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Religious.

DR. DE PRESSENE ON BAPTISM.

Great is the force of truth. It is remarkable that so many candid writers belonging to Pedobaptist communities agree in presenting the ordinance of Christian Baptism as it is understood and practised by Baptists. We have here another clear exposition from Dr. De Pressense a celebrated French Protestant minister. The French Protestants are, in most respects, similar to the Presbyterians in their Church Polity and practice. Dr. De Pressense has recently published an important work on "The early Years of Christianity." It has since been translated into English, and published in London. The following is an extract therefrom:

Baptism, which was the sign of admission into the church, was administered by immersion. The convert was plunged beneath the water, and as he rose from it he received the laying on of hands. These two rites corresponded to the two great phases of conversion, the crucifixion of the old nature preceding the resurrection with Christ. Faith was thus required of every candidate for Baptism. The idea never occurred to Paul that baptism might be divorced from faith—the sign from the thing signified; and he does not hesitate, in the bold simplicity of his language, to identify the spiritual fact of conversion with the act which symbolises it. "We are buried with Christ by baptism into death," he says (Rom. vi. 4). With such words before us, we are compelled either to ascribe to him, in spite of all else that he has written, the materialistic notion of baptismal regeneration, or to admit that with him faith is so intimately associated with baptism that in speaking of the latter he includes the former without which it would be a vain form. The writers of the New Testament all ascribe the same significance to baptism. It presupposes with them invariably a manifestation of the religious life, which may differ in degree, but which in every case demanded (Acts ii. 38; viii. 13—17, 37, 38; x. 47; xvi. 14, 15, 32). "The baptism which saves us," says St. Peter, "is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter iii. 21.)

In these times, when the organization of the church was still in many respects undefined, baptism was equivalent to the profession of faith. Administered in the name of the Lord Jesus* as a solemn sign of conversion, it had all the value of an explicit confession of the Christian faith, especially at a time when its observance was sure to bring down reproach and persecution.† It is further probable that before receiving baptism, the convert made a short profession of his faith; this was that answer of a good conscience towards God spoken of by St. Peter. This custom was quite habitual in the second century, and there is every reason to suppose it originated in the first. This simple and popular confession of faith has been erroneously confounded with the Apostle's Creed which is of much later date. That Creed is nothing more than an expansion of the baptismal formula, which received gradual additions till it became a rule of faith.

Regarded from the apostolic point of view, baptism cannot be connected either with circumcision or with the baptism ad-

ministered to proselytes to Judaism. Between it and circumcision there is all the difference which exists between the theory to which admission was by birth, and the Church which is entered only by conversion. It is in direct connection with faith, that is with the most free and most individual action of the human soul. As to the baptism administered to the Jewish proselytes, it accompanied circumcision, and was of like import. It purified the neophyte and his family from the defilements of Paganism, and sealed his incorporation and that of his children with the Jewish theocracy; its character was essentially national and theocratic.‡ Christian baptism is not to be received, any more than faith by right of inheritance. This is the great reason why we cannot believe that it was administered in the apostolic age to little children. No positive fact sanctioning the practice can be adduced from the New Testament; the historical proofs alleged are in no way conclusive. There is only one case affording any ground for doubt, and those who attach more importance to the general spirit of the new covenant than to an isolated text, hesitatingly admit that it is of no force.§

‡ Augustine has erroneously established a complete parallel between Christian baptism and that of the Jewish proselytes. ("archeol." ii. 320)
§ Five baptismal households are mentioned in the New Testament. The family of Cornelias was baptized only after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon all its members. (Acts x. 44, 47.) The family of the jailer at Philippi had heard the preaching of Paul and Silas: "They spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." St. Paul says (1 Cor. i. 16), that he baptized the family of Stephanas; and in the same Epistle (xvi. 16), he mentions that the family was the first-fruits of his ministry in Achaia, a statement which implies that all its members were converted. The single doubtful case is that of the baptism of the family of Lydia (Acts xvi. 15), but it loses this character when we connect it with the instances already referred to. It appears to us evident that the family of Lydia was the first-fruits of Macedonia, as the family of Stephanas was of Achaia.

