

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

THE  
Evolution of Infant Baptism  
and Related Ideas

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## PREFACE

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I HAVE written this volume, not because I attach peculiar value to any ritual act, but, on the contrary, because I believe that an overestimate of baptism was one of the earliest germs of evil which gradually deformed the ancient Church, and that it always was, and still remains, a chief hindrance to an effectual Reformation. Questions relating to ceremonial forms have no interest for my mind apart from the ideas they represent; and as far as possible they have been ignored.

Pædobaptists who are loyal to the principle that the new birth is a purely spiritual process, will find no unsympathetic sentence in this book. The Infant Baptism of which I write is not that which is practised by modern evangelical Churches, but something altogether different which came into general use in the fifth century, and is still maintained by Churches which claim to be true historical heirs and representatives of ancient Christianity. This is the only form of Infant Baptism of which any traces can be found in antiquity, and it means to-day what it has meant

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for about fifteen hundred years, namely, that the gift of Eternal Life is bestowed, and can alone be bestowed through the administration of a material rite by human hands. The following pages are an attempt to retrace the process by which this theory of salvation by water was evolved, and to exhibit the consequences to which it inevitably led. The knowledge of this process should not be barren, for it is fraught with lessons for all who believe that "the word of good tidings" is the only water which can wash the human soul, the only seed by which men can be rebegotten. What these lessons are each thinker can best find out for himself.

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# The Evolution of Infant Baptism

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## INTRODUCTION

**S**URVEYING the state of Christendom with an intelligent desire to read and interpret the signs of the times, we cannot fail to see that Churches, with all their institutions, beliefs, and practices, are being tried with increasing severity, and that some of them, and particularly those which bulk most largely before the world, are grievously failing to endure the trial. The most ominous, though in a deeper sense the most hopeful, sign of impending change may be found in the fact that the most contemptuous judgments passed upon "the Churches" are not uttered by atheists, or other enemies of spiritual religion, but by men who have a calm faith in the Being and Goodness of a Perfect God, but who turn away from what they sweepingly designate "the Churches," and do so on the ground that these are teaching dogmas which belittle God, and ascribe to Him a method of dealing with his creatures which, if attributed to a fellow-man, would be repudiated with indignant scorn.

These scornful judgments, when indiscrimi-



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nately passed upon bodies which differ widely, and, indeed, have for centuries been engaged in conflict, are cruelly, and even absurdly, uncritical; yet I am less anxious to defend the communities these judgments misrepresent than I am to understand their significance, and to appreciate the religious principle on which they are based.

This principle is not obscure, though it is more often implied than expressed by those to whom I refer. Briefly stated, it is an assumption that the Author and Ruler of this universe, the Maker and Judge of moral beings, must needs be just, and that no religious idea is credible if it offers a mean and degrading conception of His character and of His ways of dealing with His creatures. For those who deny the existence of God, this assumption has, of course, no value, and calls for no discussion. But for all who believe that God is, and that He cares for the creatures He has made, it is a self-evident truth, an axiom of natural religion, which no genuine revelation can conceivably contradict. There may be large room for differences of opinion in the application of this principle as a test of particular doctrines, and much may be said about the limited ability of ordinary minds to use it wisely, but whether we as individuals are competent to use it as independent seekers after truth, or whether we ought to defer to the dicta of an authoritative Church, the abstract principle is undeniably sound. It is the supreme and ultimate test of religious truth, and nothing which rightly falls

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under its condemnation can permanently sway the human mind.

Accepting this test as valid, there is much reason to rejoice in its adoption by men of scientific training, even though we may consider their use of it defective. Possibly a little more fidelity to scientific methods would forbid a sweeping disparagement of "the Churches" as if they constituted a single class. I am more concerned, however, to welcome the application of a truly religious test to prevalent Christian teachings than I am to criticise the rash generalisations which attribute to all these Churches sundry dogmas, and, worse still, a dogmatic spirit which some of these Churches abhor. To those who remember the anti-Christian arguments which were in vogue twenty or thirty years ago, the change of tone and attitude is fraught with hopeful significance. Some distinguished leaders of scientific thought in those days justly resented a charge of materialism which was freely brought against them, but the general effect of their teaching was to weaken faith in a personal God, and to favour the conception of a mechanical cosmos in which there is no room for free volitional relations between man and the Living God who is the Father of our spirits. Spiritual religion has everything to gain and nothing to lose by the change thus indicated. Speaking on behalf of God, men may fling hard words against the Churches and the Christianity they are supposed to represent,

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but the ethics of the Galilean mount and the theology of Sychar will remain unharmed.

But while I thus rejoice in the state of mind which adopts a purely religious test of current Christian teaching, I am not blind to the fact that it portends a painful sifting of Churches and creeds. The work of all Church builders, ancient and modern, must be tried so as by fire, and nothing which can be burned will survive. Doctrines and practices which will not bear the supreme test, and are found to be unworthy of God, will be dissolved, and disappear; and Churches which refuse to judge themselves, and try their own ways, will suffer loss. The fire is already kindled, and if the existent Churches are to retain a commanding place in the world, they must purge their message of every element which fails to commend itself to man's conscience as worthy of a faithful Creator. For some, this process may mean only a closer and more consistent adherence to their most fundamental principles and the elimination of some few traditional elements which will involve no dangerous breach of continuity. For others it may mean a more or less revolutionary, but ultimately reconstructive, change; but there are some Churches to which judgment by a purely religious test can bring nothing less than dissolution.

I shall not attempt the invidious task of estimating the comparative merits of the various communities which claim to be true exponents of the religion of Jesus Christ, but there is one broad line

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of demarcation which fairly divides the Churches of Christendom into two main classes: viz., those which forbid, and those which enjoin, or at least permit, the exercise of private judgment. It would be absurd to suggest that these two classes are so sharply divided that an ordinary observer would be able to draw up two lists about which there could be no dispute. The most acute critic would find the task of partition practically impossible. Neither in religion nor in any other sphere can men or institutions be divided like sheep and goats, but this does not falsify the distinctions commonly made. The distinction between rich and poor is a very real one, but between the two extremes are infinite gradations, and midway on the slope there are multitudes whom the needy call rich and the wealthy call poor. In politics, though known by various names, there are in all countries and in all ages some who are chiefly anxious to let well alone and others who desire to make things better, yet in most men these aims are commingled in all manner of ways and proportions. So in the case of Churches. At the one end of the scale there stands the Church of Rome, which bans private judgment as the root of all heresy and schism, and at the other end there stands a group of Free Churches, which not only admit the right of private judgment, but declare it to be a primary condition of spiritual religion, and a sacred duty with which neither State nor Church has any right to interfere. Between these antagonistic bodies there are many

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communities which cannot be ranged with either side, and halting on a middle path are those half-reformed Churches which timidly approve of individual liberty of thought, but leave no room for its exercise in regard to their own definitions of doctrine. These facts render the line of demarcation difficult to trace, except as a theoretic classification, but they do not contradict the statement that some Churches are based upon a claim to authority, and others on an appeal to the human conscience in the sight of God.

Before considering the different types of doctrine which prevail in the two groups, it is possible to forecast something of their probable power to endure the ordeal of trial by the fiery test of agreement with man's highest conception of God.

On this point it is safe to premise that all bodies which bear the Christian name must in some measure bear the reproach brought upon that name by those least worthy to wear it on their banners. This always has been the case, and inevitably it must continue. But allowing for the confusion of judgment due to ignorance, carelessness, or ill-will, it is obvious that those Churches which have the courage to rely on the self-commendation of their teachings to the consciences of men—Churches which have historically sprung into existence through a determined exercise of private judgment, and have trained their members to live in an atmosphere of freedom—are likely to suffer least

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from collision with those who, though standing aloof from all Churches, use a similar method of inquiry after truth. Should adverse criticism assail them, they will be found more capable than others of enduring it without harm. Accustomed to think for themselves, they are less likely to be deceived by sophistry, or daunted by reproach, than those in which thought has been suppressed; and whenever adverse judgments contain a measure of justice, they will be prepared by the natural freedom of their constitution, by the habit of their minds, and by the obligation of their own law of liberty, to welcome correction, and therefore these Churches are likely to emerge from trial stronger, wiser, and more influential in the world.

Very different is the position of those Churches which are built upon authority, and demand an unquestioning assent to their dogmas, however repugnant to reason and conscience these may be considered. For them the conflict with modern thought must become increasingly severe, and its issue cannot be less than disastrous. For immediate purposes the policy of Rome is highly effective. Notwithstanding the terrific blows which have fallen upon her, even in so-called Catholic countries like Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal, she maintains a dauntless front, and commands her members to close their eyes and ears to all adverse teaching, and leave their religious thinking to herself as an unerring Mother and the august representative of God. She thus creates a refuge of resolute irresponsibility,

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in which weary thinkers may cease to trouble about difficulties, and the ignorant may leave the pains and perils of knowledge to their instructed guides. In this way Authority becomes a stronghold against which modernity seems to direct its artillery in vain. But, as recent events are proving, this policy has been less successful than was supposed. Nations which appeared to be subservient are throwing off the yoke of clericalism. Behind a mask of passive assent, private judgment has been busy. Light has penetrated the densest screen of authority, and wherever and whenever it gains access to the people it finds them unprepared to meet it. Where Roman authority breaks down, faith in God usually goes with it, and thus the Latin peoples are rapidly becoming irreligious agnostics, not Christian Protestants. An infallible Church cannot afford to learn anything, to recant anything, or permit her children to modify her creed. In the last Decree issued by the Vatican Council she declared her teachings "irreformable." It was an extraordinary word to use, but it was absolutely correct. For the Roman Church, therefore, judgment must bring vindication or death.

I cannot assume, nor do I believe, that the angry attacks on Romanism which are agitating the chief Latin nations are an outcome of a purely religious objection to the creed of the dominant Church. On the contrary, they are largely due to political and social discontent. In this the revolutionary movements of to-day resemble those of

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the sixteenth century. Nor do I imagine that the Papal Church is alone in her failure to hold the confidence and respect of thoughtful laymen. There is probably less mental disturbance where the Greek Church is established, notwithstanding the propaganda of Tolstoi and the spread of some dissenting sects; but this is due to the extreme ignorance which prevents the leaven of thought from working, and it means only a delay of judgment, not the safety of the Church. In Germany, Lutheranism is strongly supported, but ministers are disesteemed, churches lack pastors, and in the universities the creed of Luther is treated by many professors as a body to be dissected rather than as a living faith to be glorified. In the Anglican Church there is more evidence of conviction, more animation, and her clergy enjoy more respect than those of the other Churches I have named. But this respect does not mean intellectual assent to her creeds and articles on the part of multitudes who love the prayers and unite in the praises of the sanctuary; nor does it alter the fact that an increasing difficulty is found in recruiting the ranks of the ministry with men of high culture and ability.

Some of these remarks might be applied, though with less force, to the Evangelical Free Churches. I have no desire to screen them from criticism, or to paint them in brighter colours than they deserve. They have their defects, and are not silent about them in public. They have



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also to bemoan the difficulty of commending the Christian faith to a critical generation. They experience in a special degree the hardness of the task imposed upon all preachers of the Gospel—the task of inducing men to confess and forsake sin, and to follow Him who calls upon us to deny ourselves and to take up our daily cross as His disciples. It is true also that these Churches, in their present organised forms, are comparatively modern, and as such lack the prestige of antiquity and that historical continuity which is said to guarantee the claim to preserve the original doctrine of the Apostles. It were idle to disguise these familiar facts, for they go far to explain why these Churches are so often ignored, or are carelessly included in the heterogeneous company styled “the Churches.” They do not, however, militate against the assertion that the Free Churches form a class apart, and are in greater harmony with the scientific spirit of the age, and therefore in less danger of being injured by the relentless criticism which is burning up lies and superstition with a fire which nothing but imperishable truth will survive.

At this point it becomes necessary to inquire whether these two groups of Churches have any distinctive doctrinal characteristics, and whether these in any way correspond to their radically opposite views on the subject of man's religious liberty—or rather, his obligation to think for himself as an individual. It would be very strange if

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no such characteristics were discoverable, for no Church would prohibit thought unless it had reason to fear the results of thinking; and when thought has been forbidden, opinions which will not bear the light of independent examination are easily introduced, and when introduced are less likely to be abandoned than would be the case where the laity are encouraged to try all things, and above all to try those who profess to be divinely illuminated guides.

Once started on this inquiry it is not difficult to find an answer. The two groups of Churches are distinguishable by two strongly-marked types of doctrine. The teachings of the one directly tend to exalt the importance and to magnify the functions of human ministers of religion; the teachings of the other tend, on the contrary, to enforce the responsibility of each individual to God, and also serve to guard against the indolent devolution of this responsibility by the people, and against any encroachment on the part of ambitious ministers.

The justice of this distinction is not likely to be questioned, but if confirmation be sought, it lies open before our minds in the short names of the chief doctrines formulated by the Church of Rome, and objected to by bodies which on this account are known as Protestants. Some of the chief of these titles instantly come to mind. Priesthood—which stands for a theory which invests an order of men with miraculous powers and semi-divine

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functions; Confession—which, as explained by the Church, gives these men a right to demand an unreserved disclosure of all that every member has done, or said, or thought, including all he knows of other persons' secrets; Penance—which gives to the hearer of confessions a magisterial authority to impose penal labours, self-castigations, or contributions of money for any purpose he may assign; Absolution—which means not merely a declaration of the Divine terms of forgiveness, but an actual bestowal of forgiveness on God's behalf, and an assurance that those who neglect to obtain this priestly absolution, or obtain it by false statements, or by concealment of any facts through fear or shame, will have no chance of receiving it direct from God; the Mass—which imputes to the priest a delegated power to transmute bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ for the nourishment of spiritual life; Purgatory—which declares the existence of a place of suffering for regenerate souls, wherein the discipline of the Church will be consummated, and all its defects be rectified, before admission into heaven; Prayers for the dead—which are not merely the loving commendation of deceased friends to the grace of God, but the offering of priestly intercession and vicarious sacrifice for the abbreviation of purgatorial pains.

It will be seen that all these doctrines have the common quality of magnifying the functions of human servants of the Church, investing them with

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awful powers, and rendering their mediation essential to salvation. It will also be noticed that the list is incomplete, and that I have omitted to mention Baptism. I have left it for separate mention, partly because of its importance as the central theme of this book, but also because it does not magnify the office of priest in quite the same way as the others. Baptism in the Roman Church is not necessarily administered by a priest. But although this is true, it is also true that it exalts human agency in a most amazing fashion. The administrators of this rite are made partakers of the Divine Fatherhood. They are the procreators of God's children, and without their action God can have no children or heirs. Of course, the power is Divine, but apart from human agency spiritual children are not begotten. The unbaptized are dead and under sentence of eternal death. The unbaptized have no part or lot in privileges of the Church, nor can a priest do them any good while they are still unwashed. As a man he may listen to their story, and reason with their unbelief, but he cannot admit them to confession as a sacrament; he may punish them if the State will lend its aid, but they are unable to do penance, and however contrite they may be, they can never hear the words of absolution from his lips. They are not only shut out of heaven, they cannot even have the painful hope of admission into purgatory; for them there remains only the prospect of eternal anguish, and if they die in this state, neither saints on earth nor

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the redeemed in heaven will ever dare to breathe a prayer on their behalf.\*

Few hostile critics of the Roman Church, whether religious or irreligious men, whether Christian or non-Christian in their sympathies, have had the patience to acquaint themselves critically with her doctrines, and fewer still have studied the history of their highly logical evolution, and the wonderful symmetry of the theological system of which they are mutually dependent parts. To most objectors it seems enough to dismiss them as unworthy of attention, with now and then an expression of surprise that such ideas can be entertained by any rational beings. Not a little may be urged in favour of this summary treatment, but I venture to submit that no one who aspires to understand, and to some extent influence, the religious movements of our times, can afford to disregard the painful problem presented by the rise and persistence of what he considers an irrational and God-dishonouring creed in a vast, ancient, and potent body which proudly calls itself The Holy Catholic Church.

The importance and urgency of the inquiry are enhanced by the fact that, especially in England, there is a serious reactionary tendency

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\* I have not specified *Infant* Baptism as the distinctive practice of the Roman Church, because, although that Church does, of course, baptise infants, and even claims to have originated this form of the ordinance, her doctrine covers the baptism of persons of any age.

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in the direction of Roman doctrine. It is futile to think that this tendency can be arrested by indignation, or contempt, or by angry controversy. I am afraid, also, that no process of reasoning is likely to prevail, in so far as it may be addressed to those whose primary religious duty is summed up in the words "submission to authority." The foe of all superstition is light. The light of accurate knowledge, quietly diffused, does its work as gently as the dawn disperses darkness. Minds which are impervious to the missiles of controversy are penetrated by the manifestation of truth. Even if those who conscientiously close their eyes remain in darkness, the diffusion of light will prevent darkness from overtaking others. It is in this conviction I write, not to frame a new polemic against Pædobaptism of any variety, but to exhibit with critical accuracy the manner in which a grave error concerning baptism was generated in the Early Church, and, in concert with its several related ideas, was developed into the group of dogmas now most fully and consistently expressed in the creed of the Roman Church.

To this broad estimate of the possible value of the study to which the reader is invited, I may add a few more particular reasons for its pursuit by thinkers who occupy widely different standpoints.

To begin nearest home, I commend this historical study to my fellow Baptists. They have

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been accustomed to welcome all the light which scholars of all shades of opinion are able to shed upon the past, but they have not been strongly drawn toward the study of patristic literature, or of ecclesiastical antiquities, because their appeal is made to the New Testament itself. Their opinion on the subject of Baptism would not be modified if it could be proved that the Church began to baptize infants in the first or second century. Naturally, therefore, Baptists have less cause to devote themselves to the investigation of ancient customs and beliefs than some others have who venerate what they call "Historical Christianity" as an authoritative expression of Divine truth.

I have never met with any reasonable objection to this principle of going to the fount and spring of all Christian teaching for the pure water of truth, instead of dipping our pitcher into an outflowing stream after it has trickled through an earthly channel, and has received into itself many rills and streamlets which have come down from different watersheds.

But while repudiating the notion that any Church of any century may be revered as an authoritative exponent of Christian doctrine, or as a blameless example of Christian life, we cannot question the value of an accurate knowledge of the course of thought by which Christendom has come to be what we see to-day. This is true of all Church History, but for Baptists it is peculiarly true respecting the history of the way in which the

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Church of the Apostles, which they declare to have been a Baptist Church, became transformed into the Pædobaptist Church of Augustine, which for all practical purposes may be called the Church of Rome.

Granting that Baptists are entitled to glory in their adhesion to primitive doctrine and practice, there is evidently no escape from the confession that the worst corruptions of the Papacy must have had their origin in a Baptist Church! This confession is humbling, but it may be made without any sense of shame. Christians of every name must share the grief of knowing that these corruptions were developed from germs of evil which found their way into the Church which Apostles founded and taught. We can regard these germs as tares which an enemy sowed in the night, as foreseen by our Lord. There was sorrow for both the Divine Husbandman and His human sowers, but no blame to either, and nothing wrong with the good seed they scattered in the field. The beliefs which ultimately counterfeited the truth were not born of the truth they injured and displaced, and thus Baptists need not flinch from the confession here made.

It would not be wise, however, to dismiss the matter too easily by a plea of irresponsibility. Shall we not do well to ask: What was the first germ of evil which found an entry into the minds of faithful and well-meaning men? Can we trace its introduction, or at least detect its early presence?



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Nothing is more difficult to find and label than the first germ of a doctrine or practice, and when we have to do with a group of related doctrines, opinions are likely to differ in regard to their order of development. But there is one clear principle about which there can be no dispute. Whatever the germinal error may have been, it must have been some thought or opinion which could obtain lodgment in the mind of a sincere Christian without producing a shock; something which he might entertain without perceiving it to be a germ of evil: for anything obviously false or corrupting would be rejected by such a man without a moment's dalliance.

Guided by this consideration I am content in this place to suggest that there is an antecedent probability that the beginning of change in the direction of Augustinian dogmas was a slight exaggeration of the value of baptism. The history of many religions illustrates the tendency of human nature to attach undue importance to things outward, things palpable, visible, audible, and to let these things imperceptibly take the place of things inward, spiritual, unseen, and silent. Symbols, emblems, forms of speech, rites and ceremonies, are adopted and cherished at first for what they mean, and are still clung to when their meaning has become vague, or altogether changed, or lost. Was it not, then, antecedently probable, if not inevitable, that man's ritualistic tendency would operate to first exaggerate the

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value, and ultimately alter the meaning, of baptism ?

It would be premature to discuss whether an over-valuation of the rite as administered to believers was absolutely the initial error, or whether other mistakes came earlier in time. In any case it is evident that such an error was highly probable, might easily occur in a community of persons very jealous for the ordinances of Christ, and also that, being started, it would open the way for the introduction of more serious misconceptions of the most fundamental ideas of man's relations with God. The inference is not obscure. It is not enough to be faithful to the apostolic ritual; we need to beware that we are equally faithful to the principle that, for the purpose of salvation, neither baptism availeth anything, nor un-baptism. All the waters of the four oceans could not wash away a single stain of sin, or cleanse the thoughts of a human heart. I am not aware of any forgetfulness of this spiritual axiom in the great body to which I belong, but candour compels me to say that there are small separated bodies of Baptists, both in this country and in America, which appear to me to be exalting the rite of baptism to the detriment of the spiritual truths of which it was ordained to be a witness. They will not say that no unbaptized person can be saved, but neither will they positively say that he can be. This is not Baptismal Regeneration, but it is a step in the direction of that dogma; and, as will appear in the chapter on Tertullian,

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it was a step which was taken with disastrous results in the Early Church. This fact is an illustration of the ironic law that excess of zeal in a good cause may be the means of its undoing.

I now venture to bespeak some sympathetic attention from those Evangelical Churches which practise Pædobaptism.

Neither in this place, nor in the subsequent historical study, will they find any hard words directed against their slightly variant theories or their common practice. I was recently present at a baptismal service in a Congregational Church, and found myself in profound sympathy with the minister and with the parents, and with all the thoughts and feelings which found audible expression. I added a silent "Amen" to every prayer, cordially endorsed the simple and touching address which was delivered, and was assured that every admonition concerning the education of those little children was wholesome and instinct with the spirit of Christ. I was not greatly troubled about the substitution of sprinkling for immersion, and, indeed, considering the age of the involuntary subjects, was tempted to feel glad that they were spared such a shock as would have been their lot if born in the bitterly cold regions of Northern Europe and Asia, where the Greek custom of trine immersion remains unchanged. The supreme question which interested me was this: What do these parents and this minister mean by this

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service? and with what they manifestly meant I could find no fault.

The hardest thing which I am compelled to say about this modern form of service is that it has little or no resemblance to infant baptism as evolved in the Ancient Church. For this demonstrable fact I am profoundly thankful. Evangelical Pædobaptists have been accustomed to quote sentences from sundry Fathers in proof of the early existence of their rite, but unhappily these witnesses either prove nothing or they prove too much for the satisfaction of those who repudiate the idea of regenerating infants by water. What these Fathers prove is that the service which may be witnessed at any time in a Congregational, Presbyterian, or Wesleyan church had no worthy counterpart in ancient times. As will fully appear in the course of our historical review, baptism was given to babes in the belief that it possessed a mystic virtue for the removal of sin and the impartation of the Holy Spirit. When the rite had been exalted into a requisite of salvation, its refusal to children appeared to be a cruel denial of redemption. Of any other kind of infant baptism there is no trace in early Christian literature.

The only service of great antiquity known to me which has a similar religious significance to that of the modern rite is the naming service of the Paulicians, of which an account will be given hereafter. I have sometimes dreamed that the adoption of such a service might smooth

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the way to more extensive co-operation between two sister denominations, and might in future lead to their complete fusion.

I have not included the Established Church of England under the class "Evangelical," but there is an important section of that Church which is distinctively known by this name, and it is notoriously at issue with the now dominant party in the Church respecting the true value and significance of Baptism, though all parties use the same formularies. After severe battles in the Law Courts, both the advocates and the opponents of Baptismal Regeneration have established a legal right to hold and teach their respective theories, but it is acknowledged that these theories are utterly contradictory, and it is difficult to understand how what are virtually two religions can permanently live together in a legal unity which feebly binds the walls of a house divided against itself. The Evangelical party is in a peculiarly difficult and discouraging position. This is so well understood that I have no need to dwell upon it, but I venture to urge that it constitutes a special call for historical research into the origin and ancient significance of infant baptism.

In common with most Nonconformists I have a profound sympathy with those lovers of spiritual religion who have withstood the Romeward tendency of the Anglican Church in recent times but find the tide flowing against them with in-

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creasing volume and swiftness. We are grieved to witness the elevation of sacerdotalists to the chief seats of power, and the open encouragement given by Bishops to men who avowedly hate the Reformation. Some of us may think the position of Evangelical clergymen untenable, but we respect them for standing true to their colours, although their attitude is almost certainly fatal to what is called advancement.

In addition to this general sympathy it is pleasant to me as a Baptist to claim a larger measure of agreement with Evangelical Churchmen than is usually recognised, and I gladly preface what I have to say by briefly indicating some points of this agreement which relate to Baptism.

(1.) In the Catechism the question is asked: "What is required of persons to be baptized?" This question is well put, because it assumes that all candidates are in a condition to understand and comply with the reasonable requirements which follow. The answer reads: "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and Faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament." This answer is excellent. I might criticise the restriction of God's promises to those made in a particular sacrament, but this affects accuracy of expression, and does not vitiate the clear assertion that Repentance and Faith are the conditions of true baptism.

(2.) The Order of Service appointed for "The ministration of baptism to such as are of riper

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years, and able to answer for themselves," is in strict accord with the above extract from the Catechism, and any Baptist minister might use it in public with scarcely any change.

(3.) The XXVIIth Article of Religion, also, except the last clause, gives in the main an admirable, because Scriptural and spiritual, definition of the Sacrament.

(4.) The question of dipping or sprinkling is subordinate, but the Rubrics which direct the minister to dip the candidate in water are, of course, correct.

These are not petty items of agreement, but broad and massive declarations of principle on which Baptists and Evangelical Churchmen are unanimous. If these principles were consistently maintained in the English Prayer Book our differences would be restricted to questions of Church polity—including, of course, the relations of Church and State. But unhappily we find things in the Prayer Book which appear utterly incompatible with these principles—things which are not unfairly held by extreme Anglicans to support their own contentions.

In pointing out a few of those things which appear to be at variance with the spiritual elements of the Evangelical teaching, I am anxious to avoid the spirit and the language of controversy. Nothing less, however, than a frank statement of what appear to be grave discrepancies will enable me to present the urgent reasons for rigorous historical investigation.

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I have already alluded to the last clause of the XXVIIth "Article of Religion" as inconsistent with the foregoing account of the Sacrament. This clause announces that "The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ." Considering that baptism has just been explained as a "sign of profession and a mark of difference whereby Christian men are known from others," and as an ordinance by which "faith is confirmed," the closing addendum reads like an authoritative decree to silence the foreseen objection that infants make no "profession," are in no religious sense different from each other, are not "men," and have no faith to be "confirmed." The quaint ingeniousness of this imperious command clearly betrays a resolve to retain infant baptism in spite of all that can be said against it. If infant baptism be, as it is declared, "most agreeable with the institution of Christ," there must be something wrong with the Church's definition.

Turning now to the Catechism, we meet at the outset with the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration in an undisguised form: "My baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." The Gorham judgment legalised a denial of this doctrine; but it did not legalise its excision from the religious instruction of the nation.

Repentance and Faith are clearly declared to be requisite in those about to be baptized, but the



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value of this principle is soon impaired. The following question is timely, for it is one which must arise in every thoughtful mind: "Why then are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they are unable to perform them?" But what can be said of the answer: "Because they promise them both by their sureties"?

The first thought suggested by this familiar, but none the less extraordinary, reply, relates to the sureties. Who are these? Are they an integral part of Christ's institution? If so, why are they never mentioned in the New Testament? Why did not our Lord or His Apostles explain their duties, and the solemn responsibilities they incur for themselves and impose upon the children? If they are not a part of the original institution, who invented them? Have their duties always been the same?

But supposing these queries to have been satisfactorily disposed of, it only introduces us to new perplexities.

An inquirer naturally turns to the actual baptismal service, and discovers that the Catechism is incorrect. The sureties do not promise Repentance—they profess it; for, after reciting a list of evil things, they declare, in the name of the child, "I renounce them all." They do not promise Faith, but after listening to the Apostles' Creed they say, in the name of the child, "All this I stedfastly believe."

This discrepancy involves two conflicting theories: the theory of vicarious profession, as as-

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sumed in the service, and the theory of vicarious promises, asserted in the Catechism.

Concerning the latter theory, it behoves us to inquire: Is it conceivable that God will accept a promise instead of a performance? Infirm human beings are lavish with their promises, but shrewd men of the world value them very cheaply. Promissory notes are accepted in business, but only when the amount they represent is well within the debtor's means of payment. But who will say that any man will be willing or able to repent or to believe at some future time? When those of riper years come forward for baptism they are required to do something more than promise; and yet a child is endowed with a heavenly heritage on the strength of a vicarious pledge to repent of sins not yet committed, and to believe truths which he possibly may never hear, or, hearing, is not unlikely to neglect! The vanity of human promises, however, is only brought before us in a figment. The child can make no promise, and by no conceivable law of moral obligation can he be held responsible for anything said ostensibly on his behalf. The Catechism says that on coming to age he is "bound to perform" them. But here again an earthly analogy shows that this is repugnant to morality and to common sense. The sureties could not make that child a lawful debtor to the extent of a few shillings; much less, then, can they saddle him with moral responsibilities small or great. What we owe to God is a debt which no one else can

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pay, and which no one can increase or make more binding than it is.

In the face of these contradictory fragments of theory it is needless to exhibit the incongruity of the two services for the ministration of baptism. The one is in harmony with those parts of the Church's theoretic teaching which all Evangelical Christians can approve as agreeable with the message of the Gospel; the other, while striving to maintain some verbal agreement with the demand for repentance and faith as the prerequisites of baptism, betrays a painful anxiety to conceal their total absence. By the antiquated device of vicarious profession it pays homage to the original significance of the rite; but this homage is paid for at the price of making room in the English Church for the Roman dogma of Baptismal Regeneration.

Familiarity does not always breed contempt, or any other strong feeling. More often it acts as a sort of intellectual anæsthetic, which favours an apathetic tolerance of things which, viewed with fresh eyes, would be instantly rejected. On this ground I am able to retain my admiration of the noble character and eminent ability of many Evangelical ministers of the Church of England. On this ground, also, it may be suggested without disrespect that there is some occasion for re-opening the question, "What do I mean when administering Infant Baptism? Is my meaning the same as that attached to the rite by Augustine, and by any of the

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Fathers who are known to have practised it? If so, is this common meaning 'agreeable with the institution of Christ'? If not, what reason have I, apart from traditional usage, for practising the rite at all?"

But many may ask, How can historical research help us? Has not the High Church movement come out of a revived study of Church History by Newman and his school? Is it not fortified and defended to-day by an appeal to Historical Christianity, as if this furnished an authoritative standard for the trial of all customs and creeds? I do not overlook these facts. It is not easy to forget that Newman, when about to secede, declared that "To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant." With caustic sarcasm he went on to give a reason for his dictum: "And this one thing is certain—whatever history teaches, and whatever it omits, whatever it exaggerates, whatever it says and unsays, at least the Christianity of history is not Protestantism. If ever there were a safe truth, it is this. And Protestantism has ever felt it so. . . . This is shown in the determination, already referred to, of dispensing with historical Christianity altogether, and of forming a Christianity from the Bible alone; men never would have put it aside, unless they had despaired of it" ("Development of Christian Doctrine," Intro. 5).

There is not a little truth in these allegations. Since Newman led the way, many Anglican clergymen have plunged into history, and have come up

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Romanists, but possibly if they had gone more deeply still they might have emerged better Protestants than ever before. Almost everything in the way of result depends on the spirit in which the records of the past are studied, and the pre-suppositions by which the student feels bound. He may read in a spirit of fear, afraid to exercise his faculties with freedom as he imbibes the words and follows the actions of the great thinkers and rulers of the Ancient Church; or he may go in a spirit of courage, the spirit which Paul commended in those who searched the Scriptures, to see whether his utterances would bear that test. He may go weighed down with a sense of obligation to accept the voice of antiquity as the voice of God, or he may go respecting the veracity of his own conscience, and trusting in the guidance of the Spirit of Truth to enable him to discern the things of God. In either case he will have, I think, to agree with Newman that the Christianity of history is neither Protestantism, nor the Anglicanism which flouts that title. Reading as a bondman of authority, he will discover excellent reasons for treading in Newman's footsteps toward Rome. Reading as a free seeker after Truth, he will find increased reason for making the English Reformation more complete.

"Anglican Catholics" will see that I fully recognise the strength of their position as protected by some of the clearest teachings of the

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English Prayer Book. There is in that book so much that will fairly bear a "Catholic interpretation" that they cannot be charged with remaining where they have absolutely no lawful standing ground. On the other hand, there is so much in that book which they disapprove, and so much left out of it which they think should be there, that the question of duty can scarcely be disposed of by a mere legal claim of right.

High Churchmen have many strong inducements to entrench their position. However much many of them may feel drawn in a Romeward direction, they naturally shrink from going over as lonely units, and as a body they would shrink still more from precipitate action which would flood the Church of Rome in this country with thousands of priests for whom she would be unable to provide occupation or support, and would leave the buildings and revenues and congregations of the Establishment to a Protestant residue. Believing that they have a more equitable claim to these great possessions, and also that if able to carry them into the Church of Rome they would be effecting an act of righteous restitution, it is natural for the leaders of a counter-reformation to remain where they are as long as they have any hope of success. It is quite clear, moreover, that the statesmen of the Vatican have an eye to the same reward of patience, and are in no haste to welcome any large number of Anglican seceders.

These reasons of expediency are weighty, but

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they do not constitute the sole ground of hesitation and delay, nor are they in all cases the chief. The rule of celibacy is not attractive to all, and for those already married it involves the rights and wishes of those whom they have vowed to love and cherish. The dogma of Papal Infallibility also is one which develops an evil habit of private judgment in the most docile and receptive minds. When this dogma was submitted to the Vatican Council, Newman had been resting for many years in the peace of assenting to things naturally incredible, but it almost provoked even him to revolt. It is not surprising, therefore, that those who have not yet passed the magic gate of final submission should pause before they knock.

These considerations will not be generally accepted as an adequate apology for a temporising policy, but they show that for a growing number of Anglicans the question of secession constitutes a complex and painful problem, and in view of them I refrain from discussing the equity of using ecclesiastical property while teaching doctrines and introducing customs which, if not prohibited, are certainly not provided for in the English Prayer Book. Without prejudice to any opinion on this vexed question, I desire to raise another issue of infinitely greater solemnity. Assuming that High Churchmen are honest men, and that they unreservedly believe in the necessity of infant baptism for the removal of original sin, and for the bestowal of God's gift of eternal life,

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I venture to ask whether it is in their power, while members of the Church of England as by law established, to do for the souls of baptized persons all that they believe to be necessary for their ultimate salvation?

According to their accepted theory, no one, baptized or unbaptized, can be saved except inside the Holy Catholic Church. They declare that their own is a true branch of this Church, but are they sure of this? Rome denies it. If Rome be right, what will become of themselves and of the sheep who follow them?

Again, according to their theory, none but duly ordained priests can do any of the saving acts which are indispensable after baptism. Are their own orders valid? They have made eager efforts to get them recognised at the Vatican, but in vain. Having admitted the competence of the Roman tribunal, why do they not bow to her decree? They hate Protestantism, yet, surely, persistence in exercising priestly functions when these have been pronounced spurious, is Protestantism of a most extreme and dangerous kind.

Anglican "priests" elect to stake eternal life for themselves and their people on the catholicity of their own Church and the validity of their own orders, but meeting them on this ground the question still recurs, Can they, while in their present position, exercise their alleged priestly powers in an adequate manner? In a variety of ways they defy the law with impunity, but there



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are some things which they will never be allowed to do while the union of Church and State continues. For example, they will never be allowed to deprive parishioners of their legal right to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper unless guilty of some grave misconduct. This necessarily means that they cannot enforce an injunction to confess and submit to an imposition of penance. The consequences of this disability must from their own point of view be appalling. In administering the sacrament to lawful claimants whom they deem unfit, they are guilty of desecrating the elements, and are consciously helping men to eat and drink unworthily and so to incur the heaviest penalty.

The Ancient Church boldly faced the problem which she had created by baptizing infants and declaring them regenerated persons. She recognised the certainty that these persons will sin as soon as they become capable of acting on their own account. She confessed also that they must thereby forfeit the benefits conferred in baptism, and with no possibility of receiving them again in the same gratuitous manner. To meet the pitiable necessities of their case she slowly evolved a scheme of salvation, to be worked out through a lifelong course of discipline, directed and enforced by the magisterial authority of the Church, and continued in almost every case beyond the grave. What this scheme was, and what were the priestly duties it entailed, will appear in the sequel.

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Given the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, it seems to be the only plan of post-baptismal salvation which the intellect of man could devise. It is also deserving of respect as the outcome of an intense desire to counteract the immoral effect of teaching people that they were made children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven by a rite which left their nature prone to sin. I respect High Anglican ministers for their desire to restore this well-meant discipline. The terrible fact remains, however, that they cannot do what they believe to be their duty, because canonical discipline in the Church of England is rendered impossible by the restrictions and limitations imposed by secular authority upon her servants.

Here, then, is the position which High Anglicans have to deal with. There are strong prudential reasons for remaining where they are and for struggling to obtain a revision of the Prayer Book in their own favour. There are also some comparatively small doctrinal scruples about submission to Rome. But against these considerations must be weighed the awful responsibility of staking their own salvation, and the salvation of their flocks, on the soundness of claims which are flouted by the authorities they chiefly revere. They claim to be the legitimate ministers of a true branch of the Holy Catholic Church, but Christendom regards them as a large section of a small sect, which is an unripe fruit of the Reformation. They claim to have received orders from Bishops in the true

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line of Apostolic Succession, but their pretensions are derided in some quarters, pitied in others, and believed in by no one but themselves. Branded as schismatics, and censured as pretenders, they still arrogate the functions of priests, but find themselves checked and impeded by tribunals they rail against as secular but are powerless to change, by the opposition of other sections of the Church, and by the pressure of Protestant feeling which discerns and detests their designs. Given the truth of their doctrines, the position thus surveyed may be painful, but should scarcely be perplexing. To onlookers it appears altogether plain that whether their theory be right or wrong, they are certainly not doing, or able to do, what they declare to be essential for the salvation of the thousands they baptize.

