves the soul is faith, not belief. God demands the heart of man, because the heart once gained and changed all the rest follows, while the gift of all the rest without the heart is only seeming and leaves the man in his first estate.—AUGUSTE SABATIER, *Religions of Authority*, page 335.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE AND FAITH.

Love is of God, and everyone that loveth is of God and knoweth God.—1 JOHN IV. 7.

BETWEEN love and Christian faith there is a most intimate connection ; indeed, neither can exist without the other. In the seventh chapter of Luke, Christ identifies the two. It was Mary's love to Him that poured itself out in the ointment with which she anointed His feet, and it was her trust in Him that secured the forgiveness of her sins. Speaking to Simon, Christ says of Mary, "Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much." A moment later, addressing Mary, He said, "Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace." To us, seeing as we do through a glass darkly, love and faith seem to be distinct realities, but to Him, who was able to look into the heart and trace things to their source, they were regarded as one. And yet, if the object of saving faith is, as we have just learned, a person and not a truth, a spir-

itual being and not a system of thought, it could not be otherwise.

It hardly needs to be proven that a person, and by that term we mean all for which it rightly stands, cannot become an object to either the reason or the sense. It is to the affections, to that realm of our nature spoken of in the Scriptures as "the heart," to which a person, in any true sense, can become an object. We have just been saying that different objects are known by us in different ways. The faculty that brings us into relation with one is powerless to bring us into relation with another and a different set of objects. Before the universe man stands a complex being, striving to know the things that are about him. Roughly these realities may be classified as material, mental, and spiritual. But the facts belonging to each of these separate classes are known by different perceptive powers. We know material things through the sense. They cannot be known by the mind as they are. We lay hold of ideas, the great thoughts with which the universe is inwrought, by the mind. Without the faculty of thought, ideas expressed in nature or on a printed page could not be known. And so the heart also has

its specific objects that it makes known. Realities, unperceived by the intellect and unknown by the sense, are revealed to the heart. Distinctively it is the organ of spiritual knowledge. By it we know personalities. Being itself the essence of personality, it is to the heart alone that a person can be revealed. As reason in the world speaks to reason in man, as sensuous objects speak to the sense, so the spiritual, which is the true essence of personality, speaks to the heart, and no one really knows another until he loves him. And this is the place to say that, as an organ of spiritual knowledge, we have made too little of the heart. Indeed, it is doubtful if we rightly know anything except through love. In all our education and intercourse we find again and again that love sees furthest, hears quickest, feels deepest. Nature says, "If any man love me, I will manifest myself unto him." But she is speechless to the heart in which there is no response. Two men walk along the same road ; the one sees nothing of beauty, hears nothing of music. The other hears voices which linger in his ear. The wayside flower speaks to him its tender message, and the whole scene is as the distinct handwriting of the Creator. Wherein is the

difference? It is this : the one loves nature, and nature takes him into her confidence and speaks to him her deepest spiritual secrets. The other cares not for nature, and nature cares nothing for him.

It is so of art ; and it is so because art, like nature, is inwrought with the spiritual. Every great painting, every immortal statue, says to the looker-on, "If any man love me, I will manifest myself to him." Even in nature we are dependent for our best knowledge on the heart, and no man has ever seen the spiritual in art except as he has seen it through the affections.

But pre-eminently is all this true in respect of our knowledge of persons. We never rightly know our fellows until we love them ; for, as flowers expand to the sunshine, so the soul discloses itself under the genial radiance of a trustful affection. For anything like a true knowledge of our fellows, we are shut up almost entirely to love.

Well, now, it is because God, as revealed in Christ, is a person, that He becomes pre-eminently an object to the heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Except as so revealed, "clouds and thick darkness are ever round

about Him." James Martineau does not go too far when he says, "There is no outside evidence of matter, either human or divine. It is all reciprocation and response between the inner soul and the other object, and the quickness of that response, the penetration of the glance, the certainty of the mutual understanding will depend not on the coldness of the heart, but on the fixed intensity of the mind that sends forth its looks. There is no denying that only through love and trust can God be known ; that by the base sense and understanding knowledge of Him cannot be won."

All this is especially true of a person. And God, being a person, must also first be loved in order that He may be truly known, since to the heart alone can He become a true object. No cold intellect has ever really known the One of whom alone it is said that "He is love." Long ago Job recognized this impossibility and asked the question, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" And it is to Job's question that John gives the answer, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and knoweth God."

But out of this love to Christ and inseparable from it in essence is trust. In the words of Prof.

Harris, "Trust or faith is a manifestation of love. It is a common error that faith is entirely distinct from love, and that love is manifested only in acts of service. But it is love that trusts as really as it is love that serves. A child's instinctive love to its father and mother in its earlier years is manifested chiefly in acts of reception and trust. But the child's instinctive love in receiving and trusting is as real love as the parent's instinctive love in imparting and serving. Faith or trust is the primary manifestation of love to the heavenly Father, as it is of a child's love to its earthly father." And this seems to be the thought of Paul when in his letter to the Galatians he speaks of faith as being "wrought by love." His meaning is that faith is action in which love manifests itself; that it springs out of love; that it is love trusting itself in complete self-commitment to Christ. But in saying this we do not deny that in a subordinate sense trust in another may exist without love. Still such trust never rises to the dignity of evangelical faith. It never prompts to that absolute commitment of self which distinguishes Christian from every lower form of trust. It is possible to trust even in things. The traveler contemplating

an ocean voyage, having satisfied himself of the sea-worthiness of the ship in which he proposes to embark, may take passage trusting that she will carry him safely through the perils of the ocean. And such trust is, in a subordinate sense, faith. But it is not, even in its higher exhibitions, the same trust that the one who has learned to love another places in that other. The trust that a child reposes in its parents is vastly different from the confidence that one may have in the trustworthiness of an ocean steamer. And so too, in a minor sense, we may trust men without the exercise of love. In moments of national peril a people may repose confidence in the ability of some great statesman to find a way out of the danger. In the moment before the battle the soldier may trust the ability of the commander to lead the army on to victory. The patient, suffering from disease, may trust the physician, fully believing that the disease from which he is suffering will yield to his skillful treatment. But all such instances of trust fall short of that trust of the whole self to another to which love prompts. The sublimest act of the soul is the complete surrender of self in all that for which the word stands, and this is possible

only in the case of persons. Love alone can cause us thus to lose ourselves only to find ourselves again in the being of another. And such trust of the soul in Christ "wrought," as Paul says, "by love" in Christian Faith.

It is this that makes faith the sublimest as well as the simplest act of the soul. Of what sublimer act is man capable than that of Abraham's on Mt. Moriah, when, denying every hope that he had cherished in respect of his son Isaac and conquering the paternal instincts of his soul, he makes ready for the sacrifice of his only offspring? Yet what is simpler than the unconscious trust of the little child yielding itself to the safe-keeping of the parent in some moment of threatened danger? Nothing but that trust which is born of supreme affection for another could make either the lofty act of Abraham or that of the little child possible.

A beautiful illustration of this confiding faith but recently brought to notice is entitled to a place here. A prosperous worldly man, whose Christian wife had died praying for his conversion, was lying awake in the darkness of his room when he heard a voice from the little bed by his side saying,

“Papa, it is so dark ; take my hand.” He took the little hand extended and held it gently until the frightened child fell asleep. Then that strong man looked up through the darkness and also said, “Father, it is so dark ; take my hand, as I have taken the hand of my dear child.” Then it was that peace entered his soul, even as it had entered that of his child’s when, with its hand in his, it fell asleep. Such is faith, the loving, trustful, confidence of the soul in Christ, the yielding of self gladly, lovingly to Jesus, committing the keeping of our interest both for time and eternity unto Him of whom it is said, “That he is mighty to save and strong to deliver.” And it is this, too, that makes faith “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” For to the soul even in this life there are no joys like the joys of loving fellowship. In comparison with this, all joys that come to us in the present time pale, for, in the midst of all earth’s delights, there is ever heard in the depths of the heart an undertone of sadness. But it is not so with the joy of loving fellowship. So far as any joy can be, this, and this alone, is satisfying. The truth is that no soul is or can be self-contained. It must have the help

of another, must find its rest in another, must trust and be trusted before the measure of its longing can be satisfied. And this is the essence of religion on its subjective side. It is this fellowship with the divine that changes the aspiration of morality into the fruition of religion. For whether we regard religion from the human side or the divine, in either aspect it is of its very essence that the infinite has ceased to be a far-away vision and has become a present reality. The very first pulsations of the spiritual life involve the conviction of the soul's oneness with the infinite for which it longs. "Oneness of mind and will with the divine mind and will," says Caird in his "Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion," is not the future hope and aim of religion, but its very beginning and birth in the soul. To enter on the religious life is to terminate the struggle in that act which constitutes the religious life—call it faith, or trust, or self-surrender, or by whatever name you will—there is involved the identification of the finite with a life which is eternally realized." "It is true, indeed, that the religious life is progressive, but it is not progress toward but within the sphere of the infinite. It is not

the vain attempt by endless finite additions or increments to become possessed of infinite wealth, but it is by constant endeavor, by constant exercise of spiritual activity, to appropriate that infinite inheritance of which we are already in possession. Though the believer is not exempt from temptation and conflict, yet in that inner sphere in which his true life lies the struggle is over, the victory already achieved. It is not a finite but an infinite life which the spirit lives. Every pulse-beat of its existence is the expression and realization of the life of God." And this blessed fellowship between the believer and God, realized through faith, makes faith "the substance of things hoped for;" and, because the substance, also the sure "evidence of things not seen."

