

Original Contributions.

Religion.

NUMBER I.

This word comes from the Latin language, and is composed of the two words *re* and *ligo*, "to bind again." If man can be bound *again* then he must have been bound once before. But this "again" implies also that between the primary union or binding and the reunion or second binding there was a separation. If a separation there was a cause for it; and if a reunion there was a cause for that reunion. The word "religion" then by implication teaches four things, at least, which it does not express, viz.: 1. A primary union with God; 2. A separation from him; 3. A reunion with him, which it expresses; 4. A cause for the separation; 5. A cause for the reunion with God. The word religion then has in it a vast field of thought, embracing, as it does, in its broad clasp, the primary innocence of man, his departure by sin, his reunion with his Maker by obedience to the will of God; but we can notice but one of these to-night.

1. A primary union with God.

This is enjoyed by every child born into our world, and consequently if they die in childhood they are saved. Because "sin is the transgression of law," and infants, certainly, cannot transgress any law, therefore cannot sin. If they cannot sin they are not sinners. Again we urge that they are not sinners because they are not embraced in the commission, Mark xvi. 15: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." But, says the objector, children are creatures, and if the Gospel was to be preached to every creature, then, of necessity, it must be preached to children. So is a monkey a creature, and if this argument is worth anything it proves entirely too much for the advocates of infant depravity. The "every creature" in the commission is limited to "he that believeth," but belief comes from the understanding of testimony or evidence, and children cannot understand the Gospel; therefore the apostles did not include them in the commission, and if not included in the "power of God unto salvation," they do not need salvation, and hence are not lost, for Christ came "to seek and to save the lost," and to call sinners to repentance. Jesus says, "Verily,

I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. xviii. 3. Then a little child is just as a converted man must be to enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, if children are sinners, then Christ taught his disciples that they must become sinners in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, for they were to "become as a little child." Except ye become such sinners (?) as little children are ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. When a man has been converted his sins are forgiven him, and, consequently, he has no sin or is free from sin, and is free indeed, and consequently is as a little child. If children are included in the "every creature" of the commission they will all be lost, for it says, "He that believeth not shall be damned," but they cannot believe, therefore they shall all be damned. This is universal damnation instead of salvation. But it is asked if they are not natural sinners or born sinners, why do they sin upon the first temptation? If that weakness in the child by which temptation controls it be a sin, then what was it in Adam and Eve before they sinned? We repeat if that weakness be a sin then Adam and Eve were sinners before they ate of the forbidden fruit, for they evidently had the same weakness, or else temptation could not have overcome them. If that weakness be a sin then God is the author of sin, for he created it in the first ones of our race. Children, it is true, have this weakness, but cannot sin till they are old enough to act voluntarily and understandingly. Sin is an act, and therefore in the very nature of things cannot be transmitted by generation. That all men suffer much in consequence of Adam's sin cannot be disputed but that they are responsible for it before God, is here most emphatically denied. Christ took that "sin of the world" away by establishing, through his resurrection, the great resurrection of the dead. Again, if we sin because Adam did and inherit that sin of Adam from our parents, why do the children of Christians sin? They are now free from sin, and a child born to parents free from sin certainly cannot inherit sin, for a parent cannot transmit by generation what he does not possess: "*Ex nihilo nihil fit*." "Out of nothing, nothing comes." Again, all sinful men when they cast a backward look over their

lives, cry out, even though they be in the midnight revel. "Oh for the purity of my childhood once again." This universal feeling proves that all men have the consciousness within them that children are pure. And yet men will teach that they are sinners by birth and liars from the cradle. We now read Methodist Discipline, page 40, Sec. 2, Art. 53, printed 1872: "We hold that all children by virtue of the unconditional benefits of the atonement, are members of the kingdom of God, and, therefore, graciously entitled to baptism."

If children are members of the kingdom of God it seems to me that they are not in need of being baptized, for baptism is for the remission of sins. If they are members of the kingdom of God they are not sinners, and if they need baptism they are sinners. But we have already seen that children are not sinners, and therefore do not need baptism nor anything else for the forgiveness of sin.

In Acts ii. 38, Peter says, "Repent and be baptized, (*eis aphesin amartion*), for forgiveness of sins," and Christ uses exactly the same Greek words, Matt. xxvi. 28: "For this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many, (*eis aphesin amartion*), for the forgiveness of sin." Certainly then if Christ's blood is necessary to forgiveness of sins, baptism is also, for if it requires the application of the blood to forgive sins, it requires baptism also, for the object of both is expressed in the same words. None, we presume, will claim that Christ died because men are free from sin. But his blood cleanses from sin, and must, therefore, be shed in order to the forgiveness of sin, and before it.

J. A. CAMPBELL.

(From the Christian Statesman.)

The Church Distinguished From a Sect.

J. S. LAMAR.

Continued from last week.

So I might specify our views of regeneration, of conversion, of sanctification, of election, and the like. I believe that, as usually and carefully stated by our ablest speakers and writers, these are every one true. However much I may be surpassed in the ability, no one can go beyond me in the earnestness with which I advocate, maintain and defend them.

But important as we esteem these views to be, and prominent as we make them before the public, our test of fellowship is connected with none of them, but is confined and

limited to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to his commandments. Were it otherwise—did we make all or any of these so-called "peculiar views" bonds of union or terms of communion—we should be a sect. But that we do not, at least consciously and intentionally, thus pervert them, is susceptible of abundant proof and illustration. Take, for example, the doctrine that the baptism of a penitent believer is for the remission of sins. With one heart and soul we all believe it, and we regard it as so important that we are constantly teaching and insisting upon it. And yet that we do not make its acceptance a term of fellowship, is manifest from the fact that we are daily receiving into our communion members of the Baptist Church, who, as is well known, were not baptized for the remission of sins; who at the time of their baptism did not believe in it; nor do we ask or know whether they now believe in it. The same might be said of all our peculiar views: they are not the basis of fellowship. Faith and obedience constitute the only test which we apply; and we apply this for the reason that without these a man is not and cannot be a Christian.

But while all this is true so far as we are concerned; while it correctly exhibits our attitude and overture to the world and to the sectarian churches around us; while we do not regard our views as terms of communion, nor propose them as such; it is true, nevertheless, that others so regard them;—and hence that their practical effect is in most cases precisely, or at any rate virtually, the same as if they were actually embodied in a formula and made a condition of baptism and communion *sine qua non*.

When a person presents himself to confess the faith and be baptized we do not know, and, so far as the cordiality of our welcome is concerned, we do not care, whether he accepts our peculiar views or not—but he knows, and he cares. And we may feel sure, especially if he is a thoughtful man, that before he finally decided to come forward, had investigated and duly weighed and considered whatever is distinctive in our teaching, and had settled down into substantial agreement with us. Had it been otherwise—had he rejected and repudiated these views—it is next to a certainty that he would also have rejected our communion and have declined to confess the faith.

In like manner, the basis of Christian union which we submit to the religious world is accepted by those Christians only who also accept our peculiarities in doctrine and practice. We need not pause to insist that these things ought not so to be; it is enough at present to recognize the fact that they are so. They are made so not by ourselves, but by the sectarianism that surrounds us. Many of our views would not need to be published to