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ART. I.—*Discourses and Reviews upon Questions in Controversial Theology and Practical Religion.* By Orville Dewey, D.D., Pastor of the Church of the Messiah in New York. New York: C. S. Francis & Co. 1846. pp. 388. 12mo.

THE author of these discourses stands in the very first rank of Unitarian literature. As a pulpit orator, his reputation is distinguished, and the post which he occupies in our greatest city adds importance to whatever he may choose to utter. For these reasons, and because it is some time since a polemic volume has been produced, on the side of Anti-trinitarianism, we are disposed to subject it to a serious examination.

With a few exceptions, which shall be noted in their proper place, these essays are not chargeable with the usual offensiveness of controversial writing. Dr. Dewey possesses all the qualifications which are needed to give seemliness and polish to the form of his opinions. He shines more to our apprehension, in the gentle glow of sentiment, than in the conflict of reasoning. Nothing is more characteristic of the whole work, than a disposition to avoid bold statement of positions, sharp cutting of defin-

of Bourdaloue, Massillon, or Bossuet, without some elevation and perhaps some transport. But who can thus feel, under the most symmetrical and faultless of Unitarian discourses? And with what hope can the system be expected ever to produce, in respect to pathos, fire, and sacred urgency, a Chalmers, a Tholuck, or a Monod?

These observations we do not apply, in their strictness, to the work before us, which in character is didactic, and therefore subdued in its tone. Yet several, if not most, of these discourses were pronounced from the pulpit. Perhaps we should do no injustice to the author, if we should take them as specimens of his public ministrations. They are, to an extraordinary degree, exempt from every vulgar fault; classic in the purity of the English diction, and alike free from harshness and obscurity. They abound in passages which evince a taste cultivated even to fastidiousness. But these, after all, are negative virtues. There is a marked absence as well of rapid, trenchant, irresistible ratiocination, as of vehement and passionate entrance to the strong-holds of the heart. It is the reigning and characteristic evil of the system itself.

It is high time for us to remember, that we have sat down to write a critique, and not a book. Several portions of the volume before us yet remain untouched. Our readers could not be relied on for patience equal to a longer train of observation, at this time. We have not willingly misrepresented the author. But our admiration of his system has not been increased by his labours. They have resulted in no misgiving, as to the foundation or the defences of catholic Christianity. "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide, even unto death."

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ART. II.—*Baptism in its mode and subjects*, by Alexander Carson, LL.D., minister of the gospel: with a sketch of his life by John Young. First American edition. Philadelphia. American Baptist Board of Publication. 1845. pp. 502.

THE short account of Dr. Carson by his friend Mr. Young, states the fact, that he was at first a Presbyterian clergyman, settled at Tubbermore, a small town in the North of Ireland. In consequence of some difficulties with his congregation, and the church courts, as to discipline, he seceded from the Synod of Ulster, and became independent. For some years he continued to occupy his old church, until his mind became agitated on the subject of Baptism. He finally became a Baptist minister, and organized a congregation of similar sentiments with himself, at Tubbermore, of which he became pastor, in which relation he continued until his death in 1844, at the age of 68.

His biographer, however, could not permit the opportunity to pass, without recording sentiments, and opinions which we very much regret to see. For example, he gravely informs us that the Westminster Confession was not formed to regulate the conduct of a spiritual body like the primitive church; but to hold together the unnatural amalgam of saint and sinner. This is certainly a very grave charge against a very respectable body of men; and should not have been made without proof. But none was given, for the best of all reasons, because there was none. It is scarcely necessary to refute so gross a slander. It is contradicted by history, and by the very face of the instrument which he so unhesitatingly condemns. Mr. Young farther informs his readers, that his charity struggles against the conviction that forces itself upon him, that pedobaptists do not need light, but "religious honesty." This is in point of fact charging the majority of the Christian world with downright hypocrisy. It is wonderful that it did not occur to Mr. Young, that pedobaptists might have arguments for their belief of which he had never heard, or if he had, that he might not be capable of appreciating them, and that there were some persons, who differed from him in opinion, who were nevertheless possessed of "religious honesty."