Christ Himself speaks of personal union with Himself as the means by which His blessing is received. In John xv. 1-6 we have one of His richest and most characteristic utterances. Here He tells of union with Himself as indispensable to the true life, and illustrates it by the union, real and vital, of branches with the vine upon which they grow. This is a union of life, and what it illustrates is a vital personal unity with Himself and men. This vital union with Christ is entered by faith.—CLARKE, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, page 356.

CHAPTER V.

EVANGELICAL FAITH.

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.—ROMANS X. 17.

UNTIL now we were not prepared to intelligently consider the subject of the present chapter. We needed first to see that the object of Christian faith is a person and also the relation of faith to love. For if the object of saving faith is Christ, and if Christ is known and laid hold of, as the Scriptures teach, by love, then is faith of necessity a thing of the heart. Were the end of faith other than that of self-commitment to a personal Saviour, this would not be the case. But Christ requires all. He demands the heart, and, when this is truly given, nothing remains that is not in the best sense His. In order to save He must have all, and faith gives all. Christ may be admired, He may even be worshiped as the chief among the sons of men without the commitment of self to Him. This is the act of faith, and becomes pos-

sible because of the essential oneness of faith and love.

In his summary of the greatest things, Paul gives love the pre-eminence. "Now abideth faith, hope, and love ; but the greatest of these is love." Using as he does the singular verb, he indicates the essential oneness of the three, but he says love is the greatest. Greater than hope, because hope is its necessary consequent ; greater than faith, for the reason that faith is its manifestation. But in what love works it is also the greatest. The redemption of a world is a greater act than its creation, and of all that belongs to redemption, whether on the divine or human side, love is the inspiration and the cause.

It is needless to dwell on the fact that trust is the first-born of love.

In the holy moment when love goes out to another, trust in that other is conceived. It is so in respect of our love to Christ. To love Him is to trust Him, and the measure of our love will always be the measure of our trust. Evangelical faith may, therefore, be defined as an act of trust in Christ whereby we are united with Him in loving fellowship. Nor is this definition in any sense new. It

only re-states the conception of faith that has been held by the majority of evangelical writers and that has found expression in most of the creeds of the Christian church. Justifying faith, according to Martensen, is "Not only an assent of the understanding, but trust—a confidence of the heart. This appropriation of the crucified Saviour brings with it actual fellowship of the life with the risen Saviour in His church, a fellowship in which the believer possesses the righteousness of Christ, not only outwardly, but inwardly as a creative principle for a new development of life. Christ dwells in the heart of the man by faith; yea, faith is itself the living bond of secret power, the union between Christ and the individual soul."

Muller defines faith as "The trustful surrender of one's self to the personal Saviour, a surrender of which the simplest child is capable." According to the elder Hodge, "The primary idea of faith is trust." The Westminster Confession defines faith as "A saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospels." According to the Heidelberg Catechism, "Faith is cordial trust."

It would be easy from authorities at hand to

multiply this testimony. Students of the best literature on the subject are aware that the view according to which faith is regarded as simple trust of the heart in Christ is all but universally received, not by theologians alone, but by philosophers and the mass of Christian people. And this representation of faith accords with its representations as set forth in the New Testament. It always carries with it the idea of trust. This is the recognized definition of *πιστευω* by Grim, and his translator, Thayer, as well as by other lexicographers of the New Testament. In the Seventh Revised and Enlarged Edition of Liddel and Scott's Lexicon, in Cremer's Biblico-Theological Lexicon of Byzantine Greek, trust is given as the primary meaning.

Well, now, in the light of this we are enabled to see why it is that Christian faith is always a dominating power both over the inner and the outer life. Being of the heart, it controls the will, bringing it into subjection to Christ, for the will is always in allignment with the controlling affection. Through the will it shapes the outward life of man, making it certain that wherever faith is, there will works also be. Being of the heart, it

unites us with Christ, and thus makes us partakers both of His righteousness and life. In the 15th chapter of John, Christ speaks of the vital relation into which through faith we are made to sustain to Him. He tells us that the relation is the same as that which sustains between the branch and the vine. "I am the vine, ye are the branches ; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit ; without me ye can do nothing." The key to the meaning of this significant passage is in the word "abide." It carries with it the idea of grafting. Deep into the main stem the knife of the vine-dresser is made to pierce until the heart is reached. By a like process the heart of the branch is exposed, and the union of these, the heart of the living vine with that of the branch, is the condition of the new life. This it is, says Christ, to "abide" in Him. It must be a union of the innermost-fibre, a union of the heart ; and the act through which such union is effected is faith ; in other words, the trust of love.

But we must now consider the question as to how such trust is brought into being. It is easy to see that trust and love are coexistent, that they

cannot be separated. But how is that attitude of soul to Christ, out of which both spring, brought about? We are told in the Scriptures that faith is the gift of God. But it is not so immediately.

Man is a moral being. In all that pertains to our salvation "we are laborers together with God." If the soul could be saved without our consent and co-operation, it would not be worth saving. The worth of man resides in the fact that he is a personal being endowed with the ability to live for himself, and, as a consequence, in a state of estrangement from God. And for this freedom God as a moral being is bound to have respect. To teach as Augustine taught, that grace in the case of anyone is irresistible, is at once to belittle man and throw suspicion on the moral government of God. Accordingly the promise of His spiritual gifts to men are made to those alone who strive for them. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." It is so with the gift of faith. Like all of God's gifts, it is bestowed mediately. The harvest is also God's gift, but it comes through the use of means. No field of grain ever gladdened the heart of the reaper to the production of which his own

industry did not contribute through a wise use of the means. In this lifetime, nothing that is worth having comes to us without our co-operation or apart from the use of the means suited to the end. And to this rule faith is no exception. It does not spring up in the soul spontaneously or by the fiat of the will. Its existence is conditioned upon the use of the means, and the means for its implanting are afforded in the inspired Word and the Sacraments. Faith, according to Paul, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Apart from the word, quickened by the Spirit, faith is impossible. The truth of the word lodged in the heart and quickened by the Spirit produces faith. Not the word alone but the word made effective by the Spirit, not the Spirit alone but the Spirit operating through the word, are creative of saving faith.

Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.—CHRIST.

CHAPTER VI.

ARE CHILDREN CAPABLE OF FAITH ?

These little ones that believe in me.—MARK IX. 42.

IN the above question no reference is had to infants. The discussion of the relation of infants to faith and consequently to baptism has been reserved for a subsequent chapter. Theoretically, the line separating infancy from early childhood is hard to draw, but the distinction is real. Practically all recognize a difference between the babe and the little child just beginning its individual and self-conscious life.

Whether or not infants are capable of evangelical faith has been and from the nature of the case will continue to be a disputed question. This much we know, "that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." It is true that the mere physical act of hearing is a possibility of our earliest infancy, but it is not of physical hearing that the text speaks. It is of a spiritual appreciation, an understanding of the

meaning of what is heard ; and of such appreciation and understanding the infant is manifestly incapable. But while this truth apparently denies the possibility of faith to infants, it does not deny its possibility to those who have passed beyond the limits of infancy into those of early childhood. Experience proves that no truths are so readily understood, no facts so easily grasped, as those that make up the content of the Gospel. It is so because of the affinity between these truths and the simple, trustful spirit of childhood. It is true that "heaven lies about us in our infancy," and Tertullian was in a sense right when he said "religion is natural to man."