THE LAST STRAND OF THE ROPE.

In the year 1846, on St. Kilda, one of the islands of Western Scotland, there lived a poor widow and her son. She trained him in the fear of the Lord, and well did he repay her care. He was her stay and her support, though only sixteen years of age. They were very poor; and to help their scanty means, Ronald, her son, used to collect sea bird's eggs upon the neighbouring cliffs. This feat was accompanied with considerable danger, for the birds used often to attack him.

One day having received his mother's blessing, Ronald set off to the cliffs, having supplied himself with a strong rope by which to get down, and a knife to strike the bird should he be attacked.—How magnificent was the scene! The cliff rose several hundred feet above the sea, whose wild waves lashed madly against it, dashing the glittering spray far and near. Ronald fastened one end of the rope firmly upon the top of the cliff, and the other around his waist, and was then lowered until he got opposite one of those fissures in which the birds build, when he gave the signal to his companions not to let him down any farther. He planted his foot on a slight projection of the rock, grasped with one hand his knife, and with the other tried to take the eggs. Just then a bird flew at him and attacked him. He made a blow with his knife; but, O! horrible to narrate, in place of striking the bird, he struck the rope, and severed some of the strands, he hung suspended over that wild abyss of raging waves by only a few threads of hemp. He uttered a piercing exclamation, which was heard by his companions above who saw his danger, and gently tried to draw him up.—Awful moment! As they drew in each coil, Ronald felt thread after thread giving way. "O Lord! save me," was his first agonizing cry, and then, "O Lord! comfort my dear mother." He closed his eyes on the awful scene as he felt the rope gradually breaking. He hears the top; but, O! the rope is breaking. Another and another pull, then a snap, and now he sees but one strand supporting him. He hears the top; his friends reach over to

grasp him; he is not yet within their reach.—One more haul of the rope.

It strains; it unravels under his weight. He looks below at the dark waste of boiling, fathomless water, and then above to the glorious heavens. He feels he is going. He hears the wild cry of his companions, the frantic shriek of his fond mother, as they hold her back from rushing to try to rescue her child from destruction. He knows no more; reason yields; he becomes insensible. But, just as the rope is giving way, a friend stretches forward at the risk of being dragged over the cliff. A strong hand grasps him, and Ronald is saved!

Dear reader, if you are unsaved, I want you, in this true and simple narrative, to see your own condition. If living for this world, you are frittering away your precious moments in pursuing perishing trifles. As year after year passes away, the rope of life becomes smaller and smaller. Strand after strand snaps as the knell of each departing year tolls its mournful notes. How many threads are now left, can you tell? Do you realize your position? It can not be worse. How vividly Ronald realized his position in that moment when the last strand was giving way, thread by thread—when overcome by the sense of his danger, and when that danger has most imminent, a strong hand was stretched out to save him, which brought him safely beyond the reach of further danger, and placed him in the loving arms of his parent!

INFANT IMMERSION.

Rev. Howard Malcom, D. D., of Philadelphia, while at Milan, a few years ago, saw an infant immersed. Being in the grand cathedral, he says, "I noticed a well-dressed party enter, bringing several infants, and on inquiry was told there was to be a baptism. Following the little group toward the side of the church (there are no pews) we came to a something which looked like a high-post bedstead, with crimson curtains closely drawn. As we approached, it was rolled out a little from the wall, and proved to be a baptismal font of white marble, large enough for the baptism of an adult, and nearly filled with water. A tall, handsome priest approached, and standing beside it, read the rubric, which was quite long. Then extending his hands toward one of the infants, one of the females loosed a button or ribbon at the child's neck, and drew down, with one act, all its clothes disclosing its little body bound round and round with white diaper from head to foot, making it stiff and strait as a mummy. It was then laid on the priest's hands, who gently dipped it in the water, pronouncing at the same time the usual formula. This was repeated in each case, with solemnity and grace." Anxious to know more about this ceremony, the Dr. followed out the matter with the following result:

Deeply interested to see "Infant baptism" performed by immersion, and that in Italy, and anxious to know how it came about, I resolved to converse with the priest, if I could, but was quite ignorant of Italian. Ascending him modestly, when the people was retiring, I asked if he spoke French. He courteously replied that he did. I told him I was an American, and never having heard of infant baptism being administered by immersion in the Papal Church, begged to know how it came to be so done. He informed me that all this portion of Europe had baptized exclusively by immersion from the Apostolic age.—*Christian Era.*

THE RUMSELLER'S WORK.