Some general idea of the course to be pursued in the historical study now awaiting us, has been indicated in the title of this volume, and in the reasons I have given for undertaking it; but it may be helpful to have a more definite chart of the road to be traversed.

It will not have escaped notice that the title implies at least three great assumptions. (1) That Infant Baptism is not an original institution of the Christian Church. (2) That it was not suddenly introduced as a startling innovation, but grew up in the Church by an evolutionary process. (3) That it was not a mere variation of ritual, but was

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inseparably connected with intellectual changes affecting the most fundamental ideas of Christianity. These are immense propositions, and, if unsupported by evidence, would be worthless. They are, however, rightly in the title, because in no other way could I briefly indicate the scope of my design. On each of these three points a few observations may be offered.

(1.) In assuming that infant baptism is not an original institution of the Christian Church I may seem to commit myself to an exhaustive and critical review of the New Testament writings, in order to prove that they neither enjoin nor imply the existence of such a rite in apostolic times. It is not my intention to undertake this particular task. It is true that from the New Testament alone can we ascertain with any certitude what the first Christians believed and practised; but the work of Scriptural investigation has been well done by other writers, and I wish to supplement, not repeat, their labours. My object is not to write an exegetical treatise, but to pursue a distinctly historical inquiry in order to determine at what time, by what means, and for what reasons, infant baptism was introduced into the Church. The production of positive evidence that it was introduced long after the latest canonical writings were composed, will necessarily prove that it is not an original institution of the Christian Church.

(2.) A further reason for not commencing with an exhaustive examination of Scripture may

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be found in the contents of my second assumption. It is impossible to trace an evolutionary process without some knowledge of the product evolved. To search for germs without knowing how to identify them when found is absurd. In material Nature, changes of form are significant only when they are seen to exhibit a gradual approach to the forms of objects with which we are familiar. In the history of customs or ideas the same law holds good. We have to start with the facts which need accounting for, the beliefs and customs which must have had some origin, and we ransack the records of the past to discover the beginning and progression of thoughts and habits by which they have been reached. Hence it follows that to discover, or to verify, or to disprove an alleged evolution of Infant Baptism, we must begin at the last stage of the process, and then explore the past for antecedents.

(3.) The same principle applies to the third assumption—that infant baptism was not a mere variation of ritual, but was intimately connected with great changes of thought. Comparatively little has been learned when we have discovered the date of its first appearance in history. We need to know not only when, and by whom, but also for what reasons, it was introduced. If not an original institution of Christianity, it could not spring into existence spontaneously, or be started as a freak. There must have been trains of thought which prepared people to welcome it, and even demand it. To guide us in seeking these antece-

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dent movements of Christian thought we therefore need to know what they finally led up to, what were the doctrinal views which were welded into a system of theology which at once sanctioned and interpreted the rite, and secured its permanent retention in the Church.

Governed by these considerations, I have now to tax the reader's patience by presenting a brief account of the theory of salvation which was developed in the first five centuries of the Christian era, and from that time forward became the fixed creed of the Western Church. I might give it in the language of Augustine, but its parts are scattered over a wide space in his voluminous writings, and if gathered together and systematically condensed by a modern author, would not be received as authoritative by his admirers. I shall have occasion to quote him extensively hereafter, but in this place am content to refer to him only as the great constructive thinker of the old Latin Church. Between the death of Augustine and the assembling of the Council of Trent there was a long interval, and some modifications of doctrine were effected, but the period was one of intellectual poverty, and the Decrees of the Council represent an unprecedented intellectual effort to which the old Church was goaded by the Protestant Reformers. Using, as far as space will permit, the official language of the Council, I now give the Roman theory of salvation, as finally and irrevocably defined.

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Prior to the discussion of any other doctrine, the Council of Trent decreed that "the merit of Jesus Christ is applied, both to adults and infants, by the sacrament of baptism rightly administered in the form of the Church . . . the guilt of original sin is remitted . . . those who are born again . . . are made innocent, immaculate, pure, harmless, and beloved of God, heirs indeed of God; so that there is nothing to retard their entrance into heaven." This stupendous gift of grace is the immediate act of God, and in its bestowal the Church has no part beyond the due administration of the sacrament. In order to account for the paradoxical fact that the grace which makes immaculately pure does not prevent the subject of it from committing sin in after days, the Synod confessed itself sensible that "in the baptized there remains concupiscence, or an incentive to sin." This is not "truly and properly sin," but may be called by that name, "because it is of sin, and inclines to sin."

Starting from this point, the great problem to be solved was in regard to the treatment of post-baptismal sin. A second regeneration by baptism could not be tolerated, and the saving efficacy of the first could not be made prospective without a demoralising influence too horrible to bear contemplation. On the other hand, the Church "with great reason repudiated and condemned" the austere doctrine that sinners can only once be forgiven. To meet this formidable difficulty, the

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Church has erected a system of doctrine and discipline which is not only logical, but has been devised with a marvellous skill, and is the matured result of centuries of constructive and corrective thought.

This system is based upon a declaration that in order that regenerated persons may not perish everlastingly through the sins to which they are still liable, God, who is rich in mercy, "hath bestowed a remedy of life even on those who may, after baptism, have delivered themselves up to the servitude of sin and the power of the devil—the sacrament, to wit, of Penance, by which the benefit of the death of Christ is applied to those who have fallen after baptism." The essential principle of this sacrament is that, if sin is to be repeatedly forgiven, it must not be passed over without some purgative chastisement, either in this life or in a future state. It differs from baptism in many respects, but chiefly in the fact that it is painful; on which account it is often called "a laborious kind of baptism."

For practical purposes this sacrament is of more importance than any other. Its value is secondary in the sense that it is not available for unbaptized persons, but to those baptized in infancy. Penance is the only practicable way of salvation which can be presented from the first dawn of reason until death. The sacrament of the Eucharist is, of course, the most prominent feature in the public services of the Church of Rome, but



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this is not a saving rite, and adds to the condemnation of those who partake of it unworthily. The Council of Trent expressly declared that "This sacrament of Penance is, for those who have fallen after baptism, necessary unto salvation; as baptism itself is for those who have not as yet been regenerated."

It is necessary to be very precise in stating the doctrine of Penance, because it is generally misunderstood among Protestants. It is not the irrational and immoral invention which it is commonly supposed to be. Nothing could be more atrocious than the practice of the Church in the days which preceded the Reformation; but this evil practice must not be confounded with the laws and principles it dishonoured. When Luther nailed his Theses to the church door at Wurtemberg, he declared that he was striking, not at the law of the Church, but at flagrant violations of it, and in this he was absolutely correct. When the Council of Trent assembled, it confessed that these unlawful practices had existed, and censured them. Later on, Luther learned to denounce, not only the illegal acts of the clergy, but the law itself; nevertheless we cannot be too careful to distinguish between these two things. To secure perfect accuracy, I shall as far as possible quote the words of the Canons and Decrees of the Council.

The fundamental principle on which everything is based has already been exhibited, namely, that, by baptism, individuals, whether infants or

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adults, are made children of God, heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Upon this foundation another stone is laid in the declaration that the Lord "instituted the sacrament of Penance, when, being raised from the dead, he breathed upon His disciples, saying: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.' By which action so signal, and words so clear, . . . the power of forgiving and retaining sins was communicated to the Apostles and their lawful successors, for the reconciling of the faithful who have fallen after baptism."

The sacrament is divided into several parts, every one of which is essential for "the full and perfect remission of sins." The authority of the minister to pronounce the words "I absolve thee," is not absolute, and is always conditioned by certain acts of the penitent himself, for "contrition, confession, and satisfaction are, as it were, the matter of the sacrament." Contrition is carefully defined as "a sorrow of the mind and a detestation of the sin committed, with the purpose of not sinning again." In the absence of this contrition no absolution is valid, but the tremendous question arises, How is its presence to be known by the minister? He is not omniscient, and can deal only with sins which are uncovered to his sight. Hence the absolute necessity for confession, not only before God, but to His appointed servant. But even this is not a final solution of the difficulty. Confession,

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particularly when made in expectation of pardon, is no proof of repentance, and, if nothing else were required, the confessional would be a workshop for the manufacture of hypocrites. To prevent this evil and to make the confessional a court of justice, as well as a seat of mercy, the minister is empowered to impose punishment, under the name of satisfactions. Concerning these it is said that they "greatly recall from sin, and check as it were with a bridle, and make penitents more cautious for the future; they are also remedies for the remains of sin, and, by acts of the opposite virtues, they remove the habits acquired by evil living." Submission to this discipline is held to be not only an evidence of sincerity, but a salutary means of deepening repentance and cultivating a wholesome spirit of reverence for Mother Church. When the minister is satisfied that his penitent is in a fit state of mind, he may pronounce the words of absolution. Of course, it is held that the same authority which imposes penalties can remit them wholly or in part, whenever this is deemed expedient. The Church does not claim authority to remit any penalties but those which she herself has imposed, but her pardons, or indulgences, as they are called, are declared to be a dispensation of Divine forgiveness.

This comprehensive doctrine of Penance has for its supplement the doctrine of Purgatory. Unbaptized persons are consigned to everlasting perdition, even though they die a few hours old, and

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have done nothing worse than draw into their lungs a few breaths of air. Purgatorial fires are the privilege of regenerated people. Their great object is to restore imperfect Christians to the state of immaculate purity produced by baptism; and to this end they carry on and complete the discipline of the Church, rectifying its errors, and supplying whatever may have been lacking.

It would be superfluous to point out how this entire system of salvation by Penance opens the way for the most awful abuses to creep into the Church. The Council of Trent confessed that the custom of commuting painful acts of penance into money payments had been "a most prolific cause of abuses," and decreed its abolition. It also referred to "other abuses which have proceeded from superstition, ignorance, irreverence, or" other causes; and commanded that all such cases should be reported to the Roman Pontiff, for his treatment, that "thus the gift of holy Indulgences may be dispensed to all the faithful, piously, holily, and incorruptly."

The Council did not mention that this is precisely what Luther attempted to do, but with no result except his own persecution, and it is terribly significant that the Council did its tardy work under the humiliating pressure of a blow which had almost crushed the Papacy. There is perhaps nothing rare or strange in the fact that the Church did under castigation what she refused to do when warned and pleaded with; and it would ill become

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us to treat her as a monopolist in this common human infirmity. It is, however, our duty to note the great historic fact; and charity will do its perfect work if we constantly discriminate between the most highly developed dogmas of the Church and the misdemeanours of her servants.

In urging this principle I am not forgetful of our Lord's instruction that a tree shall be known by its fruits. Every institution must submit to be judged by the work it does and the characters it produces. But, in exercising this judgment, we must not condemn a tree as naturally bad because of any fruits which are the result of some artificial process of ingrafting. We do not hold the doctrines of our Lord responsible for the disgraceful offences which were deplorably common in Corinth and Laodicea, and we must not assume that all the immoral practices which the Council of Trent censured were the intended or the inevitable outcome of the Roman doctrine of salvation. In common with all Protestants, I believe that the normal effect of what is done in the confessional is demoralising both to the penitent and to the priest; but I do not believe that the worst scandals which were rife in Luther's day were the foreseen, or an altogether inevitable, fruitage of the system. Luther continued to hear confession, and to impose penance, long after he published his Theses, and none but bitter enemies can doubt that, during this period, he administered the Roman system in its integrity, or that he did this in the fear of God

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and with a sincere desire to cleanse the hearts and consciences of his people. Before his day many priests sighed and wept over the corruption which was spreading through the whole body of Christendom, and numerous Councils made futile efforts to arrest the plague. They failed, and were foredoomed to fail, because only a minority had any wish to succeed; but the fact that even in the worst days of the Papacy there were priests who never prostituted their functions for the sake of gain, is at least presumptive evidence that the grosser scandals against which Luther thundered, were a criminal abuse of the confessional system, and were neither designed nor foreseen by its authors.

It seems right to make a further admission. I frankly confess that, in one regard, the dogmas stated above are entitled to a certain qualified respect. Given the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, the Roman discipline of Penance is probably the best conceivable means of mitigating the evil consequences of such a belief. A Church which tells men that they were made children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, through a passive and unconscious reception of baptism, and then leaves them to live under that impression, without any serious effort to keep before their eyes a fear of judgment, is neither more nor less than a minister of unrighteousness. It would be difficult to overstate my antipathy to the confessional, but beyond any reasonable doubt, the complex system for which

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the word now stands had its remote origin in a "zeal for righteousness." We cannot close our eyes to its many objectionable features, but candour compels the admission that, as a developed theory, it is the evolution of a strictly moral design.

To some readers this may appear to be an unwise admission, but I make it unreservedly, and, having made it, claim no credit for generosity. Let me reiterate that it is based on the fact that the Church had to deal with the state of things which grew up when vast populations had been made nominal Christians, through the spread of infant baptism. These people had no spiritual experience, and no fellowship with the Father through faith in Jesus Christ; yet the Church told them that they were bound under awful penalties to live up to their responsibilities as enlightened, redeemed, and regenerated men. She clearly saw what an awful thing it is for careless men and women to imagine themselves the heirs of heaven, merely because baptized in infancy; and, therefore, with a distinct view to mitigate the appalling effects of her sacramental creed, she imposed an iron yoke of discipline, and elaborated a new code of commandments, with more awful sanctions than were known to the Jewish Law. While doing this she also saw how insupportable was the new burden she was laying on the souls of genuine seekers after righteousness, and to meet their need she devised a system of conditional pardons, lest men should be made reckless through despair. Whatever was

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done under the influence of such motives deserves, as I have said, some qualified respect. But the more we respect the motives of ancient Churchmen, the more we must deprecate the dogma which created their painful problem, and the more urgent is our call to find out how the sacramental idea of salvation which governed all their thinking came to be dominant in the Church.

With this authoritative summary of doctrine before us we necessarily inquire, How did this elaborate theory of post-baptismal salvation come into existence? As a linked series of dogmas it is avowedly a product of the sixteenth century. In substance it is very much older, but neither in form nor in substance was it delivered to the Church by Jesus Christ or by His Apostles. Comparing it with the New Testament we see that it is full of new matter. It is not merely a novel arrangement of scriptural ideas, but contains new terms, which stand for obviously new ideas. I have no need to prove the truth of this assertion, because no one will challenge it. Instead of denying, or toning down, the vast changes which Protestants denounce, Roman apologists glory in them as tokens of the Church's continuous inspiration, and signal proofs of her authority. The sole difference between these two antagonistic parties lies in the fact that what one regards as legitimate developments of doctrine, the other regards as poisonous corruptions of Christian truth.

To corroborate this view I cannot do better



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than quote the words of the late Cardinal Newman. There are, he observes, "large portions of the Creed of Christendom, which have not a recognised place in the primordial idea and the historical outline of the religion." He contends that, "from the first age of Christianity, its teaching looked toward these ecclesiastical dogmas," but he does not pretend that they were recognised as truths until after a period of "more or less determinate advance in the direction of them," and with splendid courage he justifies the dogmas in their final definition, not by any attempt to demonstrate their harmony with "primordial" Christian ideas, but by the very movement of thought which ultimately led to their formulation. To this effect he continues, "at length that advance became so pronounced as to justify that definition and to bring it about." ("Development of Christian Doctrine," IV. 1.).

Of this ecclesiastical development Newman gives seven examples, and among them he includes Infant Baptism. Instead of displaying any anxiety to find an early date for the establishment of this rite, he presents ample evidence that even in the fourth century it was not "imperative on Christian parents, as it is now, to give baptism to their young children." Having cited the cases of some of the greatest Fathers of that age, all of whom had Christian parents, yet were not baptized until mature manhood, he trenchantly inquires, "Now, how are the modern sects which protest against Infant Baptism to be answered by Anglicans with this

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array of great names in their favour?" He points out that there is no way of defending the rite without acknowledging the authority of the Church which instituted it. Baptists can be answered only by an appeal "to the later rule of the Church . . . by the dicta of some later saints, as by St. Chrysostom; by one or two inferences from Scripture; by an argument founded on the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation." He calls this answer strong, but powerless to alter the fact that Infant Baptism was a comparatively late product of ecclesiastical development. "It was on retrospect, and after the truths of the Creed had sunk into the Christian mind, that the authority of such men as St. Cyprian, St. Chrysostom, and St. Augustine brought round the *orbis terrarum* to the conclusion, which the infallible Church confirmed, that observance of the rite was the rule, and the non-observance the exception" (IV. 7).

The book in which these passages occur was written while Newman still lingered in the Church of England, but was not published until after his secession had been announced. He had long striven to find an intellectual basis for Anglicanism, but had failed, and in this volume he reveals the course of thought which led him to pass from one communion to another. On this account it will long retain an almost unique personal interest. For my present purpose, however, it is chiefly significant as a frank statement of historical facts, which vindicate all the assumptions made in the

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title of this work. Newman's theory of Development as a defence of Roman innovations will demand our notice when the historical materials are before us for judgment. Meanwhile, let us appreciate the remarkable truth that Baptists and Roman Catholics have no dispute about the main features of a prolonged course of doctrinal development. The two bodies occupy opposite theological poles. Between them there can be no collusion. They have no common ecclesiastical interests or religious bias to deflect their judgment in the same direction. What one exhibits with pride, the other indignantly deplures. Wherein, therefore, they are agreed, there is a strong presumption that they are not mistaken. It would indeed require some hardihood to suggest that both parties have been deceived by a sort of historical mirage, and have been warring for centuries over the lawfulness of changes which never occurred.

I have no wish to magnify the value of Cardinal Newman's testimony, but I gladly let his outline sketch stand as a kind of general introduction to the critical study on which we are now to enter. No modern historian, whatever his genius and scholarship, can be accepted as an authority on such a subject unless he places before his readers the original sources of information on which he relies, and does this with the fairness and amplitude which independent judges have a right to expect. The only conclusive evidence on our present subject is that contained in the writings of

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men who actually aided, or resisted, the process of doctrinal evolution, or at least witnessed some stage of its advance. Other sources of information are not excluded, but second-hand testimony must always be cautiously received. Our chief business, therefore, will be to examine the Christian literature of the first few centuries, and to allow the thinkers and teachers of the Ancient Church to tell us their story in their own words.

Quotations from the Fathers have been freely used in the baptismal controversy, but, unhappily, the "proof passages" which have appeared in so many pamphlets and books have been somewhat fragmentary, and in some cases have been so extracted as to give a misleading idea of what was in the author's mind. The Golden Rule is, or should be, the first law of criticism, and should govern our treatment of the dead, who speak to us by their writings, as sacredly as it regulates our treatment of the living, who are able to feel injustice and to make reply. Revering this law, it will be my sincere endeavour to quote each ancient author with sympathetic fairness, and with sufficient fulness to enable him to be, as far as possible, his own interpreter.

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## Clement of Rome

IN commencing his great work on the "History of Infant Baptism," Dr. Wall quoted a few sentences which occur in Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians, although they make no allusion to baptism of any kind. His reason for doing so is clearly stated: "That which I produce these places for is to show what the doctrine of this apostolic man was concerning the pollution and guilt with which infants are born into this world." The anxious historian did not pretend to find any direct proof that infants were baptized in Clement's day, but he assumed that the sole reason for baptizing them which was ever accepted by the Ancient Church was their supposed need of cleansing from the defilement and guilt of ancestral sin; hence he reasoned that wherever men believed in the doctrine of hereditary guilt, the existence of infant baptism may be inferred. Hence again the further inference, that if Clement taught that doctrine, the rite must have been practised in the end of the first century.

Such an argument betrays a famine of evidence, but it is sufficiently plausible to call for a brief notice.

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The first sentence to be considered reads thus : " Again of Job it is thus written, That he was just and blameless, true, one that feared God and eschewed evil. Yet he condemns himself, and says, ' There is none free from pollution ; no, not though his life be but of the length of one day.' " (Job xiv. 4. Septuagint.) The question is, Do these words justify the use made of them by Wall and by many writers who have resorted to his work as a quarry of patristic lore ?

Wall was undoubtedly right in saying that later Christian writers were accustomed to adduce Job's words in support of their opinion that infants are accounted guilty before they begin to act or think, but we have to ask whether Clement thus misused the passage.

Fragmentary quotations are often misleading, but in most instances the only cure required is to produce the context. In the present case this remedy will be found complete.

The salutation with which Clement opened his Epistle clearly reveals his object in writing. Having heard of some deplorable disorders which disgraced the Church in Corinth, he wrote on behalf of the Church in Rome to implore their brethren to return to the spirit of lowliness and mutual submission which had once distinguished them. With this intent he wisely dwelt upon the wonderful examples of humility which abound in Scripture. Quoting the words, " But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and an outcast of the people,"

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he ascribes them to our Lord Himself, and then adds, "Ye see, dearly beloved, what is the pattern which has been given to us; for if the Lord was thus lowly of mind, what should we do, who through Him have been brought under the yoke of His grace?" (Cap. xvi.)

In the same spirit he urges, "Let us be imitators of them which went about in goatskins and sheepskins, preaching the coming of Christ. . . . Abraham obtained an exceeding good report and was called the friend of God, and looking stedfastly on the glory of God, he said, in lowliness of mind, 'But I am dust and ashes.' Moreover, concerning Job it is also thus written: And Job was righteous and unblameable, one that was true, and honoured God, and abstained from all evil. Yet he himself accuses himself, saying: No man is clean from filth; no, not though his life be but for a day. Moses was called faithful in all his house. . . . Howbeit he also, though greatly glorified, yet spake no proud words, but said, when an oracle was given him from the bush, Who am I that Thou sendest me? Nay, I am feeble of speech and slow of tongue. And again he saith: But I am smoke from the pot." (xvi.)

No reader of this passage in its entirety can imagine that Clement was trying to teach a doctrine of sin, or to humble the Corinthians by convincing them of guilt, whether as infants or as men. His special point is that the greatest and holiest beings, including Jesus Christ Himself, spoke

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humbly of themselves before God. The utterances cited are highly metaphorical, and in their literal sense absurd. If we interpret such words literally we must also insist that Christ was "a worm and no man," that Abraham was "dust and ashes," and that Moses was "smoke from the pot."

The question whether Clement quoted the old Syrian patriarch for the purpose alleged by Wall is quite distinct from the prior question whether he might fairly have done so had he wished. On this point I need say little. The different speakers in the old poem wrangle over their several theories of Providence, and in the end all alike are convicted of darkening counsel by words without knowledge, and of saying things about God which dishonoured His character. For a Christian writer to treat any one of these erring men as a theological authority is therefore not merely an anachronism, but an absurdity, almost too obvious for exposure.

The second quotation from Clement, as translated by Wall, opens thus: "Let us consider therefore, brethren, whereof we were made"; but this rather obscures the author's reference. Rendered with literal exactness it reads: "Let us consider out of what matter we were made." The allusion is to man's creation out of the dust of the earth, and not to his birth of human parents. The words which follow also show that Clement was thinking of God's workmanship and not of human parentage. "Let us consider . . . who and what manner of



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beings we were, when we came into the world; from what a sepulchre and what darkness He that moulded and created us brought us into His world, having prepared His benefits aforehand ere ever we were born."\* There seems to be some reminiscence of Psalm cxxxix. 14-16: "I will give thanks unto Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . . . Thine eyes did see my unperfect substance, and in Thy book were all my members written, which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." The words that follow show that, like the Psalmist, Clement was pointing to our creation as a cause of thankfulness and praise. "Seeing therefore," he exclaims, "that we have all these things in Him, we ought in all things to give thanks to Him, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen." If Wall were right, Clement would have been inciting men to give thanks for their hereditary guilt! Instead of this, his object clearly was to magnify the wisdom and power of the Creator who made us out of such poor material, and before creating man, prepared so many blessings to become our heritage. We cannot suppose Wall consciously misrepresented Clement, but it is surely obvious that he fastened too eagerly on words which have no resemblance to the dogma he was unduly anxious to discover in an author of the first century.

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\*Epistle to the Corinthians, 38.

## The Earliest Christian Homily

**T**HIS is a brief work of unknown date and authorship, commonly known as the Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. This description is clearly wrong, as in form it is not a letter, and there is no reason to suppose it was written by Clement. It is the most ancient sermon now extant, and was prepared by its author to be read by himself in an assembly of the Church, as a supplement to the reading of some unspecified Scriptures. It is intensely practical and admonitory in tone and aim, and the true significance of what it says, and of what it leaves unsaid, cannot be fairly estimated unless we bear in mind that it makes no attempt to expound doctrine, but assumes, on the part of its hearers, some prior instruction in Christian truth. This general view of the composition is sufficiently confirmed by words which occur at its close: "Therefore, brothers and sisters, after the God of truth hath been heard, I read to you an exhortation to the end that ye may give heed to the things which are written."

The Homily sheds little light on the author's theory of baptism, but it uses strong language

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about the solemn responsibility which rests upon its recipients. It is not said that the rite itself is a means, or even a condition, of the new birth, but it is referred to as marking a transitional experience which entails heavy moral obligations. In solemn tones the preacher inquires: "With what confidence shall we, if we keep not our baptism pure and undefiled, enter into the kingdom of God? Or who shall be our advocate, unless we be found having holy and righteous works?" (6.)

In another passage there is a possible allusion to baptism as the "seal." "We ought to know that he which contendeth in the corruptible contest, if he be found dealing corruptly with it, is first flogged, and then removed and driven out of the race-course. What think ye? What shall be done to him that hath dealt corruptly with the contest of incorruption? For as concerning them that have not kept the seal, He saith, Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be a spectacle unto all flesh." (vii.) If then, it be true, as all critics agree, that the preacher referred to baptism as a seal, we have presumptive evidence that he regarded it, not as a saving instrument, but in the same way as Paul regarded the circumcision of Abraham, when he wrote: "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision" (Rom. iv. 2). This conception of baptism as a sealing ordinance perfectly agrees with the baptism of believers as the seal of a covenant into which

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they have personally entered. In some respects it is compatible with the theory that the children of believers may be baptized because they are "holy," and therefore as a seal of their inherited position. But the analogy of sealing necessarily implies some antecedent transaction, or some existing state of privilege which may be represented and confirmed. Hence it is utterly irreconcilable with any theory of baptism which regards the rite as a vehicle of regenerative grace. This obvious fact was blindly ignored in later usage, but there is no reason for suspecting the commencement of so serious a mistake in the ancient Homily before us.

It must, however, be confessed that in some respects the Homilist used language which tended to obscure the relationship of Christians to their Lord. Like many modern preachers he frequently fails to distinguish between the value of righteousness as an evidence and fruit of sonship to God, and righteousness as a supposed ground or condition of salvation. His beautiful exordium is warm with a glowing and grateful love of Christ, not as a mere Master, but as the Saviour, whose love and grace are spontaneous, and the only source and inspiration of our own. But it cannot be denied that, as the admonition flows, its tone somewhat changes, and the appeal for righteousness is based too much on the fear of perdition and too little on the love of Christ; and in at least one sentence there is some leaven of the thinking which ulti-

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mately developed into the dogma of Penance. "Almsgiving, therefore, is a good thing, even as repentance from sin. Fasting is better than prayer, but almsgiving than both. And love covereth a multitude of sins, but prayer out of a good conscience delivereth from death. Blessed is the man who is found full of these. For almsgiving lifteth off the burden of sin." (xvi.)

That these words contain a germ of the idea that man may render something like a Satisfaction to God for sin, is indisputable, but we must beware of reading into them all that they would mean if written by one who was familiar with later developments. Opinions may reasonably differ as to their precise meaning, and I leave this open without further comment. It is absolutely certain, however, that they contain no trace of those other parts of Penance which are vital to the Roman system.

To show the radical difference between the teaching of this Homily and that of a later age, it is only necessary to read the advice it offers to erring Christians: "Therefore, brethren, let us repent forthwith. Let us be sober unto that which is good; for we are full of much folly and wickedness. Let us wipe away from us our former sins, and let us repent with our whole heart and be saved." (xiii.) Here the preacher identifies himself with the people as a sinner in need of repentance, and, notwithstanding his strong language about the necessity of righteousness, he leaves the door of

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repentance open until the hour of death, but shuts out any hope of purgatorial remedy for those who die unsaved. "While we are on earth, then, let us repent; for we are clay under the craftsman's hand. For in like manner as the potter, if he be making a vessel, and it get twisted or crushed in his hands, reshapeth it again; but if he have once put it into the fiery oven, he shall no longer mend it; so also let us, while we are in this world, repent with our whole heart of the evil things which we have done in the flesh, that we may be saved by the Lord, while we have time for repentance. For after that we have departed out of the world, we can no more make confession there, or repent any more." (viii.)

In all this there is no hint of confession made to a human minister, or of repentance being tested by human expedients, and the author assumes no right on his own part, or on the part of any official, to come between the soul and God. It cannot be denied, however, that the author of this Homily used some language which had a tendency to diminish the faith of sincere but infirm Christians, and thus helped to create a yearning for relief which the Church ultimately appeased by unscriptural devices. This, however, is the utmost than can fairly be charged to his account.

## The Shepherd of Hermas

**I**N the latter half of the second century a remarkable book, called "The Shepherd," was in wide circulation, and was read in Christian Churches as Scripture. The name of its author was Hermas, but this name was so common that it fails to identify the writer. The name appears in Romans xvi. 14, in the list of prominent members of the Church to whom Paul sent salutations, and those who admired the work, and wished to uphold its claim to veneration, ascribed it to this man. Others who disliked the book, and denied its claim to inspiration, ascribed it to another Hermas who lived in Rome about A.D. 140-150. Lightfoot accepts this view as on the whole more probable, but many critics reject both traditions, and attribute it to a possible, but unknown, third Hermas, who may have written in Rome during the episcopate of Clement. Its right to be read as Scripture was denied by the author of the Muratorian Canon, about A.D. 180, and also by Tertullian; and shortly afterwards it fell into disrepute; partly because it contained predictions which had already been falsified by

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events, and partly because its teachings were inapplicable to the state of things which existed when the hope of an immediate millennium had passed away.

That the author posed as the messenger of Heaven to his generation is indisputable, but while some regard him as a rank impostor, others think he was a self-deceived enthusiast, and yet another set of critics compare him with John Bunyan, as a frank and undisguised writer of fanciful conceits. None of these theories commands an unqualified assent. There is no just ground for the charge of gross imposture, and just as little for the apology that he wished to be regarded as a writer of religious fiction. That he was deceived seems clear, and that he deceived others by false predictions is certain. But self-deception, though easy, is seldom carried far without some admixture of an undue desire to stand well with others; and it is difficult to believe that Hermas could have produced his elaborate work without some conscious exaggeration of his own pretensions.

He appears to have been a deeply religious man, who had some remarkable dreams, which he and his friends came to regard as Heaven-sent revelations. Musing much on their import, he subsequently obtained other dreams, sleeping or waking, or in that nebulous borderland where visions are most common; and these were not quite involuntary, though mainly the result of fastings, and expectant musings, and general self-



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excitement. The precise proportion of semi-conscious invention which influenced these visions can never be determined, but in estimating the influence of Hermas, we are more concerned with the opinion of his contemporaries than with his own self-knowledge, and I shall only add that he wrote as a layman, not as an officer of the Church; that he was not a teacher of doctrine, but an ardent primitive reformer; a dreamer of dreams, but always practical and intensely moral in his design, whatever we may think of his expedients.

This work is quoted by Wall as his second authority to prove that in the earliest times baptism with water was esteemed the sacramental means of salvation, and that as such it was administered to infants. It will be seen, however, that his authority fails him in both these points.

In one of his visions Hermas saw a tower being builded upon water, and was told by a mystical interpreter that the tower represented the Church, and that it rested on the water, "because your life is saved and shall be saved by water" (Vision iii. 3).

This at once carries our thoughts back to 1 Peter iii. 20-22, where there is a reference to the ark floating on the waters of the Deluge, followed by the much misquoted words, "which also after a true likeness doth now save you—even baptism, not the putting away the filth of the flesh but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

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Unhappily, Hermas set a bad example by quoting the apostle's highly metaphorical language, without reproducing his instantaneous explanation that what he meant by the baptism which saves, is not a physical rite, but an inward and spiritual activity, which finds a visible expression in submission to the ordinance.

The general significance of Peter's words can scarcely be missed by any candid reader of the entire passage, but their precise force is seldom brought out by expositors. At first sight his use of the deluge as a type appears infelicitous, because in the historical incident the water was a destructive agent and not a saving force. To obviate this objection, it has been suggested that the marginal reading supplied by the Revised Version gives his true meaning, by emphasising the ark, rather than the water, as the saving instrument: "Into which few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through water"; but this makes havoc of Peter's metaphor. The apostle evidently had before his mind the fact, which Paul exhibits more fully in Rom. vi., that baptism denotes the believer's fellowship with Christ in His death and in His resurrection. According to this imagery, salvation is both a death and a new birth. It is death to sin, a putting off the old man, and a birth to a new life of righteousness, the putting on of the new man renewed into the likeness of Christ. Having this before his mind, Peter saw a profound resemblance between the salvation of Noah and the salvation of

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those who abide in Christ. He did not think of Noah as saved from the water by the ark, but of the salvation of a few persons through the waters, which destroyed the evil mass of the human race, and thus made it possible for a remnant to begin a new epoch of human life by yielding themselves up unto God, as those who were alive from the dead. Hence the water, which put away the corruption of the race, and made way for the beginning of a new career, was a fair symbol of that spiritual change which baptism represents.

It is not unreasonable to urge that Hermas, who paraphrased the apostle's language, should be interpreted in harmony with its true meaning.

In another Similitude (ix. 16) Hermas uses language which has been taken to teach "the necessity of water baptism to salvation." The passage in question occurs in a long and clumsily-constructed parable, designed chiefly to impress the truth stated with beautiful simplicity in Heb. xi. 39, 40, where, speaking of the Old Testament worthies, the writer declares: "And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." As before, Hermas is shown the building up of the Church as a tower into which a variety of stones are compacted. Of these stones, thirty-five are said to represent "God's prophets and His ministers," while forty are "apostles and teachers of the

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preaching of the Son of God." All these stones were seen coming up from the deep to be placed in the tower, and in reply to Hermas, an angel thus explains the incident: "It was necessary for them to rise up through water that they might be made alive; for otherwise they could not enter into the kingdom of God, except they had put aside the deadness of their life. So these likewise that had fallen asleep received the seal of the Son of God and entered into the kingdom of God. For before a man has borne the name of the Son of God he is dead; but when he has received the seal, he layeth aside his deadness, and resumeth life. The seal then is the water; so they go down into the water dead, and they come up alive."

Wall justly speaks of this as "the oddest passage in all the book," but it is not quite so odd as he makes out. The fundamental thought of the parable is that the Church of Christ is being built, not only on earth, but in the unseen world, and that its privileges and glories are shared by all who ever trusted in God, and wrought righteousness, although Christ's is the only name in earth or heaven by which men can enjoy the fellowship of God's family. To teach this lesson, Hermas represented the apostles as going, after their own decease, to preach Christ to the patriarchs and prophets. Unless, therefore, we are prepared to accuse Hermas of teaching that these Old Testament worthies were baptized with material water in Hades, we must conclude that he used the

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word baptism in a figurative manner, to denote that incorporation into Christ which is its sacramental significance.

Postponing for the moment some further remarks on this usage of the term, I must call attention to certain significant points.

(1.) There is no allusion here to infant baptism, and no room for such a practice to be supposed. The people depicted were all aged men, who had done good service in their day, and their "baptism," whatever this means, was their own act, voluntarily performed, after listening to the Gospel. "Thus to them also this seal was preached, and they availed themselves of it that they might enter into the kingdom of God." The essential truth which Hermas inculcates is that, through this preaching in Hades, the patriarchs and prophets were made perfect with us, being thus "quickened into life, and came to the full knowledge of the Son of God."

(2.) In strict agreement with this thought, baptism is spoken of as "the seal of the *preaching*."

(3.) There is no suggestion in this passage that baptism was supposed to wash away pollution and guilt, whether inherited or personal. The persons referred to were the elders who died in faith, and "fell asleep in righteousness and great purity."

Wall quotes another passage from the same Similitude to prove that, according to Hermas,

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infants, "are fit to be admitted into the covenant of God's grace and love by baptism." The words relied upon are strangely inaccordant with the theory of infant "pollution and guilt," but this seems to have been overlooked. "For all infants are glorious in the sight of God, and stand first in His sight" (Sim. ix. 29). This saying might be of service, perhaps, to those who hold that infants should be baptized because they are already God's children, but the passage contains no reference to baptism, and the words, which reveal the favourable estimate of childhood which Hermas entertained, occur incidentally, in the course of a description of some believers who "are as very babes, into whose heart no guile entereth, neither learnt they what wickedness is, but they remained as babes for ever." Concerning these persons he affirms that they "dwell without doubt in the kingdom of God, because they in no way defiled the commandments of God, but continued as babes all the days of their life in the same mind." If Hermas imagined that babes were only made clean by baptism, it is more than passing strange that he should write such a sentiment as this.

We have now examined all the evidence which Wall could extract from the Shepherd of Hermas to sustain the opinion that it was written in an age when infant baptism was practised by the Church, and was deemed necessary to salvation from the pollution and guilt of inherited and personal sin. For such a purpose, the evidence is

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not only insufficient, but it recoils upon the advocate, by clearly showing that the only baptism to which Hermas alludes is that of mature persons who availed themselves of the ordinance, after hearing the Gospel preached. That Hermas used expressions which might foster an exaggerated idea of the value of the rite, is obvious; but this is the utmost that can justly be conceded.

Hermas probably did more than any other individual to foster the awful notion that sins committed after baptism are unpardonable, and for this reason his book became an important factor in the evolution of the Roman doctrine of Penance. The most pithy statement of this view is in Mandate iv. 3. Speaking to "the angel of repentance," Hermas observed, "I have heard, sir, from certain teachers, that there is no other repentance, save that which took place when we went down into the water and obtained remission of our former sins." To this, the angel replied: "Thou hast well heard; for so it is. For he that hath received remission of sins ought no longer to sin, but to dwell in purity."

