

The Christian Messenger.

Halifax, N. S., March 13, 1872.

BAPTISM OF CHILDREN.

Parents are often greatly concerned to know at what age it would be fit and proper for their children to be baptized.

Pious Pedobaptists and Baptists are very much alike in this respect, but the former take the custom of their churches and apply what they regard as baptism to their children when they are babes.

Baptist parents are no less anxious to have their children brought into covenant relationship with God, and being united to the household of faith.

On examining the New Testament for instruction on this subject, however, we do not learn that age has anything to do in the matter. There does not appear in the Divine record any precept or example of baptism, except of such as had themselves become believers in the Lord Jesus.

None of these expressions afford any aid in determining the question of age, but they plainly indicate acts that are incompatible with the feebleness of what we now understand by early infancy.

Infancy, in the legal sense of the term, is any age previous to full maturity, and in this sense that term was used by early christian writers. This fact has led some—who being more concerned to secure the admission of their children to church privileges, than to ascertain who are the proper subjects to whom baptism should be administered, overlook the Scripture facts noticed above in reference to the New Testament examples, and so attempt to make Christians of their offspring before they are conscious of anything about it or capable of thought or obedience.

We invite Pedobaptist parents to a case of recent occurrence, and would ask them if it does not look more like the New Testament Baptisms than the taking infants of a few weeks old to the minister, and supposing that the Saviour's injunction, "Suffer little children to come unto me" is thereby observed? Rev. Dr. Sheldon a few days since in giving an account of a baptism at Troy, N. Y., says: Another of the candidates was a little girl, so small that I baptized her in my arms, and yet she was unusually mature in mind, and gave the clearest evidence of intelligent and true conversion.

The faithful performance of duty by Christian parents, and the proper appreciation of the ordinance of believers' baptism would doubtless result in the conversion, reception and baptism of thousands of such young persons.

INFANT BAPTISM.

An article on this subject recently appeared in the Princeton Review and was copied by the Presbyterian Witness of the 2nd inst. The writer has evidently abstained from the offensive methods too often adopted in such discussions. An effort is made to take the Baptist stronghold—that faith is a condition of baptism. It is, however, frankly admitted that the peculiar views of the Baptists have a potency which makes them aggressive. Let it be as freely and frankly acknowledged, that the training of Presbyterians exposes the minds of those so trained to the force of the Baptist doctrine. This admission is in praise and commendation of Presbyterian habits. Presbyterians are trained to prove their doctrines by the Word of God. Their creed, as a whole, is sound. They have a thoroughly wrought conviction that

the truth is held by them. Baptism is of course included. They do not doubt. Here is the defence of Presbyterians against the Baptist view. But when a doubt does find its way into the heart of a Presbyterian on the subject of baptism, he goes to his Bible to settle the matter. So long, however, as every doubt is kept out of the mind, and the whole soul is absorbed in the defence of what is held, no change can, in the nature of things, take place. The safety of Presbyterian-Pedobaptists consists in not entertaining doubts on the subject of baptism, no not even so long as to settle it by an investigation of the Word of God. When a pious Presbyterian sees the truth on the subject of baptism, he has not been prepared by his training to say it is not important. This accounts for the uniformity of the practice of sprinkling among them, which does not appear in other Pedobaptist bodies. Thousands in the Episcopal and Wesleyan bodies hold more or less of the views of Baptists, but the general laxity in these bodies, neutralizes the feeling of obligation which every christian should possess to practice what he believes. Baptists in some instances betray want of decision on this subject, and suppose that it does not matter with what church they dwell. But we should adopt, in the instructions we give, the decisive and positive methods of the Presbyterians, and it may not be amiss for the Presbyterians to imitate the Baptists in the prominence and place given to regeneration in the family and pulpit ministrations of the Word of God. The Presbyterians are evidently learning their part of the lesson most successfully. But let us turn from these reflections to this laboured attack made upon the doctrine of Baptists: that "faith is a condition of baptism" and "that as children cannot believe therefore they ought not to be baptized."

Against this truth three objections are urged by the writer. Here is the first "remark" entire:

1. "Our first remark is, that there is here manifest confusion of thought and language. Faith is confounded with believing; that is, a principle is confounded with an act. A principle may be in existence, and not be in action. The habit of the mind determines the character of the activities of the faculties of the mind when these faculties are brought into action; but the existence of this habit of soul precedes the exercise of the faculties, is distinct from them, and is not to be confounded with their acts."