The book whose title we have given, is, we understand, regarded by Baptists generally as one of the ablest defences of their peculiar views, which has appeared. It comes forth to the world with the *imprimatur* of the American Baptist Board of Publication. Indeed it is only necessary to read the book in order to be convinced that the writer is a man of ability. He

has collected from the classics many examples of the use of the words βαπτω, and βαπτίζω, and has displayed great zeal in so interpreting them as to make them subserve the baptist cause. But we are constrained to say that his learning is perverted and rendered to a great extent useless by his arbitrary canons of criticism. Dr. Carson had indeed a herculean task to perform. It did not suit his views to admit that βαπτω or βαπτίζω had in any case the meaning, sprinkle, pour or purify. If the pedobaptist could prove that, in any case, where a religious ordinance is intended, βαπτίζω signifies any other mode of administering this rite than immersion, he has gained his cause, for this would prove, that some other mode besides immersion is lawful. But the Baptist must prove that no mode was ever practised except immersion, or his cause is undone. We would not intimate that, in our opinion, βαπτίζω, when used to denote a religious ordinance, means in any case to plunge the whole body under water. We do not propose however to discuss this question, because it is not necessary.

Dr. Carson's canon of criticism is this: "When a thing is proved by sufficient evidence, no objection from difficulties can be admitted, except they involve an impossibility." We are persuaded that our readers will regard this canon as extravagant and arbitrary. It leaves no room for mere probabilities, however strong. The only escape from any acknowledged interpretation of a word is a positive impossibility. In the hands of Dr. Carson, it means, that if βαπτίζω signifies immersion in some cases, no other meaning of this word can be admitted, unless immersion is impossible. Nearly akin to this is another canon often repeated: "That a word is never to be taken arbitrarily, in a sense which it cannot be shown incontestibly to have, in some passage." We do not profess to know what is meant by "arbitrarily" here, especially when we consider the application which is made of this rule in the work under consideration. No word is to be arbitrarily taken to mean a given thing, in any circumstances. Its meaning must be settled by evidence in all cases. We are not the advocates of arbitrary criticism in any case whatever.

These two rules constitute the radical error of Dr. Carson's whole book. They appear every where. With this potent wand he dissolves at a touch the whole fabric of pedobaptism,

mode, subjects, and all arguments, hitherto deemed solid, become under the spell of these rules no better than the "baseless fabric of a vision." We proceed to test Dr. Carson's two rules chiefly by cases of his own selection. In the Septuagint translation of Daniel iv. 30, where our version very properly renders the passage, Nebuchadnezzar "was wet with the dews of heaven" we find  $\epsilon\beta\alpha\phi\eta$ , he was baptised, &c. Now if immersion is not plainly impossible here, the passage, according to Dr. Carson's canon, must be translated, He was immersed in the dew of heaven. After discoursing for some time on the copious dews of the east, and not finding dew in sufficient quantity for immersion, he concludes that this was a case of figurative immersion. This he regarded as possible. Here then, we have the element of water, and a human being, the ordinary subject of Christian baptism, and a plain statement of a historical fact, and yet it is all a mere figure of speech. If this is figurative, when may we expect to find literal baptism? In the historical narratives of the New Testament, when baptism takes place at the river Jordan, might we not, with as much reason, suppose a figurative immersion, and a literal pouring or sprinkling. The literal part of the transaction recorded in Daniel, was certainly sprinkling or wetting, even if it was immersion in the figurative sense. Again, when Josephus uses one of the forms of  $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\omega$  to denote one overwhelmed with a burden, Dr. Carson does not hesitate to say that the idea of the burden sinking into the man's shoulder is the prominent one in the passage. The man, who can immerse a burden in the human shoulder, need not despair of finding immersion any where. This is Dr. Carson's practical application of his doctrine of possibility. When  $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\alpha\sigma\alpha$  is used by the Greek historian to denote the act of making Alexander drunk, our author without ceremony, immerses the conqueror of the world in wine, and this is done not in poetry, but in veritable history. When  $\alpha\pi\circ\beta\alpha\pi\tau\omega$  is used to denote the operation of moistening warm loaves of bread with wine, with  $\epsilon\kappa$  before  $\omicron\nu\omicron\nu$ , Dr. Carson without hesitation makes it mean dipping the bread out of the wine, thus destroying the sense, and violating the plainest principles of the Greek language at the same time. In the gospel of Mark, it is said, that the pharisees wash ( $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\omega\nu\tau\alpha\iota$ ) when they come from the market, and in Luke, it is said, that a pharisee marvelled that Christ has not washed ( $\epsilon\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\theta\eta$ )

before dinner. We maintain, that the washing here spoken of is explained by Mark when he says these same pharisees, according to the tradition of the elders, eat not except they wash their hands. In the Talmuds, those vast receptacles of the puerile and frivolous customs and canons of the Jews, not a word is found about immersing the body under such circumstances, but very minute rules as to washing the hands, even specifying how high up the hand or arm the water is to be put, and in what position the hand is to be held. What avails all this before this potent rule. Immersion is not impossible, and therefore the Jews immersed themselves, says our author. This rule is a perfect bed of Procrustes. If a sentence means too much, it is cut off, if too little, it is stretched to the proper length.