In order to estimate aright the significance of this passage, it must be carefully noted that the baptism referred to by Hermas is that of people who had formerly committed sins. There is no allusion to any washing away of any stain or guilt derived from our first parent. If the problem of infant salvation ever troubled Hermas, as it

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troubled later thinkers, he betrays no sign of it, and neither here nor elsewhere does he deal with any question arising out of it. We have already seen what he thought of babes, and there is nothing in this place at variance with it.

The teaching of Hermas on the subject of repentance is loose and ill expressed, discrepancies and even verbal contradictions being not uncommon; but his general position is not doubtful. His main object was to counteract the abuse of Christian privileges by those who turned the grace of God into a moral opiate. Unfortunately he attempted to remedy this evil by so limiting the grace of God that he left no mercy for the faults and defects of which the best Christians are conscious. He saw correctly that there is a vast difference between sins committed by those who know the will of God, and the same misdeeds if wrought by those who know it not, but he applied this principle in a fashion which made the position of a believer in Christ more miserable and more utterly hopeless than that of any other man in the world.

The worst feature of his doctrine was a sharp line of demarcation which he drew between the time before and the time after the publication of his book. He had the audacity to announce that he was the appointed herald of a revolution in the very constitution of the kingdom of God. Hitherto, he said, God had given space for repentance to all except utter "rebels and blasphemers against the Lord, and betrayers of the servants of



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God," but forthwith the promises of grace to erring disciples were to be repealed. "It is impossible for him to be saved who shall now deny his Lord; but for those who denied Him long ago repentance seemeth to be possible. If a man therefore repent, let him do so speedily before the tower is completed; but if not, he shall be destroyed."

For a time the Churches appear to have been intimidated by the audacity of this enthusiast for righteousness. Many were afraid to run the risk of spurning an alleged prophet, and zealous reformers were glad to make use of the terrific weapon placed in their hands. To all such puritans, the visions of Hermas were welcome as a sharp sword for use against traitors and hypocrites. But such teaching could not survive together with the Scriptures, which they rendered of none effect. Before long Hermas ceased to be revered as a prophet, but for at least a generation his book was generally read as Scripture, and its influence would not cease with its official disuse. Indeed, it is not inoperative even to-day.

In estimating the influence of Hermas on the development of dogmas, it must be observed that it was chiefly indirect and preparatory, rather than direct and constructive. It was his unhappy lot to cast a gloom over two or three generations of Christian people by transforming their hope in Christ's mercy into an awful fear of perishing, unless their lives were

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perfect. In this way he did much to develop the dreadful problem which first delayed baptism until near the end of life, and then hastened it to the earliest days of life's beginning. Zeal without sagacity is always dangerous, but never so harmful as when it boils over in a good cause. Hermas had a passionate desire to induce Christians to walk circumspectly, but he relied on fear rather than on faith and love. In this way he prepared a soil for the implanting of errors, which developed into the Papal system, but scarcely any actual seeds of these errors can be found in his writings, except those already indicated. It is quite true that Rome owes not a little to his influence, but it is unhistorical to regard him as a theological precursor of Cyprian, Augustine, and the Fathers of Trent. He was a Puritan, not a priest, and it was by the law of reaction that his influence helped on the process of development which Cardinal Newman defended. Hermas knew nothing of original sin, or its corollaries, baptismal regeneration and infant baptism. He knew nothing, or marvellously concealed his knowledge, of auricular confession. He used unscriptural language about almsgiving, and he inverted the order of Christ's thought, by writing of good works as a condition, and almost as a cause, of salvation, instead of its evidence and fruit. But, although this paved the way for a doctrine of penal satisfactions, the satisfactions of Hermas were all Godward and self-imposed, not rendered to the Church, or prescribed by an official minister.

## The Shepherd of Hermas

Nothing could have been more opposed to his mind or heart than the idea of Indulgencies, however carefully fenced by conditions. In this regard he was rather the father of Luther, than of Leo or Tetzl. He was a Puritan in his aims and spirit, and even in his faults. He magnified God's strictness and circumscribed His grace in the supposed interests of righteousness; and his career exemplifies the law that all enthusiasts who presume to modify Christianity, with a view to its improvement, do of necessity obscure its lustre, and impair its power to sanctify human nature. Paul announced the whole philosophy of man's salvation from sin when he wrote that we are saved "*by grace . . . through faith . . . for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.*" The worst thing that can be said of Hermas is that he failed to grasp the logical and vital sequence of this order. He thought to reform the Church by making divine grace depend on its own ultimate effects. His idea was that, where sin abounded, there grace should not the more abound but be the more restricted. By this mistake he cut the wires of correspondence with heaven. In a subsequent age, the Church took the place of Christ at their mutilated end; and thenceforth the intercepted utterances of confession and repentance were answered by human priests, who applied the machinery of the confessional to the moral government of the Church.

## The Didache

**T**HIS is one of the most valuable of the ancient Christian writings which have been recently recovered, and throws a vivid light upon the state of the Church about the end of the first century, or the opening years of the second. It may be described as a Church Manual, and seems to have been prepared as a guide to duty and self-discipline, but without any attempt to give a summary of Christian doctrine. It is not in all respects an original work, and contains ethical instructions which were, in part, the common property of Jews and Greeks, before Christ came. It probably ranked as Scripture in the second century, and its contents were freely used by later writers.

In the first six chapters this manual sets forth the way of life and the way of death, and sums up its admonitions with this very practical, if rather commonplace, advice, "See lest any man lead you astray from this path of righteousness, for he teacheth thee apart from God. For if thou art able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou shalt

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be perfect, but if thou art not able, do that which thou art able." Passing from the moral duties of individual believers, it proceeds to give directions for the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and for the due treatment of prophets and teachers; particularly those who, as travelling preachers, sought hospitality in the name of the Lord.

The directions for baptism leave no doubt that the candidates were all persons of mature age, for among the instructions it is said, "Thus shalt thou baptize. Having first recited all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water." Another direction is, if possible, plainer still: "But before baptism let him that baptizeth and him that is baptized fast, and any also that are able; and thou shalt order him that is baptized to fast a day or two before." There is the same sober common-sense in the ritual instructions as in the ethical exhortation to do the best you can, even if that best be not ideally perfect. "But if thou hast not living water, then baptize in other water; and if thou art not able in cold, then in warm. But if thou hast neither, then pour water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (vii.)

There is but one other reference to baptism: "But let no one eat or drink of your eucharist but they that have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord

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hath said: Give not that which is holy to the dogs." (ix.) There seems to be a strange alteration and misapplication here of our Lord's test-words to the Syro-Phœnician woman, "It is not meet to take the children's meat, and cast it to the dogs"; and a question naturally arises as to the full significance of such a saying. It clearly indicates an opinion that only baptized persons are worthy to receive the Eucharist; and sacramentalists may contend that this implies a belief in baptismal regeneration. Such a contention, however, is rendered baseless by the fact that almost all Evangelical Churches to-day require baptism to precede communion; though none of them imagines that it can cleanse or renew the nature. The rite which represents the beginning of new life fittingly comes before that which represents the nourishment of that life, but this leaves untouched the question whether either sacrament is an indispensable or efficient vehicle of grace.

Occurring in a book which was revered as Scripture, the sentence quoted may have contributed a little to encourage the natural proneness of human nature to magnify the visible sign while slighting the invisible reality. It reads rather like a protest against some laxity in allowing friendly but unconverted persons to sit down at the Lord's table; possibly it was intended to deprecate an extension of Church privileges to secret sympathisers, who refrained from baptism, in the hope of escaping persecution. None of these

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explanations is improbable; and it would be uncritical to impute a ritualistic tendency to the author on the strength of a statement which may be interpreted in several other ways.

As we are searching for the earliest germs of any doctrine which stands in any way related to infant baptism, I will call attention to a few expressions which, fairly appreciated, are quite innocent, and yet may have had an undesigned effect in paving the way for the assumption of priestly functions by ministers of the Church, and therefore for the development of all those dogmas which presuppose a priestly order.

In one place the word sacrifice is used in connection with the Lord's Supper. "And on the Lord's Day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. And let no man, having his dispute with his fellow, join your assembly until they have been reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled." (xii.) Had we never heard of the sacrifice of the mass, no Christian would feel inclined to raise an objection to this language. It reminds us of the manner in which the writer to the Hebrews strove to carry the affections of his people from the type to the anti-type, and to teach them the value of spiritual sacrifices in God's sight. "Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips that make confession of His name." A Hebrew Christian did not

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renounce the ancient vocabulary of devotion when he forsook the shadow for the substance, and Gentiles have found it good to borrow freely from the same old storehouse of metaphor and trope.

It is not certain, moreover, that the writer actually had the Supper in his thoughts when he set down the word "sacrifice." He was probably thinking of thanksgiving, and of this only; but, even if applied to the meal itself, there is nothing in his language to lend the faintest sanction to the doctrine of the mass. It will be noticed that his counsel was addressed to the people, and not to any official. The sacrifice, whatever its nature, was to be offered by the people, and if it were marred it would be by their subjective unfitness, through impenitence. For the due presentation of Christ's body under the form of bread and wine, according to the later sacrificial theory, the celebrant, and he alone, is responsible. He alone can effect the miracle of transubstantiation, and his power to accomplish this service is not impaired by any state of sin into which he may have fallen, much less by the guilt or impenitence of one or many among those who come to take the bread from his hand. Again, the mass is looked upon as a sin offering, an adumbration of the atoning sacrifice offered on the Cross, but there is no trace of any such idea in the Didache. There is no suggestion of an altar, but an evident reference to a simple table,



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whereat disciples sit together, as the twelve sat with Jesus on that night on which He was betrayed. The collective tribute of praise and gratitude presented by such an assembly would indeed be marred by the presence of bitter feelings toward one another, and of hard impenitence toward God. Hence, in giving counsel concerning the sacrifice of thanksgiving, or fruit of the lips, which is the distinctive note of the Lord's Supper, as we read of it in the New Testament, the Didache prescribes mutual confession and reconciliation, just as it does elsewhere in regard to prayer. "In church thou shalt confess thy transgressions, and shalt not betake thyself to prayer with an evil conscience."

In this connection, it is worthy of notice that the Lord's Supper is said to have been preceded, not by fasting, but by a substantial meal, or love feast, after the pattern set by our Lord and His disciples when the Supper was instituted. The Didache provides a form of thanksgiving to be used when the common meal had ended, as may be inferred from the prefatory words, "And after ye are satisfied thus give thanks." The prayer is too long to reproduce, but the tone of it may be judged by a single sentence. "Thou, Almighty Master, didst create all things for Thy name's sake, and didst give food and drink unto men for enjoyment, that they might render thanks to Thee; but didst bestow upon us spiritual food and drink, and

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eternal life through Thy Son." Some readers may be rather sorry to find a prescribed form of prayer in this primitive document, and may detect in it a sign of official encroachment. Liberty of speech, however, was not forbidden. There is ample proof that the author, having prescribed a form for constant use, adds, "But permit the prophets to offer thanksgiving as much as they desire" (x.)

The prophets who are thus to be allowed to utter their feelings without restraint are placed by the Didache in the foremost place of honour in the Church. They are to be subjected to severe tests of sincerity and unselfishness, but when approved are to be honoured as messengers of the Lord. "But concerning the apostles and prophets, so do ye according to the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every apostle, when he cometh to you, be received as the Lord; but he shall not abide more than a single day, or if there be need, a second likewise; but if he abide three days, he is a false prophet. And when he departeth let the apostle receive nothing save bread, until he findeth shelter; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet. . . . But if he wishes to settle with you, being a craftsman, let him work for and eat his bread. But if he has no craft, according to your wisdom provide how he shall live as a Christian among you, but not in idleness. If he will not do this, he is trafficking upon Christ. Beware of such men." (xi., xii.)

It is important to know these facts, because

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a title is given to prophets which, taken alone, would appear to invest them with sacerdotal functions. A thoroughly-tested resident prophet is declared to be worthy of his food. Instructions under this head are a little confusing after the words I have quoted, but we must take them as they stand. "Every firstfruit then of the produce of the wine-vat and of the threshing-floor, of thy oxen, and of thy sheep, thou shalt take and give as the firstfruit to the prophets; for they are your chief priests. But if ye have not a prophet, give them to the poor." (xiii.)

It must be confessed that the discovery of this title in so ancient a document is startling, as it seems to increase the antiquity of this unscriptural usage. In the New Testament the term for a sacrificing priest is never applied to any officer of the Church, and such an application was certainly not common for some generations after the Didache was written. Here it is, however, and we have to ask for what reason and in what sense it was used.

There may be a little light in the fact that several titles are applied interchangeably to the same persons, and in so lax a fashion as to prove that the writer had no rigid distinctions of office or service before his mind. Thus those who are specially named prophets, and once called chief priests, are also incidentally alluded to as apostles and as teachers. Again, bishops and deacons are said to perform "the service of the prophets and teachers." It is also significant that the bishops,

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who in a developed hierarchy rank highest in the Church, are, in the *Didache*, placed below the prophets and teachers; and the writer even feels it necessary to say: "Therefore despise them not; for they are your honourable men along with the prophets and teachers." (xv.) This comparatively low estimate of episcopal functions, coupled with a free and almost indiscriminate use of titles, dissipates any hasty impression that there was a distinct order of priests, having functions and prerogatives which no one else could share.

But a still weightier consideration has yet to be mentioned. In every hierarchical system it is maintained that no man can constitute himself a priest, and that he can become one only by a divine ordination, which must reach him either directly from God, or mediately, through others who have previously been made priests and have received authority to transmit their power and privilege. This is not only the usual theory, but it is vital to the idea of a sacerdotal order. In the *Didache*, however, there is no trace of such ordination. In all cases the recognition and acceptance of a prophet, who alone is called a priest, is devolved upon the people, and their test is to be in all respects a moral one: "From his ways, therefore, the false prophet and the prophet shall be recognised." (xi.) The prophet, therefore, was not an official, nor had he any formal act of appointment; he spoke in the power of the Holy Spirit, and the moral fruits of this Spirit were his credentials

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wherever he went. In the case of bishops and deacons, however, there was a definite act of appointment. The men thus designed were, strictly speaking, officials; they had a well-defined office conferred upon them, with regular duties to discharge. They were not forbidden to prophesy or to teach, but this high service was not a part of their routine. Whence, then, did these officers obtain their authority to act as overseers of the flock, and to administer their varied business? The simple answer is that they received it from the members of the church they served, as is clear from the following advice: "Appoint for yourselves, therefore, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved." (xv.) The word here rendered appoint (*χειροτονήσατε*) is the one employed in Acts xiv. 23, where it is said that Paul and Barnabas "ordained them elders in every church." Thus the Didache recognises that in a settled and experienced church the members were competent to do what the Apostles had done in those days of infancy when the newly-gathered flock were being started on an independent course. The prophets were called "apostles," but the choice of bishops and deacons did not rest with them, but with the church as a whole.

In view of these facts it would be preposterous to argue that a single reference to the prophets as chief priests indicates the existence of a graduated hierarchy. The only reasonable explanation

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of the passage is that, in regard to maintenance, these men were in a similar position to that of the chief servants of the temple, and that the same principle which gave rise to the Jewish law of firstfruits should be recognised in the Christian Church. This purely analogical use of the title agrees well with the peculiar form of expression, give the "firstfruit to the prophets; for they are your chief priests." Had the title been usual, no such information would have been required.

Many are glad to find no trace of sacerdotalism in the Didache, but had any been discoverable, it would have affected nothing but the date of an innovation. I have discussed the question in the interests of historical truth, and from a desire to do justice to a nameless but venerable author. The sternest Protestant would hesitate to censure this writer for an unconventional use of a title which he had no reason to suppose would cause mischief, but looking back from this remote time, and with our knowledge of what has since transpired, we can see how the first application of the term priest to a Christian minister was a precedent which, being occasionally followed, might easily grow into a custom. This custom, once started, would imperceptibly dispose people to associate the original meaning of the word with the men to whom it was applied. For a long time the custom would be comparatively harmless, but as official pretensions grew, they would be aided by the misused name, and outsiders and uncritical converts from heathenism

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would inevitably assist the process of development.\*

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\* The extent to which an erroneous title will operate to produce and perpetuate an erroneous conception of a minister's functions may be seen in the recent history of the Anglican Church. In the Prayer Book the minister is called a "priest," and multitudes take for granted that this designation is intended to indicate that his duties are of the same nature as those of the men called "priests" in the Bible. But this is a grievous delusion. In the Prayer Book the term priest confessedly stands for the word elder (*πρεσβύτερος*) and thus derives the name of a Christian minister from the title of an officer of the Jewish Synagogue who, of course, had no sacrificial functions. But the same term, priest, stands in the English Bible for a totally different Greek word (*ἱερεύς*), which is used to designate both Jewish and pagan sacrificing priests, but is never by any chance applied to a minister of the Church. If an English reader wishes to try the pretensions of those who call themselves priests, he should take a Concordance, and turn up the word "elder," and study all the passages in which it occurs.

## The Apology of Aristides

**T**HIS work may fairly be considered the most interesting and valuable of all the Christian writings which have been recovered in our time. Its precise date is undetermined, and may never be ascertained, but it was presented either to Hadrian or to Antoninus Pius, and this limits the range of uncertainty to the period A.D. 117-161, which is sufficiently definite for the purposes of this discussion. It contains a trenchant exposure of the folly and immorality of pagan mythology, with a contrasted picture of the reasonableness, and sublimity of the Christian faith, and the simplicity, dignity, and purity of the life it inspires. Writing for the information and persuasion of a Roman Emperor, Aristides was not so foolish as to give any details of Christian doctrine, consequently there is little to assist our search for subtle changes of thought or expression, but what there is makes the Apology an invaluable witness to the beliefs and sentiments which prevailed in the Church during the earlier portion of the second century.

The conception of God disclosed in this work is free from those dark and forbidding features



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which subsequently prevailed, and did so much to hinder the approach of Christians to the throne of grace. "Anger and wrath He possesses not, for there is nothing that can stand against Him." In harmony with this view, and in blissful unconsciousness of any need for sacrificial functions in the Christian ministry, it is added, "He asks no sacrifice and no libation, nor any of the things that are visible: He asks not anything from any one; but all ask from Him." (Syriac Version, i.)

Aristides drew a beautiful picture of joyous and loving Christian life, and every line of it is consonant with faith in tidings of great joy, and thus in the truest sense "worthy of the Gospel." In this he describes the feelings of Christians in regard to birth and death, and shows that, in his day, believers walked under a cloudless sky, and in the light of a Divine love which shed its radiance equally upon man's coming in and upon his going out of the world. "Every morning and at all hours on account of the goodnesses of God toward them they praise and laud Him; and over their food and over their drink they render Him thanks. And if any righteous person of their number passes away from the world, they rejoice and give thanks unto God, and they follow his body, as if he were moving from one place to another; and when a child is born to any one of them, they praise God; and if, again, it chance to die in its infancy, they praise God mightily, as for one who has passed through the world without sins." (xv.)

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Such language needs no comment. It is a ray of light from the old convent on Mount Sinai, where the long sought Apology lay hidden for so many centuries, and it enables us to see that in the days of Aristides the Church had not yet forgotten that sweet story which tells how Jesus took little children in His arms, and proclaimed the wonderful truth that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Aristides did not commend the Gospel to Cæsar by telling him that infants are born into the world as polluted and guilty beings, under the curse of Divine condemnation; nor did he announce that their acceptance before God was secured by the administration to them of a ritual ordinance, of which they knew nothing. This Athenian Christian evidently failed to see the least speck of a cloud in the sky, as an omen of the dense black pall which made the Middle Ages dark, and has still to be chased away from vast portions of the Christian world.

There is only one sentence in this work which the most fastidious critic could fasten upon as having a possible place in favouring the development of dogma which we are endeavouring to trace. Speaking of the Greeks, Aristides declares that Christians "pity them as men who are destitute of knowledge; and in their behalf they offer up prayers that they may turn from their error. And when it chances that any of them turns, he is ashamed before the Christians of the deeds that are done by him and he confesses to

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God, saying, In ignorance I did these things; and he cleanses his heart, and his sins are forgiven him, because he did them in ignorance in former time, when he was blaspheming and reviling the true knowledge of the Christians." (xvii.) There is nothing in this statement which any but the most captious would find fault with, or denounce as untrue, but it does not expressly forbid the inference that sins committed after enlightenment might not be forgiven. It scarcely goes beyond Paul's language concerning himself in his letter to Timothy: "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 13). There seems even to be an allusion to this saying, as the words are very similar. It will be observed, however, that Paul had in his mind, not a mere forgiveness of his sin, but that superabundant mercy which sought him out on the way to Damascus, gave him a special revelation, and exalted him to the highest place in the service of Christ. It was a cause of great surprise to others, and of lifelong wonder to himself, that such a commission should have been given to one who had displayed so much hostility to the Church; and he brings forward the fact that he had been faithful to his ignorant, but sincere, convictions of duty. It is a sound ethical and religious principle that sins of ignorance may be more easily forgiven than those committed with a clear knowledge of their nature. But it is not scriptural, nor is it ethically right, to say that only sins of ignorance can be forgiven.

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This opinion was a common one in the second century, and the sentence I have quoted may have helped to confirm it, and so have operated as a small and unconscious, but real, contribution toward the corruption of Christian doctrine.

## The Epistle of Barnabas

**T**HIS ancient work was attributed by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others to Barnabas, the companion of Paul, and some critical authorities in the present day regard this view as at least highly probable. It was certainly written after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, A.D. 70, and before the desolating invasion of Hadrian, A.D. 132. It was read in Christian assemblies as Scripture for a considerable time, and Jerome included it in his list of apocryphal writings which might be read in the churches for instruction.

This Epistle may be fairly described as an early attempt to exalt Christianity at the expense of Judaism by denying the validity of the temple worship, and the possession by the Jews of any covenant with God which constituted them His people. It is difficult to believe that its author had ever seen the Epistle to the Hebrews, with its profound insight into the spiritual significance of the system which was passing away, and its true place in the Divine education of the race. Had he read that Epistle, or if, like the Barnabas we know, he had enjoyed the intimate friendship of Paul, he

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could hardly have dared to offer his crude and childish theory as a rival account of the relation of the Gospel to the Old Testament.

But while the writer's mode of handling Scripture was painfully absurd, he was not insincere in its use. He simply endeavoured to find in the Old Testament what, as a Christian, he wanted to find, just as Philo extracted what he wished to find as a Platonist, anxious to commend Hebrew theism to men of philosophic culture. He was deeply imbued with the conviction that religion must be spiritual, and that God could never have been satisfied with any but spiritual worship. He knew also that Christ had declared that the prophets had testified of Him. Starting with these excellent principles in his mind, and intensely eager to commend Christ to the Jews, he was carried away by an ingenious fancy to imitate the most extreme form of allegorical interpretation which was fashionable in his day, not only among the Hellenistic, but also among the Palestinian Jews.

The central thought of the Epistle, and its grand object, may be found in the words, "Let us become spiritual." (iv.) In spite of this, Barnabas has been supposed to teach that our sins are remitted in baptism.

The chief passage relied upon is thus introduced: "But let us inquire whether our Lord took care to signify beforehand concerning the water and the cross. Now, concerning the water, it is written, in reference to Israel, how that they would not receive

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the baptism which bringeth the remission of sins, but would build for themselves." In support of this he cites Jer. ii. 12, 13, but in a form which differs from both the Hebrew and the Septuagint. "Be astonished, O heaven, and let the earth shudder the more at this, for this people hath done two evil things; they abandoned Me the fountain of life, and they digged for themselves a pit of death." Following this are a number of scraps, which seem quoted almost at random (Isaiah xvi. 1, 2; xlv. 2, 3; xxxiii. 16, 18, etc.), and then we get a reference to water as it appears in Psalm i.: "And he that doeth these things shall be as the tree that is planted by the parting streams of water, which shall yield his fruit at the proper season, and his leaf shall not fall off, and all things whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." On this he observes: "Ye perceive how he pointed out the water and the cross at the same time. For this is the meaning: Blessed are they that set their hopes on the cross, and go down into the water; for he speaketh of the reward at his proper season; then saith He, I will repay. But now what saith He? His leaves shall not fall off; He meaneth by this that every word which shall come forth from you through your mouth in faith and love shall be for the conversion and hope of many. . . . Next what saith He? And there was a river streaming from the right hand, and beautiful trees rose up from it; and whosoever shall eat of them shall live for ever (Ezek. xlvii. 1, 7, 12). This He saith, because we

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go down into the water laden with sins and filth, and rise up from it bearing fruit in the heart, resting our fear and hope on Jesus in the spirit. And whosoever shall eat of these shall live for ever; He meaneth this: whosoever, saith He, shall hear these things spoken and shall believe, shall live for ever." (xi.)

It is difficult to criticise such childish nonsense as this pretended exposition of the Old Testament, and no one could esteem the writer of it an authority on Christian doctrine, or even a reliable witness of other men's opinions. But, however foolish his exposition, we cannot decline to consider what conception of baptism lay behind his loose language. The crucial question is, Was he referring to literal water baptism, or to that for which baptism stands as an outward and visible sign?

In reply to this question it must be remarked that Barnabas knows nothing of regeneration irrespective of a moral and spiritual change, which involves an intellectual perception and belief of truth. This statement can be verified without travelling outside the chapter now before us. When closely examined the following significant features become clear, and any one of them is fatal to a ritualistic interpretation.

(1) The Jews are said to have rejected the baptism which brings the remission of sins; but the baptistery they forsook was God Himself, "the fountain of life," not a material bath. Hence the



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cleansing, fancifully called "baptism," was purely spiritual, and this governs the interpretation of the entire passage.

(2) The persons pronounced blessed "go down into the water" which had been refused by others, and this was not a material liquid, but God.

(3) These persons are declared to have "set their hopes on the cross."

(4) They come to the water laden with personal sins. This denotes the voluntary act of persons who have actually transgressed, confessed their need of cleansing.

(5) The sequel is a spiritual transformation, "bearing fruit in the heart, resting our fear and hope on Jesus in the spirit."

(6) Consistently with this, conversion is effected by words, which come forth from Christian mouths in faith and love.

(7) The chapter closes with a declaration of salvation by faith, "Whosoever, saith He, shall hear these things spoken and shall believe, shall be saved." There is no room for sacramental purification here.

These facts are conclusive, but another kind of evidence may be adduced. At the close of a highly spiritual account of the means of salvation, which contains no allusion to baptism, Barnabas makes the following declaration: "So far as it was possible with all simplicity to declare it unto you, my soul hopeth that I have not omitted

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anything of the matters pertaining to salvation and so failed of my desire." (xvii.) There is an obvious sincerity in this statement which forbids us to think that his allegorising was the work of a trifler; but what excuse could we offer, if he believed that baptism with water is essential to salvation, and failed to announce this astounding fact? The theory falls to pieces when examined, and we are shut up to the conviction that the few words which are said to indicate his sacramentalism are devoid of any such import.

All writers need to be studied with literary insight and sympathy, but this need is peculiarly urgent in the case of those who indulge in allegorical inventions. Theology has suffered terribly from the obtuseness of ecclesiastical logicians who make brief extracts for controversial purposes, and then turn the language of imagination and feeling into rigid and literal propositions. To understand one sentence which, when quoted by itself, is equivocal, it is necessary to taste an author's style, and to imbibe the spirit of his religious thought. To those who have the patience to make this effort it must be incredible that a man so scornful of ritual, and so determined to find spiritual Christianity in the most unlikely parts of the Old Testament, could have regarded any external rite as essential to salvation. That he was among those who undesignedly helped to raise baptism in the popular estimation, is highly probable, for his language lent itself to the service of later writers, like Cyprian and Augustine, who

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eagerly desired to find a sanction for their "developments" in the Apostolic Fathers. On this account Barnabas has an interest and importance far in excess of his literary or theological merits. He illustrates that early stage in the development of dogma which consists in a perfectly innocent and unconscious use of terms in an ambiguous manner, which aided, though it did not cause, the introduction of alien elements into the Christian Church.

## The Ignatian Epistles

EARLY in the second century, Ignatius, a bishop of the Church in Antioch, was condemned to death, and while on his way to Rome to fight with wild beasts he wrote letters to several churches. Episcopalians prize these letters as evidence of the antiquity of their system of Church government, and, with certain important qualifications, their claim is fair. Ignatius distinguishes the bishop from presbyters and deacons, and assigns to him a pre-eminent position, but he does not base this on a supposed succession from the Apostles; nor does he allude to a territorial episcopate, and in his letter to the Romans he makes no mention of any bishop. It is also significant that he claims no respect for bishops on the score of any sacerdotal functions or prerogatives. It is sometimes asserted that he calls Christian ministers "priests," but this word occurs only in his letter to the Philadelphians (ix.), where he contrasts the priests of the old dispensation with Jesus Christ, "the High-priest to whom is committed the holy of holies; . . . He Himself being the door of the Father, through which Abraham and Isaac and

## The Ignatian Epistles

Jacob enter in, and the Prophets and the Apostles, and the whole Church."

The chief burden of the letters is the absolute necessity of unity, and the consequent duty of Christians to live in harmony with one another, and with those who bear rule amongst them. To Ignatius, a disorderly church was like a broken harp which could render no harmonious praise to God.

In laying stress upon the duty of concerted life, Ignatius was contending against a self-assertive and disruptive spirit which had been painfully manifested. It is evident that, without splitting off from the Church, groups were formed which despised fellowship for prayer, and undertook to administer baptism and the Lord's Supper in supercilious independence, and it was in reprov- ing these abuses that Ignatius wrote the few passages which have any direct bearing on our discussion.

The most important of these passages occurs in the Epistle to the Smyrnæans (viii.): "Let no man do aught of things pertaining to the church without the bishop. Let that be held a valid eucharist which is under the bishop or one to whom he shall have committed it. Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be; even as where Jesus may be, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptize or to hold a love-feast." There is nothing in this view which goes beyond the general practice or

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sentiment of the most democratic Congregational Church in our own times; but it has been supposed to teach a very rigid doctrine of priestly prerogative. No Congregationalist would admit that the pastor or bishop of a church has an exclusive right to administer baptism or the Lord's Supper; but none would approve the formation of a little clique, which held aloof from the services of the church, and privately administered the ordinances in a spirit of disaffection. The pastor of a church is the personal symbol of its unity as a flock of Christ, and every act which dishonours him, and deprives him of the ministry to which he has been elected, is an injury to the community, and, if tolerated, must be fatal to its peace.

Ignatius is also said to favour sacerdotalism by his mention of an altar. Thus he writes: "Let no man be deceived. If any one be not within the precinct of the altar, he lacketh the bread of God." But the allusion is to the court of the congregation in the Jewish tabernacle, which supplies a metaphorical name for the Christian assembly. Ignatius has nothing to say here or elsewhere about an altar at which officials minister. His sole thought is that the church is gathered together to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and that no one can share the benefits of social worship who refuses to partake in the offering. In the next sentence he explains his metaphor thus: "For, if the prayer of one and another hath so great force, how much more that of the bishop

## The Ignatian Epistles

and the whole church. Whosoever, therefore, cometh not to the congregation, he doth thereby show his pride and hath separated himself." (Ephesians v.) To a similar effect he writes elsewhere: "Let there be one prayer in common, one supplication, one mind, one hope, in love and joy unblameable, which is Jesus Christ, than whom there is nothing better. Hasten to come together all of you, as to one temple, even God; as to one altar, even to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from One Father and is with One and departed to One." (Magnesians vii.)

Two or three hundred years after Ignatius had been torn by lions in the Roman Circus, he was still more cruelly treated by a forger, who wrote spurious epistles in his name, and made havoc of those which are now acknowledged to be genuine. By forged letters, and by specious interpolations, Ignatius was put forward as an authority for the sacerdotal episcopacy which was developed in unison with those theories of salvation which involve the agency of priests. But thanks to the labours of a succession of faithful scholars, and pre-eminently to the amazing toil of Lightfoot, the genuine letters are verified, and may be read in a text which is sufficiently pure to leave no reasonable doubt about their purport. Read thus, we might almost apply to them the words in which Ignatius described the Church of Rome in his day: "filled with the grace of God without wavering, and filtered clear from every foreign stain." He

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used his influence as a prospective martyr to increase the authority of the bishops, presbyters, and deacons of the church, but his exhortations to Polycarp, the bishop of the Smyrnaeans, are worthy to be pondered by every Christian pastor to-day. The strongest opponent of modern episcopalianism could find little to complain of in these sagacious counsels; and if bishops subsequently posed as monarchs, and chief priests, with authority to hear confession, to impose penance, receive satisfaction, pronounce absolution, and grant indulgences, they could find no warrant for any such pretensions in the strongest expressions of Ignatius.



## Justin Martyr

**J**USTIN, who wrote about the middle of the second century, was one of the noblest of the great army of martyrs, and one of the best equipped exponents of the Christian faith in that age. He has left a vivid and humorous account of his experiences as a seeker after God in the various schools of Greek philosophy, showing how Platonism, by its failure to satisfy the desires it enkindled, became a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ. After his conversion he continued to wear his philosopher's cloak, and to the end of life maintained the attitude of one who, having found the true wisdom of God, was prepared to communicate his knowledge, and to defend it against all opponents, from the Roman Emperor down to the meanest slave in the city market. He does not appear to have held any office in the Church, but he was emphatically a missionary of the Cross, and in days when many Christians were too willing to shelter their lives in silent retreats, Justin acted boldly on the principle that it was the duty of Christians, not only out of loyalty to their Master, but as citizens, to afford to all men, and particularly

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to their rulers and judges, the clearest possible account of their lives and teaching, so leaving unbelievers and unjust persecutors without excuse before God.

The chief writings of Justin now extant are two Apologies addressed to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, and an elaborated report of a disputation with a Jew, named Tryphon, which was held in the Colonnades of Ephesus. In these works we have a careful and lucid account of Christian customs and beliefs, and this is presented in a form which commended itself to an apologist who looked upon the exposition of truth as its best vindication. As might be expected, baptism is one of the subjects introduced, and Justin, by explaining to a pagan critic the peculiar use of certain terms, provides historical students with invaluable assistance.

It is well known that baptism was commonly spoken of as Illumination, Redemption, and Regeneration, and it is certain that in a later age those who used these names did so because they believed that the rite was in some way an efficacious means of spiritual grace, so that the baptized, and only they, were born again, or enlightened, or redeemed. Those who still hold this view of the ordinance are apt to assume that wherever they find these names they find their own doctrine of baptism. On the strength of this fallacious assumption we are told, for example, that Justin taught baptismal regeneration, because he applies spiritual terms to

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the outward rite. If this inference could be established, it would leave the question of New Testament usage untouched, but it can be demonstrated that Justin did not use the words in the alleged sense; and his writings exhibit a simple process of metonymy, by which the name of a spiritual reality is transferred to its material symbol, and in a way so lucid and explicit as to leave no excuse for misunderstanding.

The passage on which Wall and others have laid chief stress, as proving that Justin taught baptismal regeneration, occurs in his First Apology. In chapter lxi. he states, "I will now declare in what manner we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been renewed through Christ. . . . As many as believe that the things which we teach are true, and profess their ability to live according to them, are counselled to pray and to implore God, with fasting, for the remission of their past sins; we also pray and fast with them. Then we bring them where there is water, and they are regenerated in the same manner as that in which we ourselves were regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they are then washed in the water."

If these two last sentences stood alone in the original (as they often do in modern quotations), they might be thought conclusive evidence that Wall's contention is correct. But the earlier clauses make it clear that Justin looked upon baptism as

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the self-dedication to God of persons who had heard and believed the Gospel, and been renewed by Christ. Whatever baptism effected, therefore, it was not a magical rite, nor was it one which could conceivably be used in the case of children too young to understand, believe, and obey the teachings of Christ.

But other rays of light await us. We ask, What did Justin understand by a new birth? and he tells us. He quotes, as a saying of Christ, words which resemble John iii. 3, but omits any reference to water: "Except ye be born anew, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," and then observes: "Now it is impossible for those who have been once born to enter into their mother's womb." Having thus called attention to the highly figurative nature of the language, he thus proceeds to give its interpretation: "And by the prophet Isaiah it was foretold in what manner those who have sinned and repented shall escape from their sins. . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from your souls; learn to do well; judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow; and come and let us reason together, saith the Lord. And though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white like wool; and though they be as crimson, I will make them white as snow" (Isaiah i. 18, 19).

Having given this purely spiritual and ethical interpretation of regeneration, Justin adds another statement which shows that to his mind "regenera-

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tion" involved the voluntary action of believers: "And for this [rite] we have learned from the Apostles this reason. Since at our nativity we were born without our own knowledge or choice . . . and were brought up in bad habits and evil training; in order that we might not continue to be the children of necessity and of ignorance, but might become the children of volition and knowledge, and might obtain the remission of sins committed in the past, there is pronounced, in the water, over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe." All this is very clear, but happily Justin saw reason to be still more explicit, and informed Antoninus of the interesting fact, and still more interesting reason of the fact, that baptism was called "Illumination." "And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed."

There is a further reference to baptism in connection with the administration of the Lord's Supper, which immediately followed the initiatory rite. "But after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has accepted our teaching, we bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, so that we may offer fervent prayers both for ourselves and for the

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baptized person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation. Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the one of the brethren who is presiding, bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and taking them he offers praise and glory to the Father. . . . And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. And . . . those present partake of the bread and wine. . . . And this food is called the Eucharist, and no one is allowed to partake of it but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing which is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is living in the manner Christ enjoined" (lxv., lxvi).

The only sentence in all Justin's writings in which Wall could find, or rather imagine that he had found, a trace of infant baptism, is one in which he was defending the morality of Christians. In reference to chastity, he informed Antoninus that Christians are required to be pure, not only in their actions, but also in their thoughts, and in this high sense he declared that he could produce many men and women of sixty or seventy years of age who had been "discipled to Christ from childhood," and still remained pure (xv.). Wall mistranslates the

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Greek (*ἐκ παιδων*) by rendering it "in childhood" instead of "from childhood," and then assumes that this means that they were baptized. He does this on the long since worn-out plea that baptizing and discipling are closely linked together in the great commission (Matt. xxviii. 19), and on this account he would eliminate the idea of mental illumination from the work for which the disciples had been so carefully trained. It is difficult to reason with anyone who can seriously entertain so mechanical a conception of missionary service as this implies. The distinction between making disciples and baptizing them is clear in John iv. 1, where it is said that "the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John." It is glaringly exhibited in Paul's protestation that Christ sent him "not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Paul made more disciples among the nations than did any other Apostle—possibly as many as were made by all the other twelve, and yet he was able to thank God that during a protracted stay in Corinth he had baptized only a few whom he names out of the large number converted through his ministry. If Christ meant "make disciples by baptizing the nations," instead of "make disciples and when made baptize them," Paul must have woefully misconceived his calling, and we must pronounce him a blundering or a disobedient servant.