We deny that in our demand for faith before baptism there is any "confusion of thought and language." Says Dr. Hodge in his Systematic Theology vol. 1 page 353 "It is one of the distinguishing doctrines of Protestants that knowledge is essential to faith. This is clearly the doctrine of Scripture. How can they believe on him whom they have not heard? is the pertinent query of the apostle. Faith includes the affirmation of the mind that a thing is true and trustworthy. But it is impossible for the mind to affirm anything of that of which it knows nothing. \* \* \* If therefore we cannot know God we cannot believe in Him." The authoritative meaning of faith is given in Heb. xi. 1. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Of this passage Dr. Barnes says, "It is the only definition of faith which is attempted in the scriptures." These two distinguished divines are at one with the Baptists in their views of faith and believing. They would not be charged by their brethren with "confusing thought and language."

The confusion is produced in the mind of the writer by confounding life in God with faith in God. In view of what is said of John the Baptist and Jeremiah, one could scarcely affirm that infants are never regenerated. If they may become the subjects of the Holy Spirit, and if they may be born of God in the unconscious period of their lives, then they may live; they may have life, but they do not believe, they have not faith. Faith cannot have an involuntary existence in an unconscious soul, but eternal life, as well as natural life, depends neither upon volition nor consciousness. So an infant may be conditioned for heaven, and not qualified for baptism. Baptism is placed after eternal life and scriptural faith. There may be life and not faith, but there cannot be faith without life. In requiring faith as a condition and preparation for baptism, eternal life is included. And it is only by the exercise of faith that the existence of eternal life in the soul can be ascertained. The salvation of the intelligent believ-

er God couples with duty and ceremony. The salvation of the body from the grave has been reserved by God to Himself. No ceremony nor co-operation of man will attend that event. In saving unconscious and irresponsible infants God requires nothing of them, for they can render nothing. And when they have been committed to God by faith, nothing further is required until intelligence is developed. Faith depends in its very nature upon conscious intelligence. It is to the mind assurance and evidence of things not seen but hoped for. Neither faith nor believing has any existence in an infant. Faith, the prerequisite, condition and qualification of christian baptism—the strong hold of the Baptists—cannot be breached by subtlety of argument or refinement in reasoning. It is the plain teaching of the Word of God. It must stand.

The second objection brought against the Baptist doctrine, if it were sound, would condemn Presbyterians as well. It is this: "If the lack of belief debars an infant from baptism, it will also prevent its salvation; and put it under the tremendous and righteous sentence, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Let a christian parent," says this writer, "take this principle in his hand and try to sustain his soul with it, as he looks upon his little one in its coffin and shroud." This is unworthy of a Presbyterian Pedobaptist. Any intelligent Presbyterian knows that the "breaking up of the fountains of sorrow, and the rending of heart-strings," by calling upon christian parents to look upon their little ones prepared for the cold, damp grave, is no preparation of the mind for an impartial examination of the Word of God; but it is a good device by which the mind can be prepared to receive a fiction, and submit to be bound by a delusion. A storm of passion does not help the judgment, especially when it is a storm of prejudice. But the Presbyterian principle also "would be a reed to pierce the hand and soul" as well as the Baptist principle. Presbyterianism denies baptism to infants, unless they have believing parents, and the tremendous sentence would be against all the little ones—and they are millions—who have not believing parents. The thousands of parents who do not love Christ, would be as much comforted by the "Baptist principle" as they would by the Presbyterian principle. But Baptists and Presbyterians hold no such view of the salvation of infants. Neither is it a legitimate inference from the views of either denomination on the subject of baptism. Infants are saved in God's own way through the atonement of Christ, and the infants of all parents, both christian and heathen are believed to be included in the salvation. If infant baptism needs such weak arguments as this for its support it is time it was cast aside by the church, and infant salvation for all the nations proclaimed, as clearly taught in the Word of God.

Let us turn our attention to the third objection of this writer. Here it is: "Our third remark is that they who are fit subjects of the thing signified are fit subjects of the sign. In baptism the sign is the natural element, water, and the thing signified is the water of life." "If Baptists hold that those dying in infancy drink of the water of life, how can they withhold from them, on the ground of their unfitness, the sign by which that water is symbolized? "How," asks this writer, "can these things be harmonized?"

