

A Baptist Adverb.

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Whilst pursuing the undergraduate course at Acadia College some years ago, it was my privilege to spend the summer vacations in doing a little missionary work on Prince Edward Island. After the manner of the Apostles, two of us went forth in company to bear the good news of the kingdom to all who were disposed to give heed to the message. My fellow-laborer was an ordained evangelist, a man of congenial spirit and good natural abilities, though lacking a collegiate training.

Our humble efforts were graciously blessed of God in the conversion of a number of persons, among whom were some who had been brought up under the spiritual guardianship of other denominations. Of their own accord, and in pursuance of convictions reached by a painstaking and prayerful study of the inspired Word, these converts earnestly desired to follow their divine Master in the ordinance of baptism, and to unite in fellowship with a church which emphasized the doctrine of the new birth. Whilst studiously avoiding anything like a spirit of proselytism as being alien to the genius of true Christianity, we could not refuse compliance with the reasonable wishes of these trusting converts; and they were therefore baptized on a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ, and received cordially into the fellowship of the Baptist church.

An esteemed divine of a different persuasion, who regarded himself as charged with the spiritual watchcare of some of these converts, manifested much displeasure at our apparent interference with his ecclesiastical prerogatives. This was not, of course, a matter of very great surprise. It was natural and to some extent excusable; it might even be regarded as praiseworthy. Instead, however, of endeavoring to secure the return of the wanderers by reasoning with them and seeking to convince them of the unscriptural character of their course, the good man deemed it to be more "heroic and effective to deal directly with the thieves whom he charged with having stolen his sheep.

Shrewdly forecasting the possible contingencies connected with such an undertaking, he wisely summoned to his assistance a distinguished Doctor of Divinity, of the same faith and order, whose dialectic abilities in the arena of theology and New Testament exegesis were known and feared throughout the land. A formal visit on the part of such dignitaries as these might well awaken a measure of solicitude in the minds of the untrained evangelist and of the fledgling from Acadia. The ostensible purpose of this visit was to ascertain by what authority the missionaries presumed to administer the ordinance of baptism to those who had in infancy been made recipients of that sacred rite.

The gauntlet was thus thrown down, and the challenge courteously accepted. In polite and plain terms the reasons for our procedure were fully presented. Infant baptism was shown to be unauthorized by Scripture and repugnant to reason. New Testament baptism was shown to be an act of personal consecration, preceded by genuine repentance and faith on the part of the candidate, admitting him at once to the enjoyments and privileges of the Christian church. We claimed the Master's authority to go into all the world and preach these doctrines, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, all who professed faith in Jesus.

The erudite doctor, who had been quietly studying his surroundings and waiting for an opportune moment to magnify his office, seemed to regard this as a fitting juncture to enter into the discussion. With an air of profound wisdom he inquired if we had a Greek Testament at hand. He was promptly assured that we were in possession of the necessary article, for no ambitious theological student of Acadia College pretends to face a cold and unfriendly world without the benign assistance of a genuine Greek Testament. The book was speedily produced, and we were asked to read Acts 16: 34, giving special attention to the clause translated, "and he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Searching questions were asked by the learned interrogator respecting the grammatical analysis and meaning of the original words. The point of the argument gradually became apparent. In place of the expression "with all his house" the Greek equivalent was found to be the word *panoikēi*, which the classical reader at once recognizes as an adverb. A literal translation of the passage would seem to be simply this: "He rejoiced, believing householdly in God." In other words, it was claimed, that the jailer believed in behalf of his household. He exercised family faith, and in virtue of his faith his household was baptized. "This is an unfortunate adverb for the Baptists," argued the shrewd divine, "since it demolishes at one stroke their favorite stronghold respecting believers' baptism, and clearly authorizes the practice of baptizing infants in virtue of the faith of their parents."

Here was a stunning argument for the unsophisticated missionaries to face. If the grammatical exegesis of the learned doctor was correct, it was difficult to see how his conclusions could be rejected. It became very plain that we must either find a more satisfactory meaning for this perplexing Greek adverb or forever abandon one of the strongest citadels of our Baptist faith.