We will suppose that the Greek word *ανηρ* can be proved to mean a man, a human being. But the angels that appeared to the Apostles on the mount of Olives, at the time of our Saviour's ascension, were called *ανδρες*, men. Nothing is ascribed to them which it was not possible for men to do. They were clothed in white, and spoke of Christ's second coming; and therefore according to our author's rule, they were men, and not angels. The mob that rushed into the theatre at Ephesus, when a tumult was raised against Paul, is called *εκκλησια*. Is this word always to be understood as meaning a mob, except when this meaning is impossible? Two meanings can often be proved to belong to a word by evidence equally strong. What would our author do in such a case?

We will now briefly pay our respects to Dr. Carson's second rule, we remark first, that, if no word is to have a meaning which cannot be incontestably proved by some passage, then all discussion is at an end; for what word in the New Testament of any importance, has not been contested? It is of importance, however, to ascertain the use that is made of this canon, in the book before us. If an attempt is made to prove affusion by the baptism of the Philippian jailer, an answer is ready; it must be proved by some other incontestable case, that affusion was sometimes practised, before this can be used as an argument. The pedobaptist is thus made to resemble a man, that has a suit in a court of justice. He introduces a witness, and the defendant cries out, that his witness cannot be heard, until he proves the point in dispute by other testimony. The plaintiff replies, that

the witness introduced is expected to prove the very point in litigation, at least in part; and that upon the same principle all his witnesses might be rejected. Strange as it may seem to our readers, this argument or rule or whatever else it may be called, is continually recurring in Dr. Carson's book. On this principle he might proceed to dispatch the arguments of his opponents *ad infinitum*, by pleading, as he does, that a clear case of affusion has not been made out. Unfortunately, however, for Dr. Carson's logical acumen, this rule assumes that βαπτίζω means to immerse, and all the reasoning on it is nothing less than a begging of the question in dispute. The pedobaptist might assume that to sprinkle or pour is the proper meaning of the word in dispute. Then all Dr. Carson's arguments would be easily answered. No case must be admitted as proving immersion until it is proved by some incontestable passage, that the word has this meaning. But Dr. Carson can violate all his own canons, when the exigency of his cause requires it. When John baptizes at the river Jordan, it is a clear case of immersion. But when he baptizes in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, as immersion might be impossible here, he makes it mean Jordan-dale, the edge of Jordan, although the preposition *εν*, which is used in Greek before Bethabara, is that on which so much stress is laid when it happens to be found governing the word Jordan.

Thus have we given our readers, somewhat at large our views as to the true canons which are the ground-work of the book under consideration. We might continue our remarks to an indefinite extent, by exhibiting the sad perplexities under which Dr. Carson labours when he encounters a difficulty, and the many forced and harsh interpretations to which he resorts. For example, when he speaks of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, he at first, in a bold and confident manner, asserts "that there is no likeness to the Spirit or the mode of his operation in baptism; and that baptism, whatever be the mode, cannot represent either the manner of conveying the Spirit, or his operation on the soul;" and two or three pages afterwards, he says, "The disciples were immersed in the Holy Spirit by the abundance of his gifts, and when there is no literal immersion the word never drops its characteristic meaning." But the teaching of the Bible is, that the Spirit is shed down and poured out, and that

the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost, which last seems nearer the idea of the Holy Spirit being immersed in them, than their being immersed in the Spirit, though both phrases would be abhorrent to our feelings. There is not, so far as we know, a single description of the work of the divine Spirit, in the New Testament, which looks like an allusion to immersion. But Dr. Carson can set at defiance all the rules of interpreting language, when his cause requires it. He seems, however, to think that he has produced a sort of mathematical demonstration on the subject of baptism. This is evident from the fact, that he states, in so many words, that if he has not "settled the controversy as to βαπτίζω there is no truth in axioms." He also charges Dr. Miller with uttering "what is contrary to self-evidence," when he ascribes several meanings to this word. If the words axiom and self-evidence are to be taken in their ordinary sense, then surely he takes very high ground upon this subject. We confess that all this is quite new to us, as it doubtless will be to our readers. No such impression, as to Dr. Carson's work, was made upon our minds by a very attentive perusal of it. There is an air of confidence displayed by our author in the prosecution of his argument which is not justified by any soberness of judgment or logical acumen, or profound and philosophical views of the laws of language exhibited in the work. He seems unwilling to leave it to the judgment of his readers, to decide on the strength or weakness of his argument. He ever and anon gives them information on this point himself. Superficial readers, who are disposed to believe every thing an author says of himself, or his cause, may consider such declarations as evidences of triumph; but for our part, we think they are frequently made in Dr. Carson's book when there is least reason for them.