Take away the false assumption and the harmony is apparent. The sign is not withheld "on the ground of their (the infant's) unfitness," as unfitness is so cleverly defined here by implication. Those dying in infancy are morally prepared for heaven, but they are unfit for the sign of that life which they have in their souls; but it is not a moral unfitness that is meant it is an intelligent fitness that is wanting. If it could be known that a certain infant had been regenerated, but it cannot be known to man, it could be said to be fit for heaven, and morally fit for baptism, but not intelligently fit for the ordinance, for faith is required. "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest," implies the omission of those who cannot believe, not because they may not be morally qualified for the ordinance, but because they are unqualified for the intelligent exercise of faith, the prerequisite of baptism. Here is the harmony, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The fitness of which Baptists speak is that intelligent condition required by the Scriptures, i. e., faith in Christ. But allow the argument all the force

given to it by the writer, and turn it upon the writer, and ask him 'how these things can be harmonized.' He says that the children of unbelievers, dying in infancy, drink of the water of life; why then do Presbyterians withhold from them the sign? If they are fit for the thing signified why not give them the sign? This is a very poor argument to read about among Presbyterians.

We are glad to learn from this writer that the doctrine of believers' baptism is still aggressive. Here is what he says:—

"It has penetrated deeply into the ideas of almost all branches of the Church, until it may be said to predominate over their own original views. Presbyterians, in no inconsiderable numbers, have fallen away from the principles of the Confession of Faith, with respect to the children of the Church, which are drawn purely out of the Abrahamic covenant; and are powerfully influenced, often without being aware of it, by Baptist ideas and tendencies."

WISE FORECAST.

The Western College Society has been some years energetically sustained by the Congregationalists of New England, for the purpose of founding Colleges in the Western States. We glean the following facts in respect to its recent work. Last year their subscriptions amounted to \$84,000. These subscriptions are applied to the endowment of Colleges that have inadequate incomes, or the creation of new institutions. Among the Colleges aided by this Society is Iowa, for which \$70,000 has been raised, Ripon which has received \$35,000, and Olivet in Michigan, which in a few years has received real estate and buildings to the amount of \$100,000, a fund of \$60,000, and subscriptions of \$40,000. The Congregational churches in Michigan are said to be largely Home Mission churches, yet they have raised for this institution \$75,000 within five years. This is laying the foundations of future greatness and power. In two or three generations many of these Colleges will be to the Great West, what Harvard and Yale now are to New England.

A sentence from a writer, from whom the above facts are learned, may reveal to us how this work is done: "We believe that almost any church can be trained by its divinely appointed leader to feel a deep and practical interest in the cause of higher education."

RELIGIOUS AMENDMENT OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION.

A number of leading divines principally Episcopalians, we believe, have inaugurated a movement having for its object the introduction into the United States Constitution of some recognition of the Divine Being, and especially of Christ as the appointed ruler of nations. They adopt the following as the principles which demand such an amendment:—

- 1. A nation is the creature of God; 2. It is clothed with authority derived from God; 3. It owes allegiance to Jesus Christ the appointed ruler of nations; 4. It is subject to the authority of the Bible, the special revelation of the moral law.

We have seen many elaborate arguments on either side of this question, and it is one on both sides of which much may be said. It has many warm advocates and many others who are as strong opponents. We have not seen so succinct and clear a statement of the objections to this movement as appears in a recent number of the Christian Weekly as follows:—

"The objections to this amendment may be for the most part classed under three general heads: 1. That it is impracticable; that however wise such a provision might have been originally it is too late now to secure it, and that to endeavor to do so is a waste of energies. 2. That it is undesirable; that a nation is not made Christian by inserting Christianity in its constitution, but by imbuing therewith the hearts of its citizens, and that the labor expended in getting the clauses in the written document had better be expended in getting personal faith in these principles into the hearts of the people. And 3. That it tends towards a fusion of church and state, and indirectly prescribes religious tests as a condition of office, since every important office-holder must swear to support the Constitution of the United States, which, if it were so amended, a conscientious Jew or unbeliever could not do."