It has already been shown that saving faith is trust of the heart in Christ, and that such trust is coincident with love. In every way this conception is to be preferred, for in its Scriptural sense faith is the simplest act of the soul. We speak of trust in the same connection in which we speak of love, for experience teaches that to truly love another is to trust another. But trust in Christ, that surrender of self to Him that comes out of love for Him, is the essence of saving faith. It is an act of the heart and not of the cold intellect, for, as Paul

tells us, "it is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness." We need not go beyond the ordinary consciousness of men to be convinced that knowledge as such cannot be the measure of piety. The logical faculty is not the organ of communion with God, nor by its greater or less acuteness and activity can a man's spiritual state be tested. It is possible to possess ratiocative powers of the highest order, the cultured intelligence which renders a man a competent literary and historic critic, a deft framer even of theological dogmas and systems of divinity, and yet with all this intellectual equipment to lack the element of saving faith, that state of the heart and affections which constitutes the essence of true religion. Indeed, if religion is a thing possible for all—if it is a relation of the soul to God not conditioned by any special gifts or arbitrary acquirements—its essence must obviously be altogether independent of that intellectual ability and culture which are far from universal. It must come to the human spirit in a way possible for the simplest and rudest alike with the most acute and cultured intelligence. Our inquiry, therefore, is one that concerns itself with the ability or want of ability of the little

child to trust rather than that of its ability to mentally grasp the truth of certain propositions.

Now, in answering this question, it is important that we bear in mind that the object of saving trust is the personal Christ. Not a creed, not a thing, not a creation of the mind, but the personal Saviour. For this a matured intellect is by no means essential. It is questionable if the reason has anything to do with our affections one for another. The moment we begin the process of analysis and synthesis in respect of those whom we love, affection is likely to die out. We love persons because they are persons, because we are so created, and it is not within the power of the mind to analyze, or put in speech, the content of such love. Love to a person is in no sense conditioned on intellectual knowledge as such, nor does it lie dormant until the mind reaches its maturity.

It is wonderful, yet strangely suggestive of the earnestness of the divine purpose to draw all men unto Himself, that love is the first power to come into being. We grow into physical maturity, and not until years have passed do our bodily powers attain their full development. It is so with the powers of the mind. It is difficult to tell the pre-

cise period at which the child is capable of intellection. Possibly the early morning of the child's life is spent in the simple receiving of impressions that, later on, are taken up and woven by the mind into knowledge. But, however that may be, it is at least certain that it is not until years have passed that the mind becomes capable of laying hold of abstract truths such as are expressed in Creeds or Dogmas : for the last of our powers to reach their maturity are the powers of reflection. But it is not so with the powers of love. They manifest themselves with the earliest dawn of consciousness. The first thing for which a mother looks is for a response to her affections, and, in the smile that plays upon the face of her offspring, she reads the evidence of the love for which she yearns. Nor do experience or knowledge make love more real. Under their influence love becomes more conservative, more rational, more lasting, but no more real or intense. The love of the child is as deep as that of the man ; indeed, if there be any difference, the difference is in favor of the child, for in youth we love those whom we cannot love with the more mature knowledge of after years. But out of this love possessed by the

child for another there also comes trust in that other. It is in the very nature of the child to trust, and it is this that gives infancy its loveliness. To its mother it looks for the satisfaction of its hunger ; upon her it trusts for protection in moments of danger ; to her it yields itself, whether consciously or unconsciously, it matters not, in all that it is, and in all that it desires.

Now it is in the light of all this that we are to study the relation that the child may sustain to Christ. It is certain at least that the little one is capable of love. It is just as certain that out of this love, that trust, which in experience is never separated from love, is present also in the child. So far, therefore, as the ability is needed for the exercise of saving faith is concerned, the child has it. The ability that makes it possible for the child to love a human being makes it possible for it to love Christ, for Christ, the object of saving faith, is also a person, and the heart with which we love Him is the same heart out of which comes our love for each other. The same ability that makes it possible for the child to trust its mother makes it possible for it to trust Christ. In both cases the power is the same, its operation the same—the

only difference being in the object. But the moment the object of trust is changed, the moment Christ is substituted for the parent and the trust given to the parent is given to Christ, the act is lifted out of the ordinary, and what was before natural now becomes saving faith.

No doubt it will be contended by some that this trust of the child in its mother is in no sense faith ; that whatever such trust may or may not be, it is at least something other than that which in the case of the believer goes out to Christ. Nevertheless the acts are identical, they involve the same power, and both are alike faith. And as such they have been conceived by the majority of Christians everywhere. More and more, as theologians have shaken themselves loose from the fetters of scholasticism, have they owned the simplicity of faith and found in the trust of the child in its parent its highest exhibition. In his recent thoughtful work, Professor Samuel Harris, speaking of the child, says : " There is no more striking illustration of faith than a little child's faith in its father and mother, which our Saviour used. It is taken with them on a journey ; it knows not whither it is going, nor how long it is to travel. It goes out with

them, like Abraham under the call of God, not knowing whither. But amid whatever new and strange scenes, it is peaceful and contented so long as its parents are with it, trusting fearlessly to them."

It was in this sense that the saintly Dr. Thompson also regarded saving faith. Near the close of his life he said: "I have at last come back to the faith of my childhood. To trust in Christ and in Christ alone even as the child trusts its mother, this at last is the substance of all that I have learned in my study of the Scriptures." And Paul's words are "To you it is given in behalf of Christ to believe on him." Observe, not in truth of His mission, not in the history of His saving acts, but on Him and in Him as the personal Saviour. This it is to be converted and to become as little children.

But we must now turn to another question. That the ability to trust in Christ has been given to the little ones there can be no question. But admitting that such ability has been given, may it not be brought to naught from want of a proper knowledge of the One who came to save? Let us explain our meaning. Faith must not only have

an object, that object must also be known. The love out of which trust springs must go out to someone. Love cannot exist without another. Even God prior to the creation of man needed the community of the Trinity to make Him a loving God. Alone in the universe and without such a community eternally existing in Himself, He could not be a loving God. To create love, to keep it alive, someone other than self must exist. But such a one must not only exist, he must exist to the one in whose soul love is to be awakened. In other words, the one loved must be known. It is possible for the little child to love its mother because it knows her. The face upon which its eyes first opened was the face of its mother. The voice that it first heard was that of its mother. Beside its cradle it beheld her day by day and in her arms at life's dawn it yielded itself to sleep. And it is this knowledge of her being, this relation to her personality, that calls out the love of the child. What that knowledge embraces, what it involves, no one can tell. How much, how little, of the real nature of its mother its knowledge includes, no one can know. Certain it is that it is not the knowledge that is possessed in after years, when a

deeper insight of all that motherhood means is attained. But its knowledge is enough to awaken love and the trust that in youth as well as in manhood is sure to attend love. Now all this applies to Christ, the object of saving faith. He, too, must be known by the child before trust in Him can be awakened. But by this is not meant that a knowledge of all that He is in His person or His work must be possessed. That is not necessary. If it were, no man could know Christ.

Let us own that such knowledge is too wonderful for the one of even mature years and ripened understanding. Before these problems the mightiest intellect must stand, owning, with the apostle, the mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh." No doubt such higher knowledge of Christ in the mystery of His person and being makes love more reverent, more rational. But such knowledge is not essential to love, any more than a knowledge of all that a mother is, or of the relation she sustains to the child, is essential to its love for her. It is the mother that the child loves, apart from a reflective consideration of what she is or does. Through reflection in after years, that love is deepened by a knowledge of all that

she was and of all that she did. But even then it is no more real than when in the days of early infancy it went out in ignorance of these very things. And so, too, it is possible to love Christ without an understanding of the mysteries of His person or work. What did the little children who sprang into His arms know of either? Yet it was upon these that He put His hands in blessing and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

But while a knowledge of what Christ was in His innermost nature is not an indispensable condition of trust, yet He Himself must be known, a knowledge of Him and what He did is essential to trust. But is such knowledge possible to the child? We must not answer this question too hastily. Often it has been answered in the negative, for the reason that the results of such denial have not been fully considered. Few if any are ready to accept the conclusions which such denials involve, or to affirm, as they must, that children are excluded from the operations of the Holy Spirit, whose mission, as we are told, is to "take the things of Christ and to show them unto us." Not so do most men reason. The energy of love goes

out in making itself known. The best and only proof of God's love is to be found in the fact that He revealed Himself to men. It is not in love to hide itself from the one beloved. Its very existence depends and is conditioned upon its manifestation. To deny that Christ may be revealed to the little ones is either to deny that they are loved of God, or affirm that the Holy Spirit is powerless to make Christ known. With the first of these conclusions the heart is at war; against the latter reason utters its protest; both are utterly false. To the little child that has been properly instructed in the Scriptures the consciousness of the nearness of Christ is such as seldom comes in after years. After all, it is true that God is the earliest environment of all such, more real than the objects of sense, that appeal to the eye or that respond to the touch. To the attentive soul, whether it be the aged Eli or the little child Samuel, God strives to speak. More readily known is He than objects of sense, for to the spirit it is given to intuitively know what is most like itself.