There is confessedly much subtlety in the construction of the argument here outlined, and it sometimes passes for demonstration among those who are not familiar with the grammatical and lexical use of Greek words. We have met this plausible method of reasoning in more than one locality. It is therefore worth our time to give it a brief review in order to make plain to all intelligent readers the precise facts of the case.

To every candid mind it must be obvious, in the first place, that the interpretation of the good doctor necessarily proves a great deal more than even he would be willing to admit. For, if the Philippian jailer could believe in behalf of his entire household, including as it certainly did all the children, servants and guests connected with the family, there was nothing in the nature of the case to prevent him from exercising the same faith in behalf of the friends of these guests, in behalf of the entire country of which he was a citizen. Surely it was quite as reasonable for him to believe *panoikēi*—for all his countrymen, as to believe *panoikēi*—for all his household. On the given theory there is nothing to limit the imputative virtue of a Christian's faith. With such a magnificent opportunity and such a glorious privilege he might be able, by a heroic act of faith, to save the entire human race, if he might not even go so far as to rescue lost spirits from perdition. Doubtless the critical doctor would hesitate to preach such a doctrine as this; yet it logically follows from his exegetical premises. The theory of exercising faith in behalf of others does not seem to admit of any definable limitations. It proves too much.

But a further difficulty arises from this wonderful theory. If the jailer could believe in behalf of his household, why could he not be baptized for them? In other words, why should not his baptism, as well as his faith, be accepted of God in behalf of his household? This is a question which neither the doctor nor his friends of kindred faith have ever answered with the slightest degree of satisfaction.

What an inspiring sphere of usefulness opens before the man whose faith avails in an unlimited measure for his fellowmen! It surpasses even the biasedness of those whose works of supererogation are placed to the credit of less fortunate mortals. Francis Xavier seems to have exercised such faith for eastern heathenism, with the trifling defect that he left them in the same condition as that in which he found them. We are of the opinion that faith by proxy invariably leads to this result.

Let us turn our attention for a little while to the meaning of this curious adverb. The word *panoikēi* is derived from the Greek *pan*, all, and *oikos*, a household. Its more classical form is *panoikia*, the dative case of an absolute nominative. In that form its meaning is perfectly clear, corresponding to the translation given in the passage above quoted. By a Greek idiom this dative has taken the form of an adverb, whilst still retaining its dative signification. Many instances of this use of Greek adverbs could be cited, but the classical reader can verify the correctness of my statement by consulting any good Greek lexicon.

The precise import of such an adverbial dative may be made plain by the use of an exactly equivalent English form of expression. We say, with grammatical accuracy, "The teacher, with his pupils, was present," or "The father with his children was baptized." Here, although the verb is in the singular number, in each case it is distinctly understood that what is affirmed of the teacher in the given sentence is also affirmed of the pupils, and that what is predicated of the father is likewise predicated of his children. Thus the dative *panoikia* idiomatically changed into the adverbial form *panoikēi* is correctly translated in our Authorized Version by the equivalent phrase "with all his house." The eminent divines who made this translation will scarcely be suspected of having been unduly biased in favor of Baptist sentiments in giving this rendering. Had they entertained the view held by our erudite friend, respecting the meaning of this uncommon adverb, they would certainly have translated it—"he rejoiced, believing in God in behalf of all his household." The fact that they did not so render the clause is sufficient evidence of their rejection of such an interpretation. In like manner the scholarly authors of the Revised Version have, by following in the footsteps of their predecessors, given their emphatic disapproval of any such meaning as has been proposed.

It may be suggested that a comparison of similar passages in other places in which this a verb occurs would do much in the way of making its meaning plain. Unfortunately the word is not to be found in any other portion of the New Testament. We are pleased, however, to be able to cite from other sources one or two instances in which the precise import of the term is made clear.

The first instance occurs in the Septuagint version of Exodus 1: 1, where it is stated, regarding those Israelites who went from Canaan to settle in Egypt, "Every man and his household came with Jacob." According to the Septuagint "every man *panoikēi* came with Jacob." This is a very plain case. The distinguished doctor's method of interpretation would compel us to think that every man came with Jacob in behalf of his family, heartlessly leaving the poor boys and girls at home with their disconsolate mothers. This may be true translation,

but it is certainly false history, since we have abundant evidence that both wives and children joined in the pilgrimage. The wise old men who prepared the Authorized Version knew better than to give such an absurd rendering to the Greek adverb. They knew well that what is affirmed of the men in this passage is also affirmed, in exactly the same sense, of their households.