It should not be overlooked that Wall's theory reflects most gravely on Justin's candour as an

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apologist. Roman statesmen rightly judged that, if Christians continued to multiply, the whole fabric of pagan society would crumble to pieces, and the service of the Empire, both military and civil, would collapse. How shameful, then, would have been the guile of Justin, if, while professing to have no desire except to lay bare the thoughts and habits of Christians, he had concealed the formidable fact that they were multiplying themselves by so sure and facile a method as the baptism of unthinking and unassenting children! Before making so disgraceful a charge, we should require strong and unmistakable evidence, but the utmost anyone can say is that Justin mentions old men and women who had been disciples from childhood! Such aged disciples could be produced in multitudes from the members of Baptist Churches to-day.

One other passage to which Wall refers is adduced to prove that Justin believed in the doctrine of original sin, and inferentially, that he must have thought the baptism of infants necessary to their salvation. In his Dialogue with Tryphon, he had occasion to speak of the baptism of Jesus, and did so in the following terms: "And then when Jesus had gone to the river Jordan, where John was baptizing, and when He had stepped into the water, a fire was kindled in the Jordan; and when He came out of the water, the Holy Ghost lighted on Him like a dove. . . . Now, we know that He did not go to the river because He stood in need of baptism, or of the descent of the Spirit like a dove; even



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as He submitted to be born and to be crucified, not because He needed such things, but for the sake of the human race, which from Adam (*ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀδάμ*) had fallen under the power of death and the guile of the serpent, and each one of whom had personally sinned" (lxxxviii). Here, again, Wall has improperly coloured his translation. Justin wrote of what had happened to all mankind from Adam downwards, using the same form of expression as Matthew uses in summing up his genealogy: "So all the generations from Abraham unto David are fourteen generations" (i. 17); but Wall discolours this simple historical statement by substituting "by Adam" for "from Adam." Having thus dealt with his author, he offers the following comment: "I recite this only to show that in these times, so very near the Apostles, they spoke of original sin affecting all mankind descended of Adam; and understood, that besides the actual sins of each particular person, there is in our nature itself, since the fall, something that needs redemption and forgiveness by the merits of Christ. And that is ordinarily applied to every particular person by baptism." (ii. 1.)

It would require several pages to expose all the fallacious assumptions which are packed up in this short paragraph, but a few lines must suffice. Few Christians doubt that all men have come under the power of death, and have suffered from the guile of the "serpent" as this word is used in Genesis, but there is a vast and altogether vital difference

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between the consequences of a forefather's transgression and direct or indirect responsibility for it. Wall, like the Council of Trent, meant by "original sin" both "the pollution and guilt with which infants are born into the world," but of this awful dogma Justin makes no suggestion. On the contrary, he followed up his reference to Adam by asserting the freewill of each man, the competence of each man to choose good or evil, and the judgment of each individual apart, and for his own deeds. "For God, wishing both angels and men, who were endowed with freewill, and were at their own disposal, to do whatever He had given them strength to do, so made them, that if they chose the things acceptable to Himself, He would keep them free from death and punishment; but that if they did evil, He would punish each as He sees fit." If Justin had anticipated misrepresentation and had wished to repudiate it he could scarcely have expressed himself more forcibly.

Reviewing all the passages we have examined, we may briefly summarise our conclusions. (1) Justin knew nothing of Original Sin; (a) because the evils derived from parents are limited by him to bad training and example; (b) because the only sins which he speaks of as remitted are those actually committed by the individual; (c) because the only sins which he declares that God will judge are those which men voluntarily commit. (2) Justin teaches that Regeneration is the birth which comes from

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choice and knowledge, as opposed to that natural birth for which our parents alone are responsible, and which happens without our knowledge or consent. (3) The only baptism known to Justin is the baptism of persons who have received Christian teaching, have believed it to be true, and, having repented of their sins, have chosen that better life which Christ came to impart. (4) According to Justin's explanation, baptism was called Illumination, not because it was supposed to illuminate, but because only those already illuminated in their understandings were baptized. Hence it follows indisputably that when baptism was called Regeneration, or Illumination, or Redemption, it was so designated because it was administered only to those who were believed to have been the subject of the corresponding spiritual experiences.\*

The value of the knowledge thus afforded will

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\* It is painful to complain of any lack of chivalry in a controversialist, but I am reluctantly constrained to point out that Wall sometimes curtails his extracts in such a way as to deprive his readers of essential information. He was anxious to make the most of the fact that baptism was called Illumination, but it would have been fatal to his use of the fact if he had given Justin's explanation. Justin wrote: "And this washing is called Illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. And . . . he who is illuminated is washed." But Wall cuts off his quotation thus: "And this washing is called the enlightening, etc.," thereby concealing the fact that the sentence so truncated was a much-needed explanation of patristic terminology. "Etc." is a poor substitute for Justin's information. Indeed, in such a place it is not only not enlightening, but is positively darkening to a reader's understanding.

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become plainer as we trace the later stages of the process thus uncovered. All we need to do at present is simply to register the fact established by Justin that in the middle of the second century Christians were in the habit of using the names of spiritual realities for the designation of a material rite, but that in so doing they were not guilty of confounding the sign and the reality. But as time passed, the same terminology persisted, while its significance faded out of sight. The history of every known religion exemplifies the proneness of human nature to lose the spiritual treasure, and to mock itself with representative forms and customs. Ceremonial forms persist, and often acquire an increased value for those who observe them, when their true significance has been obscured, or utterly lost in oblivion. Justin enables us to see how the weakness of language may contribute to a change of thought which in turn must influence action. The words which he explained to Antoninus needed no explanation to Christians in his day, but, human nature being what we know, it was inevitable that the habit so innocently set up would lead to an enhanced sense of the importance of the rite which bore such lofty titles. Speaking and thinking of the baptized as regenerated persons, many would learn to regard the unbaptized as unregenerate and unsaved, and out of this thought there would spring a fear of dying without baptism, and, on the part of parents, a dread of what would befall their children. In defiance of his lucid explanations,

## Justin Martyr

Justin has been claimed by sacramentalists as an authority for their creed and practice, and if this misuse of his writings can persist in a critical age, we can well imagine what happened among hosts of ill-educated ministers and utterly ignorant peoples in the third and fourth centuries of our era.

## Athenagoras

**A**THENAGORAS was an Athenian philosopher who projected a literary attack on Christianity, and for this purpose made a careful study of the Scriptures. In the course of this task his prejudices were overcome, he became a Christian, and consecrated his life to the defence and furtherance of the faith. Of his writings, two are still extant, the one an Apology which was presented to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, about A.D. 175, the other, an expanded Lecture or treatise on the Resurrection. There is little in either of these works which throws light on our subject, but in one of them he incidentally reveals the pleasing view of infancy which prevailed among Christians in his day.

In his truly admirable discussion of the Resurrection, Athenagoras criticises those Christian writers who had based their plea on the moral necessity of a resurrection in order that men may receive judgment, and be rewarded or punished more strictly according to their deeds than is the case in this life. He fully recognised the force of this argument, but did not regard it as so

## Athenagoras

primary or so conclusive as that which may be drawn from a consideration of the final cause of man's creation. He reasons that God would not have created a being like man, with such an immeasurable capacity for growth in wisdom and knowledge and character, without intending him to achieve a destiny commensurate with his powers. "If, therefore, the Maker of this universe made man with a view to his partaking of an intelligent life, and that, having become a spectator of His greatness, he might remain for ever in the contemplation of these things; then, in harmony with the design of his Author, and with the nature with which he has been endowed, the object of his creation is a pledge of his eternal persistence, and this persistence is a pledge of the resurrection." (xiii.)

Having thus stated his strongest philosophical argument for faith in the resurrection, he points out that it has the advantage of supplying a reason why all the dead, small and great, young and old, should rise again, whereas the moral argument fails to show any need of a future life for those who die in infancy, having done nothing worthy of either reward or punishment. "Although all human beings who die rise again, yet not all who rise again are to be judged; yet if a just judgment were the sole cause of the resurrection, it would, of course, follow that those who had done neither good nor evil—namely, very young children—would not rise again; but seeing that all are to rise

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again, those who have died in infancy as well as others, they, too, justify our conclusion that the resurrection takes place, not primarily for the sake of the judgment, but in pursuance of God's purpose in forming men, and because of the nature of the beings so formed." (xiv.)

The light thus incidentally thrown on the state of opinion is more valuable than any direct statement of the author's own belief. If Athenagoras could have conceived it possible that his fellow Christians would retort that infants were to be judged as partakers in the sin of their first father, and die as they were born, in a state of "pollution and guilt," he could never have advanced such an argument. He assumes, not only that very young children have done neither good nor evil, but that there is absolutely no reason why they should come into judgment. He also assumes that this opinion will be accepted by all his readers, without a word being needed in its support. The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible, that Athenagoras, one of the ablest and best informed men of his age, was unaware of any party in the Church which doubted the safety of infants who die before becoming conscious of moral responsibility.



## Irenæus

**I**RENÆUS, who was bishop of the Church in Lyons from A.D. 177 to the close of the second century, is commonly said to be the earliest writer who refers to infant baptism. This statement is not quite devoid of truth, but, unhappily for those who make it, the only true part of it is that which they would gladly find erroneous. It is a fact that no one has found such a reference in any author who wrote before Irenæus, but the remainder of the statement is an assumption which will not survive criticism. The only ground for supposing that Irenæus ever heard of infant baptism is found in a single clause which does not mention the rite, and this clause occurs as a parenthesis in the midst of a long sentence which refers to a totally different subject.

The sentence which awaits interpretation occurs in the course of a reply to certain Gnostics who affirmed that Jesus suffered at the close of His thirtieth year. As against these heretics, who made a mystical use of the number thirty, Irenæus asserted that Jesus lived and taught until the age of fifty; and he emphasised the fact that the humanity

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of Jesus was real, so that He was always what He seemed to be, and passed through every stage of human experience. The words calling for special attention are few, but the whole passage needs to be read by those who would form an impartial and independent judgment:

For He did not seem one thing while He was another, as they affirm who describe Him as being a man in appearance only; but what he was, that He also appeared to be. Therefore, being a Master, He had also the age of a Master, not despising or evading anything proper to humanity, nor abrogating in Himself His own law for mankind; but sanctifying every age by that which corresponded to it in Himself. For He came to save all by Himself:—all, I mean, who by Him are born again unto God;—infants, and children, and youths, and young men, and old men. He therefore passed through every age, for infants being made an infant, sanctifying infants: for children He became a child, thus sanctifying those of this age, being made to them an example of piety, rectitude, and submission: for young men He became a young man, an example to young men, and thus sanctifying them for the Lord. In like manner for old men He became an old man, that He might be a perfect Master for all, not merely in regard to the setting forth of the truth, but also in regard to age, sanctifying the aged also, and becoming an example to them also. Then, finally, He advanced to death itself, that He might be the “firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence,” the Prince of life, existing before all, and going before all. (Against Heresies, Bk. II., ch. xxii. 4.)

It will at once be perceived that this is not a careful statement of doctrine, or practice, but a vehement assertion of the reality and completeness of Christ's human experience. In his fervid fashion Irenæus declares that on our behalf Jesus was born, and lived a human life from infancy to old age, and at last tasted death that He might

## Irenæus

be a sympathetic friend and forerunner on the path to heaven. The uncritical and impulsive nature of the man appears in his acceptance of the foolish idea that Jesus lived to the age of fifty; a fancy for which there was no foundation, though it reminds us of the saying of the Jews, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" I will not descant on the literary style of the passage, but it at least prepares us to find without surprise that the author did not carefully measure all his expressions, or ponder their accidental connotations. But, with ~~all~~ his impulsiveness, Irenæus dashed off one sentence which he could not leave unqualified. "For He came to save *all* through means of Himself." This, if unexplained, would be understood to teach universalism, and having written it, Irenæus hastened to limit its application by adding, "all, I mean, who by Him are regenerated unto God."

Of course, sacramentalists are entitled to offer reasons for their opinion that this little parenthesis was written to distinguish between baptized and unbaptized infants, but their reasons ought to be very strong. So interpreted, the parenthesis becomes an assertion that our Lord's object in coming into the world was limited to the salvation of baptized persons, including infants. It may at once be conceded that this view of the words does not involve any grammatical difficulty, but this leaves us free to consider the actual force of the words, and to compare their proposed interpreta-

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tion, or rather to contrast it with the author's well-known theological opinions.

Our first duty is to determine the meaning of certain terms which have occasioned lively disputes, "infants" and "born again."

Some Baptist writers have insisted that the Latin term "infantes" may here be understood in its legal sense, which includes all who are under age. That the term is commonly used in this way is indisputable, but it does not appear to be so used in this place. As the first of a series of terms covering the whole of human life, it must be understood to denote the earliest stage of our existence—"infants, and children, and youths, and young men, and old men." I cannot imagine that Irenæus intended the first of this series to overlap the period denoted by the second and third. The legal force of "infantes" would have this absurd effect, and may be set aside.

Coming to the word "regenerated," I freely assent to the statement that in the course of time it came into common use as a name for baptism, and ultimately was applied to a kind of water baptism which neither followed nor produced any intellectual conviction or spiritual experience. We have already learned, however, from Justin Martyr, that this extreme usage did not exist in his day. The question is, Did Irenæus follow Justin's usage, or did he anticipate that which prevailed in a later age?

Wall, who is still an authority for his school,

## Irenæus

insists that Irenæus, when saying "regenerated," meant a birth effected by an outward act of baptism in water, and he supports this opinion in two ways: (1) By citing certain other Fathers to prove that this mode of speech was an established custom in the second century. (2) By a critical argument to prove that the language of Irenæus will bear no other meaning.

(1) To prove established usage in the second century, Wall marshalls five great names: Cyprian, Gregory, Jerome, Augustine, and Justin Martyr. Of these witnesses the first four flourished about two centuries later, and therefore their practice throws no light on the question. The only remaining authority is Justin, who was almost a contemporary of Irenæus, and his testimony is a direct contradiction of the theory he is relied upon to prove. He has told us that the Christians of his day understood by regeneration a new birth which comes from choice and knowledge, as contrasted with that which comes without our knowledge or consent, and for which our parents are alone responsible. In defiance of this explanation we are invited to accept Justin as a witness that by regeneration Irenæus must have meant a sort of baptism which is suffered by infants without their knowledge or consent, and for which their parents are responsible!

On this point I need only add that, since Wall ransacked the Fathers with such meagre results, no Anglican follower has fared any better. Numer-

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ous writings of the second century have been recovered, but none of them has betrayed any knowledge of the sacramentalism which prevailed in the fourth and fifth. Wall's appeal to patristic authorities not only breaks down, but has proved as disappointing as the call of Balaam to curse Israel.

(2) To prove that Irenæus must have meant water baptism, Wall presents the following gem of criticism: "When Irenæus does here speak of *infants regenerated*, it is plain enough of itself, that they are not capable of regeneration in any other sense of the word, than as it signifies baptism: I mean the outward act of baptism, accompanied with that grace or mercy of God whereby He admits them into covenant, though without any sense of theirs" (iii. 5).

No one will pretend that infants are capable of regeneration as Justin explained the word, but the true inference from this plain fact is that Irenæus was not specially thinking of infants when penning his famous parenthesis. The inference drawn by Wall is not merely unwarranted, but absurd. If "born again" is to be read as a synonym for water baptism, the sentence will make good sense with the latter term substituted for the former. Let us make this change, and look at it in print. "All, I mean, who *by Him* are baptized unto God." What sense is there in talking about men or infants being baptized by Christ? Does the ascended Christ use water? Even in the days of His flesh Jesus did not personally baptize, and

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there is no conceivable theory which permits us to confound the physical act of a human administrator with the spiritual act of God. Only controversial zeal could have blinded Wall to the blunder he was making. He carefully distinguished between the "outward act of baptism" and the accompanying "grace or mercy of God, whereby *He* admits them into covenant," and yet he ascribes the outward act to Christ. The obvious effect of this astonishing criticism is to make Irenæus say that, in baptism, one person of the Trinity uses water and another bestows grace! He was not always wise, but he was surely incapable of so grotesque a mistake as this.\*

When we pass from the criticism of the solitary passage which has been wrested into the service of sacramentalism, there is ample evidence that Irenæus held views which are utterly at variance with the idea of baptismal regeneration, and our

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\* It is passing strange that Evangelical Christians, who abhor the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, should resort to Irenæus as a witness to the antiquity of their own rite. It is only by treating regeneration and baptism as synonymous terms that an allusion to any sort of rite can even be imagined. When Wall's gloss has been discarded, the sentence becomes a reminder that, although it was Christ's design to become a Saviour for all mankind, He never intended to dispense with a due response to His redeeming grace. The thought recalls the words of John i. 12, 13: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

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only difficulty is, not the discovery, but the selection of proofs.

Had Irenæus lived in the days of Augustine, or afterwards, he would have been denounced as a Pelagian, for he taught explicitly that children are born into the world without any evil in their nature, and this opinion would, as Augustine rightly insisted, render the baptism of infants for the remission of sin absurd. His opinion on this subject comes out very clearly in opposition to a notion that the differences of character which men display may be traced back to their birth, some being made by nature bad, and some good. Against this Irenæus urged that an original disparity of nature would destroy all moral accountability; because those who were born good would, for that reason, deserve no praise, and those who were born evil would deserve no blame (*Against Heresies*, Bk. iv., chap. xxxvii. 2). Pelagius never denied hereditary guilt more strongly than this.

The only defect which Irenæus will allow in human nature is that which is inherent in all created things (xxxviii. 1). He even goes so far as to regard man's creation as a process which is still incomplete, and charges every man with responsibility for its consummation: "If, then, thou art God's workmanship, await the hand of thy Maker which creates everything in due time; in due time as far as thou art concerned, whose creation is being carried out. Offer to Him thy heart in a soft and tractable state, and preserve the form in which



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the Creator has fashioned thee . . . lest by becoming hardened thou lose the impression of His fingers. But by preserving the framework thou shalt ascend to that which is perfect, for the plastic clay which is in thee is hidden there by the workmanship of God " (xxxix. 2, 3).

If we ask Irenæus, Who are the sons of God? and, How do men become God's sons in the sense implied by the word regenerated? his answer is given in harmony with the above views of man's nature and responsibility. He points out that the word "son" has a twofold meaning: "one is a son in the order of nature, because he was born a son; the other, in that he was made so. . . . For, when any person has been taught from the mouth of another, he is termed the son of him who instructs him. . . . According to nature, then—that is, according to creation, so to speak—we are all sons of God, because we have all been created by God. But with respect to obedience and doctrine *we are not all the sons of God: those only are so who believe in Him and do His will.*" It is inconceivable that any man could thus write, if he were accustomed to think or speak of infants as made the children of God by an outward act of baptism (xli. 2). *Book IV*

When treating of Adam's sin and its consequences, Irenæus taught that the primal curse was laid partly on the soil, but that it fell with its full weight on the serpent only, because God looked upon Adam with pity, as one who had

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suffered defeat at the hands of a foe too strong and subtle to be conquered. He vehemently denounced those Gnostics who said that Adam perished for his sin, maintaining, on the contrary, that he truly repented, and confessed his fault, and was forgiven. With a startling reversal of the doctrine imputed to him, he protests that, if Adam had not been saved, there would have been no salvation for us, because, *if he had not been pardoned, we should have been the heirs of his perdition*. It is true, therefore, that this Father alludes distinctly to the possibility of inherited guilt, but it is also true that he alludes to it with horror, as a supposition too dreadful to be entertained, and glances at its possibility as an unthinkable alternative to his own belief that Adam was saved (Bk. iii., chap. xxiii. 8).

It is almost pathetic to find serious men ignoring all this trenchant teaching, and fastening on a little parenthesis, to found thereon, or rather, on its perverted interpretation, an assertion that its author must have believed in the regeneration of babes, "without any sense of theirs" being exercised; and worse still, to display this tiny shred of literature as ample evidence of an otherwise unmentioned custom of the general Church. If the custom of infant baptism had existed in the second century, it would have been freely commented upon by Gnostic, Pagan, and Jewish critics, and therefore would have been prominent in every exposition and in every defence of Christianity.

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If it existed, the pictures of Christian life which have come down to us are false, and all the great writers of the period must have been beguiled into a foolish concealment of a practice which must have been a conspicuous feature in the history of every family and in the public services of every church.

## Tertullian

A NEW and somewhat definite stage of development is visible in the writings of Tertullian, whose literary activity extended from A.D. 197 to about 225. He was born, and spent most of his life, in Carthage, and after his conversion from paganism in A.D. 197, he devoted his highly-cultivated powers to the service of the Church. In his later years he cast in his lot with the despised sect of Montanists, but it is generally allowed that Montanism, as he knew and approved it, was comparatively free from the worst features which are said to have disfigured its earlier history in Phrygia. The Montanism of Tertullian was chiefly the protest of a stalwart Christian against the laxity of discipline which prevailed in the Latin Churches, and was at the same time a defiance of the increasing presumption of the bishop and elders of the Roman Church.

The fact that he died outside "the orthodox fold" is made an excuse for rejecting some of his opinions as unrepresentative of the Catholic faith, but this need not delay us, because it is not as an authority, but as a witness, that he is to be studied.

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It should be remembered, moreover, that the writings which chiefly claim our attention belong to what is called his "Catholic period," and were composed some years before he became a "schismatic." Precise dates cannot be fixed, but the leading authorities agree in assigning his treatises on "Baptism" and "Repentance" to A.D. 197-8, and his earliest Montanistic writings to A.D. 202-3. Montanism, I may observe in passing, was only in a minor degree a doctrinal departure from the general Church. It was essentially a Puritan movement, and, like all such movements, was animated by a zeal for holy living; and by a passionate assertion of individual intercourse with God, with a corresponding liberty of prophesying.

It is often complained that Tertullian speaks with two voices about baptism, sometimes declaring that it is necessary, and at other times affirming the sufficiency of faith. This complaint may not be entirely unjust, but it has been over-stated. Detached sentences can be produced in support of the charge, but an impartial reader may easily discover that, when he insisted upon the necessity of baptism, he was contending against those who would dispense with the rite altogether, on the specious pretext that salvation is possible without it. When, on the other hand, he affirmed the safety of all who believe, he was not slighting baptism, but endeavouring to dissuade men from demanding it with undue haste, lest they should die unbaptized, and on that account perish.

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These two views are not mutually contradictory, but complementary, and as they are expressed in the same treatise, and not in different works, or at different periods of the author's life, the charge of inconsistency is rather over-strained.

His fundamental position in regard to baptism may best be shown in a short statement, which has been too much overlooked: "We are not washed in order that we may cease from sinning, but because we have ceased, since in heart we have been bathed already" (On Repentance, vi.). It would be difficult, and I think impossible, to show that Tertullian ever meant to contradict or attenuate the force of this strong utterance, and it may safely be taken as a key to all his more ambiguous language.

Perhaps the most significant fact which Tertullian put on record is the prevalence in North Africa of divergent views on the subject of baptism, and of heated, and even virulent, controversy. Before his day subtle changes of thought, feeling, and expression may be detected, but the mind of the Church, as reflected in its literature, was unruffled, and since the day when Peter baptized Gentiles, nothing had occurred to compel Christian writers to discuss the common opinion and practice.

In introducing his treatise "On Baptism," Tertullian laments that there were many unformed Christians who had given a superficial credence to the Gospel but had made no inquiry into the rational foundations of the faith, and consequently

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were easily victimised by false teachers. His ire was specially excited by the success of a woman who preached the "venomous doctrine" of the Cainites, and made it a chief aim to abolish baptism. These people probably deserved the hard things that were said of them, for it can scarcely be doubted that they were systematically immoral, and gloried in their shame. They honoured Cain as a better man than Abel, and with consistent perversity despised every man whom Christians venerated for virtue and godliness, and extolled every wicked man named in the Scriptures, including Judas Iscariot, whose conduct in betraying Christ they defended.

In opposing the Cainite woman, Tertullian wrote some ridiculous chapters in praise of water as a fitting element for use in a religious rite.

But while thus defending the "liquid element," he encountered the truly cogent objection that if Christians attribute a supernatural virtue to water, they resemble the heathen who believe that their gods impart similar efficacy to wash away defilements and guilt from the soul. It is highly significant that such an argument should have been used, and it goes far to explain the success of the Cainite prophetess in discrediting baptism. This charge of paganism must have failed if Tertullian had been in a position to disclaim the charge of superstition. But, unhappily, he was crippled in his war with the Cainites by the knowledge that a vast number of people really had

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brought their pagan notion of mystical illustrations into the Church. It is certain, also, that Tertullian himself was not thoroughly purged of all his old ideas, for he betrays a lingering belief that behind the idols he had discarded there lurked real demons, who exerted a noxious influence over men through the waters in which they washed.

Having made this damaging admission, he went on to point out what he considered to be the difference between the pagan and the Christian mysteries.

In the first place, he declares that pagans cheat themselves by using waters which are "widowed" because deprived of the Spirit of God. Beyond this, he insists that pagan washings were the devil's spurious imitation of the things of God, and with fine irony he mocks at the supposition that the devil would do his deluded victims any good. "The unclean cleanses! the ruiner sets free! the damned absolves! He will, forsooth, destroy his own work, by washing away the sins which he himself incites!" (v.) He then goes on to speak of unclean spirits brooding over shady fountains, sequestered streams, and ponds and baths in private houses, and then inquires, "Why have we adduced these instances?" to which he answers, "Lest any should think it incredible that a holy angel of God should grant his presence to the waters, to temper them to man's salvation; while the evil angel holds frequent profane commerce with the same element to man's ruin" (v.).



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Following up this allusion to angels, he cites the interpolated statement of John v. 4, that an angel periodically troubled the pool of Bethesda, and exclaims, "This figure of corporeal healing sang of a spiritual healing, according to the rule by which things carnal are always antecedent as figurative of things spiritual. Thus, when the grace of God advanced to higher degrees among men, an increased efficacy was given to the waters and to the angel. They who were wont to remedy bodily defects, now heal the spirit; they who used to work temporal health, now renew eternal; they who did set free once in the year, now save peoples daily, death being done away through ablution of sins. The guilt being removed, of course the penalty is removed also. Thus man will be restored for God to His likeness . . . for he receives again that Spirit of God which he had first received from His afflatus, but afterwards lost through sin" (v.).

Having indulged his fervid soul in this impassioned outburst, Tertullian became aware that his language needed qualifying. He did not believe in any regeneration which dispensed with spiritual experience, though he had written such perilous stuff, and accordingly devoted a new chapter to the task of repudiating the meaning which most readers would attach to his words. In this chapter he tells us that we do not receive the Spirit in the water, but after we come out of it. In the water we receive some undefined influence from an angel, which cleanses

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us in preparation for the Spirit Himself. How Tertullian became acquainted with this singular fact is unexplained, and, having announced it, he reverts to the scriptural idea that the remission of sins is obtained by faith, and sealed by baptism. His language is confused, but its purport may fairly be re-stated thus: Faith in the promises of God is the pre-requisite of baptism, and it is this which obtains the remission of sins. In baptism the pardoned believer has his sins washed away by the angel who is the arbiter, or official witness, almost the umpire, who presides over the transaction. This washing is sacramental only, but, by Divine appointment, it is a sacred pledge and attestation of the Divine promise of salvation, and at the same time it is the expressive sign and attestation of the faith which grasps that promise, in reliance on the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (vi.).

It would be tedious and unprofitable to review Tertullian's further discussion of what he calls "the generals which form the groundwork of the sanctity of baptism," and we may pass on to notice his treatment of certain particular questions. The points to which these questions relate are (1) The necessity of baptism to salvation. (2) The persons who may baptize. (3) The persons to whom, and the time when, baptism should be administered. (4) Preparation for, and conduct after, baptism.

In discussing the necessity of baptism, Tertullian enables us to see how varied and how in-

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conclusive were the arguments which were commonly employed, and how flickering was the light which he himself was able to shed upon the subject. It is lamentable to observe how utterly he failed to clear the field of controversy by raising a definite issue. He was a trained lawyer, yet he descended into the popular arena, where unlearned multitudes were warring over false antitheses, and wrangling confusedly over minor questions, and instead of ordering the battle by lifting up a banner of principle which none could mistake, he allowed himself to be drawn into the wordy fray, and there he stood, striking out all round at those he thought in the wrong, but doing it in such a way as to injure the principles he championed.

Tertullian quotes, as a commonly-received saying in his day, that "without baptism no man can be saved"; and although he did not, as Wall and others insinuate, advance this as his own opinion, yet in this particular place he refrained from any explicit utterance of dissent, and wrote with scornful anger of those who denied it. An explanation, though not a justification, of this reticence, may be found in the fact that the denial which angered him was not made in the interest of a more spiritual view of the ordinance, but with intent to get rid of it altogether; and was made by people whose ulterior aim was to destroy everything pure and purifying in the Christian religion.

These people perversely contended that, if

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baptism was not absolutely indispensable to salvation, it could not be obligatory, or even useful, and should be abolished. In order to deal with this sophism, Tertullian needed at the outset to explain his own more reasonable position. But when a man of comparatively moderate and liberal views is fighting in alliance with others whose opinions are 'more extreme than his own, he is reluctant to obtrude their minor disagreements in the face of a common antagonist. This may be foolish, and even verging on insincerity, but it is a common weakness, and is to be seen in all controversies, whether political or ecclesiastical. The moderate man, the man who sees truth on both sides, and begs both parties to correct their judgments, is apt to be trodden down or hustled off the field by impatient comrades and by scornful foes. Tertullian was not this kind of man. He was not fitted by temperament to play the part of a philosophical trimmer, and, therefore, while, as will immediately appear, he did not believe the unqualified proposition that "without baptism no man can be saved," he was too much of a partisan to formally make this admission in the face of a common enemy of the Church. Instead of doing this, he followed the keen instinct of a lawyer, and adroitly turned the attention of his readers to the feebler arguments employed to prove that baptism is not a Christian duty.

Special interest attaches to the chapter in which Tertullian treats of "the persons to whom,

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and the time when, baptism is to be administered " (xviii.). In this chapter he combats a growing tendency in Africa to hasten the baptism of young people. He makes no allusion to the baptism of speechless babes, but custom was evidently trending in that direction. The extreme length to which any party had yet gone is indicated in the words: "Give to every one that asketh thee." Tertullian remarks that these words of our Lord refer to almsgiving and not to baptism, and submits that those who drag in so irrelevant a quotation should more carefully ponder the precepts, "Give not the holy thing to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine"; and, "Lay not hands easily on any; share not other men's sins."

These sayings were more especially directed against a rash bestowal of baptism on men and women who asked for a cheap salvation by water, but whose lives were scandalous. One of the worst effects of an exaggerated estimate of the grace conveyed by an outward rite is to be seen in the avidity with which it is demanded for merely prudential reasons, with a corresponding laxity in acceding to the wishes of unfit applicants. Thus Tertullian saw unenlightened, unreformed, and unconverted people forsaking the heathen temples, and flocking round the gates of the Church; and he saw with dismay that, without adequate instruction, or probation, these "dogs" were being admitted into the Church, because Christians did not like to refuse their request for baptism, lest, per-

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adventure, they should be refusing them eternal life.

At this point he insists that delay is specially necessary in the case of little children. Then, as now, people were finding a warrant for their baptism in the command of Christ: "Forbid them not to come unto Me." With caustic satire he exposes the absurdity of making this beautiful saying an excuse for dispensing with a real coming to Christ along the path of intelligent discipleship. "Let them 'come,' then," he exclaims, "while they are growing up; let them 'come' while they are learning, while they are being taught whither to come; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ. . . . Let them know how to 'ask' for salvation, that you may at least appear to have given 'to him that asketh'" (xviii.). Some think that these expressions imply that speechless babes were being baptized in Tertullian's day. The point is of very little importance, for religiously there is no appreciable difference between a child that cannot talk and one who can be schooled by parents to ask for something it does not understand, and cannot conceivably desire. This, however, is certain—and it marks a most definite stage of development—that, when it had become the custom to baptize those who could barely articulate a request, the remainder of the process would inevitably follow.

In chapter xviii. Tertullian gives several reasons for insisting on delay in the baptism of children, and also of adult candidates.

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His first reason for delaying the baptism of adults is the risk of deception which must attend hasty action; and this may take the form of self-deception on the part of a candidate in regard to his own fitness for the ordinance; or it may take the form of a wilful deception of the Christian minister by false professions of repentance and faith, thus causing him to unwittingly give that which is holy "to the dogs."

It would be dangerous to found a charge of prevalent immorality among candidates for baptism merely on this rather cryptic reference to deceit, but it is certain that Tertullian was not raising an imaginary objection, for, in his treatise on Repentance, he exposes with unsparing fidelity the terrible effects which had been produced by "a presumptuous confidence in baptism." He tells of "young novices who are only just beginning to bedew their ears with divine discourses, and who, as whelps in yet early infancy, and with eyes not yet perfect, creep about uncertainly, and say indeed that they renounce their former deeds, and make a profession of repentance, but neglect to complete it" (vi.), by bringing forth fruit in amended life. Beguiled by the anticipation of complete pardon when they are baptized, they "steal the intervening time, and turn it into a furlough for sinning, rather than a time for learning not to sin." To such persons, he declares, no minister would grant baptism if he knew their real condition, and he warns them that, although it is easy to deceive men, God will know

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and judge their tergiversation. Turning to adjure them, he exclaims: "Who will grant you, a man of so faithless repentance, one single sprinkling of any water? To approach it by stealth, indeed, and to get the minister appointed over this business misled by your asseverations, is easy; but God takes foresight for His own treasure, and suffers not the unworthy to steal a march upon it."

Unhappily, Tertullian did not see his way to deny that even the grossest hypocrites would receive the remission of sins when baptism was obtained by fraud, but he predicts that they will not be allowed to retain the blessing so extorted by lies. Those who think to rob God do therein deceive themselves; they promise themselves a boon, but do not pay the price. "For repentance is the price at which the Lord has determined to award pardon . . . and if sellers first examine the coin with which they make their bargains, to see whether it be cut, or scraped, or alloyed, so likewise we believe that the Lord . . . institutes an assay of our repentance" (vi.).

The second reason for delay which Tertullian put forward applies especially to the case of children, namely, that the baptism of very young people exposes their sponsors to some danger (Baptism, xviii.).

It has been thought that he had before his mind the legal responsibility which sponsors would incur by participating in an act which, if not a



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violation of any specific statute, was one which Roman statesmen would certainly view with alarm. It is sufficiently clear, however, that Tertullian was thinking of something more serious and solemn than the risk of being called in question before a human tribunal. In his day, sponsors undertook very real responsibilities. They were required not merely to make a few vicarious promises, but to give an assurance that the candidate for baptism did verily believe in Christ, and had repented of sin, and actually forsaken it. It was demanded of them also, particularly in the case of young converts, unblest with Christian parents, that they would watch over these novices with loving solicitude, and direct their steps into the ways of righteousness and truth. The danger which Tertullian pointed out was the risk of having these assurances falsified and these promises frustrated; in some cases by the development of an evil disposition in the child, and in others by the sponsor's death. This double risk he regarded as so grave, that nothing could justify its being incurred except a conviction that without baptism none could be saved from perdition. In pressing this argument, Tertullian again shows that he did not share this terrible conviction, and more important still, he tacitly assumes that his readers will admit that under some circumstances the unbaptized might be saved.\*

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\* The text of the sentence is defective, but there is no uncertainty of the writer's meaning.

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A third reason for delay, which applies solely to young children, is found in the fact that they have no present need for the remission of sins. In strict agreement with his reason for deprecating rash sponsorship, Tertullian demands: "Why does the innocent period of life make such haste to the forgiveness of sins?" (xviii.) If Tertullian had thought of baptism as needful for the removal of hereditary "guilt and pollution," or if he had known of such a view as prevalent among his contemporaries, he could not have asked this question with such an easy confidence that it would be unanswerable. Taken together, these second and third reasons for delay are not only harmonious, but complementary. They say that young children do not need baptism, because of their guiltlessness, and that on this account there is no necessity for sponsors to incur superfluous danger of failure and mistake.

A fourth reason for delay is found in the fact that, rightly understood, baptism involves great responsibilities which only persons of ripened intelligence and established character can bear. Tertullian does not work out this thought with any fulness, but he presents it under several aspects. He was not sufficiently clear in his thinking to declare baptism void when administered to those incapable of entering into covenant with God, but he deprecated such a practice on the ground that it burdened children with a trust for which they were unprepared, and thus put them into needless

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danger of condemnation, and at the same time exposed religion itself to reproach. Men do not display such folly in secular affairs, he observes, and thus it happens that "one who is not trusted with worldly substance is trusted with that which is Divine!" On similar grounds he insists that no adults should be baptized while exposed to certain forms of temptation, specially naming those who are not yet married, and those who have been married but have been widowed. Tertullian was not one of those who said that post-baptismal sins admit of no repentance, but he was profoundly imbued with the idea that they exposed the sinner to heavier condemnation, and he closed his reasons for delay with this impressive sentence: "If any understand the heavy burden of baptism, they will dread its reception, rather than its delay; sound faith is secure of salvation" (xviii.).

The last chapter of the treatise deals with the subject of "Preparation for, and conduct after, the reception of baptism." The writer's aim was to secure a befitting spirit of humility and awe in all who were about to put on Christ and assume the Christian name. With this object he writes: "They who are about to enter baptism ought to pray, with repeated prayers, fasts, and bendings of the knee, and vigils all the night through; and with the confession of all bygone sins" (xx.).

Tertullian's language on the importance of confession calls for close attention, because it contains a germ of the Roman doctrine of penal satis-

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faction. "To us," he observes, "it is matter for thankfulness if we do *now* publicly confess our iniquities or our turpitudes; for we do at the same time both make satisfaction for our former sins, by mortification of our flesh and spirit, and lay beforehand the foundation of defences against the temptations which follow." It cannot be honestly pleaded that Tertullian sanctions the custom of private confession to an individual minister, for, according to him, the whole value of the confession lies in its painfulness as a public humiliation. But while we thus reject a common misuse of the passage to prove the antiquity of private auricular confession, we thereby emphasise the fact that it indicates a serious driftage towards the theology of Trent in regard to the efficacy of those things of which Paul wrote: "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Col. ii. 23).