And so it appears that neither from want of ability to trust nor yet from want of ability to know Christ are the little ones shut out from the exercise

of saving faith. True, if the child never hears of Christ, if it has not been given to Him in baptism, if the Holy Scriptures are never read in its hearing, then a knowledge of Christ must be wanting. But for this the parent alone is to blame, for how can they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? But in the home in which the atmosphere is made religious, in which God is made the child's environment, faith is the earliest and the easiest of possibilities.

Original sin is a want of original righteousness, connected with a depraved inclination, corrupting the most inward parts, the whole human nature, derived from the fall of our first parents and propagated to all men by natural generation, rendering them indisposed to spiritual good, but inclined to evil. . . . Everything follows the seeds of its own nature. No ferocious lion ever produces a gentle lamb, and no man polluted with inborn sin ever begets a holy child.—HOLLAZIUS.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNIVERSAL NECESSITY OF REGENERATION.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.—JOHN III. 6.

IN his letter to the Galatians, Paul tells us that the thing of universal and transcendent importance is the "New Creature." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." It would seem that this simple, concise, and unqualified statement ought to be sufficient answer to the question, What is necessary to salvation? Nor is it difficult for one loyal to the teaching of the Scripture to discover weighty reasons for this unqualified utterance.

In His conversation with Nicodemus, Christ enforces the same truth. To this ruler of the Pharisees the new birth, of which Christ had just spoken, seemed inexplicable. "How," he asks, "can a man be born when he is old?" It is to this question that Christ gives answer: "That

which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In this answer a law is announced from which there has never been a single departure.

Teeming as the world is with life, every living thing is precisely what its birth determined it to be. The limits fixed by birth are never transcended by simple growth. To be born into the world is to be born of the flesh, and by no possibility, resident in itself, can that which is so born become anything other than what it essentially is. Growth is but the unfolding of the nature inwrought in every living thing. The seed holds within itself the future flower of its own species, but no other. Out of such a seed there can never come an oak, or even a plant differing from it in species. Every seed produces life "after its own kind," and no seed in its after development has power to transcend the limits fixed by its own nature. The ant remains an ant. It never becomes possessed of the powers belonging to a higher order of species. The bee, under the working of the same law, continues from generation to generation the same, and at no point in its history does it put aside the limitations of its lower, or put on the belongings of a higher

nature. It is so all through. The law to which Christ called the attention of Nicodemus is invariable—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

If any man, therefore, is to enter upon a higher life, or to rise from the natural into the spiritual, he must somehow come into possession of a new nature, a nature to which the attributes of the spiritual life belong. And this necessity is universal. The law, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," has no exceptions. It applies to the little child in its innocence, and touches the old man leaning on the top of his staff. It is not by some arbitrary or superinduced law that the natural man is shut out from the spiritual life. It is by the old law, the wisdom of which is seen and acknowledged everywhere throughout the physical universe ; that nature ever abides the same, ever continues true to itself. The limits that environ the natural man arise out of his nature. Accordingly we have no controversy with the one who speaks of the purity and the innocence of childhood. Doubtless, it was this very innocence, so characteristic of early childhood, that attracted the heart of Jesus, and that

inspired the reproof that He administered to His disciples, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." But innocence is one thing and the new life another, and between the two there is no causal relation. Let it be owned that the child is in no sense personally responsible for the nature that it inherits. Its freedom from such responsibility is not the equivalent of the new birth. The deficiency resides in the nature that the child inherits, and it is this that brings it under the law, to which Christ referred when He said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It is just as though He had said, "The possibilities of the spiritual nature are not those of the physical, nor are they such as can arise out of the natural." Spiritual realities, spiritual possibilities, spiritual experiences, both here and in the after-life, are conditioned upon the spiritual birth. It is not, therefore, a question as to the guilt or innocence of the child; the difficulty is deeper, and resides in the nature, from which neither guilt nor innocence opens the way of escape. Being born of the flesh, it needs the birth from above in order that it may be introduced into the spiritual life, and to make it a partaker of those experiences of which the spiritual life is the un-

folding. And all this is to say that the infant, as well as the mature man, needs the life that Christ came to communicate. Without union with Him, who alone is our life, the infant as well as the man is devoid of the spiritual life; for it is through such union that the new life is inaugurated. Its connection with the old Adam, through the flesh, necessitates its connection with the new Adam, through the Spirit. Perhaps by no recent writer has the gulf between the natural and the spiritual been so clearly set forth, or the universal need of a birth from above been so vividly illustrated, as by the gifted Professor Drummond, in his "Natural Law in the Spiritual World." "The passage," says he, "from the natural world to the spiritual is hermetically sealed on the natural side. The door from the inorganic to the organic is shut, and no mineral can open it. So the door from the natural to the spiritual is shut, and no man can open it. This world of the natural is staked off from the spiritual world by barriers which have never yet been crossed from within. No organic change, no modification of environment, no mental energy, no moral effort, no evolution of character, no progress of civiliza-

tion, can endow any single human soul with the attribute of the spiritual life. The spiritual world is guarded from the world next in order beneath it by the law of biogenesis, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Let us put the emphasis on the emphatic word "cannot." It is not said of the fleshly born he "may not;" the word is absolute and unconditioned, "he cannot." Just as effectually as the organic world is closed to the inorganic, so effectually is the spiritual life closed to the natural. If the chasm is, therefore, to be crossed, and the natural man lifted into the realm of the spiritual, a birth from above is unconditioned and universally necessary. Innocence can do nothing for us. Freedom from personal guilt communicates nothing to nature. No power but the birth from above can quicken the dead soul, or make man other than what the birth of the flesh determines that he shall be.

But here the question may be asked: "Why this insistence upon a truth so evident in itself, and to which no one takes exception?" Our reply is that such exceptions are taken. By some it is thought that the doctrine of man's universal

need of regeneration assumes too much, and, if carried to its logical conclusions, takes us too far. Unswerving loyalty to truth is, after all, not a common virtue. Many to whom the charge of disloyalty would give offense abandon truth the moment that it brings them into collision with cherished opinions or preconceived prejudices, forgetful of the fact that the truth cannot lead to conclusions at war with the best instincts of the soul. Yet the question is asked, "What is to become of our little ones, if need of regeneration be universal?" Since union with Christ is the condition of spiritual life, and since union is effected alone through faith, how can a new birth be a requirement when such faith is impossible? And thus in the supposed interests of infants, the universal need of regeneration is denied. Somehow, other than by the new birth, the nature alike in the infant and in the one of mature years must be transformed. But how this is accomplished no denier of the universal need of regeneration can tell. No intimation as to the method comes either from nature or revelation, for both, as we have seen, bear witness to the stern fact that the spiritual is never evolved out of the natural.

Let us own that even the suggestion of the possibility of the exclusion of the little ones from the provisions of grace is at war with the best instincts of the heart. No mother, believing that God has made no provision for her little one, of whom death had robbed her, could reconcile herself to a belief in His love, or longer in prayer speak to Him as Father. It is inconceivable that He, who, during His ministry here below, took the little children into His arms and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," should provide no way for their salvation. Nor does anyone from the heart believe that. Even those doctrinal predilections, according to which, under certain conditions, infants are shut out, have always been abandoned in the serious and candid moment when those professing them have stood by the grave of their own children. There is an inner certainty that the one dying in infancy is safe, and this certainty rests on the conviction that God's provisions are always in harmony with His infinite love. Still, the words of Christ, "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven," are true. How or by what means this new life, in the instance of those dying

in infancy, is effected we know not, nor need it concern us.