Meeting with a person the other day who had formerly been engaged in the liquor traffic, I asked why he had left the trade. His reply was as follows:—

"In looking over my account book one day I counted up the names of forty-four men who had been regular customers of mine, most of them, for years. Thirty-two of these men, to my certain knowledge, had gone down to a drunkard's grave, and ten of the remaining twelve were then living,

confirmed sots! I was appalled and horrified. To remain in such a dreadful, degrading, and murderous trade, I could not; hence I abandoned it." Such are the fruits of rum-selling.

RIGHT TO LEGISLATE FOR TEMPERANCE.

The Rev. Albert Barnes, the distinguished commentator, states forcibly the right of society to suppress by law the liquor traffic. The substance is this:—

1. Society has a right to protect itself.
2. Society should not legislate to protect evil.
3. Society should not legislate to regulate evil.
4. Society has a right to take efficient means to prevent and remove evil.
5. Society has a right to remove a public evil by destroying private property if necessary.

WHAT WILL YOU SAY THEN?

While Hopu, a young Sandwich Islander was in America, he spent an evening in a company where an infidel lawyer tried to puzzle him with difficult questions. At length the native said:

"I am a poor heathen boy. It is not strange that my blunders in English should amuse you. But soon there will be a larger meeting than this. We shall all be there. They ask us all one question, namely: Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Now, sir, I think I can say, Yes. What will you say, sir?"

When he had stopped, all present were silent. At length the lawyer said that, as the evening was far gone, they had better conclude it with prayer, and proposed that the native should pray. He did so; and as he poured out his heart to God, the lawyer could not conceal his feelings. Tears started from his eyes, and he sobbed aloud. All present wept, too, and when they separated, the words, "What will you say sir?" followed the lawyer home, and did not leave him till it brought him to the Saviour.

THE END OF THE WORLD.—To thousands this is no fiction—no illusion of any over-heated imagination. To-day, to-morrow, every day, to thousands, the end of the world is close at hand. And why should we fear it? We walk here, as it were, in the crypts of life; at times from the great Cathedral above us, we can hear the organ and the chanting of the choir; we see the light gleam through the open door, when some friend goes up before us; and shall we fear to mount the narrow staircase of the grave, that leads us out of this uncertain twilight into the serene mansions of the life eternal?—*Longfellow.*

Dr. Lyman Beecher once said: "A great many professed Christians have no other idea of religion than that it is the means of getting to heaven when they die. As to doing any thing for God while they live it does not enter into their plans. I tell you my brethren, I do not believe there is one in five hundred of such professors that will reach heaven; for there is a magnanimity in true religion that is above all such contemptible meanness."

Strong language, said I to myself. But is it not true? Is there not "contemptible meanness" in expecting God to save us when we die, if we do not serve Him while we live?

"He left a large property," was a closing sentence of a recent obituary. How many reflections it suggests! What a pity he was obliged to leave it! He was taking great delight in collecting it. It was all the fruit of his own energy, industry and good judgment; he had to leave it, and he went out of the world as poor as he came in. He might have taken it with him—or rather he might have sent it in advance. Every dollar given in humble faith to scatter the glad tidings of salvation,

* There is no example in the New Testament of the employment of the complete formula of baptism. Bingham in vain attempts to deny this fact. ("Origines," iv. 163.)

† Great importance must have been attached to baptism as the sign of incorporation with the Church since in some congregations it was held necessary to administer it to Christians already baptized, in the name of catechumens who had died before receiving it. This is in our opinion the only reasonable meaning to attach to those words 1 Cor. xv. 29. This practice, passingly mentioned by St. Paul, was afterwards perpetuated in heretical sects. (Epiphanius, "Hæreses," xxviii. 7; Tertullian, "De Resurrectione," 48.)