It would be difficult to find in all patristic literature a more interesting or instructive illustration of the truth that the worst corruptions of Christianity had their origin in comparatively small and innocent, and even well-meant, perversions of wholesome doctrine, than is supplied in Tertullian's treatment of confession. It is obvious that he regarded it as a kind of penance, and urged it as a means of appeasing the Divine anger, but it is no less clear that to his mind the value of it

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lay in its salutary reflex influence on the moral nature of the penitent. He considered repentance, not self-inflicted suffering, the price of Divine forgiveness, but prescribed mortification of flesh and spirit as a bitter, but needful, medicine for spiritual disease. It appeared to him that, when a Christian man had fallen into sin, he would, if really contrite, be prepared to undergo the ordeal of uncovering his fault before those "brethren and fellow-servants with whom there is a common hope, fear, joy, grief, suffering, because there is a common spirit from a common Lord and Father."

With a true knowledge of human nature, he also held that repentance is not only expressed, but deepened, by confession, and by the sympathy of those who are partakers of our infirmities and temptations, and therefore "cannot feel gladness at the trouble of any one member" of Christ's Body, and "must necessarily join with one consent in the grief and in labouring for the remedy" of a brother's sickness. With caustic language, which ill conceals the tenderness of the love which made him angry with their infatuation, he expostulates with those who deprive themselves of restoration to the Church because they flinch from the anguish of the process. "Yet most men shun this work, as being a public exposure of themselves, or else defer it from day to day. I presume they are more mindful of modesty than salvation. . . . Grand indeed is the reward of modesty which the concealment of our fault promises us! for, if we do

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hide something from man, shall we equally conceal it from God? Are the judgment of men and the knowledge of God so put upon a par? Is it better to be damned in secret than absolved in public?" People were saying: "It is a miserable thing thus to come to open confession"; and Tertullian admits that it is, for evil does involve misery, but then he pleads: "Where repentance is to be made, the misery ceases, because it is turned into something salutary. Miserable it is to be cut, and cauterized, and racked with the pungency of some drug; yet the things which heal by unpleasant means do, by the benefit of the cure, excuse their own offensiveness, and make present injury bearable for the sake of the blessing to follow." Therefore, he finely exclaims, confession, "while it abases the man, it exalts him; while it covers him with squalor, it renders him more clean; while it accuses, it excuses; while it condemns, it absolves. The less quarter you give yourself, the more (believe me) will God give you" (On Repentance, ix. and x.).

Evidence has already been given that Tertullian did not found his doctrine of baptism on the theory that it was requisite for the removal of hereditary guilt and pollution, but as attempts have been made to discover this idea in his writings, it may be well to point out their non-success. In one of his later works there is a sentence which is commonly quoted for the purpose, but it is only when divorced from its context that it has an

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apparent bearing on the subject. Wall translates it thus: "So there is almost no being born clean (or free from sin)—that is, of the heathen." Taking this sentence as it stands, the reader will see that it refers solely to the children of heathen parents. In the following words, Tertullian makes his meaning more emphatic by quoting Paul's dictum that "when either of the parents was sanctified the children were holy"; adding the further explanation that this cleanness was "by reason of the prerogative of that (Christian) seed and also the instruction in their education" (History, chap. iv. 6).

A wider reading of the chapter shows that Tertullian made no such statement as Wall imputes. The words "or free from sin" which the translator ventured to insert as a fair exposition of the term clean, are not justified by the force of the Latin (*munda*), and are quite inexcusable when tested by the drift of the passage. Tertullian was not speaking of the sinfulness of any infants, but of the defiling influence of the evil spirits which were invoked whenever a child was brought into the world by a pagan mother. After describing the idolatrous ceremonies with which such infants were consecrated to demons, he observes: "On this principle of early possession it was that Socrates, while yet a boy, was found by the spirit of the demon. Thus, too, is it that to all persons their genii are assigned, which is only another name for demons. So there is almost no being born clean—that is to say, of the heathen" (On the Soul, xxxix.). It is prepos-

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

terous to import into such an account the notion of sinfulness in the babes thus dedicated to devils.

The conclusion to be drawn from this examination of Tertullian's writings are so important, and mark so definite a stage in the development of doctrine, that it will be advisable to present them in a summary form.

The broadest and most significant fact which these writings attest is that baptism had become a subject of controversy in Northern Africa, and that this was mainly due to the spread of what Tertullian calls "a presumptuous confidence in baptism." Underlying this vain reliance on the efficacy of an external rite, we can detect the prevalence of a lowered type of Christian life, with its inevitable tendency to dull the perception of spiritual truth, and this again reacted to the further degradation of faith and morals. Lacking clear thoughts of Christ, and of the Gospel which is the instrumental power of God unto salvation, the people easily fell into the error of confounding sacramental signs with spiritual realities, and in this they were aided by that interchange of names which was explained by Justin Martyr. In Tertullian himself we have found some looseness of expression, indicating more or less vagueness of thought on the distinction between baptism as a sign and seal of pre-existent faith, and as a supposed vehicle of grace, efficient and essential for the remission of sins. We have seen also that, although he did not believe that without baptism there could be no salvation, yet he



## Tertullian

failed to avow this with uniform boldness and consistency, and sadly omitted to point out that although baptism is morally obligatory as an act of obedience to the Saviour, it is an act which only the saved can rationally perform, and therefore not a means or a condition of salvation.

Again, we have seen that the exaggerated estimate of the value of baptism which was growing up in Africa provoked, or at least encouraged, a movement to get rid of it altogether. It seems probable, though it cannot be proved, that the Cainites were not alone in the desire for its abolition, but the fact that so detestable a sect made this attack could not fail to intensify zeal for the ordinance, and to discredit those who sought to moderate it. Abhorrence of the Cainites, combined with the natural tendency of ill-instructed and superstitious people toward ritualism, evidently favoured the spread of sacramentalism, and aggravated those evils in the Church which ultimately constrained Tertullian to become a Montanist.

It has been further seen that the same vain confidence in baptism which provoked the scoffs of a few, induced many to demand it as a sort of magical charm or safeguard, while they were still destitute of any moral or mental fitness for the Christian life; and that this induced a corresponding laxity on the part of ministers in administering the ordinance to half-converted pagans, and to young children, who at best could only ask for it in meaningless words. Against this tendency, Ter-

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tullian valiantly fought, and evidently with some success. But his chief weapon was an appeal to the fear of incurring some dreadful consequences if the life which followed baptism proved unworthy. Matthew Arnold pilloried him as "the fierce Tertullian," who denied a fount of fresh forgiveness to all who had been once forgiven. In this the poet was mistaken, both in regard to the real teachings of Tertullian and as to the spirit in which he warned men against a presumptuous undertaking of Christian responsibilities. His denunciations of haste are a strange mixture of sagacity and superstition. His aim was right, and up to a certain point his advice was good, but the appeal to fear was at variance with the call of the Gospel to live our present life in the flesh by faith in the Son of God. His counsel inevitably served to encourage that awful delusion whereby many were beguiled into a postponement of baptism for the sake of prolonging the time wherein they might indulge their lusts with impunity, relying on the chance of washing away the stains of a whole lifetime of sin before being carried by death into the presence of the Judge. Tertullian was well aware of this abomination, and scathingly denounced it, but nothing could prevent the hypocritical and superstitious from perverting his cautious plea for delay into an excuse for continuing in sin, because of the cheap grace which would wash away the sins of fifty years or more as easily as the sins of early youth.

It is probable that, by his intimidating argu-

## Tertullian

ments, coupled with his assurance that "sound faith is secure of salvation," Tertullian checked an immediate spread of premature baptism. For some generations the habit of delay prevailed, not only in Africa, but also in the European and Asiatic Churches, but this prudential custom was foredoomed to pass away as "presumptuous confidence in baptism" increased, and gloomier views of God's attitude toward children caused the hearts of parents to quiver with anguish as they contemplated the awful jeopardy of their little ones. The obvious advantage of postponing a rite which cancelled all preceding guilt, and enhanced the guilt of all subsequent transgressions, would never have failed to commend itself to adults; but parental anxiety had the first chance, and did its work before an infant's self-regarding prudence could be awakened. This fact, together with a growing dread of infant damnation, nullified all the motives to which Tertullian appealed. There is something ironical in the fact, but it is none the less true, that the very means which this ardent opponent of infant baptism employed to arrest its development, helped to foster the feelings and ideas out of which it ultimately sprang. He strengthened the root while lopping off its early outgrowth; and, while trying to purify the African Church, he assisted unintentionally to make it a fitting seed-plot for those ideas which first matured in that region in the fourth and fifth centuries, and subsequently spread throughout the world.

## Clement of Alexandria

CLEMENT presided over the famous catechetical school of Alexandria from about A.D. 190 to 203, and during that period produced invaluable literary works. His references to baptism are not frequent, and perhaps the most significant indication of his mind upon the subject is the absence of any allusion to it in places where a strong believer in its virtue must have made it prominent. To feel the force of this remark it is only necessary to read his "Address to the Greeks," in which he presented Christianity to pagan thinkers. Throughout this admirable work Clement expatiates upon the national and spiritual superiority of the Christian religion to any other, as shown in the sublimity and ethical purity of its teachings concerning God and man, and the means of human salvation provided in Christ, who is the image of God, "the genuine Son of Mind."

An imaginary reference to baptism has been discovered in the words, "Receive, then, the water of the *word*; wash, ye polluted ones; purify yourselves from (evil) custom by sprinkling yourselves *with drops of truth*" (x.). It requires keen sight to detect the allusion!

## Clement of Alexandria

Replying to the sneers of conceited Gnostics who professed a monopoly of illumination, maturity, and spirituality, Clement observes: "For we are not called children and infants with reference to the childish and contemptible character of our education, as those who are inflated on account of knowledge have calumniously alleged. Straightway, on our regeneration, we attained that perfection after which we aspired. For we were illuminated, which is to know God. He is not imperfect who knows what is perfect. . . . So that in illumination what we receive is knowledge. . . . For what ignorance has bound ill, is by knowledge loosed well; those bonds are with all speed slackened by human faith and Divine grace, our transgressions being taken away by our Pæonian medicine, the baptism of the Word. We are washed from our sins, and no longer entangled in evil. This is the one grace of illumination, that our characters are not the same as before our washing" (The Tutor, vi.). How ridiculous such language would be if applied to persons who were baptized in infancy!

Elsewhere Clement insists on the principle that there is neither virtue nor vice, neither judgment nor salvation, neither genuine repentance nor rational baptism, apart from the free use of man's power of choice and self-direction. He declares that "only voluntary actions are judged"; and if faith be not "the direct result of free choice," the "entire peculiarity and difference of belief and

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

unbelief will entail neither praise nor censure." If these principles are denied, and man held to be a creature of necessity, then, he affirms, it inevitably follows, "that neither is baptism rational, nor the blessed seal, neither the Son nor the Father. But God, as I think, turns out to be the distribution to men of natural powers, which has not the foundation of salvation—voluntary faith" (Strom., Bk. ii. 3).

Some of these expressions may be a little obscure, but the writer's meaning is clear. Clement affirms that all who strip man of his freedom as a moral agent destroy the entire Christian conception of the universe as the scene of God's paternal government. If men are mere automata, incapable of self-control, personal relations are a delusive dream, Fatherhood and Sonship are poetical fictions, and "God" is only a fanciful name for what we now call natural law.

The bearing of this is obvious. Clement's doctrine utterly excludes the idea of infant baptism. Where there has been no voluntary action, there has been no sin; where there has been no sin, there can be no repentance; where no sinner has repented, there can be no forgiveness; salvation thus becomes a fiction, and baptism ceases to be rational. Thus it is clear that in the dawn of the third century the head of the Alexandrian school of theology derided as irrational any baptism except that of repentant sinners who believed in God through Jesus Christ.

## Clement of Alexandria

To confirm what has been said, I may quote some samples of Clement's quaint allegorical treatment of scriptural terms. After giving what purported to be a scientific account of the transformation of blood into milk in the process of maternity, he develops a spiritual analogy: "For if we have been regenerated unto Christ, He who has regenerated us (by His blood) nourishes us with His own milk, the Word; for it is proper that what has procreated should forthwith supply nourishment to that which has been procreated. And as the regeneration was comformably spiritual, so also was the nutriment of man spiritual." In the same strain he observes: "Further, milk has a most natural affinity for water, as assuredly the spiritual washing has for the spiritual nutriment. . . . Those, therefore, that swallow a little cold water, in addition to the above-mentioned milk, straightway feel benefit. . . . And like to the union of the Word with baptism is the agreement of milk with water; for it receives it alone of liquids, and admits of mixture of water, for the purpose of cleansing, as baptism for the remission of sins. And it is mixed naturally with honey also, and this cleansing along with sweet nutriment. For the Word, blended with love, at once cures our passions and cleanses our sins, and the saying,

Sweeter than honey, flowed the stream of speech,  
seems to me to have been spoken of the Word,  
who is honey" (Pæd. Bk. i. 6).

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To men who live in a critical and prosaic age, this may seem pitiful nonsense, but Clement wrote in the style which was most admired and cultivated in Alexandria, both by pagan philosophers and by Christian theologians; and through its fanciful literary garb, the great thought is made manifest that baptism is vain unless accompanied with faith in those who receive it, and followed by an eager appropriation of the spiritual food which is provided by Christ for the new-born children of God.

The only point in Clement's writings still requiring notice is the fact that, like the earliest Puritan sects, he was afraid to admit that great sins can be repeatedly forgiven. He distinctly affirms the grace of a second repentance, but leaves the possibility of any further recovery shrouded in uncertainty. In his chapter on "First and Second Repentance," he justly states that one "who has received the forgiveness of sins ought to sin no more," but adds that the Lord, knowing the fickleness of man's heart and the craft of the devil, has of His great mercy "vouchsafed, in the case of those who, though in faith, fall into any transgression, a second repentance; so that, should anyone be tempted after his calling, overcome by force and fraud, he may receive still a repentance not to be repented of." This concession is, however, made in a somewhat halting fashion, and is hedged about with cautious warnings. Repentance and forgiveness are said to be quite different things, and it is hinted that the one may not always



## Clement of Alexandria

be followed by the other; so that a Christian who has lapsed and repented ought "to fear, as one no longer washed to the forgiveness of sins" (Strom., Bk. ii. 13).

It is easy to discern beneath these and many similiar utterances a well-intentioned desire to tighten, rather than relax, the cords of discipline. The fear of making the Gospel an indulgence to live carelessly was evidently before Clement's eyes, and he was not free from the specious thought that self-castigation and the fear of hell are more wholesome than the joy of salvation. Moved by this thought, he exclaims: "But by torturing himself for his sins he benefits his soul." His teaching on this subject is purer than Tertullian's, but it undoubtedly tended to nourish thoughts and feelings which naturally developed into a definite dogma of Penance.

## Hippolytus

THE life of Hippolytus is imperfectly known, and some of the main facts are still the subject of controversy, but he was one of the most influential leaders of the Church in the first quarter of the third century. He was probably a bishop, and in his writings he appears to claim the position of a bishop in Rome. The Roman Church does not recognise this claim, though she honours him as a martyr, and celebrates the anniversary of his burial in the catacombs. Dr. Döllinger regards him as the first anti-Pope, and there is much to be said in favour of that opinion. It is possible that there was no organised schism in Rome, but indisputably there was bitter strife between two sections of the Church, one headed by Hippolytus, and the other by Callistus, who stands in the list of Roman Pontiffs as bishop from A.D. 218-223. Among the subjects of contention baptism had a prominent place.

Hippolytus gives an extraordinary account of the career of Callistus and of the disgraceful tactics by which he secured election to the bishopric when Zephyrinus died. According to this account, Callistus was a conscious impostor,

## Hippolytus

who commended himself to a multitude of worthless persons by pandering to their lusts. Denying the name of "Church" to his party, and contemptuously calling it "a school," Hippolytus charges Callistus with the offence of receiving persons who had been excommunicated for gross sin, freely forgiving such reprobates on the sole condition of uniting with his sect and professing to believe his teaching. He declares that, in contempt of Christ, the school of Callistus placed no restraint on the commission of any kind of sin, and after naming some of the worst abominations which were tolerated, he exclaims: "Behold into how great impiety that lawless one has proceeded by inculcating adultery and murder at the same time! And withal, after such audacious acts, they, lost to shame, attempt to call themselves a Catholic Church!" (Refutation of all Heresies, ix. 7). In the same connection, he asserts that, during the pontificate of this Callistus, and for the first time in history, "second baptism was presumptuously attempted."

It is difficult to believe or to disbelieve the charges thus indicated. Hippolytus was evidently smarting under a personal disappointment, and was predisposed to take an unfavourable view of the man who had been preferred before himself; but, making allowance for some readiness to believe evil, his statements agree but too well with those of other writers. Gross licentiousness may not have been so quite so common as he thought, but there

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

was grievous laxity in the treatment of misconduct; and, alike in theory and practice, the Church under Callistus resembled the Ark of Noah, in which were things clean and unclean.

Encouraged by this laxity, it is said that a Syrian, named Alcibiades, came to Rome, bearing a book which impudently sanctioned all the irregularities which were becoming rife. This volume was professedly written by one Elkesai, and contained an alleged revelation, received in the reign of Trajan, which announced a new remission of sins. According to Alcibiades, this book had been in secret circulation among Jewish Christians for more than a hundred years.

Hippolytus does not fully explain the Elkesaite doctrine of salvation, but he seems to imply that baptism was supposed to take the place of sacrifice as a means of cleansing. He has also preserved some fragments of the work, which show that the Elkesaites were, in the strictest sense of the term, "Anabaptists," because they allowed, and even prescribed, a second baptism, without denying the validity of the first. "If, therefore," declared Elkesai, "a baptized person has been guilty of the most unmentionable offences, and is desirous of obtaining remission of sins, from the moment that he hearkens to this book, let him be baptized a second time in (the) name of the Great and Most High God, and in the name of His Son, the Mighty King. . . . Again I say, O adulterers and adulteresses, and false prophets, if you are desirous of

## Hippolytus

being converted, that your sins may be forgiven you, as soon as you hearken to this book, and be baptized a second time along with your garments, peace shall be yours, and your portion with the just" (ix. 10). The same remedy which was supposed to be effectual for post-baptismal sin, however foul, was prescribed as a cure for the bite of mad dogs and venomous animals! The sufferers were advised to "run with all their wearing apparel, and go down to a river or a fountain wherever there is a deep spot." The same formula was to be observed as in second baptism.

This Elkesaite book would not be worthy of much attention if it had simply been the secret manual of an Ebionite sect, but it assumes importance from the fact that an attempt was made to foist it upon the Church in Rome in the beginning of the third century. The attempt was not very successful, but the fact that it was made affords a painful evidence that immorality was rife and discipline seldom enforced. As vultures are attracted by carrion, so Alcibiades was drawn from a far country by rumours of corruption in Rome, and found an eager welcome at the hands of ambitious clergy who were already pandering to gross desires, for the sake of popularity, and as a means to acquire power.

In this way the dispute between the general Church and austere Puritans was entering upon a new stage. The Church, which was beginning to call itself Catholic, and had its most influential

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

centre in the capital city of the Empire, had done well to insist on the inexhaustible grace of Christ. She had done well also to defend the right of the Church to consider the case of each professor of repentance afresh, and to restore to fellowship all whom she believed to be truly contrite. But the prerogative of the Church was slowly passing into the hands of her ministers, and these ministers were becoming more and more the masters instead of the servants of the flock.

It is impossible to trace all the phases of the process, but it seems probable that at first pre-eminence was acquired by the best men, and for the sake of their best qualities; but in course of time elective offices were filled with men who knew how to win and keep the suffrages of the many by a bland tolerance of easy virtue and a readiness to accept excuses for self-indulgence. When men of this type rose to power, their influence aggravated the evils which made their rise possible, and having found their laxity popular, under the name of Christian charity, they became less and less particular in regard to the indulgences they winked at. While the people were jealous of their Lord's honour, they would claim their part in the exercise of discipline, but as they became weary of a high standard of holiness, they were only too willing to see their obliging pastors stretching their authority to condone or forgive such faults as they themselves were conscious of committing.

Hippolytus saw a well-developed stage of this

## Hippolytus

mutual corruption of people and priest. His complaint against Callistus was not merely that he did not frown upon iniquity, but that he presumed to bestow forgiveness as if the prerogative of the entire Church resided in him. A further aggravation of this usurpation was that Callistus substituted an acceptance of his own teachings and authority for credible proofs of repentance.

Callistus was a typical worldly Churchman—suave, astute, and businesslike. He loved exalted office and the praise of men; and because he prophesied smooth things the people preferred him to the learned and upright, but austere, Hippolytus. By his conduct, and the protest it occasioned, the better part of the Church was goaded to seek some method of dealing with the sins of her members which should neither drive the contrite to despair, by a ruthless refusal of mercy, nor encourage the wicked man in his wickedness, by making light of his transgression.

Thanks to Hippolytus, and to the shocking scandals which arose, the attempt to introduce second baptism proved a failure. It is regrettable, however, that Hippolytus did not seize the occasion to insist that water baptism cannot avail even once for the removal of sin. The attempt to use it twice, or oftener, only aggravated the mischief of using it at all for such an impossible purpose, and Hippolytus would have done well to assert and illustrate this principle. But nothing of this kind appears in the controversy. It would be unjust to

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say that Hippolytus believed in the efficacy of an outward rite to effect spiritual change, but he certainly used unguarded language.

In the "Discourse on the Holy Theophany"\* we read: "The Father of immortality sent into the world the immortal Son and Logos, who came to man in order to wash him with water and the Spirit; and He, begetting us again to incorruption of soul and body, breathed into us the spirit of life, and endued us with an incorruptible panoply, If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God. And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the bath, he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection from the dead. Wherefore I preach to this effect: Come, all ye kindreds of the nations, to the immortality of the baptism. I bring good tidings of life to you who tarry in the darkness of ignorance. Come into liberty from slavery, into a kingdom from tyranny, into incorruption from corruption. And how, saith one, shall we come? How? By water and the Holy Ghost. This is the water, in conjunction with the Spirit, by which Paradise is watered, by which the earth is enriched, by which plants grow, by which animals multiply, and (to sum up the whole in a single word) by which man is begotten again and endued with life, in which also Christ was baptized, and in which the Spirit descended in the form of a dove" (8).

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\* This work is probably, but not certainly, genuine.



## Hippolytus

After numerous quotations from Scripture concerning the Spirit, Hippolytus resumes his appeal to the heathen: "Come then, be begotten again, O man, into the sonship of God. And how? says one. If thou practisest adultery no more, and committest not murder, and servest not idols; if thou art not over-mastered by pleasure; if thou dost not suffer the feeling of pride to rule thee; if thou cleanest off the filthiness of impurity, and puttest off the burden of sin; if thou castest off the armour of the devil, and puttest on the breastplate of faith, even as Isaiah saith, 'Wash you, and seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow. And come, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, I shall make them white as snow. . . .' Do you see, beloved, how the prophet spake before-time of the purifying power of baptism? For he who comes down in faith to the bath of regeneration, and renounces the devil, and joins himself to Christ; who denies the enemy, and makes the confession that Christ is God; who puts off the bondage, and puts on the sonship—he comes up from the baptism brilliant as the sun, flashing forth the beams of righteousness, and, which is the chief thing, he returns a son of God, and joint-heir with Christ" (10).

In these extracts there is a lamentable absence of any effort to define the relation of the outward rite to the inward change it accompanies, but it is far removed from any conception of a materialistic

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or magical transformation. The baptized man is extravagantly likened to the sun as it rises from the sea, but the brightness is the outshining of a transfigured moral nature; it is the beauty of a character which springs from a heart which has been purified by faith in Christ.

It is notable that Hippolytus is so occupied with the spiritual renovation of a believer that the idea of remitted sin disappears. Among the fashionable followers of Callistus this idea was not only prominent, but it seems to have filled their minds to the exclusion of all else. They sought baptism to escape damnation, not to attain holiness and the blessedness of communion with Christ. The ethical contrast thus presented is most impressive; it is like the difference between light and darkness, or between that sin which is red like crimson and the righteousness of saints which is white as snow. All this commands our respect for Hippolytus, but the truth remains that his language was fitted to confirm rather than to correct what Tertullian described as "a presumptuous confidence in baptism" on the part of unspiritual, and therefore, undiscerning, multitudes.

I cannot close this chapter without referring to an unfortunate error by which a strong disclaimer of infant baptism has been improperly

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\* It would lead us too far afield to discuss the peculiar expression that man may become God, but it is only fair to say that it appears to have been a verbal indiscretion rather than an aberration of thought.

## Hippolytus

attributed to Hippolytus. The supposed quotation represents the bishop as having said: "We in our days defended the baptism of children, which in my time had only begun to be practised in some regions, unless it were as an exception and an innovation. The baptism of infants we did not know."

It will be seen at once that the time-marks in this utterance are peculiar, for the speaker seems to be talking to the men of a later generation, and refers to his own days as lying far back in a past with which his hearers were unacquainted. It is evident, also, that these hearers are supposed to be acquainted with infant baptism, which would be impossible if they were the contemporaries of a man in whose lifetime it had no existence. Worse still, it is obvious that if infant baptism was unknown in the days of Hippolytus, he had no occasion to deny any knowledge of it, nor by any conceivable mental process could such an anachronism have occurred to his mind. On the other hand, it is evident that, if Hippolytus did make such a marvellous statement, he would be convicted out of his own mouth of bearing false witness, for the words, "Baptism of infants we did not know," demonstrate that both speaker and hearers are acquainted with the subject named.

The explanation of this literary puzzle is very simple. In 1842 a complete text of the "Refutation of All Heresies" was discovered, and thereupon a long and heated discussion arose; many scholars

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denying that it was the long-lost work of Hippolytus. In the course of this debate, Baron Bunsen wrote an imaginary "Apology of Hippolytus," in which, by a quaint literary device, he brought up the spirit of the ancient Father from the dead, to address an audience of English critics in London. The speech is said upon the title page to have been delivered "on the Ides of August, MDCCCLI., being the anniversary of the deposition of the remains of Saint Hippolytus in the Catacombs of the Ager Veranus, on the Tiburtine Road, One thousand six hundred and sixteen years after his martyrdom." In the course of this speech (which is well worth reading) Bunsen makes the indignant ghost defend his title to the authorship of the disputed work, and with great skill he puts into ghostly lips such an account of his age as Bunsen believed Hippolytus would really give if permitted to visit the earth and correct the errors of the Church in the present day. Thus the words which have been mistakenly attributed to Hippolytus are not a fraudulent invention, but are avowedly what a distinguished scholar regarded as a true historical statement.

It may be added that Bunsen had no objection to infant baptism when practised as a rite which the Church had liberty to introduce. This makes his testimony as a student of Christian institutions more valuable, and induces me to extend the quotation from his *jeu d'esprit*. After saying, "Baptism of infants we did not know," the sainted ghost con-

## Hippolytus

tinued: "Much less did we ever imagine that such an act could have any of those words of our Saviour applied to it which I see some attach to the external act of a simulacrum of the symbolical immersion, accompanied by the promissory act of third persons, which together they call Baptism. We, the old Fathers, would have considered such an opinion heretical. ✓. . But understand me well: I do not blame the arrangement of infant baptism in itself, unless it be in this respect—that it seems to me to have given rise to superstitious notions of magic influence, such as I have combated in refuting certain heretical sects which believed in sorcery and practised withcraft. But if that so-called immersion is to be justified, it ought to be followed by what I, a bishop and a teacher of the Church, have considered, and do consider now, the principal part of that rite according to Christ's institution and to the apostolic practice: I mean the solemn Christian pledge, not of other persons, but of the responsible catechumen; a pledge preceded first by instruction, then by solemn examination in the faith, and finally by the public confession of the same before the whole church—that is to say, his own congregation. I am not indisposed even to go further, and to praise such a change; there is nothing of such an act in the Bible, but I see in it an act of that Christian liberty which the Spirit sanctifies and even encourages (Bunsen's "Hippolytus and his Age," Vol. ii. 313).

Every reader must judge for himself whether

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

Hippolytus, reviewing the developments of doctrine which had taken place between his martyrdom and his imaginary resurrection, would have given so lenient a judgment on the particular exercise of Christian liberty which has eliminated, not only the knowledge of Christ, but even the knowledge of good and evil, from the conditions of baptism, thereby dispensing with repentance and faith and with the inquiry of a good conscience toward God. I give Bunsen's words, however, as they stand. Possibly he was a little too anxious not to be considered illiberal, or to prejudice his case for Hippolytus, by allowing his phantom to figure as a rude assailant of an Anglican ordinance. This suggestion is rather favoured by the words which close his remarks on baptism: "I should of all things dislike to be uncivil; and still, how can I say that sprinkling with water, followed perhaps by imposition of hands, without Christian examination and solemn pledge before the Christian congregation, is baptism?"

## The Clementine Recognitions

**T**HIS work, which has many points of resemblance to the book of Elkesai, was in circulation early in the third century, and in its present form was probably an adaptation of some older composition. It pretends to have been written by Clement of Rome, and purports to relate the manner of his introduction to the Apostle Peter, his conversion, and subsequent attachment to Peter as a travelling companion and helper in his work. In this capacity, Clement is supposed to have heard many of Peter's discourses, and particularly a great discussion with Simon Magnus, of which a lengthy report is given. One of the chief objects of the author was to discredit Paul, and to represent James, the brother of our Lord, as the head of the entire Christian Church, to whom even Peter was subject. By many incidental touches he insinuates that both James and Peter were at variance with the Apostle of the Gentiles.

The family history of Clement, and the story of his wanderings with Peter, may be regarded by the charity which believeth all things as an innocent romance, or it may be branded as the elaboration of a lie; but, on either theory, the book was

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designed to commend and justify Essene Ebionism, by imputing its tenets to all the Apostles except Paul; but especially to Peter, whom it styles the first Bishop of Rome—also to Clement, whose Epistle to the Corinthians has been reviewed. Critics have shown that the "Recognitions," as now known, must have been freely dealt with by apologetic editors who have laboured to soften or delete its most objectionable features. For our present purpose we can take the book as it stands, because, however much manipulated, and whether forged or not, it throws a strong side-light on opinions which were struggling for acceptance in the third century.

In the course of his instruction in the elements of the Christian religion, Peter is reported to have told Clement that Moses permitted the people to offer sacrifices, but only as a concession to their depraved religious notions, and because he despaired of weaning them from idolatry in any other way. He reluctantly suffered it, like other customs, because of the hardness of their hearts, that he might cut off at least one half of the deeply-ingrained evil, leaving the other half to be corrected by another "Prophet," and at a future time. In due time this Prophet appeared, in the person of Jesus Christ, who commanded the people to cease from sacrificing. But again some concession was required, and therefore, "lest haply they might suppose that on the cessation of sacrifice there was no remission of sins for them, He instituted baptism by water amongst them, in which they



## The Clementine Recognitions

might be absolved from all their sins on the invocation of His name, and for the future, following a perfect life, might abide in immortality; being purified, not by the blood of beasts, but by the purification of the Wisdom of God" (I. 39). To the same effect it is said: "For it is Jesus who by the grace of baptism has put out that fire which the priest kindled for sins" (48).

From this account of the origin and object of baptism it would logically follow that this ordinance has no necessary place in the Christian system, and should be regarded as a temporary aid to the faith of immature believers, and not as an indispensable vehicle, or condition, of grace. But logic was not the strong point of the Ebionite "Peter," and elsewhere he declares that without baptism there can be no salvation. "For he who is regenerated by water, having filled up the measure of good works, is made heir of Him by whom he has been regenerated in incorruption. Wherefore, with prepared minds, approach as sons to a father, that your sins may be washed away, and it may be proved before God that ignorance was their sole cause. . . . And do not imagine that there is any hope for you before God, even if you cultivate all piety and all righteousness, but do not receive baptism" (VI. 8).

No attempt is made to reconcile these different views of baptism, but "Peter" supplies data for a plausible, though not a satisfactory, answer to objectors. It might be pleaded that although

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baptism under the Gospel dispensation, like sacrifice under the law, is a condescending expedient, and not intrinsically necessary as a means of grace, yet, while appointed by God, it is obligatory. An Essene Ebionite could not consistently adopt this line of argument, because he did not regard sacrifice as a Divine institution; but it expresses what I take to have been the author's real view of baptism. In his theology, the element of grace was exceedingly minute. Christianity varied the law, and introduced a new Master, but it left untouched the principle, "This do, and thou shalt live," and baptism was one of the things which must be done, and its omission vitiated all other righteousness. Thus, almost in continuation of our last quotation, Peter is made to say: "Yea rather, he will be worthy of greater punishment, who does good works, but not aright; for merit accrues to men from good works, but only if they be done as God commands. Now God has ordered every one who worships Him to be sealed by baptism; but if you refuse, and obey your own will rather than God's, you are without doubt contrary and hostile to His will." According to this, baptism is a test of obedience, and submission to it is a good work, from which merit accrues; while its refusal is fatal, because a clear proof of insubordination and hostility to God.

In the following paragraph it is presented as a test of faith: "Betake yourselves therefore to these waters, for they alone can quench the violence of the future fire; and he who delays to approach

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them, it is evident that the idol of unbelief remains in him, and by it he is prevented from hastening to the waters which confer salvation. For whether you be righteous or unrighteous, baptism is necessary for you in every respect: for the righteous, that perfection may be accomplished in him, and he may be born again to God; for the unrighteous, that pardon may be vouchsafed him of the sins which he has committed in ignorance. Therefore all should hasten to be born again to God without delay, because the end of every one's life is uncertain " (8).

This passage reminds us of Tertullian's treatment of the subject. He was angry with those who would dispense with baptism because salvation was not impossible without it, and he refused to admit that a Divine ordinance could be slighted with impunity; but this partial agreement only masks an attack upon Tertullian. Tertullian boldly said that sound faith is secure of salvation, but "Peter" will not hear of such a doctrine. His advice is, Make haste, for nothing can save you from the everlasting fire, if overtaken by death before you obey. In his system, therefore, baptism was specially valuable as a test of obedience and of faith, and not as a means of conferring grace, yet absolutely indispensable, and from this stern rule even martyrs were not excepted.

Hitherto we have found no definite anticipation of the Augustinian doctrine of sin, and nothing which deserves such a description can be detected

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in the "Recognitions," but the following sentence may be suspected of some influence in preparing the way for a doctrine quite unknown to its author: "For our first birth descends through the fire of lust, and therefore, by the Divine appointment, this second birth is introduced by water, which may extinguish the natural fire; and that the soul, enlightened by the heavenly Spirit, may cast away the fear of the first birth" (IX. 7). The idea thus broached is worked out somewhat fully, and with unpleasant details which may be dispensed with. The connecting of baptism with a birth-stain is interesting, and historically significant; but the differences between the doctrine thus vaguely taught and the Augustinian dogma are immense. In the "Recognitions" no attempt is made to trace the evil behind the actual parents of a child to other generations, much less to Adam. The evil suffered is ascribed to demoniacal influence. Parental misconduct is blamed for giving an opening to demons, but the injury is inflicted directly and immediately by these evil spirits, and their polluting activity is not linked in any way with the original temptation of man in Eden. The mischief is also plainly described as an injury suffered by children, which entails upon them no culpability. It is distinctly represented as an evil which requires remedy, and not as a fault which deserves punishment, or admits of forgiveness. Instead of children being blamed for their misfortune, it is said that "parents are responsible for their children's defects of this sort."

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These statements indicate profound and truly vital differences between the teaching of the "Recognitions" and that of Augustine, but beneath them all there lies a common element in the thought of a congenital defect which water baptism has been appointed to wash away.

## Origen

**O**RIGEN was born about A.D. 185-6, and died at some time in the reign of Gallus (251-254). It has been surmised with some probability that his mother was a Jewess in blood, though a Christian in faith. His father, Leonides, was a highly-cultured man, and a staunch Christian, who suffered martyrdom in the reign of Severus, when Origen was in his seventeenth year. Under his father's guidance Origen became an eager student of the Scriptures, and subsequently obtained a more advanced training in the great Christian School of Alexandria, of which he afterwards became the illustrious chief. When he had acquired fame as a teacher he still toiled to increase his efficiency by studying the various non-Christian systems of philosophy which were influencing the thought of the age.

Origen was a prolific writer, and no man was better able to bear witness to the condition of Christian life and thought in the first half of the third century, but unhappily his works have suffered grievous maltreatment at the hands of unscrupulous enemies and audacious admirers. Rufinus, who sought to commend Origen to the

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Latin Church, confessed that he altered or omitted anything which he thought heretical, or likely to offend. Professing to translate, he presumed to interpret by interpolations and excisions, and he carried this cruel kindness to extraordinary lengths. It would be idle to discuss the meaning of notoriously corrupt passages, and our only safe course is to ascertain Origen's opinions from works which are unquestionably his own.

Among many philosophical objections to the Christian religion, he found it needful to deal with one which attacked the Scriptural statement that the world had its beginning in time. If this were so, said certain heretics, "What was God doing before the world began? For it is at once impious and absurd to say that the nature of God is inactive and immovable, or to suppose that goodness at one time did not do good, and omnipotence at one time did not exercise his power." To this Origen replied that God did not begin to work when He made this visible world, and, on supposed Scriptural authority, he affirmed the existence of many older worlds, one following another, not only in time, but in a wisely planned sequence, which enabled God to carry on the moral discipline of His intelligent creatures through illimitable ages, the denizens of one world having a revived existence in the next, and being assigned a position corresponding to their moral and intellectual capacity and desert.

In thus replying to a philosophical objection to the common theory of creation in time, Origen

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laid a foundation for a system of theology which has been seriously misconstrued. He held that men are born into this world under a burden of responsibility for errors and sins of which they have no recollection, but, though forgotten, these sins were none the less their own personal acts in a former state of existence. Origen insists on the principle that God cannot righteously judge any human being except for what is done in the exercise of his own free-will. Thus he declares that the disparities and inequalities of lot observable in the world can be reconciled with the justice of God only on the assumption that "every one has the reason in himself why he has been placed in this or that rank of life" (De Princ. Bk. iii., chap. v. 4). He complains that many had become fatalists for lack of any moral or rational explanation of the present state of things; and he attributes this failure to the fact that they took no account of any world but this, and thus were unable to perceive "that it was owing to preceding causes, originating in free-will, that this variety of arrangement," which causes so much perplexity, had been instituted by God.