The question, "How are we to be saved?" is pre-eminently a question for the living, and that for all the living. Certain it is that to be born of the flesh is to be inheritor of a nature wholly corrupted by sin, and utterly devoid of the power to work the retrieval of its lost condition. "Behold," cries the Psalmist, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Our weakness, our absolute need of a birth from above, is written in our nature. When, in the moonlight of the Orient, Christ spoke the words, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," He told at once man's helplessness by nature, and his universal and absolute need of the new birth of which He was speaking.

Baptism is not simply water, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's word.—LUTHER'S CATECHISM.

CHAPTER VIII.

REGENERATION AND BAPTISM.

Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.—JOHN III. 5.

WE have just been speaking of the universal need of regeneration. To be born by natural generation, according to the teaching of Christ, is to be in possession simply of the natural and temporal life. And man has been created for the spiritual. He alone of all created beings has been created for the divine habitation. "Thou hast created us for Thyself," said Augustine, and the cry of the Psalmist to the living God is, "Be thou my strong habitation unto which I may continually resort." Our home is in God, and God finds in us His chosen dwelling-place. In the experience that comes out of such a relation to God do we find our full satisfaction and the true end of our creation. But as the natural life has its own door of entrance, so has also the spiritual. We enter the one through natural generation, the other through regeneration.

But what is regeneration? It may be said that two definitions have divided the opinion of theological writers. According to one, it is a state of pardon and of actual goodness. According to the other, it is a state of pardon and a new or infused capacity for goodness. Both of these definitions, if accepted in the simple sense conveyed by the words, are correct. It is true that regeneration in its completeness always means actual goodness; and it is just as true that the power out of which the new life comes is a new and infused power. The power of the new life is always a supernatural and not a natural power. But whether or not the new capacity for goodness passes into a state of actual goodness depends on the personal faith of the individual to whom the new capacity has been given. God does not deal with men as He does with material things. He recognizes our freedom and in every work of grace seeks our co-operation. And what is more, it is possible for man to bring the divine purpose in his salvation to naught at any point of the divine procedure. The failure to give this fact its proper weight has blinded the eyes of the advocates of each of the definitions given to the truth contained in the other. That regenera-

tion and baptism are connected in the Scriptures needs hardly to be proven. Paul, speaking of baptism, calls it "the bath of regeneration," and as such the church has universally regarded it. While looking upon the sacrament of the altar as instituted with special reference to the nourishment of the new life, the church has commonly regarded baptism as the specially ordained sacrament through which the new life is communicated.

But, in considering the subject of regeneration, we must not overlook the fact that, while dealing with a supernatural order of life, we are still dealing with life, and hence with that that is under the government of law. The new life is not lawless. It has its normal beginning and development, and the laws that hold in respect of all life hold also in the realm of the regenerate. One of these is the law that no life is complete at its beginning. That it may be complete, it needs to be developed, and this development is in all cases dependent on appropriate nourishment. The life that is in the seed newly quickened is not the same in measure or perfection as the life that exists in the perfect plant. In each step of the process of growth the life becomes fuller, unfolding more and more the poten-

tial life of the germ until perfection is reached. But though more and more perfect as growth goes on the life at any point is identical with that of the germ, is but a continuation of the living history that began at the time of quickening. But no living thing is perfect at the beginning or leaps full-fledged from the womb of nature. That this is true of the regenerate life also is clearly taught by Christ. In the fourth chapter of Mark, he tells us that the history of the new life, like that of the natural, is, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." It has its moment of beginning, its period of enlargement, and we are told that in God's own time it will come to its perfection, for "He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it until the day of Jesus Christ." And this fact is also confirmed by experience.

No truly regenerate man looks upon himself as being the same that he was the moment he first laid hold by faith of Christ and felt within him the joy of the new life. He knows that he has grown stronger. He knows that while at the beginning he was a babe, he has steadily gone on to the full stature of manhood in Christ Jesus. He

knows that he is stronger, and that he is so because he possesses more of the spiritual life than he possessed at the beginning. The Scriptures speak of a fullness of life and of a life "more abundant." It matters not what it may be called, whether it goes by the name of "Christian development," or "A going into perfection," or "Growth in grace," the secret of it all is the nature of the new life to become more and more abundant. And yet with the fully developed Christian the life, although more abundant, is yet the same life that was communicated through faith and baptism at the beginning. The idea of a "second blessing" is foreign to the Scripture, and the larger experience and greater power for which the phrase is meant to stand is but a fuller measure of the life communicated at the first.

But while development, or what is known as the more abundant life, is the normal rule, there is yet another law that in the world of natural things has been called the law of "degeneration." A careful study of nature proves the presence and operation of this law also. The process is not always upward into a fuller life, it is sometimes downward, ending in extinction. The little germ

that the moisture of the earth and the warmth of the sun have called out of the seed does not always develop into the full-grown plant. The life fostered in the egg does not always develop or carry itself forward into the mature life of the bird. The germ of grain may die from lack of proper nourishment, and that of the egg may perish from lack of the warmth necessary to its after development. But in each case the life was actually present, though it did not reach its perfection ; and the fact that it stopped short is no proof that it was not actually begun. Had conditions been favorable, the life that was begun, and which from want of proper nourishment perished, might have gone to its full maturity. Now, in the light of all this, we are better prepared to estimate the force of two objections to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration which to the practical mind have seemed unanswerable. The first is the one based on the fact that many who have been baptized either in infancy or later in life give no evidences of such regeneration. They live the life of the worlding, and the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, always present in the life of the fully regenerate, are wanting. They live as other men live, not as strangers or pilgrims,

or as those whose conversation is in heaven, but as men whose home is the earth and whose God is their lusts. Such cases are common. But how are they to be explained, if regeneration or the implanting of the new life is always effected in baptism? It has been this testimony, furnished by lives that give no evidence of regeneration, that has shaken the confidence of some in the doctrine so clearly stated in the Scripture. As a consequence, the necessity of baptism is denied, and we are told that whatever importance is to be attached to it is to be found in its value as a symbol, and that faith alone, apart from the outward rite, is sufficient to unite us with Christ, incorporate us into His kingdom, and effect in us the new personality.

The second objection to the doctrine that we are considering rests on a moral basis, and may thus be stated : God is a just being, whose will is that no one should be lost. And, being just, He will impose no impossible conditions upon any who truly desire to be saved. But, under circumstances that may easily be imagined, baptism may become such a barrier. Indeed, under circumstances that are continually occurring, some are de-

nied the rite even to the last. To others the moment of awakening comes late, as it did to the thief on the cross, and under conditions most unfavorable. Some, through no fault of their own, but through circumstances or the fault of others, die unbaptized, for it is not given to all to choose whether believer or infidel shall minister the last act. But what is to be said of all these, and what is to be thought of the justice of a being who has made regeneration contingent upon a rite, and left without provision all to whom, for any reason, the rite has been denied?

Such, as briefly as we can state them, are the two objections that have told with most force against the doctrine of baptismal regeneration as taught in the Scripture and accepted by the church. Now it must, in fairness, be said that both of these objections spring out of misconceptions. The latter out of a misconception of what the doctrine actually implies. The former out of a misconception of regeneration itself. No intelligent advocate of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration would claim for a moment that the relation between baptism and regeneration is absolute and unconditional. The relation is one by which the

church alone is bound. For her it is the normal relation. Ordinarily the new life is opened in baptism, and it is the ordinary by which in this as in all instances we are to be bound. But, while the church has recognized herself as bound by the rite, she has contended for the freedom of her Lord to establish His new creation in the soul of whomsoever and in whatsoever manner He may choose. He is bound by no sacrament and will always do right. Accordingly, the canon of the church has been that "It is not the unavoidable absence of the sacrament, but neglect of it, that excludes from the new life." And thus, when understood in its true sense, the objection to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration based on its seeming injustice disappears. For all such cases in which the administration of the rite has for any reason been impossible the doctrine makes allowance without minimizing the importance of the sacrament. And this is its merit. Any conception of baptism that lessens our respect for it, or tends to encourage neglect of the ordinance, is by that very fact proven to be false.