Language is conventional; words mean precisely what the persons using them agree that they shall mean. They are mere arbitrary signs of our ideas. People who speak the same language sometimes use the same words and phrases in different senses, and thus misunderstand one another. But if the language be a dead one, the difficulty of understanding it is greatly increased. The learner in this case begins in perfect ignorance of the signification of words. To talk of self-evidence in such a case seems to us absurd. The inquirer after truth balances probabilities as to the different meanings of doubtful and diffi-

cult words. If βαπτίζω is the word, he inquires whether it has the meaning pour or sprinkle in a given passage; and in order to ascertain this, he inquires into the laws and customs of the age and nation in which the rite was performed; examines the context, and other accessible sources of evidence. He may consider one of the meanings above indicated probable.

As his examination of passages proceeds, the evidence in favour of this meaning accumulates, until his accumulated probabilities amount to a fixed conviction of his mind, that the majority of the Christian world practise a lawful mode of baptism. His mind may not arrive at infallible certainty on the subject, especially as to every given passage. He would not say that it was absolutely impossible for him to be deceived as to the grounds of his judgment, and yet his conviction is so strong that it has removed all painful doubts, and he continues through life a firm and unwavering advocate of the lawfulness of affusion, and of the right of infants to this ordinance. He does not consider confidence as in itself proof that his opponents have better evidence for their exclusive dogma than he has for his more liberal and charitable view of the matter. Heated partisans in any cause are apt to over-rate the strength of their own cause, as well as their own abilities; and it seems to be the infirmity of many men of superficial minds and shallow attainments to possess a large share of self-confidence. We do not mean to say that Dr. Carson deserves to be placed in the class of superficial thinkers. Far from it. We entertain a high respect for his understanding and his learning; but we are constrained to say that a little more modesty would have been a decided improvement in his work on baptism.

Dr. Carson seems to have been quite a man of war in his day. The book before us, besides the main body of the work on the mode and subjects of baptism, contains no less than nine controversial tracts on the same subject, written against eight different persons. Upon them all he deals out censures with an unsparing hand, and in some cases he indulges in cutting sarcasm and ridicule and bitter contempt. "The evasions" of one "are silly."\* The observations of another are "ridiculously false."† A third is "guilty of calumny,"‡ a fourth is "strong only in his igno-

\* Dr. Miller.

† Dr. Henderson.

‡ Mr. Bickersteth.

rance" of the grounds of proof,\* and a fifth exhibits a "trifling and shallow sophistry."† These are only specimens of the rudeness with which he treats those who differ from him. He seems to have regarded himself as the champion to whose keeping the defence of the tenets of the Baptist church was committed. Three of the persons, whose works on baptism he professes to answer, reside in this country, namely Dr. Miller; Mr. Hall and President Beecher, at that time residing in Illinois. Our concluding remark is, that if Dr. Carson had possessed but a modicum of the charity for others, which he seems to have entertained for himself, there would have been no just ground of complaint on the score of bitterness, and the book, which he has written, would have been more creditable to his candour and Christian forbearance.

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ART. III.—*The Eldership.*

IN various living languages, there are titles of honour and respect, the etymological origin of which is to be sought in the idea of old age or seniority. Such are *Sire*, as addressed to kings, and the cognate expression *Sir*, as used in common parlance, and also in the title of an English knight or baronet. Such too are the French *Sieur*, *Seigneur*, the Spanish *Senor*, the Italian *Signore*, with their various compounds, *Monsieur*, *Monseigneur*, *Monsignore*, *Messire*, &c., all which may be traced back to the Latin *Senior* the comparative of *Senex*. We find, however, that terms thus derived have been extensively employed, not only as expressions of personal respect, but also as designations of official dignity. This is the case with most of the words already mentioned, to which may be added *alderman* (elder man,) *senator*, *patres conscripti*, the Arabic *sheikh*, and many others.

This extensive use of words, which properly denote old age, to signify official rank, might possibly admit of explanation on the hypothesis, that what was first used to express a merely personal respect was afterwards employed to express the same feeling with respect to public or official dignity; that as any

\* Mr. Hall. † Mr. Thorn.