Origen's views on the subject of salvation and man's ultimate destiny are in perfect accord with this doctrine of pre-existence. He scorned any conception of salvation which did not consist in the free response of man as a moral being to the upward call of God in Christ. This teaching is developed with great power in his treatment of



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1 Corinthians xv. 28: "And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all." He boldly affirmed that this passage must be taken to announce the "perfect restoration of the whole creation," including the recovery of all who had become God's enemies. Before the attainment of this consummation, ages of ages might elapse, and innumerable worlds might provide successive schools of discipline; but God would not fail to achieve His purpose.

Origen carefully guards against the not improbable objection that this universalism involves an overwhelming use of Divine power to conquer the antagonism of created wills. "It must not be imagined," he observes, "that the subjection is to be brought about by the pressure of necessity," for from its very nature it must and will be accomplished by moral suasion, "by word, reason and teaching; by a call to a better course of things, by the employment also of suitable threatenings, which will justly impend over those who despise any care or attention to their salvation and usefulness." He does not pretend to explain all God's methods, or to penetrate the mysteries of man's pre-existence. But while ignorant of these secret things, Origen was absolutely certain of the principle that whatever God does will be done "consistently with the preservation of the freedom of will in all rational creatures"; and resting on this basal principle

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he describes a vast educational scheme by which all the rational creatures God has made are being trained to know and understand and approve God's will. His theory represents God as carrying on this process through immeasurable ages rather than deprive His creatures of their freedom, even for their apparent good; and vindicates Divine justice by affirming that God's treatment of individuals, which seems so unequal, is determined by the behaviour of each in this life or in some previous state of existence.

This theory of cosmical education excludes the idea of original sin and of sacramental salvation. From Augustine's point of view, Origen appeared to be the greatest heretic who had ever been tolerated by the general Church, and Rufinus could defend him only by omitting much that he had written, and interpolating much which he would have indignantly disowned. Erasmus declared that, in reading this man's "translations," it was impossible to tell whether we are reading Origen or Rufinus, but while this remark gives a perfectly truthful idea of the extent to which the text has been tampered with, it might fairly be reversed in regard to the nature and theological colour of the alterations made. The doctrinal emendations of Rufinus are in many cases so glaring that they are like crimson patches on a white robe, which only colour-blindness could mistake.

In his work against Celsus, Origen had occasion to state the conditions and manner of initiation

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into the Christian Church, and he makes it clear that no change in the direction of infant baptism had taken place within his observation. Fastening on the fact that the Gospel was preached to the poor, the sinful, and the ignorant, Celsus had pretended to believe that Christian preachers were conscious of their inability to plead their cause before cultured and philosophic minds. He roundly declared that it was "only foolish and low individuals, and children, of whom teachers of the divine word wish to make converts." Origen had, of course, no difficulty in showing that it was the special glory of the Christian religion that it had a message of hope for the meanest and worst of mankind, yet not to them only, but also to the highest and best (III. 49).

But while thus glorying in the reproach of addressing sinful and lowly persons, Origen was careful to repudiate the charge of receiving vicious and unenlightened persons into the Christian community. He retorts upon Celsus that, in addressing the ignorant populace, Christian preachers resemble the greatest philosophers, who "converse in public," since these do not pick and choose their hearers, but speak to all who stand and listen. It is one thing, however, he points out, to teach the foolish and depraved, and quite another to receive them into the Church. In order to make this distinction plain, Origen described the several stages of initiation by which admission to the Church was guarded.

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If any who heard the public appeals of Christian preachers desired fuller instruction, some effort was made to test the earnestness and sincerity of their wish; if they bore this preliminary trial they were granted some private instruction; this was continued until they "sufficiently evinced their desire towards a virtuous life." After this, they were introduced into a class of unbaptized adherents, consisting of "those who are beginners, and are receiving admission, but who have not yet obtained the mark of complete purification." From this elementary class, the fit were promoted into a more advanced class of catechumens, consisting of those "who have manifested to the best of their ability their intention to desire no other things than are approved by Christians." Even among the members of this second class there was still a further sifting process to be undergone, for "among these there are certain persons appointed to make inquiries regarding the lives and behaviour of those who join them, in order that they may prevent those who commit acts of infamy from coming into their public assemblies, while those of a different character they receive with their whole heart, in order that they may daily make them better."

To this account of the "strait gate" by which alone men could enter the Church, Origen added yet another item of information, concerning those who were vanquished by licentiousness or any other sin during their probation. Over these persons

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Christians made lamentation as over the dead, "because they are lost and dead to God"; but, if they subsequently manifested a becoming change, they were rejoiced over as having risen from the dead, and might be received into the Church at a future time, but this could be done only after a greater interval than in the case of those who had suffered no such lapse (III. 51).

In different terms, but to the same effect, Origen replies to the kindred charge that Christians invite children and the vilest characters to participate in their mysteries. In answer to such statements he observes "that it is not the same thing to invite those who are *sick in soul* to be *cured*, and those who are in *health* to the *knowledge* and *study* of Divine things. We, however, keeping both these things in view, at first invite all men to be healed, and exhort those who are sinners to come to the consideration of the doctrines which teach men not to sin, and those who are devoid of understanding to those which beget wisdom, and those who are children to rise in their thoughts to manhood, and those who are simply unfortunate to . . . blessedness. And when those who have been turned towards virtue have made progress, and have shown that they have been purified by the word, and have led as far as they can a better life, then, and not before, do we invite them to participation in our mysteries. . . . Not to *participation in mysteries* then and to fellowship in the wisdom hidden in a mystery, which God ordained before

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the world to the glory of His saints, do we invite the wicked man, and the thief, and . . . all those whom Celsus may enumerate . . . but such as these we invite to be *healed*." In summing up his reply to the charge that the Church received into her communion the immature, the feeble, and the vile, Origen somewhat scornfully declares that Celsus "does not know the difference between inviting the wicked to be healed, and initiating those already purified into the sacred mysteries!" (III. 59-61).

It will be noticed that in none of these extracts is baptism actually named. The clearest reference to it is that which calls it "the mark of complete purification," and this shows that Origen viewed it, not as a means of purification, but as the divinely-appointed seal which the Church, acting with jealous scrupulosity, bestowed upon well-approved converts, after a prolonged course of moral discipline and doctrinal instruction. Baptism is also, I doubt not, referred to as a rite of initiation into the Christian mysteries; and here again it is said to be granted only to those "already purified." If Origen, as many modern controversialists represent, had been familiar with the baptism of infants for their purification, what defence could be set up for his suppression of such a fact when repelling the taunt that Christians attracted none but childish and feeble persons? If his apology is not to be branded as an elaborate falsehood, we must accept his statement that the only persons received into the Church

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in his day were those who had been patiently instructed in the truths of the Gospel, and had evinced in their lives the transforming power of Christ.

## Cyprian

CYPRIAN, one of the noblest figures in the ancient Church, comes suddenly into view as a middle-aged man at the time of his conversion and baptism, in A.D. 246. His birth-place is unknown, and of his parents little can be said, except that they provided him with the highest intellectual training available in their day. Prior to his conversion he practised as an advocate, and either by inheritance, or by rare success in his profession, he acquired great wealth. On becoming a Christian he devoted most of his property to religious purposes, and consecrated his entire energies to the service of the Church. So profoundly were the people impressed by his brilliant gifts, his assiduity, and his saintly life, that within two years of his baptism he was called to accept the office of bishop. Ten years later he was beheaded in the persecution of Valerian, and in the course of these few years he acquired an influence in the general Church which raised him to an untitled pre-eminence, and still leaves him the most prominent Churchman of his age.

It is difficult to write with brevity of Cyprian, or to state his opinions without discussing several



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questions which have become the subject of embittered controversy. He is glorified by Roman Catholic writers as the most ancient and distinguished exponent of their ecclesiastical system, the man who first developed a theory of the Church which was based upon the primacy of Peter and his successors in Rome. Anglicans deny that he favoured the supremacy of a single bishop, and are able to demonstrate that the passages relied upon to prove that he did so are spurious, and can give the history of their interpolation. Protestants who are not Episcopalians, and have no subservient respect for patristic opinions, have cared but little for this dispute, and have been content to let episcopal communities settle their differences for themselves. Baptists, in particular, have viewed Cyprian with disapproval as one of the chief offenders in the work of introducing pædobaptism; and, in common with other Evangelical bodies, have usually regarded him as a narrow-minded ecclesiastic, whose influence was cast on the side of a priestly sacramental system, which largely through him became the dominant feature of Latin Christianity.

It is difficult to judge such a man with strict impartiality, but it is my wish to guard against the distorting effect of prejudice, and to study him as one of the most potent factors in a great transitional movement, and emphatically a representative man—a man, therefore, who neither originated the movement of his age, nor determined its

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direction, but who did much to give it a conquering impetus. To misread Cyprian's mind is to misread the history of Christian thought, and those who love truth better than any Church, and better than their own opinions, will at least endeavour to read him with impartial eyes.

To appreciate the man, and to understand his work, it is necessary to know something of the social conditions under which he lived, and from various sources, but chiefly from his own writings, the materials for a vivid picture may be gathered.

In regard to the Pagan population of Carthage and the region round about, it will suffice to say that morally it was no better than Rome in the days of Paul. It would be pleasant to think that the Church stood out in lustrous purity against this dark background; but Cyprian makes it clear that a majority of Christians were divided from pagans by their creed, and by very little else. Since Tertullian died, the Church had greatly advanced in numbers, but she had done this at the cost of a serious decline in the average quality of her members. Tertullian saw the commencement of this process, but Cyprian was called upon to preside over a community which he likened to a city smitten with the plague.

Writing at the close of a severe onslaught of Pagan persecution, Cyprian declared that it had been rather a Divine visitation for the chastisement of a corrupt Church than an attack of the wicked on the righteous. He called upon his brethren to

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confess that "The Lord has desired His family to be tried, because a prolonged peace had corrupted the discipline" of the Church. In a mingled strain of denunciation and confession he paints this terrible picture of the times: "With the insatiable ardour of covetousness they devoted themselves to the increase of their property. Among the priests there was no devotedness to religion; among the ministers there was no sound faith; in their works there was no mercy; in their manners there was no discipline. . . . Crafty frauds were used to deceive the hearts of the simple, subtle meanings for circumventing the brethren. . . . They would swear not only rashly, but, even more, they would swear falsely. . . . Very many bishops, who ought to furnish both exhortation and example to others, despising their divine charge, became agents in secular business, forsook their throne, deserted their people, wandered about over foreign provinces, hunted the markets for gainful merchandise, while brethren were starving in the Church. They sought to possess money in hoards, they seized estates by crafty deceits, they increased their gains by multiplying usuries" ("The Lapsed," 6).

The grievous lack of Christian principle, which persecution proved to be almost universal, is still more painfully disclosed in the account of what happened when the tribulation began: "Immediately at the first words of the threatening foe, the greatest number of the brethren betrayed their faith, and were cast down, not by the onset of

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persecution, but cast themselves away by voluntary lapse. . . . They did not wait to be apprehended ere they ascended, or to be interrogated ere they denied. Many were conquered before the battle, prostrated before the attack. Nor did they leave it to be said for them that they appeared to sacrifice to idols unwillingly. They ran to the market-place of their own accord; freely they hastened to death, as if they had formerly wished it, as if they would embrace an opportunity now given which they had always desired" ("The Lapsed," 8).

This alacrity to apostatise on the part of almost all the members of the Church in Carthage betrays the hollowness of their profession, and the prevalence of shameless vice behind this hypocrisy is betrayed by the fact that even many Confessors, men who had actually suffered imprisonment and torture without denying Christ, were charged by Cyprian with offences unfit to be named in these pages. These Confessors seem to have found in the sufferings for which they were honoured a licence to indulge in lasciviousness.

While the morality of the Church was in this diseased condition, there was also a sad lack of mental enlightenment. There seems to be room in most minds for some irrational extra-beliefs, and in many cases these do little harm. But the case is much more serious when traditional superstitions are allowed to distort Christian truth, and to misinterpret the realities of religious experience. There

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is ample evidence that this corrupting process had been at work in Carthage, and that Cyprian himself was somewhat influenced by it, and helped to strengthen it in other minds. His credulity is illustrated by readiness to find a miracle where investigation would have found either a silly invention or the working of an evil conscience. This is made apparent by several incidents which he relates without the least suspicion of their character. I may give one of these stories as a fair sample.

With great solemnity, and at considerable length, Cyprian relates an incident which he himself had witnessed, and any old nurse could have explained. It appears that, when threatened with arrest as Christians, the parents of an infant which had been baptized, abandoned it in their haste to escape. This child was taken to a magistrate, who forced some defiled food into its mouth, and thus made it a lapsed Christian! After a time the mother recovered the child, and brought her to Cyprian's church, where she cried loudly, and showed other signs of infantile discomfort. The innocent celibate ascribed this disturbance, not to the usual physical cause, but to the "violent excitement of her mind," although already described as too young to prevent or even know what had been done. But worse signs were to follow. In those days the African Church was sufficiently consistent to recognise the baptized of every age as members, and as such she gave them the Lord's Supper. During the Communion service a deacon offered

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the cup to those present, and in due course he attempted to give it to the little infant, but nature was instinctively disinclined for food, and this is how Cyprian diagnosed her disorder: "The child, by the instinct of the divine majesty, turned away its face, compressed its mouth with resisting lips, and refused the cup." The deacon, poor man, thought it his duty to persevere, "and forced on her some of the sacrament of the cup," with a result which anywhere but in a church would have been foreseen and understood by her mother. "Then there followed a sobbing and vomiting. In a profaned body and mouth the Eucharist could not remain; the draught, sanctified in the blood of the Lord, burst forth from the polluted stomach. So great is the Lord's power, so great is His majesty. The secrets of darkness were disclosed under its light, and not even hidden crimes deceived God's priest" ("The Lapsed," 25, 26).

To many people it may seem almost incredible that a man of strong and highly-cultured intellect should be capable of writing such nonsense, and weaving it into a serious argument; but the fact is that Cyprian did so use it, and a still more extraordinary fact is that no one appears to have expressed surprise or contempt. It is difficult for us to transport ourselves into an intellectual atmosphere which prevented the entire community from being convulsed with laughter at Cyprian's expense. It must be remembered, however, that Cyprian had been brought up in a school which favoured

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credulity as strongly as the prevalence to-day of a critical and inquiring habit of mind predisposes us to search out a natural cause for everything that happens. I have mentioned Cyprian's participation in the unscientific spirit of his age and country, not to disparage him, but to show how easy it was for such a capacious believer to form an exaggerated estimate of the grace which might be conferred through a sacrament.

It is admitted on all hands that Cyprian made great mistakes, but we cannot refuse to admire the manner in which he laid bare the real cause of the malady from which the Church was suffering, and the skill with which he prescribed the sole method of cure. Unfortunately, the remedy he prescribed is not the remedy he actually administered to the sick patient, as I shall have occasion to show. He was like a physician who correctly named the drug he required, but went out into the forest and plucked a wrong plant, and used it, fully believing it was right.

With fine discernment he recognised that the great danger of an age "when Christianity is for the first time widely accepted is the presentment of old error under Christian forms." It was more admirable for one living in such an age to see this profound principle than for us to see it after centuries of copious illustration. Christ foreshadowed this danger in His parable of the tares. He knew that the subtlest peril of His followers would arise from counterfeit truth and counterfeit

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Christian life. In the night, the dark time when men rest from their labours in the field, the enemy, who cannot dig up the separate grains of good seed, creeps from his lair, and scatters the seed of a plant which shall spring up in the midst of the wheat, and closely resemble it, but be useless for food, and injurious to the good plant by robbing it of nutriment, and in other ways which every farmer knows in this country as well as in the East. In Carthage these tares were rankly abundant in the persons of numbers who had some of the forms of godliness without the power thereof—people to whom the Spirit of Christ had been nominally imparted by a sacrament, but in no other sense; converts who wore the name of Christ, but in whom His mind was unformed. These tares were present also in teachings which bore the name of great Evangelical doctrines, but lacked the sanctifying power of the truth as it is in Jesus. To some extent Cyprian was aware of these facts, and although his own instruction had been too imperfect to enable him to detect every particular counterfeit, it must be placed to his credit that he saw the danger of propagating heathenish ideas and habits under Christian forms and names.

Still higher honour must be awarded to Cyprian because he not only detected the danger, but saw and stated clearly the one thing needful to guard the Church against her insidious enemy. In one of his finest passages he describes the craft of the devil in devising new frauds to deceive the in-



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incautious, when he despairs of keeping them in the darkness of the old way, and how he works through those who, having been deceived, become deceivers, still calling themselves Christians while walking in darkness, and feigning things "like the truth," whereby, under the pretext of faith, they "make void the truth by their subtlety." Having thus exposed the origin of the tares which grow up and choke the wheat, he exclaims: "This happens, beloved brethren, so long as we do not return to the source of truth, while we do not seek the Head or keep the teaching of the heavenly Master" ("Unity of the Church," 3).

Nothing could be better than this utterance. It sounds like the voice of a root and branch reformer. It might be adopted as a motto by all who sigh for the restoration of primitive Christianity. After reading it, we anticipate an immediate reference to those ancient writings which Cyprian revered as the source of a sound knowledge of the Master's mind. But in this we are too sanguine, for, having pointed his readers to the original fount of living waters, he straightway forbids them to draw freely for themselves, and bids them drink only from the ecclesiastical bucket held out by the official teachers of the Church as defined by himself. Instead of presenting vital truths in the wholesome words of Christ, he serves up the misused utterance of our Lord to Peter upon which the whole superstructure of the Papacy has ostensibly been reared: "The Lord speaks to Peter, saying, I say unto thee

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that thou art Peter ; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." On the strength of this utterance, coupled with the similar words spoken to the other disciples, he boldly assumes that the Episcopal body to which he belonged inherited a sole authority to open and shut the gates of salvation, to punish and forgive, to teach and govern the Church, and to communicate the grace of God through the sacraments. The one essential truth for ordinary men is therefore this doctrine of the Church, and the business of truth-seeking at the ancient fount is reduced to the simple duty of submitting to episcopal authority! This he calls an "easy proof for faith," and "a short summary of the truth" (4).

The same mixture of noble sentiment and stultifying inference may be seen in a famous letter which Cyprian wrote to Pompey, the Bishop of Sabrata, who was interested in his controversy with the Bishop of Rome: "There is a short method for religious and simple minds, both to put away error and to discover and develop truth. For if we return to the fountain-head of the divine tradition, human error disappears; and having seen the reason of the heavenly mysteries, whatever lay hid in obscurity under the gloom and mists of darkness opens out into the light of truth. If some

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aqueduct, whose stream was ever large and copious before, fails suddenly, do we not proceed to its fount, there to ascertain the cause of that failure; whether the flow has dwindled through the drying up of springs at the source, or whether indeed it gushes forth in full, unshrunk volume, but has failed in mid-course; that so, if it is the fault of a broken or leaky channel that the water does not ceaselessly run in uninterrupted flow, that the channel may be repaired and strengthened, and the collected waters be delivered for the use and drinking of the city in all the same plentifulness and purity with which they issue from the spring" (Ep. lxxiii. 10).

Alike for style and substance this passage is admirable, and it might well have come from the pen of John Wicliffe or Martin Luther. Duly applied to the condition of the Church, it would have compelled Cyprian to reconsider the dogmas which he had received from his immediate teachers, and was himself imparting to others, and to compare them with the most ancient and authoritative sources of information concerning the actual teaching of "the heavenly Master." But again we find him held in the bonds of a fallacy which confounded the opinions of the Church of his own day with the fountain-head of truth in Christ Himself; and substituted the river of tradition as it flowed through existing ecclesiastical channels, after centuries of possible pollution, for the springs of living water which gushed from the Master's lips.

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It does not immediately transpire that Cyprian had thus erred, for he goes on to counsel his fellow ministers to become reformers if research should discover the need for correction: "And this it behoves the priests of God to do now, if they would keep the divine precepts, that if in any respect the truth have wavered or vacillated, we should return to our Lord and origin, and the evangelical and apostolical tradition; and thence may arise the ground of our action, whence both our order and origin have arisen." Here the sentiment is still excellent, and I believe that the writer was intensely in earnest, and quite sincere; but this noble exhortation to ascend to the ancient sources of Christianity is distorted into an appeal to his fellow bishops' sacramental prerogatives, and to deny the existence of Christian life outside the charmed circle of their acknowledged sway! "For it has been delivered to us," he exclaims, "that there is one God, and one Christ, and one hope, and one faith, and one Church, and one baptism ordained only in the one Church, from which unity whosoever will depart must needs be found with heretics; and while he upholds them against the Church, he impugns the sacrament of the divine tradition" (11).

On this question of unity Cyprian will have no inquiry. It is for him the one truth to be maintained by priests, and to be accepted by the people who desire salvation. If men are outside this organised unity, it matters not what they believe.

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As all the inhabitants of the earth perished in the flood, except eight persons who were shut in the ark, so "neither can he appear to be saved by baptism who has not been baptized in the Church which is established in the unity of the Lord according to the sacrament of the one ark" (11). Error inside the Church is only the mistake of an obedient child, but a blameless life and a flawless creed has no avail to undo the suicidal sin of separation. Without the gates of which Catholic bishops held the keys, austere Puritans, dissolute Gnostics, and benighted Pagans would all be involved in a common ruin, for separation from the Church is separation from Christ, and separation from Christ is everlasting death.\*

Christians who believe in the watchword, "Back to Christ," and find no guarantee of apostolicity in any historical succession of bishops or in any continuity of organised bodies, must deplore the fatuity which allowed Cyprian to confound submission to a Hierarchy with a return to the fountain-head of truth in the teachings of our Lord, but there is no reason to suspect him of insincerity. Being raised to the head of the Carthaginian Church while still a novice in the faith, he was constrained to magnify the office, which entitled him to deal strongly with the corrupt state into which the community had sunk. He saw how feebly the duties of overseer had been discharged; how lax

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\* See Appendix, Note I.

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had been the discipline, and how carelessly the doors of the Church had been opened to faithless and immoral persons, and it appeared to him that the one thing needful was to draw a sharper line of demarcation between the Church and the world.

Desiring thus to define the Church more strictly, he failed to discover or invent any frontier line except that of obedience to ordained rulers. The idea of a spiritual body, comprising all believers in Christ, in all places, and with many diversities of thought and custom, never dawned upon his mind, and he had no misgivings about the general conception of the Catholic Church as a visible corporation, whose members could be named and numbered and enrolled. To this body he believed that Christ had committed the custody of truth, and the administration of the sacraments through the hands of appointed servants. Believing, as he did, that baptism conferred the Holy Spirit, and imparted the forgiveness of sins, membership of Christ's body, everlasting life, and an inheritance reserved in heaven, it seemed nothing less than a sacrilegious absurdity to admit that persons outside the Church could bestow upon others these stupendous gifts which they did not themselves possess. In this way Cyprian's endeavour to reform the Church soon developed a controversy with Stephen of Rome, and others, who wished to recognise the baptism of heretics as valid.

In accordance with his theory of unity, Cyprian, supported by three African Councils, contended that

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the so-called baptism of heretics was a spurious imitation of the rite, and ought to be ignored when any who had received it sought admission to the true Church. He defended the "anabaptism" of the Carthaginian Church by saying that those "who have been dipped by heretics, when they come are not re-baptized among us, but are baptized. For indeed they do not receive anything there, where there is nothing" (Ep. lxx. 1). With great force he observes that "water alone is not able to wash away sins and to sanctify a man, unless he have also the Holy Spirit." If Cyprian had carried out his own advice to return to the first spring of Christian life, he might have been led to reform his whole theory of baptism by perceiving that water baptism depends for its validity on the subjective state of its recipient, and not on the status or character of the man who officiates. But he did not see this, and from his own standpoint he made the best use of the weapon he had forged by, framing a dilemma which greatly puzzled his opponents. "We are agreed," he urges, "that there cannot be a regenerating baptism without the Holy Spirit, hence it is evident either (1) that heretics are capable of imparting the Holy Spirit; or (2) that because they cannot give what they do not possess, their water baptism is null and void, and cannot be recognised by the Church."

Cyprian's opponents clearly saw that the logical consequences of this view would be terrible, but their replies were rather evasive than convincing.

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They justly said that, if the validity of baptism depended on the genuine faith of an administrator, no man could know whether he had been regenerated! A priest's ecclesiastical status might be known, but who could probe the secrets of another mind? If, therefore, undiscoverable qualifications for baptizing were to be regarded as vital, the salvation of millions in former generations must be shrouded in uncertainty; and every Christian, or rather, every man who was a follower of Christ in heart and life, would be haunted with an appalling fear of discovering in the Day of Judgment that he had never received the grace of life.

It would be wearisome and unprofitable to review all the arguments and retorts which were bandied to and fro in the wordy fray which vexed the churches for many years. By degrees it became evident that the Christian Church would crumble to ruins unless she could find a theory which avoided the incredible and torturing consequences of Cyprian's demand, and yet escaped the horns of the dilemma on which Stephen seemed to be impaled. No conceivable theory could meet the case unless it freed baptism from dependence on the worthiness of the person who administered it. Cyprian's hierarchical theory of Church unity was warmly welcomed by the clergy as a protection of their prerogatives and dignity, but his inference that they alone could baptize involved consequences they dared not confront. Official prudence



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and human sympathies forbade them to pronounce a knell of everlasting doom over the graves of myriads who had died in faith, but whose baptism had been irregular. It was perceived also that in many parts of the world a "Catholic priest" might be out of reach, and a sick man might have to choose between dying unbaptized and receiving the rite at the hands of a heretic, or a Puritan separatist. Even in Rome or Carthage, cases might be foreseen in which a man's salvation by baptism would be impossible if none but a regular priest could confer it. For these reasons, High Churchmanship, though never willing to part with any of its functions, or to share them with outsiders, was compelled to give up the proposed monopoly of the right to baptize.

These practical considerations, rather than any abstract reasonings or Scriptural teaching, led to a general, but by no means universal, rejection of Cyprian's views, but they left unsolved the problem—How can the Church concede the validity of heretical baptism, without assenting to the obnoxious inference that unbelievers, or separatists, are able to confer the Holy Spirit?

Of course, the simplest solution of this problem was to deny that water baptism is ever the necessary or efficient means of imparting the Spirit, and this denial was made at the time in a treatise which I reserve for separate treatment, but this view was too revolutionary for favourable consideration.

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The theory which ultimately prevailed discriminates between the human agent, whose part is to dip the candidate in water, and to pronounce the prescribed formula, and the Divine Employer by whom alone the Spirit is conferred. It was urged, with success, that God would honour His own Name whenever it was invoked, and that the character of the man invoking it could not vitiate a Divine pledge. Thus a minister might be immoral, or heretical, but God would bestow His Spirit whenever the baptismal formula was pronounced.

In so far as this dexterous evasion of Cyprian's dilemma tended to increase faith in the direct action of God in man's salvation, it may be regarded with satisfaction. It was fitted to diminish the superstitious idea of magical grace operating through water, and it must have led many to ask whether the God who is too great and good to consign people to perdition because their baptizer was a heretic, might not also dispense with a ceremonial washing. It is impossible to ascertain how many people in North Africa still clung to Tertullian's belief that faith is always sure of salvation, but the intuitions of loving hearts are hopeful of God's mercy even under the shadow of depressing creeds.

Cyprian's stern limitation of the right to baptize was motived by the resolve to defend the gates of the Church at any cost, and it was not unnatural for him to think that the wider theory would prove to

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be a fatal surrender of the keys. In this, however, he was mistaken, as rigid theorists usually are in this illogical world. He had no need to fear this his fellow Bishops would efface themselves. They conceded the one rite to unordained hands, and with this their generosity ended. They carefully avoided a definition of the exact benefit conferred by heretical baptism, and while declaring that God gave His Spirit in conjunction with the ceremony, they still insisted that the benefit was so incomplete that subsequent admission to the true Church was indispensable to salvation. Thus the concession which Cyprian dreaded was robbed of all its practical value, and the only definable effect of it was that when applicants for fellowship came from heretical bodies the physical washing with water was not repeated.

Before leaving the subject of anabaptism\* it is but fair to emphasise the fact that it was practised in the third century by two totally different parties, and with almost opposite designs. By one party in Rome and elsewhere it was adopted as a mere device to smooth the path of return for recreants who had saved their lives by denying their Lord in times of danger, but were eager to resume their places in the Church when the storm of persecution had subsided. In their case it was, as already seen (p. 166), an outcome of moral and religious laxity, and deserved contempt as a farcical substitute for

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\* See Appendix, Note II.

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repentance. But the Carthaginian Bishops, with Cyprian at their head, were untainted with the fashionable insincerity which left the door of the Church to swing so loosely that men could go out and come in again at convenience. They disagreed with the Novatians, who denied that the Church had a right to re-admit the lapsed on any terms whatever, but morally they also were Puritans in their desire to keep unworthy persons outside the Church.

It will have been noticed that while reviewing the great controversy no reference has been made to infant baptism, although Cyprian is generally credited with a large share in its introduction. It is very remarkable that the case for or against the re-baptism of children is never alluded to by the disputants on either side, and almost all their arguments presuppose that the persons under discussion have received instruction, and have imbibed some sort of faith. This fact renders it highly improbable that even in Carthage it had become the rule for the children of Christian parents to be baptized in early infancy, but it does not set aside some direct evidence that the practice existed, and that many of the clergy had no misgivings on the subject.

It has been seen that Tertullian resisted a tendency to hasten the baptism of young children, but in his time no one proposed to give the seal of faith to those who were too young to be schooled

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into uttering some form of request. But in the course of half a century this scruple had to some extent been discarded. The evidence of this fact is slight, but it is adequate. In illustrating the superstition of the age, I related the story of an infant who rejected the Lord's Supper, and this incident shows that in Carthage an infant could be taken to a Communion service without exciting any surprise on the part of the priest; and, of course, infant communion must have been preceded by infant baptism. There is also direct evidence in one of Cyprian's letters that babe-baptism was not unknown, and that he himself had no repugnance to the innovation.

It appears that Fidus, who was an African Bishop, protested against a minister being required to take into his arms an infant of less than eight days old. This fastidious cleric considered that "the aspect of an infant in the first days of its birth is not pure, so that any one of us would still shudder at kissing it." In support of his contention Fidus urged that the law of circumcision should be taken as a model by the Christian Church. This opinion was formally submitted to a Council over which Cyprian presided, and at which sixty-five others were present. Cyprian's letter was an official intimation to Fidus of the conclusion arrived at by the Council, and has an almost unique interest because it marks a definite stage in the slow and insidious evolution of thought and practice we are endeavouring to trace (Ep. lviii.).

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It is significant that, although not one of the assembled Bishops agreed with Fidus, not one of them appears to have revived Tertullian's plea for delay, although he was still honoured in North Africa as a great authority. This striking fact proves that Cyprian was not the actual initiator of infant baptism. The Council was held only seven years after Cyprian's conversion, and it is inconceivable that in so short a time he could have originated a new custom, and brought all the African Bishops to its unanimous approval. Whether we think him right or wrong, it is only just to regard him as accepting, without protest, the views current among the Christian leaders of Carthage, and probably without realising the extent to which they ran counter to the teachings of Tertullian. The one clear fact is that during the first half of the third century a notable change had taken place in the Church of Carthage; a change which was portended by the very efforts which Tertullian made to prevent it, and not only portended, but aided, by the defectiveness of his arguments. It must be carefully noted, however, that this evidence applies to Northern Africa alone.

It is thus absolutely certain that Cyprian and his colleagues approved of infant baptism, but it is equally certain that their theory concerning it differed greatly from the one which was subsequently formulated by Augustine, and adopted by the then dominant party in the Church. There is undoubtedly a germ of the Augustinian dogma of

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Original Sin in Cyprian's letter, but it is expressed in very different language, and is mixed up with pleas which breathe a tender regard for infants as coming into the world straight from the hand of God, and combat the idea that there is in them anything impure. Fidus had not pretended that infants were morally defiled. His objection to embrace them was a bit of æsthetic prudery such as only a oelibate could feel; and Cyprian lifts the question up to a higher level, rebuking his false delicacy as an imputation on the perfect work of God. "For what is wanting," he exclaims, "to him who has once been formed in the womb by the hand of God? 'To the pure all things are pure,' Nor ought any of us to shudder at that which God hath condescended to make. For although the infant is still fresh from his birth, yet it is not such that anyone should shudder at kissing it in giving grace and making peace; since in the kiss of an infant every one of us ought, for his very religion's sake, to consider the still recent hands of God themselves, which in some sort we are kissing, in the man lately formed and freshly born, when we are embracing that which God has made." In a similar strain Cyprian refers to the vision which came to Peter at Joppa, reproving him for calling unclean that which God had cleansed, and quotes as applicable to infants the words of the Apostle, "The Lord hath said to me that I should call no man common or unclean" (5).

The most remarkable feature of Cyprian's

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argument is that in his zeal to correct Fidus he loses sight of the significance of baptism as a cleansing ordinance, and insists that infants, because of their personal sinlessness, are worthier to receive it than any adults. Thus he urges that, "if anything could hinder men from receiving grace, their more heinous sins might rather hinder those who are mature and grown up and elder." In this sentence he appears to have children, but not infants, in view, but in the following passage he compares the most extreme cases of developed wickedness with the innocence of babyhood: "But again, if, even to the greatest sinners, and to those who had sinned much against God, when they subsequently believed, remission of sins is granted . . . how much rather ought we to shrink from hindering an infant, who, being lately born, has not sinned."

I break the quotation here, because the sentence is long and involved, and it is important to note that what follows is added as a real or apparent exception to the statement that the infant is sinless. The object of the writer is to state the utmost that can be urged in abatement of an unconditional assertion of innocence. Thus he proceeds to say that the infant "has not sinned, except in that, being born after the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of the ancient death at its earliest birth, who approaches the more easily on this very account to the reception of the forgiveness of sins—that to him are remitted, not his own sins, but the sins of another."



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This is a sentence which neither Pelagians nor Augustinians could defend, but the spirit and tone of it are certainly not anti-Pelagian. Cyprian recognised that the posterity of Adam inherit death as the consequences of their forefather's offence, but he regarded this as a misfortune which constituted a claim on the grace of God, and on all the help which we can render. Instead of regarding babes as the objects of God's wrath, defiled and guilty in His sight, and "changed in body and soul for the worse," he esteemed them the fit objects of "the grace of God, who is merciful and kind and loving to all . . . who *on this very account deserve more from our help and from the Divine mercy*, that immediately, on the very beginning of their birth, lamenting and weeping, they do nothing else but entreat" (5).

It is impossible to determine with precision what Cyprian meant by saying that the sins remitted to an infant are "not his own sins, but the sins of another." That he was looking back to Adam's transgression is obvious, but neither in this place nor in any other does he define the accountability of Adam's posterity. The time for scholastic theories of imputation was not yet come, but Cyprian's language was eminently fitted to excite questions which inevitably provoked those endeavours after clearness which eventually divided the Church into two hostile camps.

It would be premature to discuss the ways in which opposing schools of thought were developed,

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but it is essential to note the fact that in the passages now before us the great problem of human accountability was thrust into a prominence which was altogether new. It should also be distinctly recognised that this problem was forced into notice, and was invested with agonizing interest, by the spread of infant baptism. It was the fear of perdition which caused the hastening of baptism, but when this fear began to take effect in the baptism of speechless babes, men were called upon to defend their action, and they could only do this by putting their vague fears into shape. *It is not a mere coincidence, therefore, that, in the writings of the first Father who mentions babe-baptism as an existing practice, we also find the first distinct statement that, in baptism, the sins of a progenitor are remitted.* When this had once entered into the thought and language of Christian ministers, it was certain to excite debate. Men were bound to ask, Why should a harmless, helpless child be supposed to need forgiveness? On what principle could the Judge of all the earth hold each entrant into life responsible for what was done thousands of years before?

Cyprian's vague statement shed no light on these grave questions, but it helped to develop an anxious state of mind which presently demanded a clear answer. In the course of years, different answers were proposed, and subjected to criticism, which again in turn induced many efforts to rectify defects, or at any rate to obviate objections. As

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in all similar cases, these efforts brought about more extreme and definite statements of opinion; and as this process advanced, the strife of tongues became embittered; phrases became party cries; animosities were intensified, and opponents receded from one another into more extreme and contradictory positions. In other words, although neither Augustine nor Pelagius could endorse Cyprian's language, they fought out a controversy which he unconsciously opened, and one which became inevitable from the hour in which the Church was confronted with the problem of heredity in relation to the sin of the world.

The most important and permanent effect of Cyprian's influence was the strengthening of the sacerdotal pretensions of bishops, and a consequent modification of Christian life and thought. It might be difficult to prove that Cyprian uttered anything original, or devised anything novel in Church polity, but he gave definite form to ideas that had been nebulous, and raised a banner which brought the bishops of many countries into cohesion. Within the few years of his own episcopate it is easy to trace a growth of official assertiveness. At the outset he recognised the right of the laity to be consulted on many important matters, and was greatly aided by their presence in the earlier Councils held in the city; but after a time he ceased to consult them, and virtually told them that the whole duty of a layman was to serve God and save his own soul by obeying the priests, and

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believing what they set before him as the truth. "They are the Church," he wrote to Pupianus, "who are a people united to the priest, and the flock which cleaves to its pastor. Whence you are to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church, and that those flatter themselves in vain who creep in, not having peace with God's priests; and . . . the Church . . . is connected and bound together by the cement of priests who cohere with one another" (Ep. lxviii. 8).

To appreciate this passage it is needful to remember that, in Cyprian's writings, priest and bishop are almost equivalent terms, as he rarely applies the term *sacerdos* to any minister under episcopal rank. Had he followed his own prescription for the reformation of the Church, he would have found that the title of sacrificing ministers of the temple is never given to any officer of the Christian Church; but overlooking, or ignoring, this fact, he boldly identified bishops with Jewish priests, and enforced episcopal prerogatives and discipline by quoting language from the Old Testament, which, if relevant, would justify the infliction of capital punishment on a recalcitrant deacon or presumptuous layman.