But, as the objection just considered springs out of a misconception, so also does the one suggested

by the unworthy lives of some who have been baptized. It is true that all who have been baptized do not give evidence of regeneration. They live as other men live, and the fruit by which the existence of the new life in the soul is proven is wanting. It is this experience, as has already been said, that awakens suspicion of the truth of the doctrine. For, if regeneration is conveyed in baptism, then are we not to look for the evidences of such regeneration in the life of all who have been baptized, and does not the absence of such evidence point to the conclusion that no necessary connection exists between the rite and the new birth? Now in this objection there is both truth and error. It is true that, normally and under proper conditions, fruit is the test of the new life. The test of fruitage is a test, the validity of which was recognized by our Saviour in the words, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The regenerate life has its characteristic fruits, even as the natural has its, and in its maturity and fullness such fruit is never wanting. Under such conditions fruit is always the test of the new birth. But it is not true that the presence or absence of the new life is always to be determined

by the test of fruit-bearing. The new life may exist in the soul, the person may have been born from above, and the outward evidences at least for a time be wanting. In the matured tree, growing under proper conditions, we look for fruit. But not from the newly quickened seed or even from the immature stem. The law of life is : first the blade and then the ear, afterward the full corn in the ear. Fruit belongs to the after-history and is produced under conditions that may be wanting at the beginning. But the beginning is as truly life as is the maturity, though in maturity the life is more perfect and abundant. But what is the law in the case of living things around us may safely be assumed to be the law in the case of the life known as the new birth. For regeneration is not a work begun and completed in the soul in an instant. It has its history, and under favorable conditions goes on to greater and greater perfection.

Now it is in these considerations that the answer to the objection to baptismal regeneration, based on the fact that the fruit of the new life is not always present in those who have been baptized, is to be found. The absence of such fruit is no more a proof of the absence of the new

life than is the want of fruit in the case of the tree that is surrounded by unfavorable conditions a proof that there is no life in it. The want of such fruit usually points to unfavorable conditions rather than the absence of life. And this is the teaching of the barren fig tree. The tree was alive, but it was fruitless. What it needed was a more favorable environment. "I will dig about it and dung it," said the owner. Had the tree not been a living tree, no change of conditions could have made it bear fruit. After all, life is one thing and fruit-bearing is another. Life is an emanation from God ; fruitage the result of conditions for which we are usually responsible.

It is so with the new life. Implanted in baptism, it requires the presence of the proper conditions that it may go out in fruit-bearing. And these conditions are supplied in personal faith. In those cases in which the rite and faith go together, fruit may immediately be expected, for in such cases the new life finds its proper conditions. But in the case of those baptized in infancy, the implanted life must await the advent of faith. For years no fruit may appear ; indeed, for want of the conditions that faith alone sup-

plies, the implanted life may perish. But, in either case, the new life was present, although from want of faith it failed to produce fruit.

Regeneration is by no means concluded with baptism, but the foundation of it is therein laid ; and it is not therefore baptism alone which saves, but baptism and faith.—
MARTENSEN.

CHAPTER IX.

INFANT BAPTISM.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
—MATT. XXVIII. 19.

IN the times lying nearest the ministry of our Lord and His apostles, the fitness of infants for baptism was not called into question. It was not until two centuries had passed that the first protest against the universal practice of baptizing infants was uttered. Of this protest Tertullian was the author. Born in the year A. D. 160, and dying at the ripe age of eighty, he was the most eccentric of the church fathers. About the middle of his life he wrote what is now recognized as the earliest treatise on baptism, in which he earnestly advises against the administration of the rite to infants. Holding as he did that "Baptism of itself washes away sins and that sins committed after baptism were peculiarly dangerous," he opposed not only the baptism of infants but of all, until

the period of "youthful appetites and passions should have passed."

Indeed, he advised that in all cases in which death was not likely to intervene, baptism should be postponed until the subjects of it should have arrived at a period of life where they would no longer be in danger of being led astray. He says, "If any understand the weighty import of baptism they will fear its reception more than its delay." And in this he was consistent. For if baptism in itself purges away sins, then its administration should be withheld until the very last. But in his conception of baptism he was without sympathy in his day, and as a consequence the argument that he based upon his assumption as to the nature of the ordinance produced little effect. "His whole argument," says Dr. Schaff, "rests upon false premises which were not admitted by the church, and his protest fell without an echo." From Tertullian onward, the universal practice of infant baptism is proved by the clearest and most abundant testimony.

Origen, who was contemporary with Tertullian, declares that "The church derived an order from the apostles to baptize infants," and that "accord-

ing to the custom of the church baptism is administered to infants who would not need the grace of baptism if there were nothing in them that needed forgiveness and mercy.” Chrysostom, born in the year 347 and who died in exile in 407, says, “Our circumcision, I mean baptism, comes without pain and procures for us a thousand benefits and fills us with the grace of the Spirit, and has no fixed time as circumcision had, but one that is in the beginning of his age, or one that is in middle age, or one that is in old age, may receive this circumcision without hands.” Augustine, in the beginning of the fifth century, says, “The whole church practices infant baptism. It was not instituted by councils, but was always in use.” Pelagius, although denying original sin, and who on that account was charged by some with opposing himself to the practice of baptizing infants, complains that he was misrepresented, and says, “Men slander me by the charge that I deny baptism of infants. I never heard of anyone, not the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants.”

The schoolmen, too, defended the practice that had been continued in the church from the beginning, and based its necessity on the universal need

of regeneration which in their conception was conveyed in baptism. Historically, it may be said that the argument defending the practice of infant baptism is unanswerable.

But in this important duty the church of to-day is by no means as faithful as was the church of the past. Outside the Catholic and Anglican folds, the obligation of the church to her children is now largely denied. For this many reasons may be assigned. The first and without doubt the most prominent is the indifference to the sacraments resulting from a lack of proper appreciation of the place that the supernatural holds in our religion. From the creed of many the supernatural has been largely eliminated, and a rationalism that seeks to find a natural explanation for all things has taken its place. What can be understood is believed, and that for which no explanation can be given in terms of the natural is discredited. It is in this mood that many approach the mystery of baptism. What efficacy can there be in the application of water to the head of an infant? What connection can possibly exist between a rite and the new birth? These are the modern forms of the question asked

by Nicodemus in the moment that he stood face to face with the mystery of the new birth. To this spirit pervading the religious atmosphere of our times more than to any other cause is the present neglect of infant baptism to be attributed. For the necessary outcome of the prevalence of this spirit is the practical denial of the importance of the sacraments and a disbelief in the operations of the Holy Spirit through them.

But to the neglect of this duty other causes have also contributed. It has been urged that the practice of baptizing infants has no definite warrant ; that no specific command imposing it as an obligation and no undeniable instance of its practice occur in the New Testament.

To this it may be replied that no such command under the circumstances ought to be expected. What is and has been for centuries the religious practice of a people needs no command to give it authority. Wherever Christ and His disciples went they found the practice already in vogue. It had for its authority all the traditions of the past, and had ingrained itself for centuries into the religious habits of the people to whom Christ spoke, and among whom He labored. For this reason

there was need rather of a command prohibiting its practice, if it had not been the purpose of Christ that it should be continued in the church. It is true that He was silent, that no command authorizing the baptizing of infants fell from His lips. But His silence, when read in the light of the customs of the day, but confirms the practice and gives warrant to the conclusion that He looked upon it with favor and meant that it should be continued in His church.

But the Scriptures are not silent. In three well-authenticated instances it is morally certain that the apostles baptized infants. That the households of Cornelius, of Lydia, and of the Philippian jailer were childless can hardly be thought in the light of the fact that, among the Jews, children were looked upon as a heritage from the Lord, and the blessedness of the one who had "his quiver full of them" was sung by their greatest poet. But the practice of infant baptism has its specific warrant in the Scriptures. In the commission, "Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them," that warrant is distinctly given. It is true that in that commission infants are not specially mentioned. Neither are women, neither are children, nor even

the aged. And the reason is that the term nations needed not so to be defined or that the various classes composing them be severally indicated to make it understood by the apostles. And as they understood the command, so they fulfilled it, establishing, as has already been shown, a tradition that for centuries in the church was never questioned. But another objection to the baptism of infants must also be mentioned. It is the objection that rests itself in the position that infants are and must, from the nature of the case, be devoid of faith.