The second instance is found in the original Greek of Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews, in the fourth book, and in the fourth section of chapter four. Alluding to the portions of sacrificial offerings set apart for the sustenance of priests and their families, Josephus remarks, "They *panoikēi* may eat them, etc." Here our modern sage would have the cool malignity to simply starve every member of these unfortunate domestic circles in order that well-fed priests might feast themselves in behalf of their hungry wives and children! The inhumanity of such a rendering condemns it at sight. And yet there is quite as much sense in arguing from this passage that the children of priests lived by virtue of what their fathers ate, as in maintaining from Acts 16: 33 that the jailer's children were baptized in virtue of what their father believed.

Thus our study of this word has shown us from its derivation, from its grammatical use and lexical signification, from similar passages found in other connections, and from the rendering given in both the Authorized and Revised Versions, that *panoikēi* distinctly and clearly sustains the position held by Baptists in relation to believers' baptism. We claim it to be a thoroughly Baptist adverb, putting its emphatic veto upon the doctrine that one person can exercise faith in behalf of another.

As for infants, there is not the faintest allusion to that class of persons in the chapter with which this word stands connected. The plainness and simplicity of the inspired narrative are so distinctly marked that we cannot avoid suspecting the sincerity of the man who professes to find in this passage any warrant for the theory of faith by proxy or for the practice of infant baptism. Meyer, a prince among pedobaptist exegetes, frankly concedes that "the baptism of the children of Christians, of which no trace is found in the New Testament, is not to be held as an apostolic ordinance."

As heralds of eternal truth we must regard ourselves, with Paul, as being set for the defence of the gospel, and we cannot with impunity permit even an adverb to be distorted into the service of error. Many of our younger missionary workers and pastors will meet the fallacy we have been exposing. It is to be hoped that in such encounters they will be fully prepared to acquit themselves like men, speaking the truth in love, exposing error fearlessly, and showing even Doctors of Divinity that at their peril they allow themselves to teach for doctrine the commandments of men.

A Faithful Stewardship.

BY REV. WALTER H. VASSAR.

Nothing is more prominent in the teachings of our Master than his thoughts concerning stewardship. Perhaps we should except what he taught of the Fatherhood of God. But Jesus made it plain that happiness, both here and hereafter depended upon a faithful discharge of our trusts. "Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord will make ruler over his household?"

How many of us really know the meaning of a faithful and prompt embracing of every opportunity? But there have been a few souls whom it would seem cause little short of doing their utmost of service. We want to call attention to one such—the life of a humble man, whose thought of self was so little his love for Christ so great. Those who have read that record of thirty five years of toil entitled "Uncle John Vassar or The Fight of Faith," will endorse what Dr. A. J. Gordon has said in writing the introduction to it: "A life so given up to God that it would have been literally impossible for him to have given more." One who recently returned the book to her pastor after reading it said, "Now I know the meaning of the word Christian." We may not all be called to do the same kind of work; but when and where called there must be no questioning.

"Where our Master bids us go,
'Tis not ours to answer no."

Some can do work which others cannot, and it may be work is waiting our undertaking. If we are faithful in our stewardship, we will be restless, till we find and do it.

We want to give a few incidents illustrative of the kind of work Uncle John Vassar was called to do. A pastor says: In five minutes after he greeted Mr. Vassar at the train his work began on that field. Passing on the way to the parsonage, in sight of the shop of a blacksmith, the pastor suggested that it would be wise for Mr. Vassar to call there during his stay in the place. To the surprise of the pastor this "winner of souls," started at once for the shop, and his surprise grew into amazement when he saw the smith put down the foot of the horse he was shoeing, and go with this stranger behind the forge to pray.

A young man was noticed to come night after night to revival meetings, but would slip away before one could grasp his hand. Mr. Vassar felt he must see this soul, and walked five miles to the farm where he was employed, arriving as the family were about to eat an early

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