A glaring instance of this vicious fallacy occurs in a letter to a bishop who had complained of a certain deacon's encroachments. Replying, on the part of a Council, Cyprian wrote: "We were deeply dis-

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tressed on reading your letter. . . . And you indeed have acted worthily, and with your accustomed humility toward us, in rather complaining of him to us; although you have power, according to the power of the episcopate and the authority of your throne, whereby you might be justified on him at once, assured that all we your colleagues would regard it as a matter of satisfaction, whatever you should do by your priestly power in respect of an insolent deacon, as you have in respect of men of this class Divine commands, inasmuch as the Lord God says in Deuteronomy, 'And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken to the priest or judge, whoever he shall be in those days, that man shall die; and all the people when they hear, shall fear, and shall do no more impiously.' " Happily, neither Cyprian nor any colleague ventured to carry out this "Divine command," but they freely threatened all offenders that if they dared to baptize, or perform any other priestly function, they would certainly be treated by God as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were treated in the wilderness. Cyprian frequently repeated this threat, and in an ignorant and superstitious age it had a most intimidating effect (Ep. lxiv.).

Individual piety can survive under any system of Church government, and in the absence of any Church, but the general type of Christian life must vary according to the measure of freedom granted religious thought, and to the demand made upon the sense of personal responsibility before God.

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Cyprian honestly thought that the only way to elevate the moral condition of the Church was to enforce the authority of its rulers, but it was a short-sighted policy, and the remedy helped to aggravate and spread the disease. As priests magnified their office, the need for personal approach to Christ was kept out of sight; the message of the Gospel, which called men into the Divine presence, was still preached in many churches, but it was followed by instructions which kept the soul dependent on a human master for response to every cry of need. Sacraments increasingly took the place of spiritual means of grace, and the whole conception of salvation through faith, begotten by truth presented to every man's consciousness in the sight of God, was, to say the very least, obscured.

## An Anonymous Treatise

A NOBLE treatise, to which I have alluded when writing of Cyprian's great controversy on re-baptism, deserves a special notice, although it comes down to us without an author's name, and is seldom quoted except incidentally as a protest against anabaptism. It abounds with quaint and uncritical citations of Scripture, but for breadth of view and for spirituality of thought some parts of it are unsurpassed by any writing of the age in which it was produced. As an argument it failed to convince Cyprian, or to stem the tide of opinion which flowed so strongly in Africa; but it appears to have had no slight influence in other regions when its author, who bemoaned his own failure, had passed away.

The line of reasoning pursued in this treatise may be summed up as an endeavour to show the needlessness of re-baptism by limiting the value of the rite to something so insignificant that the ability to bestow its almost nominal benefit might be conceded to heretics, without surrendering any vital prerogative of the orthodox Church. In the course of his discussion the author used some arguments which might be gladly adopted by a modern Baptist, but either through timidity, or through

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inability to shake himself free from the dominant sacramentalism of the age and country in which he lived, his conclusions were much feebler than his arguments would have justified.

The strength of Cyprian's position lay in his contention that heretics could not confer a valid baptism because they did not possess the Holy Spirit, and therefore could not impart it. The answer to this, which finally satisfied the general Church, distinguished between the act of man as an agent in dipping the candidate in water and repeating certain words, and the act of God in bestowing the Spirit. In the treatise before us the dilemma is met in a different way. The author goes to the root of the matter by denying that the Spirit is usually or necessarily given in, or even in conjunction with, baptism. In proof of this opinion he cited two cases, in one of which the Spirit was given long after baptism, and in the other had been given previously. The Apostles, he remarks, were baptized with water during Christ's lifetime, but did not receive the Spirit until after the ascension; and the household of Cornelius received the Spirit while Peter was preaching to them, and were commanded to be baptized because they had possession of this supreme blessing, and not in order to obtain it. Dwelling on this second case, he comments with great beauty on the words of Peter when called upon to defend his conduct before the Church at Jerusalem: "He put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts



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by faith." With perfect justice he treats this incident as a sample case, and not an exception to any rule: "And there will be no doubt that men may be baptized with the Holy Spirit without water, as thou observest that these were thus baptized before they were baptized with water; so that the announcements of both John and our Lord Himself were fulfilled; inasmuch as they obtained the grace of the promise, both without the imposition of the Apostle's hands and without the laver, which they obtained afterwards. And their hearts being purified, God bestowed upon them at the same time, in virtue of their faith, remission of sins; so that the subsequent baptism conferred upon them this benefit alone, that they received also the invocation of the name of Jesus Christ, that nothing might appear to be wanting to the integrity of their service and faith" (Treatise on Re-baptism, 5).

I could not mention any passage in patristic literature which accords more perfectly with Scriptural teachings on this subject than this spiritual gem. It entirely sweeps away the sandy foundation on which both Cyprian and Stephen stood to wrestle for a victory which in either event would tend to fasten the idea of salvation by sacrament in the minds of the people. It not only distinguishes between human agency and Divine action, but it shows that Divine action is not in any degree dependent on the administration of a ritual ordinance. It links the gift of the Spirit with an

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impartation of truth to the heart and mind, and conceives purification as a process which cleanses the springs of conduct, and not the flesh. Whether the writer knew it or not, his plea reduced infant baptism to absurdity, because it denied that it could be of any use to those incapable of purifying faith, and removed every excuse for permitting the rite to precede the spiritual experience it denoted.

To show the strength and depth of this writer's conviction that baptism is worthless without faith, and that faith alone is sufficient to ensure the bestowal of all God's gifts, I will quote another passage, which, if possible, is more emphatic than the last.

It was universally admitted in the ancient Church that martyrdom, "the baptism of blood," would count for more than water baptism, because it is a fellowship with Christ's sufferings on the Cross. Therefore, if it can be shown that even martyrdom will not avail to save a man who does not believe in and return the love of God in Christ, it will thereby be proved *a fortiori* that water baptism must be yet more impotent for the purpose. In support of this case, the author quotes Paul's words: "And if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." With this strong language he links the words of John: "And every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; for God is love." "It manifestly appears that he who has not in him this love . . .

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profits nothing by an empty confession and passion." To which he sternly adds that spurious martyrs will find, contrary to their vain expectations, that "they are condemned to eternal punishment by Christ . . . when God shall begin to judge the hidden things of men according to the Gospel of Christ Jesus, because they did not believe in Him, although they were washed in His name" (13). Thus neither burning in fire, nor washing with water, whether alone or when combined, can profit those in whom love is unbegotten.

Those who approve this spiritual teaching must deplore the failure of its author to deduce from it any wider conclusion than the needlessness of rebaptism. This was, indeed, a very small mouse to be born of so great a travail of soul. The principle established was that, without faith in Christ, a faith which begets a new heart and a right spirit, neither baptism nor unbaptism availeth anything; and wider still, that, without faith, no sacrament of any sort could be of use. The only logical or practical application of this principle would have been a protest against the growing sacramentalism of the Church, but no such protest followed.

It is charitable, and I think just, to conclude that, in spite of his luminous exposition of Scripture, the writer did not perceive the full force of his own reasoning. Possibly he saw, but feared to say all that was in his mind. He cannot be called a coward, but he may have lacked the heroic

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courage to stand up against the increasing host of sacerdotalists, with their growing arrogance and zeal. In any case it has to be recognised that the object he set before himself was conservative, not revolutionary. He was anxious to provide a common ground on which Cyprian and Stephen might meet, and with this intention he devised a compromising theory, which, of course, pleased neither party, while it sacrificed the truth he had proclaimed.

In framing such a theory he was aided by the usual practice of bishops in his time, which was to follow baptism with the imposition of hands. In many cases the second rite was not administered immediately, and circumstances often compelled its postponement for long periods. Deacons and presbyters might baptize, but only bishops were supposed to confer a gift of the Spirit by the laying on of hands, and bishops were not always available. The specific difference between the two rites had never been defined with any attempt at accuracy, but the second was held to be a completion of the first, and its special benefit was a gift of the Holy Spirit. Taking advantage of this belief, our author endeavoured to draw a sharp line of distinction where previously there had been vagueness. He admitted that heretics could not confer the Holy Spirit, but urged that this did not invalidate their baptism, because the imposition of hands, and not baptism, was the vehicle of spiritual endowment. He pointed out that even orthodox

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baptism confessedly needed episcopal supplement, and if this were granted to lapsed persons and converts from heretical sects, their Christian outfit would be complete.

Cyprian could, of course, receive this theory in so far as it was a denial of saving efficacy to heretical baptism, but neither he nor his opponents could afford to make this denial at the cost of levelling down the value of orthodox baptism to an equal nullity. To some extent it got rid of the awful anxiety and lifelong suspense which would prevail if Cyprian's view were accepted, but it confessedly exchanged suspense for despair in myriads of breasts. If baptized persons would be lost unless they received episcopal hands upon their heads before dying, what had become of the countless multitude who had been buried in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, but without the defectiveness of the first rite being "filled up with the remaining things" supplied by bishops? For every sacramentalist the demand for two rites instead of one made life more terrible, and multiplied the risks of everlasting doom, for himself, his friends, and his forefathers.

It is strange that this appalling theory should have emanated from the author of the beautiful words I have quoted, and the more so because in his panegyric of faith he had expressly noted that the household of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit, the purification of their hearts, and the remission of their sins, not only without the laver, but also

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"without the imposition of hands," both of which they obtained later.

It cannot be pleaded that the household of Cornelius obtained an exceptional blessing, which must not be construed as a precedent. If the earlier incidents of apostolic history are of any use to the Church, it is because they are providentially recorded as instructive examples and perfect illustrations of Christian principles. The story of Cornelius has in this regard an extraordinary value. It is related at great length, as an incident which vitally affected the constitution of the Church. It was not merely an example, but the commencement of a new epoch. It was the actual turning of a key which opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. It exhibits in concrete form the universal law of life in Christ: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. . . . Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be put to shame. . . . For the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The history of Cornelius is thus at one with the doctrine of Paul, and illustrates the truth that faith cometh, not by baptism, nor by laying on of hands, but by hearing the word of God, and that no man who hears, believes, and calls upon the Lord, will miss salvation.

It is lamentable that a man who sometimes seems to have this great law in his mind should

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have failed to teach it to his age. It is difficult to prevent regret being mingled with blame when we note that he confounded a heartfelt calling on the name of the Lord by a suppliant sinner, with a ceremonial invocation made by someone else while administering baptism, while this again is declared to be dependent for success on the magic touch of a bishop's hand!

When spiritual and ritual conditions of salvation are thus mixed together as co-essential, the way of life is made more perplexing and more difficult than if either one or the other stood alone. Plain people could understand the frank sacramentalism of Cyprian and Stephen, which said: "Come to the truth as it is in the Church, and receive life, with all needful aliment, from the priests of God." They could also understand a spiritual teacher who said: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, and that without the imposition of hands and without the laver." But they could not understand trimmers who sought for a *via media* between these two; or the broad conciliator who tried to make an amalgam of them both. If a sacrament is indispensable, then no one can be saved without it, even though his name be Cornelius. If a man can be saved without a sacrament, then the sacrament is not indispensable, and the more clearly this is said the better.

I have so much sympathy with this man who so nearly emancipated himself from the super-

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stitution which was enslaving the Church, that I turn with pleasure to give a final sample of the courage with which he could write in his best moments. Dealing with the supposed necessity for the baptism of all who had denied Christ under torture, or through fear, he boldly reminded the Carthaginians that the Apostles themselves deserved to be numbered among the lapsed, seeing that they all forsook their Lord, and fled on the night of His arrest; and worse still, that Peter, the rock confessor, had denied Christ with oaths and curses. He insisted that this recreant behaviour was recorded expressly that we might know that, without going down again into the laver, these sins "were without doubt put away by the baptism of the Holy Spirit."

To the same effect he pointed out that the Apostles held most defective views of our Lord's person and work, and frequently misunderstood and sometimes disbelieved His words, even up to the time of His ascension. At one time Peter was rebuked as Satan, and bidden to get behind his Master because he savoured not of the things of God, but the things which are of men. When the women reported the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples treated their saying as an idle tale. On the way to Emmaus two of them were chided for their ignorance of Scripture, and for their unbelief, while Thomas confessed his determined scepticism until Jesus offered physical proof of His identity. "And thus," he concludes, "as far as concerns the disciples themselves, they are found to have had a



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faith neither sound nor perfect in such matters; as we have referred to; and, what is much more serious, they moreover baptized others, as it is written in the Gospel according to John" (9).

In the light of these examples, Anabaptists were invited to say whether they were prepared to carry out their principles consistently, and the argument from heretical Apostles was pressed home with great vigour. Within the Mother Church there were many who had been baptized by bishops who had since been convicted of gross crimes and excommunicated as unfit even for private membership. Others had received the ordinance from men who were secretly heretical at the time, and had since joined alien sects. Were these unfortunate but innocent believers to be re-baptized, or pronounced unsafe? Would the Church repeat its own acts because some of her servants were unworthy of their position? If not, then let them hear no more about the need for baptizing afresh the people who came from outside, but were in precisely the same position as many inside the Church; they were no worse off than some who were baptized by the Apostles themselves before they received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

From an historical point of view this treatise is of immense value, because it shows that in Cyprian's day, and even in North Africa, the minds of men were in a wavering and uncertain state. In relation to baptism the Church was halting between two opinions. It had not ceased in theory

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to require repentance and faith to precede baptism, but it was drifting into a position which was destined to reduce this theory to a fiction by permitting sponsors to declare that infants actually did believe, and had already renounced the devil and all his works.\*

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\* This anonymous treatise will be found appended to Cyprian's Works in the Ante Nicene Library.

## The Apostolical Constitutions

THE writings gathered together under this title have been the subject of keen and prolonged controversy, the result of which has been the rejection of some as worthless concoctions, and the acceptance of others as genuine documents of great antiquity. Concerning their precise date, opinions differ, though not to an extent which lessens their value as testimony to the practice of the Church during a considerable, though not strictly defined, period. The book I am about to quote is believed by some critics to have been composed in the fourth century, while others ascribe it to the third. It does not profess to have been composed by the Apostles, but it incorporates materials which probably are as old as any Christian writings. It was obviously designed to prevent irregularities in the administration of baptism and other services, by providing a fixed order in accordance with the best usage of the period; and so to perpetuate what was believed to be the order handed down from apostolical times. Its authors are nameless, but as Bunsen finely said: "It is a book composed by believing souls whose names

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are known only to God, and sealed with the blood of the confessor of the faith" ("Hippolytus and his Age," vol. 2, vi.).

One of the most conspicuous features of this book is its total silence about the baptism of infants. It recognises but one class of candidates, namely, persons sufficiently mature to have characters to be inquired into, and mentally capable of undergoing a prolonged tuition in the doctrines and moral teachings of Christ. If, when this book was compiled, infants were being baptized, there was no special service adapted to their condition, and in spite of an amazing incongruity, this order must have been adhered to in their case. Such an anomaly is not inconceivable, however, as we know that, when infant baptism was becoming general, the old service for believers remained in use.

The first step to be taken with a view to Church membership is thus directed: "Those that first come to the Mystery of Godliness, let them be brought to the Bishop, or to the Presbyters, and let them be examined as to the causes wherefore they come to the Word of the Lord; and let those who bring them inquire exactly about their character, and give them their testimony." Then follows a list of persons (who are to be rejected, even as learners, unless they abandon the evils named.

When admitted to instruction, the learner was required to undergo a prolonged course of teach-

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ing. "Let him be catechised three years, but if any one be diligent, and has a good will to his business, let him be admitted; for it is not the length of time, but the course of life, that is judged" (Greek Const. vi., Copt. Can. ii. 42).

After a first course of instruction, the catechumens were subjected to a further examination as thus ordered: "When they have chosen those appointed to receive baptism, let their life be inquired into, whether they have lived in chastity during the time of their being catechumens. . . . And if those who introduced them have borne witness to them that they have done thus, let them hear the Gospel (Copt. Can. ii. 45a, 42).

After the full course of instruction had terminated, those accepted as fit were to be "separated and sealed for being baptized at Easter." The following are the chief provisions and directions to be observed when the day approached:

"And when the day approacheth on which they shall be baptized, let the Bishop exorcise each one of them, that he may know that they are pure. But if any one is not good, or is not clean, let them put him apart, that he may not hear the Word with the believers."

"Let them that are to receive baptism fast on the Preparation of the Sabbath (Friday evening). But on the Sabbath, when those who shall receive shall have been gathered together in one place by the advice of the Bishop, let them all be commanded to pray and to kneel; and when he hath

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laid his hand upon them, let him exorcise every strange spirit to flee from them, and not to return into them from that time. And when he hath finished exorcising, let him breathe on them; and when he hath sealed their foreheads, and their ears, and the opening of their mouths, let him raise them up; and let them watch all the night, reading to them and exhorting them" (Copt. Can. ii. 45b).

"And at the time of the Crowing of the Cock let them first pray over the Water. Let the Water be drawn into the font, or flow into it. And let it be thus, if they have no scarcity. But if there be a scarcity, let them pour the Water which shall be found into the font; and let them undress themselves, and the young shall be first baptized" (ii. 46).

"And when the Presbyter has taken hold of those who are about to receive baptism, let him command each to renounce, saying, 'I will renounce thee, Satan, and all thy service, and all thy works.' And when he has renounced all these, let him anoint him with the Oil of Exorcism, saying, 'Let every Spirit depart from thee.' And let the Bishop or the Presbyter receive him thus undressed, to place him in the Water of Baptism. And let the Deacon go with him into the Water, and let him say to him, helping him that he may say, 'I believe in the only true God, the Father Almighty, and in His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and in the Holy Spirit the Quickener.'"

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“And let him who receiveth Baptism repeat after all these, ‘I believe thus.’ And he who bestoweth it shall lay his hand upon the head of him who receiveth, dipping him Three times, confessing these things each time.” The recipient is also to recite, and to affirm his belief in, the Apostles’ Creed.

“And let them go up out of the Water, and the Presbyter shall anoint him with the Oil of Thanksgiving, saying, ‘I anoint thee with holy anointing Oil, in the name of Jesus Christ.’ Thus he shall anoint every one of the rest, and clothe them as they rest, and they shall enter into the Church.”

“Let the Bishop lay his hand upon them with affection . . . offering prayer on their behalf, anointing them again, and sealing them upon the forehead, and saying, ‘The Lord be with thee.’ Whereupon the baptized shall say, ‘And with thy spirit.’ And all those who receive Baptism shall be praying; let them say ‘Peace’ with their mouths” (Copt. Can. ii. 46).

The administration of baptism being thus brought to a close, the new members of the Church were immediately to receive the Eucharist, the service ending with a wholesome admonition: “And when these things have been done, let every one hasten to do all good things, and to please God, and to take care to live in integrity, being diligent in the Church, doing those things which they have been taught, proceeding in the service of God.”

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It need scarcely be said that the above order exhibits an elaboration of ritual which has no counterpart in apostolic practice as known to us in the New Testament. It would be idle to quote it as an apostolic warrant for making converts wait a long time for baptism; for the choice of an annual festival for its administration; for exorcism; or for anointings with oil, and other minor customs. These superfluities are not worthy of any serious discussion. The all-important fact is that, irrespective of any opinion we may form as to the harmfulness or innocence of these ritual accretions, the baptism provided for in this ancient order is the baptism of believers who have been patiently instructed in the truths of the Gospel, and who evince in their lives a sincere desire to follow in the footsteps of their Lord. The later the date to which its authorship or final setting can be referred, the more effective it becomes as a witness to the late origin of infant baptism. For other purposes some critics are anxious to assign it to the earliest possible period, but I am content to leave the question of age with a simple expression of opinion that it could not have been composed in its present form earlier than the third or later than the fourth century.



## The Armenian Baptismal Service

THE baptismal service of the Orthodox Armenian Church has some peculiar features, which are curiously instructive for historical students. Like every ancient service it has evidently been arranged for use in the baptism of persons capable of asking for the ordinance and of making an intelligent profession of faith. Throughout the ceremony it is assumed or declared that the subject is a conscious and eager candidate for the rite, and the responses are described in the rubric as made by the catechumen personally, whether the words are uttered for himself by an adult, or by the lips of a sponsor in the name of a speechless child.

When the procession reaches the church door there is a halt, during which the priest offers a prayer which contains a sentence which stamps the entire procedure with unreality, when, as is now customary, it refers to an infant. "Accept now, good Lord, the eager goodwill of Thy creature, who hath set his faith to draw nigh unto Thy holy and only true Godhead, bearing in himself a Christian name." Subsequently, when standing

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by the font, the priest thus examines the candidate:

"The Priest: What dost thou ask for?

The Catechumen: I ask for baptism.

The Priest: Dost thou sincerely ask for it?

The Catechumen: With faith I ask to be baptized, and to be purified from sin, and liberated from devils, and to serve God.

The Priest: Let it be unto thee according to thy faith."

Having received these satisfactory assurances, the priest makes the following declaration, and then administers the rite:

"N. or M., the servant of God, having come of his own free will unto the catechumenate, and from the catechumenate unto baptism, is now baptized in my hands in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." As each name is mentioned, a handful is poured over the catechumen's head, and afterwards he is immersed three times.

Mr. Conybeare (to whom I am indebted for an account of the Armenian service) has justly observed that "The whole ceremony as here detailed is obviously suitable to an adult only, and those who compiled it had no idea of baptizing infants, who cannot come *of their own free will and ask* for baptism." But the service has a still more distinctive peculiarity to which he has also called attention. The prayers offered at the church porch contain passages which are utterly

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incongruous with the immediate administration of baptism, whether to an adult or to a child. Referring to the catechumen, the priest thus prays: "Look, O Lord, in thy pity upon him. Remove and drive away from him, by the calling out over him of Thy all-powerful Name, the lurking thoughts and words and deeds of foul spirits. . . . Fill him with Thy heavenly grace, and make him to rejoice by Thy most excellent calling, naming him a Christian. And let him become worthy, *in the proper time of baptism*, of the second birth; and let him, receiving Thy Holy Spirit, become body and limb of Thy holy Church." In this plea baptism is evidently contemplated as the natural, but remote, sequel to some present action. This peculiarity becomes still more evident in another sentence, which distinctly implies that before baptism is attained there must be a long interval of strife and endeavour, in which there will be great need of Divine aid. "And give him strength and help both to be made worthy and to attain unto the purification of the holy font of spotless life, and to the heritage of adoption into the kingdom of heaven, Christ Jesus our Lord."

These prayers closely resemble those provided for the Paulician Naming Service, and would be strikingly appropriate for the use of parents when filled with solicitude for a child whose warfare with temptation has still to be accomplished. But the strangest feature of the service has yet to be noticed. The prayer last quoted immediately

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follows a sentence (cited above) in which the catechumen is described as a zealous aspirant for baptism, and also as one who has already received a Christian name. Commenting on this peculiarly composite service, Mr. Conybeare justly observes: "Both these clauses should evidently not stand in the same prayer. The first belongs to the service of baptizing an adult who has already received a Christian name, as the Paulician child receives one on its eighth day. The second properly belongs to a service of name-giving, held long before the baptism itself. For where is the sense of praying that a person may have strength to grow up and come to baptism when in the space of five minutes he will, anyhow, be baptized? . . . Thus the genesis of the orthodox (Armenian) baptismal service is plain. It is the older service of name-giving and the adult baptismal service of the Paulicians rolled into one" ("Key of Truth," clxxxviii.).

## Macarius

**M**ACARIUS, who was Bishop of Jerusalem from A.D. 311 or 312 to about 335, though seldom mentioned now, was highly esteemed in his lifetime, and for long afterwards, as one of the most faithful and virtuous leaders of the Church. He was a prominent member of the Council of Nicea, and was extolled by Athanasius as one who displayed "the honest and simple style of apostolical men." He is best known, perhaps, as the host and associate of Helena in her supposed discovery of the Holy Sepulchre, and of the "True Cross." His reputation at Rome is indicated in the fact that Constantine presented him with a costly vestment of gold, to be worn at the great festivals when he administered baptism; a garment destined to become famous through a scandalous story, which declared that Cyril sold this sacred robe to an actor, who suddenly expired when he ventured to wear it in the theatre.

Quite recently a more serious claim to modern notice has transpired in the publication of some portions of a letter written by Macarius in reply to an Armenian bishop who consulted him in regard

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to some of the "Ordinances of the Catholic Church." \* Macarius seems to have responded with reluctance, because he had no authority over the Churches of Armenia, but "through awe and fear of God, and loving solicitude for true religion," he overcame his scruples. His letter represents not only his own views, but those of many bishops to whom he had submitted the letter of enquiry, and his instructions are presented as "the regulations of the holy Council" which had just been held.

At the outset Macarius declares that great surprise has been felt in "the holy city" that the Churches of the East were so careless in the administration of baptism. Three things in particular were censured: (1) the absence of regular fonts in many churches, and a consequent use of "any vessel that comes handy"; (2) the performance of the rite by deacons; and (3) delay in baptizing applicants.

In regard to the first point Macarius strongly urges that, "if we have churches, we must also make baptisteries and a font in which to baptize those who come in the right faith of the true religion." He admits, however, that, where there is no regular font, "it is not right to prevent anyone from being baptized who desires to be; for the Holy Spirit gives grace according to our

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\* See "The Key of Truth," Appendix, Note IX., for a translation of this letter.

## Macarius

prayers and entreaties, and is not hindered by want of a font; and on every occasion it is the wish and desire that is enough for the grace of the Spirit."

On the validity of baptism performed by deacons, the verdict is more severe. "It is not right for deacons to do it . . . and the rite is nullified by them." Those who had transgressed this rule, in ignorance of its existence, may be forgiven, but any man who wilfully transgressed it should be punished "according to the scale of his transgression."

In deprecation of delay, Macarius observes: "And the Holy Spirit doth not despise those who are desirous of true religion, but, bending low, doth come down and make us holy through right faith by means of the water of the holy font. And in all this it is not right for the bishop and elders to be supine and to postpone the baptism of those who wish to draw nigh devoutly unto the religion of God. . . . For this rite the universal Church of God fulfils without delaying it, with great care and anxious trepidation."

It is curious that this admonition deals only with delays caused by officials of the Church, and is silent about the procrastination of which we hear so much from other Fathers. Possibly those in close touch with the Emperor found it wise to be quiet on this subject. Constantine, though he had dominated the Council of Nicea, was still postponing his own baptism, and bishops belonging to the party he had favoured might be reluctant

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to pronounce censures which would fall most heavily on him.

The current conception of baptism most clearly, though incidentally, appears in a discussion of the three great festivals when the administration of baptism was specially recommended. The broad principle is laid down that the rite is not restricted to these occasions, because the Apostles did not baptize according to a choice of feasts, but according to the preparedness of those who came to them. The preference for these occasions is ascribed to the fitness of the ideas associated with them. "There are three feasts," wrote Macarius, "on which our fathers in particular celebrated the rite of baptism in the holy font with zeal and enthusiasm, being desirous, on them more than on other days, to urge unto baptism those who have given themselves up to God, and to fulfil in them the type of the great saving mystery, which on those holy and famous days was fulfilled . . . namely, on the holy manifestation (Epiphany) of the Lord's birth, on the saving Zatik of the life-giving passion of Christ, and on Pentecost full of grace. . . . Wherefore it is proper to acquaint you with the particular import of each of these feasts, of the Birth and of the Baptism, to the end that ye may diligently fulfil the same. For our expiatory birth in the holy font is (or was) fulfilled on the same day with the illumining birth of Christ, because on that very day He took on Himself to be baptized out of condescension to us.



## Macarius

For it was not because He was Himself in any need of baptism; but He wished to cleanse us from the stain of sin. Accordingly He cries out aloud, saying: Unless a man be born of water and of spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. To the end that we may come to be born along with Him after the same type (or way) and baptized along with Him on the day of the birth of Christ."

It will be noticed that Macarius here links the birth and baptism of Christ in one festival. This is in accordance with the ancient belief that our Lord was baptized on the thirtieth anniversary of His birth, and that both these events happened on January 6. The festival chiefly, if not solely, celebrated the baptism and the showing to Israel. Christmas Day is not mentioned by any writer prior to A.D. 360. The subsequent spread of infant baptism, and the enhanced importance of the nativity when Mary had been exalted to a place of divine honour as the Mother of God, led to a remarkable change soon after Macarius wrote; and before long the original connection of Epiphany with Christ's baptism was almost forgotten in the Western Church.

But while the festival of Christ's own baptism was anciently regarded as the most appropriate season for the baptism of His disciples, it was perceived that the feast of the Resurrection was also a most fitting occasion, because baptism specially symbolises death to sin, burial with Christ, and

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rising with Him to newness of life. When the ordinance was administered at Pentecost, special emphasis was laid on the work of the Holy Spirit, as Macarius thus explains. We then celebrate "the inspiration flashing with light of the quickening Spirit which in the form of fiery tongues descended on the Apostles. . . . After the same type do we also on the same day lay hands on the baptized, and thereby the same Spirit is bestowed on them." \*

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• See Appendix, Note III.

## Methodius

**M**ETHODIUS was Bishop of Olympus, and subsequently of Patara, in the beginning of the fourth century. The particulars of his life are shrouded in some obscurity, and some of his doctrinal opinions are uncertain, but his extant writings leave no room for doubt that for him baptism deserved the name of "enlightenment," because it is an outward putting on of Christ by those in whose hearts Christ has been formed through the tuition of the Church and the gift of the Divine Spirit.

Dealing in an allegorical fashion with Isaiah lxvi. 7, 8, Methodius pronounced an opinion that "the Church is here said to give birth to a male; since the enlightened (or baptized) receive the features and the image and the manliness of Christ, the likeness of the form of the Word being stamped upon them, and begotten by a true knowledge and faith, so that in each one Christ is spiritually born. Therefore, also, the Church travails in birth until Christ is formed in us, so that each of the saints, by partaking of Christ, has been born a Christ. In agreement with this interpretation it

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is said in a certain Scripture, 'Touch not Mine anointed ( $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omega\nu$ ) and do My prophets no harm,' as though those who were baptized into Christ had been made Christs by communication of the Spirit, the Church contributing here their clearness and transformation into the image of the Word. . . . For it is necessary that the Word of Truth should be imprinted and stamped upon the souls of the regenerate " ("Symposium," viii. 8).

These expressions are not indistinct, but their meaning is made clearer still by the next chapter, in which the same truth is taught in a negative form: "Now certainly Christ has not been born in those men who have never perceived the manifold wisdom of God—that is, has never been known, has never been manifested, has never appeared to them. But if these also should perceive the mystery of grace, then in them, too, when they were converted and believed, He would be born in knowledge and understanding " (9).

Contending against the opinion of Origen and his school that, after the resurrection, man's nature will be purely immaterial, Methodius incidentally observed: "But now, even after believing, and after the time of being touched by the water of sanctification, we are often found in sin. For no one can boast of being so free from sin as not even to have a thought of sin " ("On the Resurrection," v.).

The evidence of Methodius has an exceptional value, because it fairly represents a phase of

## Methodius

thought which never was, and never could be, even speciously harmonised with the practice of infant baptism. His description of enlightened believers as "made Christs by communication of the Spirit," identifies him with those who regarded the age of thirty as the right age of baptism, because Christ was baptized at that age, and thereupon received the Holy Spirit in a sense which completed, or, as some said, constituted, the Incarnation. This fixture of a definite age for baptism effectually resisted the tendency to lower it in the direction of infancy, and it rendered a separation from the Catholic Church inevitable. The writings of Methodius have almost wholly perished, and in this they have shared the fate of a vast amount of literature which a persecuting majority detested as "heretical."

## Cyril

CYRIL, though not a great thinker or writer, is one of the most useful witnesses to the state of opinion on the subject of baptism in the fourth century. He was born in or near Jerusalem, about A.D. 315. At the comparatively early age of 33 years he was appointed to the duty of instructing the catechumens who were under preparation for baptism at Easter. As a part of this service he delivered eighteen lectures, and these were followed by five others, addressed to the same persons after they had been baptized. These discourses are all extant, and are the earliest samples of the kind we possess. In substance they are an exposition of a creed very similar to that of Nicea, which Cyril recited from memory, but would not commit to writing, or allow the catechumens to put on paper. They were required to commit it to memory, "and to rehearse it with all diligence" among themselves, thus "engraving it" upon their hearts as a provision for the whole course of life. This alone would attest the intellectual maturity of the persons baptized in the fourth century, in the great Church of

## Cyril

Jerusalem, and others in close communion with it.

The spiritual view of baptism which Cyril commended is disclosed in the opening sentences of the introductory lecture. He thus accosts and faithfully warns his hearers: "Already there is an odour of blessedness upon you, O ye who are soon to be enlightened; already ye are gathering the spiritual flowers, to weave heavenly crowns; already the fragrance of the Holy Spirit has breathed upon you; already ye have gathered round the vestibule of the King's palace; may ye be led in also by the King! . . . Thus far there has been an inscription of your names, and a call to service, and torches of the bridal train, and a longing for heavenly citizenship, and a good purpose, and hope attendant thereon. . . . God is lavish in beneficence, yet He waits for each man's genuine will. . . . The honesty of purpose makes thee called; for if thy body be here but not thy mind, it profiteth thee nothing. Even Simon Magus once came to the laver; he was baptized, but was not enlightened; and though he dipped his body in water, he enlightened not his heart with the spirit; his body went down and came up, but his soul was not buried with Christ, nor raised with Him" ("Procatechesis," i. 2).

This passage is valuable as evidence that in Cyril's day the term "enlightened," when applied to baptism, had not lost its proper meaning as denoting an intellectual process. In the first clause

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it might be claimed as a mere name for a sacramental washing, but this is precluded by what follows: "If thy body be here, but not thy mind, it profiteth thee nothing." Again, Simon Magus was baptized but not enlightened, and his fault was that he did not rightly bring his mind into the business. The verb is peculiarly significant: "he enlightened not his heart with the spirit."

The note thus struck is maintained throughout the discourses. In a pungent fashion Cyril warns all candidates that if they get themselves baptized and admitted to the Church without sincerely renouncing sin, they will be cast out by our Lord, like the man without a wedding garment, when "Jesus the Bridegroom of souls" comes in to see their fashions. "For we, the ministers of Christ, have admitted every one, and occupying, as it were, the place of doorkeepers, we left the door open; and possibly thou didst enter with thy soul bemired with sins, and with a will defiled. Enter thou didst, and wast allowed, thy name was inscribed. . . . But if thou persist in an evil purpose, the speaker is blameless, but thou must not look for the grace; for the water will receive, but the Spirit will not accept thee" (4). This warning is solemnly repeated in a later lecture: "Beware lest ever, like Simon, thou come to the dispensers of baptism in hypocrisy, thy heart the while not seeking the truth. . . . approach the Minister of Baptism, but approaching, think not of the face of him thou seest, but remember the Holy Ghost of whom we



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are now speaking. For He is present to seal thy soul. . . . Yet He tries the soul. He casts not His pearls before swine; if thou play the hypocrite, though men baptize thee now, the Holy Spirit will not baptize thee. But if thou approach with faith, though men minister in what is seen, the Holy Ghost bestows that which is unseen. . . . If thou be counted worthy of the grace, thy soul will be enlightened, and thou wilt receive a power which thou hadst not. . . . If thou believe, thou shalt not only receive remission of sins, but also do things which pass men's power" (Lec. xvii. 35, 36). Thus, in Cyril's view, immersion in water by man is not baptism unless the subjective conditions are fulfilled; and, more emphatically than some of the earlier Fathers, he insists that without genuine repentance and faith there is no remission of sins and no bestowal of any grace.

But while Cyril insisted on the nullity of baptism apart from spiritual conditions, he fell short of Tertullian in confessing that sound faith is secure of salvation. Nothing could be more definite than his statements on the absolute necessity of baptism in the case of every believer, with the single exception of those who suffered martyrdom. "For since man is of twofold nature, soul and body, the purification is twofold. Neither doth he that is baptized with water, but not found worthy of the Spirit, receive the grace in perfection; nor if a man be virtuous in his deeds, but receive not the seal by water, shall he enter into the

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kingdom of heaven. . . . If *any man receive not baptism, he hath not salvation; except only Martyrs, who even without the water receive the kingdom* " (Lec. iii. 4, 10).

It is almost incredible that one who so clearly perceived that the essence of valid baptism lies in the mutual activity of the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, would at all times insist upon the damnation of those who sought for baptism, yet died before the reception of the rite. The loud and unqualified declarations which he thundered out in the great congregation were probably uttered economically—that is to say, for the purpose of "effecting something good," as Cyril accounted for Christ's professed ignorance of certain times and seasons. But in the course of years, and among the countless hosts of probationers scattered over the world, many must have been overtaken by death while dutifully waiting for the day appointed by the Church for their incorporation. Over the graves of such persons Cyril must have found it hard to repeat the stern decree which he announced to healthy multitudes who were strongly tempted to procrastinate. Under the shadow of death, and in the hearing of bereaved parents and friends, he, like many others to-day and in his own age, would probably whisper hopes of some "uncovenanted mercy." On some points Cyril echoes Tertullian's language, and possibly he would have repeated his more liberal sentiments when not restrained by a fear of encouraging malingerers.

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Surmises of this kind may relieve our hearts, but they cannot alter what is written. The all-important fact is that Cyril, while doing his utmost to prevent the people of Jerusalem from deluding themselves with the hopes of being saved by a mere corporeal act, unwittingly prepared the way for the spread of this same delusion in another form. What answer he would give to the questions of parents as to the fate of deceased infants, we cannot ascertain; but his awful doctrine must have filled the hearts of parents with a loving impatience to see their children baptized. He was not a direct precursor of those who taught the doctrine of baptismal regeneration in its most superstitious form, for to him nothing could have been more hateful; but he prepared the soil of the Eastern Churches to receive the pernicious seed sowed by Cyprian in Carthage and presently wafted over all lands. Cyril's doctrine, by denying the sufficiency of the mere rite, rendered some homage to the spiritual requirements of the Gospel, and so far it was good. It rightly sought to close the door of salvation against the impenitent and insincere and unbelieving; but it did so at the expense of shutting the gates of the kingdom against innocent infancy, and against all believers who, by accident, or through the unjust suspicion, the error, or the tedious formalities of the Church, were permitted to die unwashed. By this closure of the fold against many sheep and lambs whom the Good Shepherd loved, multitudes were prepared

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to seize upon the idea that if baptism was necessary it must also be sufficient, unless God be thought to have mocked men by its institution. Salvation by water was obviously a strange expedient for God to adopt, but it seemed to be better than no expedient at all! Hence, faith in the love and righteousness of God, combined with the agonizing solicitude of parents, rendered infant salvation by baptism a welcome alternative to the prospect of infant damnation, from which Cyril's doctrine showed no way of escape.