It is held that faith is an indispensable requisite for baptism ; that the obligation to be baptized involves belief ; and that, since infants are incapable of belief, they are not fit candidates. To this it is replied that, since faith is the gift of God, He can and does confer it whenever and on whomsoever He will. Yet, let it be owned that all things are possible with God, the question still remains, Does God do all that with Him is within the realm of the physically possible? To this, the real question in its relation to infant faith, the Scripture gives no answer. Nor ought the question, as to the possibility or impossibility of infant faith, concern us for the reason that it touches

the subject of infant baptism but remotely, if at all. The error that underlies the discussion both pro and con is in the assumption that faith and the administration of the rite must of necessity be simultaneous acts. It assumes that baptism and its grace, viz., a complete regeneration, are inseparable in point of time. This is a grave error and leads to much confusion of thought. That faith and repentance are necessary to the full benefits of baptism is undoubtedly true. To this the Scriptures bear abundant testimony. But it is not true that regeneration in its fuller sense and faith are necessarily connected in point of time ; nor is it true that baptism, in order to be effective, must, at the moment of its administration, be accompanied by faith.

That this is the case is evident from the nature of regeneration itself. It has already been shown that regeneration in its true sense involves two things, the imparting of a new and supernatural life, on the one hand, and actual goodness on the other, or what is the same, the divine life infused, and that act of personal assent of the soul necessary to fruit-bearing. The first, or implanting of the new life, is the work of Christ in baptism.

By it He lays the foundation of His church and kingdom in the soul, in virtue of which regeneration becomes a germinal possibility. The second is the act of the Holy Spirit, engendering personal faith, without which regeneration is only begun, but not completed. Neither of these acts, alone and apart from the other, constitutes regeneration; they go together and are inseparable. When faith exists at the moment of baptism they are simultaneous, and complete regeneration is at once effected. But the two acts, that of Christ wrought for us and that of the Holy Spirit wrought in us, and by which faith is engendered, are but one and the same gracious work, the objective and the subjective, the essential and the personal. In the case of those of riper years they may coexist. The new life implanted by Christ in baptism may at once assert itself in personal goodness or fruit-bearing. Indeed, where faith exists, this is the normal experience. But, in the case of the infant, or in that of the adult in whom faith is wanting, the acts must of necessity be separate in point of time or baptism becomes a source of peril to the soul. The position that absolute certainty of the existence of faith at the moment of bap-

tism is essential to its efficacy is untenable for the very reason that such certainty can never be had.

This was the position taken by many of the divines of the Reformation, and in this they followed the testimony of the fathers. They looked upon baptism in the case of the infant as an "anticipatory rite," which though it might not be beneficial at the time in the sense of conveying with it regeneration in its fullest sense, yet became beneficial when faith came into being. They held that the grace of the sacrament was not tied to the time of its administration, that the simultaneity of the sign and the thing signified is not necessary, but that, on the contrary, the sign may precede the grace by an indefinite interval.

And in this position they had for their support the authority from which our Saviour drew His profoundest analogies of spiritual laws and processes, the book of nature. We have already spoken of the seed. It is a living thing. If it were not, the rain and the sunshine would be powerless to coax out of its shell either the blade or the ear. But, though alive, it may lie in the soil an indefinite period before entering upon its actual development in blade or fruit. Though living, it needs

the aid that it gets in the rain and the sunshine to call out its powers and to bring them to their maturity. For these helps it may wait long. But when they come and the process of growth is begun, the life of the seed and that of the plant are the same life. It is so with the new life implanted in baptism. In the soul in which it has been implanted it may remain for an indefinite period, awaiting the coming of faith. But when faith comes and the living seed is quickened into a fuller life there has been no break in the life. Between the time of the implanting and that of growth a period may have elapsed, but the life is the same. And that is to say that baptism and its grace are not inseparable in point of time, that the seed may be implanted although its development may not immediately follow.

But the position just stated finds its most powerful support in the law of baptism itself. It is universally conceded that baptism admits of but a single administration. Standing for what it does, it under no circumstances admits of repetition. This being the case, the position that the grace of baptism and the rite are inseparable in point of time becomes untenable. It hinges the destiny of the

soul on the simultaneity of faith and the rite, and thus makes baptism a thing to be dreaded instead of a privilege to be coveted. For who can tell, even after the most careful investigation, who among a number of candidates for baptism are at the moment in possession of faith? And who can affirm with absolute certainty, even for himself, whether at the critical moment of his own baptism faith is really coincident with the rite? If the co-existence of baptism and of faith are unconditionally essential, then the church must postpone baptism indefinitely, indeed forever in this world. Against all such narrowness the parable of the sower tells. Unremittingly he sowed his seed, though some fell by the wayside and some even was lost. If simultaneity of faith and the rite are essential and baptism admits of but a single administration, then to baptize multitudes as did the apostles is to tamper with men's souls and to assume the enormous risk of shutting men out of the covenant of grace forever. Nor does such a position as this receive any warrant in the Scriptures. They indeed insist on moral qualifications for the reception of the grace of baptism, but attach no conditions of time, nor do they ever

once imply that the grace, in order to be had, subsequently must have been conferred simultaneously with the administration of the rite.

Now the bearing of all that has been said on the question of infant baptism is at once apparent. Let it be owned that infants are devoid of faith. They are not for that reason to be denied the seal of the covenant of grace. What if the new life implanted does not at once come to its maturity in complete regeneration? What if for a time it must await the coming of faith, even as the seed hidden in the ground must await the sunshine and rain? Still the seed should be implanted. Faith comes earlier than we think. Under the influence of Christian instruction and nurture faith is one of the very earliest of possibilities. "Therefore," said Luther, "I will not base baptism upon my faith, but my faith again shall base and build itself upon my baptism."

Church membership is the birth-right of all who are born of Christian parents. This Christian birth-right is recognized and confirmed in the baptism of infants.—H. J. VAN DYKE.

To be unbaptized, therefore, is a grievous injury and reproach, and one which no parent can innocently entail upon a child.—HODGE, *Theology*, 3, page 579.

CHAPTER X.

THE BENEFITS OF INFANT BAPTISM.

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ; and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.—GAL. III. 27, 29.

WHAT are the benefits of infant baptism? No one can fully tell. Of one thing we are certain, and that is, that baptism is a means of grace. As such its benefits are mainly two-fold.

First, through it the new life is communicated and the subject made a member of the kingdom of heaven. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit," said Christ, "he cannot enter the kingdom of God." To be saved the infant needs to be regenerated, and the divinely appointed means to this end, as Paul teaches, is the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Another benefit of baptism is that by it the infant is included in the covenant and made heir of the "everlasting promise." "For as many as have been baptized into Christ," says

Paul, "are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." The promise to which he refers is: "I will be a God to you and to your seed after you." All that this promise involves, all that it means to those to whom it has been made, cannot be told. And this, not because such benefits are doubtful, but for the reason that we "know but in part." No one can tell all the forces that have entered into his life, or their influence in making him what he is. We are, without doubt, the creatures of environment, but the factors of this environment that count the most are spiritual, and hence unrecognized.

If we could critically watch the growth of our souls, as we can the shaping of a statue, if it were possible to know all the providences that have made up the warp and woof of our lives, we would be able to give definite answer to our question. But no one knows what has contributed most to the shaping of his spiritual life, and no one is possessed of anything like accurate knowledge of the providences that have most determined his history. To the tree in Eastern lands it means much to be "planted by the rivers of water." It is here that it best flourishes. Back on the dry,

arid plain, deprived of the needed moisture, its growth is retarded, and its life even endangered. But here beside the river, into the very bed of which its roots may penetrate, it flourishes and brings forth fruit in its season. To the tree it means much to be beside the stream, or, in other words, along the channel through which what is so vital to its life flows. It is worth much to the flower to be planted in the unobstructed sunlight. In the spring it needs the warmth of the sun to arouse it from its winter sleep, and when, later on, its petals open, it again needs the light to tint them with delicate beauty. Back under the shadow of the cliff, in the cold soil, and shut out from the warmth and light, the flower cannot attain either its beauty or perfection.

In a word, every living thing is dependent on its environment, and requires that it be brought into those relations upon which its life is dependent. It is so with the spiritual life of man. All conditions are not alike favorable to its growth, and those that are essential we may be sure are furnished to all who through baptism are made heirs of the promise, "I will be to him a God." Nor is this all. To be a parent is, in the nature

of the case, to desire the best for the child. Uppermost in the hearts of the father and mother, and for a purpose, God has placed a holy concern for their children. By the constraint of love they own themselves compelled to the doing all that can be done for the welfare of their offspring. But such endeavors, earnest as they may be, are not wisely put forth if the spiritual of the child is neglected. Health of body is to be sought after. Yet health is but a thing of years. Intellectual attainments, the rounding out of the mental powers, is to be sought. But intellectual attainments endure but for a time. The soul lives on, and the bent that shapes its destiny is received here. For these reasons too great concern cannot be had for the spiritual welfare of our children. It is imperative that these little ones be placed in those relations most conducive to their spiritual lives, and into these we may bring them by baptism.