NUTRITIOUS CONDIMENT FOR CATTLE.—We have much pleasure in directing the special attention of Farmers and all others interested in the raising, and improving the condition of Cattle throughout the Province to the adver-

tisement in another column of "THE NORTH BRITISH CATTLE-FOOD COMPANY'S" FOOD for Cattle. We have seen their testimonials from parties of the highest standing in Great Britain and Canada, who have proved the genuineness and utility, as well as the economical qualities of the Condiment, which is now for the first time introduced into this Province, and we have not the least doubt that when it has been fairly tested, its use will become as general here as it appears to be in all other places where it has been introduced.

Its cheapness will doubtless secure for it a large demand at the present time, when provender of all kinds is so scarce.

We would add that we consider the company fortunate in the selection and appointment of Mr. Fraser as their Agent for this Province, and feel assured that any information required from him concerning the Food, or any orders entrusted to his care, will be promptly and faithfully attended to.

Notices, &c.

ACADIA ATHENÆUM. The Revd. J. M. Cramp, D. D., will lecture before the Acadia Athenæum, in the Vestry, on Friday the 15th inst., at seven o'clock, P. M. Subject:—"The story of a remarkable stone." F. H. EATON, Cor. Sec. Acadia College, March 7th, 1872.

Judge McCully as treasurer desires to acknowledge four dollars for the Baptist Home Missionary Fund, for labour in Cape Breton from "A Friend," Victoria County—per H. N. Paint, Esq. Also further sums per S. Selden, of \$5.00 from John Web, Arichat; Everett, \$3.00; D. Webber, \$1.00; Week of Prayer Offering \$1.00.

COLCHESTER COUNTY BAPTIST SABBATH SCHOOL CONVENTION. The Quarterly Meeting of this Convention will be held in the Meeting House at Debert River, on Friday, March 22nd, commencing at half past two, P. M. There will be a sermon at the beginning of the afternoon Session. Evening Session to commence at 7 o'clock. A. J. WALKER, Sec'y. Truro, Feb. 16, 1872.

TO THE MEMBERS OF WOMEN'S MISSION-AID SOCIETIES AND THE FRIENDS OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.

Contributions of articles to be forwarded to Miss Norris should be sent to Halifax as early as possible in the month of April. Either of the following named members of the N. S. Central Board, will be pleased to take charge of such contributions: Mrs. Goucher—28 Albro Street. Mrs. R. I. Hart—115 Pleasant Street. Mrs. A. Smith, A. & W. Smith's—7 & 9 Buckingham Street. Mrs. A. W. Clark—6 Mumford Terrace. Mrs. Selden—61 Granville Street.

RECEIVED FROM WOMEN'S MISSION AID SOCIETIES. Riverdale, Weymouth,—Mrs. Jos. Sabean \$2.00 M. R. SELDEN, Sec'y. March 12th, 1872.

LETTERS RECEIVED.

- H. E. S. Mader, 1 sub \$2. Z. G. Gable, Rev. T. Harley, J. Sabean, \$2. J. D. Masters, 1 sub \$2. Rev. W. H. Warren—yes all right. Rev. C. Y. Snell. Rev. O. Chute, \$1.50. B. L. Teller, \$7. Rev. F. A. Kidson. Rev. W. Sommerville, \$2. W. McCully, 4th. Rev. L. B. Gates, \$3. A. Marshall, Esq., \$6.

News of the Week.

PROVINCIAL APPOINTMENTS.—Digby Co.—To be Justices of the Peace—Jos. W. Denton and Stephen Westcott. To be a member of the Central Board of Agriculture, under Chapter 13 of the Acts of 1871—J. J. O'Brien, Esq., of Noel, in the County of Hants.

Lunenburg Co.—To be Justices of the Peace—James Hennigar and James McKean.

Annapolis Co.—To be Masters in the Supreme Court—George Woodbury and J. M. Owen, Esqrs.

MATHEW GALLAGHER, a laborer employed on the Windsor and Annapolis line, was run over by the down train on Tuesday morning and killed, between Beaver Bank and Mount Uniacke Stations, while engaged in shovelling snow off the track. The deceased had been 14 years in the service of the Railway Department, and bore an unexceptionably good character. He leaves a wife and ten children.

We learn from the Church Chronicle, that Rev. H. P. Almon will resign his charge at Bridgetown, after Easter, and take up his residence in Halifax.

THE ICE in the harbor last week moved several of the buoys from their proper positions. The red buoy, off Ives Point, Mon-Nab's Island, was carried three quarters of a mile SSW of its proper place, and the Point Pleasant buoy about one hundred yards south of its place. They were put in their proper places on Monday.