It is impossible, within the limits of the present chapter, to trace the argument showing the identity of baptism with circumcision. Confessedly they recognize and confirm the same relation to God and possess the same symbolic meaning. They

both signify the inward and spiritual grace of regeneration of which each was appointed as the seal. All that circumcision then did for the child baptism now does for it. But one of the blessings that circumcision wrought for the child of the old dispensation was that it identified it with the people of God, and made it an heir to the promise. And it meant much to be an heir of that promise, for to no human being can there come a blessing at all comparable to that of having God his God.

But what circumcision meant to the child then, baptism means now. It makes the one thus given to God an heir of the promise that God will be to him a God. And God is not the same to all men. To some He is a daily presence, a confidential friend. To some He is a shield and a sun; a sun giving light and life, a shield affording protection and safety. To some He is a shepherd, feeding and protecting from danger. Beneath some are the everlasting arms, and to some, as not to others, is the "Eternal God a refuge." And this heritage, a heritage the value of which cannot be estimated, is the portion of those who are brought into covenant relation with God. And into this covenant relation we place our little ones by bap-

tism. By this act we possess them of God as their God.

And thus, out on the unknown pathway of life, into the temptations and dangers that are sure to come, we may send them, certain that they will not be without the presence and help of the Almighty Friend, certain also that we have placed them in the environment most favorable to their spiritual growth.

Nor is that all. Having thus brought the child within the range of the covenant, having sealed it as a member of Christ's flock, there is given to the parent a power in the religious shaping of its life that otherwise could not be had. "It will therefore be your duty as his parents to teach him early this blessed truth, to watch over his education in all things that he be not led astray by false doctrines, to direct his youthful mind to the Holy Scriptures and his feet to the sanctuary," is the solemn responsibility to which the attention of the parent is called in the formula for the baptism of children. But what greater help in the performance of these duties than that which is afforded in the right to teach the child that the mark of the Lord Jesus is upon it, and that, as a result of its

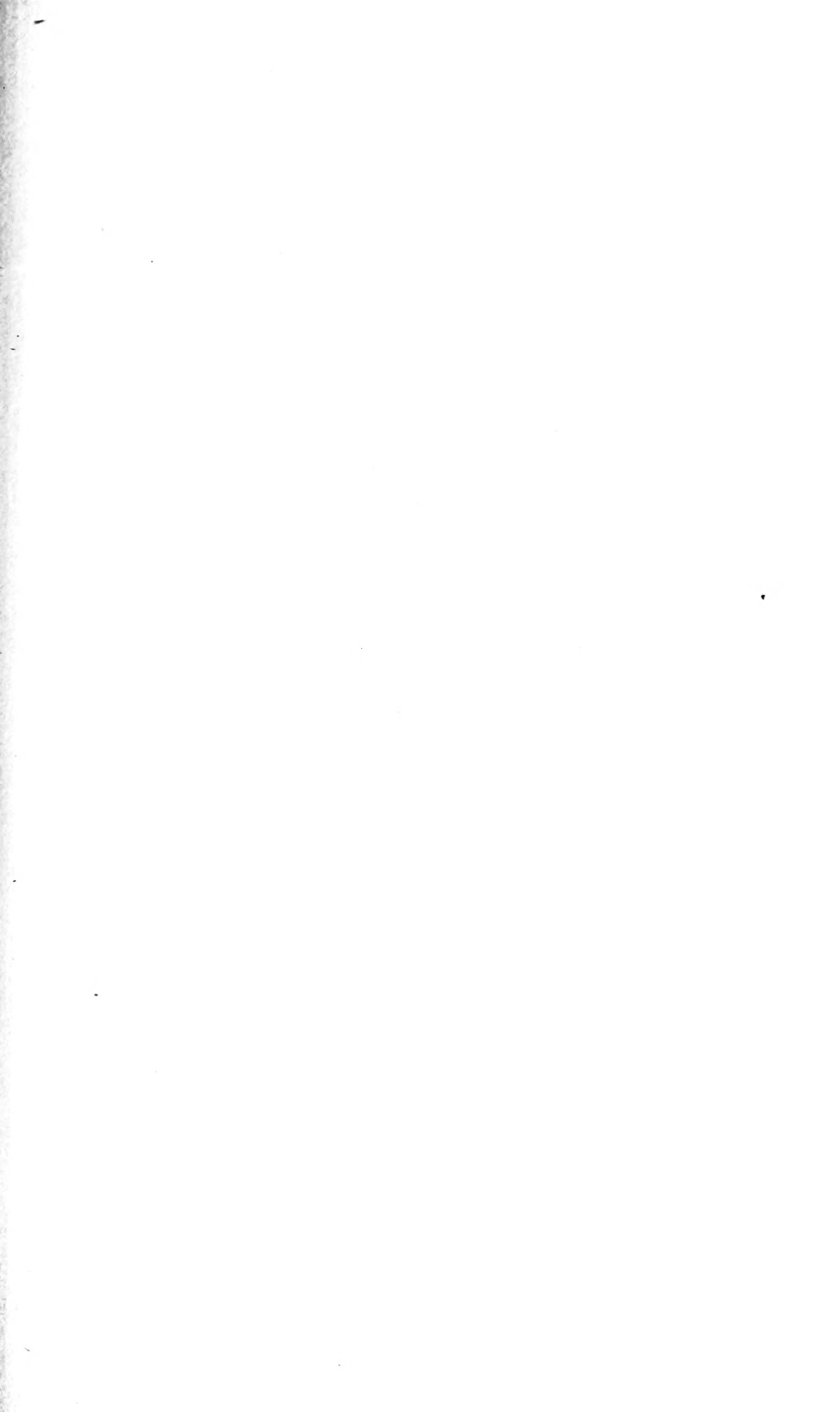
baptism, it is already a member of Christ's fold ; that it is already bound by all the obligations of religion, and entitled to all its privileges? In the words of another, "We endow our lips with an argument of divine persuasiveness when, at the earliest dawn of intelligence, mingled with the sweet story of old, we whisper into the souls of our children the assurance that they are the lambs of Christ's flock and bear His mark." We believe that no Christian parent whose example and teaching were consistent ever made such an appeal to the tender soul of the child without evoking a quick and abiding response. And then, too, what so mighty in its restraint, or so helpful in its constraint, as the covenant bonds under which, as parents, we put ourselves by the holy pledges of baptism? It is no easy thing to lay down precepts which are absolutely safe to follow. It is no easy thing to daily live a life such as may afford an example worthy of being followed. Yet both are necessary on the part of the parent. Indeed, the condition upon which God pledges His blessing upon our children is the performance of the holy vows taken at the moment of their consecration. And these vows, in their power to restrain

from the doing of wrong, and in their constraint to the doing of right, are of the greatest help.

But among the benefits of the baptism of infants must also be included the joyful sense of companionship in the bearing of the heavy responsibilities of parentage. To no one does God open a wider sphere of usefulness, and upon no one does He lay a heavier responsibility, than that of parentage. It descends with all its weight in the moment that we stand beside the cradle of our first-born, and lifts not until all life's burdens are laid down.

We desire that our little ones may go right, and that they may be kept from the hurtful influences that so thickly beset life. In a word, we want that they may be saved. While they are by our side we feel a sense of security. But they cannot always be near us. Sooner or later they will find their own companions, go out from the shelter of the home, and be exposed to the attack of the wild beasts that lurk amid life's mountains. And what will come to them then? Who will counsel them, guide and help in the time when, so far as our presence is concerned, they will be alone? What parent has not asked himself these ques-

tions and wished that it were possible to put the ones he loves so dearly under safe convoy? Well, precisely that is possible. It is possible to have another share with us the responsibility of their safe-keeping, and this one is God. We have already spoken of baptism as a seal. Upon every child given to Him in its holy covenant God places the seal of ownership. From the moment that we so give our little ones to Him they are not ours alone, but His also. And being His, He also assumes with us the responsibility of their safe-keeping. Watched over, kept by the Great Shepherd, we may be sure our little ones will be safely kept, for the promise is, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." And in this promise we may rest.



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