In another way Cyril helped to produce the state of mind which rendered possible those later developments of doctrine which are now identified with the Church of Rome. He not only repudiated second baptism, but gave no hope of restoration for the lapsed. Thus, in warning candidates not to be baptized unless fully prepared, he protests: "We may not receive baptism twice or thrice; else it might be said, Though I have failed once, I shall set it right a second time: whereas if thou fail once, the thing cannot be set right; for there is one Lord, and one faith, and one baptism: for only the heretics are re-baptized, because the former was no baptism."

Cyril was not unmindful of the calamitous effects of despair, but he seems to have kept all his encouraging words for unbaptized sinners. Here, for example, is a fine declaration, which unhappily was meant exclusively for erring catechumens: "Let us not despair of ourselves, brethren; let us

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not abandon ourselves to a hopeless condition. For it is a fearful thing not to believe in a hope of repentance. For he that looks not for salvation spares not to add evil to evil: but to him that hopes for cure, it is henceforth easy to be careful over himself" (Lec. ii. 5). It is inconceivable that the man who could preach such a gospel to those who were "lately come to the catechising" could look an erring but contrite Christian in the face, and tell him to abandon hope! But whatever Cyril's inward thought may have been, his public teaching was dominated by the prudential desire to deter believers from sin by brandishing before their eyes a flaming sword of judgment.

The position thus taken up by stern disciplinarians was one which the Church could not maintain. It made the outlook for Christian men gloomier than it had been for Jews under the law. To welcome the glad tidings of God's love in Christ, and to put on Christ in baptism, was to incur a risk so deadly, and so certain to prove fatal to imperfect men, that unless the Church had devised some mode of saving her members from despair, she must have become extinct.

## Gregory Nazianzen

GREGORY, commonly styled "The Great," was born in Cappadocia, about A.D. 325.

He was the son of Christian parents, his father being a priest at the time of the child's birth, and his mother, Nonna, a woman renowned for her intelligence and piety. These facts are of some historical value, because it is certain that Gregory was not baptized until about thirty years of age, and it thus appears that his parents were not pædobaptists. Some writers have attempted to cast doubt on this fact, but Gregory wrote a long poem, in which he tells the story of his life, and in this he narrates an incident which is conclusive. When voyaging from Alexandria to Greece, his life was endangered by a fierce storm, and in this hour of peril his mind was tortured with a dread of dying unbaptized:

But while we all were fearing sudden death,  
Mine was a worse, because a secret, fear.  
The cleansing waters ne'er had passed on me,  
That slay our foe and join us to our God.  
This was my lamentation, this my dread.  
For this I stretched my hands and cried to God,  
And cried above the noise of surging waves,  
And rent my clothes, and lay in misery.

. . . . .

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Thine own, I said, am I, both erst and now;  
Twice shalt Thou take me for Thine own, a gift  
Of earth and sea, a doubly hallowed gift  
By prayers of mother and by fateful sea.  
To Thee I live if I escape the waves,  
And gain baptismal dews; and Thou wilt lose  
A faithful servant if Thou cast me off,  
E'en now, Thine own disciple, in the deep;  
Shake off for me Thy slumber, and arise,  
And stay my fear. So prayed I—and the noise  
Of winds grew still, the surges ceased, the ship  
Held straight upon her course; my prayer was heard.

It is uncertain whether Gregory was baptized immediately after this experience, or whether he deferred action until his return home several years later. The only point of importance is that he was at the time a "disciple," and not less than eighteen years of age. This becomes more strikingly significant, however, when considered in the light of another fact which he mentioned in an oration pronounced on the death of his father. Referring to his mother, he observed: "It was on her part a great undertaking to promise me to God before my birth, with no fear of the future, and to dedicate me immediately after I was born." Gregory's ultimate opinion on the subject of infant baptism will show that he lived in a transitional period, but the facts that Nonna repeated the sacrifice of Hannah, yet allowed her consecrated child to grow up unbaptized, and that she and his father, who had become a bishop, knew him to be a disciple, yet permitted him to go abroad as a student for many years, without the protection of the ordinance, convincingly attest that child

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baptism was not practised in their day in the Churches of the East.

Gregory's views on the subject of baptism are given at length in one of his chief orations, but his fundamental conception transpires in an incidental way, in the course of the funeral oration mentioned above. Describing an extraordinary portent which appeared at his father's baptism, he introduced it thus: "He was approaching that regeneration by water and the Spirit by which we confess to God the formation and completion of the Christlike man and the transformation and reformation from the earthy to the Spirit. He was approaching the laver with warm desire and hope, after all the purgation possible. . . . The whole of his past life had been a preparation for the enlightenment, and a preliminary purification making sure the gift, in order that perfection might be entrusted to purity, and that the blessing might incur no risk in a soul which was confident in its possession of the grace. And as he was ascending out of the water, there flashed around him a light and a glory worthy of the disposition with which he approached the gift of faith" (13).\*

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\* The phenomenon is not incredible. I vividly remember something very similar, caused by a sudden outburst of evening sunshine striking the broken waters of a baptistery, and transfiguring the face of one whom I was baptizing, now many years ago. This strange sight left an almost superstitious feeling in my mind, and in the minds of others who stood by. This feeling was kept alive by the saintly but brief career which ensued. Something of this kind may have happened in the case of Gregory's father.



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may differ about this light, but Gregory's account of baptism is unaffected by any doubts which may be felt.

It is clear that he regarded the rite as the due expression of a matured believer's mind to God; and as the seal of a blessing which marked, not so much the birth, as the perfection of Christian manhood.

In his great "Oration on Holy Baptism," we are told that "The Word recognises three births for us; namely, the natural birth, that of baptism, and that of the resurrection. Of these the first is by night, is servile, and involves passion; but the second is by day, and is destructive of passion, cutting off all the veil that is derived from birth, and leading on to the higher life; the third is more terrible and shorter, bringing together in a moment all mankind, to stand before its Creator, and to give account of its service and conversation here" (ii.).

It is difficult to say precisely what the preacher meant by the "veil that is derived from birth." Some editors find no difficulty in explaining that "This veil is original sin, by which the soul is darkened and, as it were, covered." This explanation is highly improbable, but the question involved is of little importance, as it only affects the date of an innovation by a comparatively few years.

Gregory was more incautious than many of the Fathers in the terms in which he extols the virtue of baptism, but in spite of this he very clearly recognised that the outward rite is worthless unless

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the subjective conditions are present. "For, to say it all in one word, the virtue of baptism is to be understood as a covenant with God for a second life and a purer conversation." Our being baptized is a calling upon God "as a Mediator to ratify human professions," and our guilt will be great if we violate the covenant thus solemnly made. He dwells upon the great danger incurred by those who prove unfaithful, but he does not declare their case incurable. There can be no second baptism, but the wounds of a transgressor may be cicatrized, though with great difficulty and pain, by sighs and tears, and he adds: "If we might wipe away even the scars I should be glad, since I, too, have need of mercy" (viii.).

In this connection there is something more than a faint anticipation of the doctrine of Penance. "But it is better not to stand in need of a second cleansing, but to stop at the first, which is, I know, common to all, and involves no labour. . . . For it is a strange thing to substitute for a painless remedy one which is more painful; to cast away the grace of mercy, and owe a debt of punishment; and to measure our amendment against sin. For how many tears must we contribute before they can equal the fount of baptism; and who will be surety for us that death shall wait for our cure, and that the judgment seat shall not summon us while still debtors, and needing the fire of the other world?" This language may well have suggested the subsequent description of Penance as "a laborious kind

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of baptism," and the significant phrase, "needing the fire of the other world," coupled with the idea of incompleated sufferings on earth, contains the complementary idea of Purgatory, as a place in which the unpurged remnants of post-baptismal sin must be removed by cleansing fire, instead of cleansing water.

A considerable part of the oration is taken up with appeals to many different kinds of people who were delaying baptism. The prevalence of this custom, and the variety of excuses by which it was defended, are attested by the length and multiplicity of Gregory's arguments. Unlike Tertullian, who restrained the eager, lest they should commit themselves to a warfare which might issue in defeat, Gregory incited men to be baptized as a putting on the panoply of God, to protect them from the assaults of the devil. His cry was: "Let us then be baptized, that we may win the victory. . . . Let us be baptized to-day, that we suffer not violence to-morrow" (xi.).

Against all the acknowledged risks of failure in the Christian life, he sets the more terrible danger of waiting for a more advantageous season which may never come. "While thou art still master of thy thoughts run to the gift. While thou art not yet sick in body or in mind . . . while thy tongue is not stammering or parched . . . while the gift is still clear to thee, and there is no doubt of it; while the grace can still reach the depth of thy soul, and it is not merely thy body

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that is washed for burial; and before tears surround thee announcing thy decease . . . before the physician is powerless to help thee, and is giving thee but hours to live—hours which are not his to give—and is balancing thy salvation with the nod of his head . . . while there is a struggle between the man who would baptize thee and the man who seeks thy money . . . and there is no time for both. . . . Why wait for a fever to bring you this blessing, and refuse it from God? . . . Why will you receive it of force and not of free will; of necessity rather than of liberty?"

Rising to a higher note, he pleads: "Give yourself occasion to celebrate the gift with feasting, not with mourning; let the talent be cultivated, not buried in the ground; let some time intervene between the grace and death, that not only may the account of sins be wiped out, but something better may be written in its place; that you may have not only the gift, but also the reward; that you may not only escape the fire, but may also inherit the glory" (xi., xii.).

This is noble language, but there is something finer still to follow: "I know of three classes among the saved: the slaves, the hired servants, the sons. If you are a slave, be afraid of the whip; if you are a hired servant, look only to receive your hire; if you are more than this, a son, revere Him as a Father, and work that which is good, because it is good to obey a father; and even though no reward should come of it for you, this is itself

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a reward, that you please your Father " (xiii.).

Addressing those whose fears are not base, Gregory reasons: "But are you afraid lest you should destroy the gift, and do you therefore put off your cleansing, because you cannot have it a second time? What? . . . Would you then on this account avoid becoming a Christian? Perish the thought. Such a fear is not for a sane man; such an argument argues insanity. O incautious caution! O trick of the Evil One! . . . For being unable to persuade you to despise baptism, he inflicts loss upon you . . . and because you fear to destroy the gift, you may for this very reason fail of the gift altogether through a fictitious security" (xvi.).

Gregory divides those who fail to receive the gift into three classes: (1) Scorners, who despise it, who will "have to suffer punishment, as for all their sins, so for their contempt of baptism"; (2) those "who know and honour the gift, but put it off; some through laziness, some through greediness"; all of whom will have to suffer, but less than the scorners; (3) those who "are not in a position to receive it, perhaps on account of infancy, or some perfectly involuntary circumstance through which they are prevented from receiving it, even if they wish." These last, Gregory thinks, will "be neither glorified nor punished by the righteous Judge, as unsealed and yet not wicked, but persons who have suffered rather than done wrong" (xxiii.).

This passage brings before us two subjects

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of vital importance in our inquiry. It contains at least a faint foreshadowing of infant baptism, and it shows how painfully men's minds were working in regard to the state of those who died unbaptized.

There has been much needless discussion of the precise force of the word "infancy" in this passage. The Greek term (*νηπιότης*) has a very wide range of meaning and was applicable to children of all ages, and in a special sense to youths too young to bear arms. It might be used also of aged persons and others who, by reason of bodily or mental infirmity, are in a state of "childishness." The precise force of the term in this place is of little interest. It is rather curious, however, that pædobaptists should be eager to prove that Gregory included "infancy" among those "involuntary" circumstances which prevent a reception of baptism!

The lawfulness of bestowing the rite on children is introduced by Gregory in a fashion which reveals the existence of a painful interest in the problem, and he discusses it in unequivocal terms.

After expatiating on the blessedness of the ordinance, he confronts the question which was evidently troubling many minds: "What have you to say about those who are still children, and conscious neither of the loss nor of the grace? Are we to baptize them also? Certainly, if any danger presses. For it is better that they should be

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unconsciously sanctified than that they should depart unsealed and uninitiated" (xxviii.). He justified this action by the example of circumcision, which "was conferred on children before they had the use of reason," and more curiously, by the anointing of the "doorposts, which preserved the first-born, though applied to things which had no consciousness."

Under ordinary circumstances Gregory counselled parents to leave the baptism of their children until "the end of the third year, or a little more or less, when they may be able to listen and to answer something about the sacrament; that, even though they do not perfectly understand it, yet at any rate they may know the outlines . . . for this is how the matter stands: at that time they begin to be responsible for their lives, when reason is matured, and they learn the mystery of life (for of sins of ignorance owing to their tender years they have no account to give), and it is far more profitable on all accounts to be fortified by the Font, because of the sudden assaults of danger that befall us."

Elsewhere, Gregory addresses parents thus: "Have you a child? Do not let sin get any opportunity, but let him be sanctified from his childhood; from his very tenderest age let him be consecrated by the Spirit. Fearest thou the Seal on account of the weakness of nature? O what a small-souled mother, and of how little faith!" (xvii.). While speaking thus, Gregory seems to have forgotten

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that his own revered mother had not given him the seal of baptism! It shows that he had moved away from the position which satisfied Nonna and his father, and it is one of many marks of the transitional period in which he lived. The entire oration is the utterance of a man who was striving against popular opinion, and was endeavouring to carry the Church with him in a direction which the majority disapproved.

In regard to the state of those who died unbaptized, Gregory was still far away from the position assumed by Augustine; indeed, his doctrine was closely akin to that which was subsequently taught by Pelagius. He had no idea of any common ground of damnation for all the unbaptized, irrespective of their personal character and deeds, and he holds out no threat of hell for little ones whose parents deny them the ritual seal. In common with all who miss the seal through the hindrance or neglect of others, or through any cause unpreventable by themselves, they "will neither be glorified nor punished by the righteous Judge." This thought, which he shared with many leaders of the Eastern Church, is carefully developed. "For not every one who is not bad enough to be punished is good enough to be honoured; just as not every one who is not good enough to be honoured is bad enough to be punished" (xxiii.).

Whatever may be said of Gregory's view, on religious or ethical grounds, it is not indistinct, and it is radically different from that which pre-



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vailed at the time in Northern Africa, and came to be the doctrine of the general Church. His anxiety to have infants baptized when in any serious danger of death was not in order that they might be saved from hell, but that they might become entitled to heaven, and not be kept outside in some middle state, where neither wrath nor love abounds. It is very doubtful whether infant baptism would have become general if this plea had not been strengthened. Historical criticism is only entitled to say that the strengthening came, and with it infant baptism became the rule, instead of the exception. Gregory helped to prepare the Eastern Churches for the invasion of African superstition, by awakening parental alarm, and by branding the delay of baptism as disgraceful.

## Gregory of Nyssa

GREGORY of Nyssa was an intimate friend of Gregory Nazianzen, and a brother of Basil. He was born about A.D. 335, and lived to near the close of the century. Like his friend, he was the child of Christian parents, his mother eminent for piety, but he was not baptized until manhood, and, unlike his friend, he betrays no preference for an early administration of the rite. Indeed, there is no trace in his writings of any acquaintance with the innovation which Gregory Nazianzen favoured, nor could his views of the ordinance be reconciled with infant baptism.

In his treatise "On the Holy Spirit," which was written to maintain the personality of the Spirit as "the Lord and Giver of Life," Gregory incidentally asks, What is it we secure in baptism? "Is it not a participation in a life no longer subject to death?" Whence then, he inquires, does this gift of life proceed? "Is that life-giving power in the water itself which is employed to convey the grace of baptism?" To this he replies that obviously "this element is only employed as a means in the external ministry, but of itself contributes nothing towards the sanctification . . . and that what gives life to the baptized is the Spirit" re-

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ceived by faith. "Further still, seeing that this grace administered through the Son is dependent on the Ungenerate Source of all, Scripture accordingly teaches us that belief in the Father who engendereth all things is to come first."

The import of this passage is strikingly confirmed by Gregory's repetition of an old patristic idea, that spiritual regeneration is an act of human choice, so that the person born again not only knows "who it is that begets him," but actually selects his own father. "For, while all things else which are born are subject to the impulse of those who beget them, the spiritual birth is dependent on the power of him who is being born. . . . It were well, I think, for him who is moved towards the begetting of himself, to determine by previous reasoning what kind of father is for his advantage, and of what element it is better for him that his nature should consist. For, as we have said, it is in the power of such a child as this to choose its parents" ("The Great Catechism," xxxix.).

It is not conceivable that the man who could write this extraordinary passage had before his mind the regeneration of unconscious, or unreflective, children, but even stronger evidence may be found in his denial that baptized persons are regenerated, unless baptism in water be followed by transformation of character. Thus, in the following chapter, he writes: "For we ought, in my opinion, to take into consideration the sequel of this matter; which many of those who come to the

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grace of baptism overlook, being led astray, self-deceived, and indeed only seemingly, and not really, regenerate. For that change in our life which takes place through regeneration will not be change if we continue in the state in which we were. . . . But if, when the bath has been applied to the body, the soul has not cleansed itself from the stains of its passions and affections, but the life after initiation keeps on a level with the uninitiated life, then, though it may be a bold thing to say, yet I will say it and will not shrink; in these cases the water is but water, for the gift of the Holy Ghost in no ways appears in him who is thus baptismally born. . . . Let such an one, therefore, who remains in the same moral condition as before, and then babbles to himself of the beneficial change he has received from baptism, listen to what Paul says: 'If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.' For what you have not become, that you are not" (xl.).

These are courageous words, and uttered, as they were, not long before the conquering inroad of sacramentalism, which reduced the operation of the Spirit in regeneration to an act of authority which produced no discoverable effect on the moral nature, and involved no conscious response of reason or faith, they may well cause us to marvel that truths so clear, and so consonant with the teachings of Scripture, should have proved so barren of result.

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Gregory's teaching on the subject of infancy was very unlike that of his namesake in some important respects. His views are preserved in a valuable treatise "On Infants' Early Deaths," which he wrote in his old age.

Nothing could be more explicit than the assertion that children are born in a state of innocence, and have neither guilt to call for punishment, nor virtue to deserve reward. This is how he states the problem to be discussed: "A human being enters on the scene of life, draws in the air, beginning the process of living with a cry of pain, pays the tribute of a tear to Nature, just tastes life's sorrows, before any of its sweets have been his . . . dies and goes to pieces again; being either exposed or suffocated, or else of his own accord ceasing to live from weakness. What are we to think about him? How are we to feel about such deaths? Will such a soul as that behold its Judge? Will it stand with the rest before the tribunal? Will it undergo its trial for deeds done in life?"

These questions Gregory unhesitatingly answers in the negative, and sustains his opinion with reasons which are conclusive against the condemnation of harmless beings, but are unsatisfactory because they fail to distinguish between the radically different ideas of salvation and reward. He would not allow that infants could be placed in the same position as men who have worked righteousness, but he consigned them neither to a state of

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punishment nor to a sort of middle state in which they are neither punished nor glorified. Sometimes he appears to say that babes dying before the awakening of reason are blotted out of the universe, as Job wished for himself, like "a hidden untimely birth . . . as infants which never saw the light." But a broader view of his teaching shows that Gregory anticipated for deceased infants an entirely new start in the other world—such a start as would constitute a real commencement of moral experience, the beginning of a career which would be totally unaffected for either good or ill by the brief passage from birth to death on earth.

To appreciate Gregory's doctrine on this particular point we need to view it in relation to his whole theory of the future state. He has been frequently, but erroneously, cited as an ancient authority for the Roman doctrine of Purgatory. He undoubtedly taught that many souls will be purified with fire after death; and to this extent he aided the development of the Roman dogma, but apart from this common idea of remedial suffering, the two systems of thought have scarcely any resemblance. According to Roman teaching, none but baptized persons can enter Purgatory, and all who from any cause have missed the regenerating rite, together with those who have forfeited the baptismal gift by unpardonable sin, are cast into the bottomless pit, from which there is no escape for ever. But according to Gregory, Purgatory is specially required and appointed for "those whose

## Gregory of Nyssa

weaknesses have become inveterate, and to whom no purgation of their defilement has been applied, no mystic water, no invocation of the Divine power, no amendment by repentance." For such persons he declares it is "absolutely necessary that they should pass into some state appropriate to their case, just as the furnace is the proper thing for gold alloyed with dross, in order that, the vice which has been mixed up in them being melted away after long succeeding ages, their nature may be restored again pure to God" ("The Great Catechism," xxxv.).

According to Gregory we cannot understand the future lot of infants or of mature men without knowing "the whence of human nature, and the wherefore of its ever coming into existence." As to the "whence," he traces it back to the First Cause from whom all things proceed, and describes it as an amalgamation of spiritual and material elements, which were so united that man "was fashioned by his Maker to be the incarnate likeness of Divine transcendent power." As to the "wherefore," he tells us that "the design of all that is being born" is that God "may in all parts of the creation be glorified by means of intellectual natures, conspiring to the same end by virtue of the same faculty in operation in all—I mean that of looking upon God" ("Infants' Early Deaths"). The whole history of humanity, in this life and the next, is, therefore, the struggle of individual men to attain the ideal life for which they were created,

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and in this they are aided by Divine teaching and discipline, but never released from the inexorable necessity of working out their own high destiny. He boldly relies upon the Creator's purpose as the pledge of man's success, because God's glory cannot be attained except through man's achievement of his destiny as a free, volitional being, and therefore God will at any cost of combined severity and goodness eliminate every false and foolish thought and every wrong desire which unfits man for the beatific vision.

Having grasped these principles, we may understand Gregory's conception of Purgatory. Its fires are curative and educational, not penal; and only retributive, because without chastisement man cannot be reclaimed, or corrected, when once he has sinned. "It is not punishment chiefly and principally with which the Deity, as Judge, afflicts sinners; but He operates . . . only to get the good separated from the evil and to attract it into the communion of blessedness . . . and the agony will be measured by the amount of evil there is in each individual" ("On the Soul and the Resurrection").

In these sufferings two classes of persons have no part—perfected men and unfallen infants. "The soul of him who has reached every virtue in his course, and . . . the innocent babe . . . does not need the soundness which comes from purgation, because it never admitted the plague into its soul at all." When asked, What then will be its position in the future life? he finds a helpful analogy in the



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phenomena of infant life on earth. The infant has no share in the sorrows, or struggles, or delights of mature manhood, but it has "a natural delight in its milk, and in its nurse's arms, and in gentle rocking that induces, and then sweetens, its slumber." So in the world into which it passes with its undeveloped faculties, it will be nourished with elementary knowledge of God, and slowly acquire a capacity for fellowship with Him whom to know is life eternal.

This teaching reminds us of the simple trust in the well-being of little ones who chance to die in infancy, which led Christians, in the days of Aristides, to "praise God mightily, as for one who has passed through this world without sin." Gregory's primitive faith in the goodness of God enabled him to regard with equanimity the premature death of countless infants, and to declare that they "have nothing in them to suggest that one who so terminates his life is subject to some grievous misfortune." He felt the difficulty of explaining such apparent calamities, and offered various surmises on the subject; but without pretending to dissipate all the clouds which hover over the graves of the little ones, he insists that their early removal must be accepted by Christians as a part of the all things which "happen for the best."

It would be superfluous to exhibit more elaborately the ways in which the Roman doctrine of Purgatory contradicts this theory of human education, but I must call attention to an easy method

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by which the one might be transformed into the other.

Gregory confesses the prevalence of a well-meant but indefensible attempt to deceive the people by painting the future state of sinful souls in more lurid colours than preachers really believed to be correct. He intimates that the most alarming prospects were held out "to the thoughtless sort, as the threat of a terrible correction, in order that through fear of this terrible retribution they may gain the wisdom of fleeing from wickedness" ("The Great Catechism," viii.).

I should like to think that Gregory of Nyssa did not personally play upon the fears of thoughtless people in the way described, but he must have had good ground for his statement, and he betrays no sense of shame or regret at such unveracity. On the contrary, he seems to think that the end sanctifies the means, and anticipates no censure from his readers. It would be impossible to say how far the desire to awaken salutary fear promoted the development of the doctrine of Purgatory, but we cannot afford to shut our eyes to the significance of Gregory's disclosure.

## Basil

**B**ASIL, sometimes styled "The Great," was born about A.D. 329, and after a comparatively brief but strenuous and eventful life, died in 379. His parents and grand-parents were eminent Christians, and he was trained from infancy to walk in the footsteps of their faith, yet, like his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and his friend Gregory Nazianzen, he was not baptized until manhood. The precise date of this event is unknown, but it probably took place A.D. 357, when Basil was about twenty-eight years of age. In some respects Basil was the greatest of "The Three Cappadocians," and there is no doubt that the other two confessed his intellectual pre-eminence, but for our immediate purpose his writings are less valuable than theirs.

His general view of baptism may be gathered from a few brief extracts from his treatise "On the Spirit." He inquires, "Whence is it that we are Christians? 'Through our faith,' would be the universal answer. And in what way are we saved? Plainly because we were regenerate through the grace given in our baptism. How else could we be?" (xxvi.) This distinction between being

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"saved," and being made "Christians," is not very luminous, but there is little doubt that Basil wished to emphasise the complementary value of faith and baptism. This becomes clearer a little later in the same work. "Faith and baptism are two kindred and inseparable ways of salvation: faith is perfected through baptism, baptism is established through faith, and both are completed by the same names. For as we believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, so are we also baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: first comes the confession, introducing us to salvation, and baptism follows, setting the seal to our assent" (xxviii.).

No one has been able to discover in Basil's writings any allusion to the baptism of infants, but like so many others of his day, he supplies abundant proof that throughout the churches of the East the delay of baptism to old age was customary. His oration, exhorting catechumens to be baptized, strongly resembles that of Gregory Nazianzen, but it has a distinctive evidential value, inasmuch as it proves that the class of procrastinators Basil reproved were not, as is sometimes suggested, converts from heathenism, but, like himself, were the children of Christian parents, who had been under instruction from their earliest days. "Do you demur and loiter and put it off? When you have been from a child catechised in the Word, are you not yet acquainted with the truth? Having been always learning it, are you not yet come to the

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knowledge of it? A seeker all your life long: a considerer till you are old? When will you be made a Christian? When shall we see you become one of us? Last year you were staying till this year; and now you have a mind to stay till next. Take heed that by promising yourself a longer life you do not quite miss of your hope" ("Exhortation to Baptism").

Basil's opinion on the moral status of little children appears with great clearness in a sermon which he preached on a day of humiliation on account of a great dearth. He was moved to indignation by the general absence of grown men from the Church, most of them busy with their trades in the city, and the few who were present taking no interest in the prayers. "And the infants that have neither any sense, nor any guilt, are also brought in crowds to the public confession, who neither understand the occasion of distress, nor are capable of praying accordingly. Come yourselves to the office, you that have the burden of sins upon you. It is you that ought to prostrate yourselves, to mourn and weep."

Some attempt has been made to prove that Basil sanctioned infant baptism by advising it in the case of a young child of the Emperor Valens. The story, as told by Theodoret, simply states that "the great Basil came to the palace, and perceiving that the Emperor's son was at the point of death, promised him restoration to health if he received baptism at the hands of the pious, and

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with this pledge went his way. But the Emperor, like foolish Herod, remembered his oath, and ordered some of the Arian faction who were present to baptize the boy, who immediately died" (Hist. iv. 19).

Socrates gives a different version. Making no mention of baptism, he states that Valens said to Basil, "If the doctrine you maintain is the truth, pray that my son may not die." To which Basil replied, "If your Majesty will believe as I do, and will cause dissension and disunion in the Church to cease, the child shall live." The Emperor would not yield to this condition, and Basil answered, "Let God's will concerning the child be done, then," whereupon Valens dismissed Basil; and shortly afterwards the child died (Hist. iv. 26).

Gregory Nazianzen, in his eulogy of Basil, tells this story at some length, and likens the sickness of the child to the death of Pharaoh's firstborn, but he also makes no mention of baptism (54).

Still another version is given by Ephraem Syrus, and, according to him, Basil made no reference to baptism, but promised to intercede for the child's recovery if entrusted with his religious education. "I will do this," he told the Emperor, "if you will so deliver him to me, that I may bring him to the true faith, and free him from the impiety of the Arian doctrine." According to this statement the Emperor's son must have been old enough to receive doctrinal instruction, and must already have been influenced by Arian teachers. Ephraem makes

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the case still clearer by adding a complaint that, after Basil left, the Arians baptized the lad "with water, but not with the Spirit, for they taught him to reject the Son of God."

It is impossible to decide which of these four versions of the story is the most accurate, but taken together they render it extremely doubtful whether Basil advised baptism. On the other hand, they make it practically certain (1) that the young prince was being educated by Arian tutors; (2) that the Emperor Valens, in a time of panic, summoned Basil to his aid; (3) that Basil profited by the occasion to constrain the Emperor to withdraw from the Arian party; (4) that his attempt failed; (5) that the subsequent death of the lad was attributed by "orthodox" churchmen to a Divine judgment in their own favour. In none of its forms has this story any connection with infant baptism.

## Chrysostom

**J**OHAN, the "golden-mouthed" Bishop of Constantinople, was born at Antioch about A.D. 347. His father, who was a military officer of the highest rank, died soon after the child's birth, and his mother Anthusa, refusing many offers of marriage, devoted her whole life to the training of her son. She was a Christian of the noblest type, and deservedly ranks among the excellent women who have exalted the ideal of motherhood in the Church. It is instructive, therefore, to note that this universally-admired Christian mother did not regard it as any part of her duty to have her son baptized. His education was intended to qualify him for the profession of an advocate, and at a very early age he began to practise, but his refined moral sense was shocked by the causes for which he was expected to plead, and he renounced a career which promised opulence and fame. His friend Basil begged him to forsake the world and join with himself in a monastic life, but for this he was unready until a brief indulgence in the fashionable gaieties of the city had produced a measure of remorse and disgust.



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When about twenty years of age, John sought admission to the Church, and after a probationary period of three years was baptized, and at the same time ordained to the office of reader. At this period he was eager to join Basil, but yielding to his mother's entreaties he consented to remain at home for several years. It is probable that Anthusa died in A.D. 374, for in that year John entered a monastery near Antioch, and endeavoured to famish the natural desires of manhood by a course of rigorous austerities. Finding that these severities were ineffectual, he tried to live "the life of angels" by retiring to a mountain cave, and there in the course of two years he ruined his health without getting rid of his temptations. With shattered constitution he returned to Antioch, and devoted himself to the service of the Church. Subsequently (A.D. 396) he was consecrated as Bishop of Constantinople.

There is nothing specially distinctive in Chrysostom's views on the subject of baptism, or in regard to the doctrines which cluster round it. He was an orator, not a profound thinker, and appears to have given far more study to the manner than to the matter of his discourses. His power to sway the vast audiences which thronged the great cathedral where he preached was marvellous, but the copious torrents of declamation which have been preserved contain but few germs of original thought. For historical purposes, however, they have great value.

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Chrysostom clearly recognises the existence of infant baptism, and quite as clearly favours it; but his writings prove what his own history illustrates—that it had not become a general practice in the Eastern Church. It was still usual in Constantinople to baptize catechumens after a long course of teaching and trial; and the tendency to defer, rather than to hasten, baptism was strong. Every Easter large numbers were baptized in the cathedral, and it incidentally transpires that in A.D. 404, when a riot occurred in the city, the soldiers drove out from the church a multitude of men and women about to be baptized, numbering as many as the converts who received the ordinance on the day of Pentecost.

One passage which is commonly quoted as an allusion to infant baptism has not a little troubled Chrysostom's admirers. In order to exalt baptism at the expense of the more ancient rite, he observes: "There was pain and trouble in the practice of that, and no other advantage accruing from circumcision, than this only—that by this sign they were known and distinguished from other nations. But our circumcision—I mean the grace of baptism—is without pain, and procures for us a thousand benefits, and fills us with the grace of the Spirit; and it has no fixed season as that had; but one who is in the beginning of his age, or one who is in the middle of it, or one who is in his old age, may receive the circumcision made without hands. In which there is no trouble to be under-

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gone, but to throw off the load of sins, and receive pardon for all past offences" (Hom. xl., on Genesis).

In reply to the question why circumcision was imposed on infants of only a few days, he declares that it was partly because the rite, although painful, was more safely and easily borne by an infant than by a full-grown man, but chiefly to make it clear that it had no spiritual significance or value. In words that are too clear to be explained away he declares that it was so ordained "that they might understand by the thing itself that it signified nothing to the soul, but was given for a mark of distinction." He assumes that this lesson was so vividly apparent that no one could fail to recognise it: "For what benefit to his soul can an infant derive from it who has no knowledge of what is done to him, and has no sense?" If this remark could justly be applied to one rite it would apply to every rite administered to infants.

Another significant feature of the passage is its denial that any fixed season had been appointed for baptism. Circumcision, we are told, was ordered to be given at a certain age, but baptism is equally suitable for every stage of human life, including old age. A generation or two later, this statement would have been denounced for its laxity. Wherever Augustine's influence prevailed it was considered a crime to withhold baptism from an infant. It was regarded as a kind of spiritual infanticide. Hence we might conclude from this passage alone that Chrysostom was living in an

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age of transition, and was himself swayed in turn by ideas which were passing away, and by those which were gaining strength, and were destined to capture the chief organised communities of the East and West.

There is another possible reference to infant baptism in a discourse which deals with numerous Pagan customs which were persistently observed in the Christian community. Among these customs Chrysostom scornfully denounces the senseless folly of smearing a new-born infant's forehead with mud to "turn away an evil eye, witchcraft, and envy." Concerning this he exclaims: "Now that among Greeks such things should be done is no wonder; but among the worshippers of the Cross, and partakers in unspeakable mysteries, and professors of high morality, it is peculiarly deplorable that such unseemliness should prevail. God hath honoured thee with spiritual anointing; and dost thou defile thy child with mud? . . . And when thou shouldest inscribe on his forehead the Cross, the means of that invincible security, dost thou forego this, and cast thyself into the madness of Satan?" Up to this point there is no reference to baptism, for the sign of the Cross was to be made by the child's parent as a charm of more potency than mud, but a few lines lower down there is a distinct reference to some official ceremony which may possibly, though improbably, import baptism: "He that besmears his child with mud, how can it be less than making it abominable? For how, I

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want to know, can he bring it to the priest? How canst thou require that on that forehead the seal should be placed by the hand of the presbyter, where thou hast been smearing the mud? Nay, my brethren, do not these things, but from the earliest life encompass them with spiritual armour, and instruct them to seal the forehead with the hand; and before they are able to do this with their own hand, do you imprint upon them the cross" (Hom. xii., on 1 Cor.).

It is probable that the official act here referred to was connected, not with baptism, but with an ancient ceremony of name-giving. The question is interesting, but not worth discussing in this connection. The most important fact certified by the passage is that the Christian community presided over by Chrysostom was unworthy of its name, and was still under bondage to debasing superstition. The people who were rebuked for preferring Pagan mud to Christian water, or to any other ceremonial sign, are poor authorities on the subject of Christian institutions, and no Church need be proud of their example.

Another possible, though questionable, reference to infant baptism occurs in the course of a vehement expostulation addressed to those who deferred their acceptance of the ordinance until "the last gasp." Chrysostom's noblest plea is that men should eagerly consecrate their lives to God, in order to spend as many years as possible in His service, instead of degrading salvation into a mere

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city of refuge whither they may flee after squandering their days in sin. This leads him to deplore the universal absence of any desire to please God. "Hence it is," he exclaims, "that all is clean reversed, hence that, all the world over, everything is marred—because nobody makes it his aim to live to God. Thus those who are yet catechumens . . . give themselves no concern about leading an upright life; and those who have been baptized, whether it be because they received it as children, or whether it be that they, having received it in sickness, and afterwards recovered, had no hearty desire to live to God, neither do make this their business; nay, even such as received it in a time of health, have little enough to show of any good impression, and though warmly affected for a time, these also presently let the fire go out" (Hom. xxiii., on Acts).

This outburst is chiefly significant as a witness to the decadence of Christian life in the city. Making allowance for oratorical fervour, it attests a grievous lack of genuine discipleship in the multitude of people who called themselves Christians, and yet knew nothing of the constraining love of Christ. It is remarkable, also, as an incidental proof that Chrysostom perceived the futility of baptism as a means of imparting the kind of grace which bears fruit in a godly, sober, and righteous life.

This acknowledged failure did not prevent Chrysostom from indulging in rhapsodical praise

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of the ordinance. In the same discourse he exclaimed: "For great is the might of baptism: it makes them that partake of the gift quite other men than they were; it does not let the men remain mere men." Still more extravagantly, he said on another occasion: "For as soon as we are baptized, the soul beameth even more than the sun, being cleansed by the Spirit; and not only do we behold the glory of God, but from it also receive a sort of splendour. Just as if pure silver be turned toward the sun's rays, it will also shoot forth rays, not from its own properties merely, but also from the solar lustre; so also doth the soul, being cleansed, and made brighter than silver, receive a ray from the glory of the Spirit, and glance it back" (Hom. vii., on 2 Cor.).

That Chrysostom taught the absolute necessity of baptism is clear, and brief quotations will suffice. Addressing catechumens, he told them with a fierce precision that although they might in no other way differ from full members of the Church, yet the simple fact that they were unbaptized rendered their position hopeless. "For the Catechumen is a stranger to the Faithful (even though the near kinsman in nature and character). He hath not the same Head, he hath not the same Father, he hath not the same City, or Food, or Raiment, or Table, or House, but all are different; all are on earth to the former, to the latter all are in heaven. One has Christ for his King, the other sin and the devil; the food of one is Christ, of the other that meat

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which decays and perishes; one has the worms' work for his raiment, the other the Lord of angels. . . . If it should come to pass (which God forbid!) that through the sudden arrival of death we depart hence uninitiated (meaning unbaptized), though we have ten thousand virtues, our portion will be no other than hell, and the common worm, and fire unquenchable, and bonds indissoluble" (Hom. xxv., on John).

Chrysostom makes no secret of his own conviction that a large proportion of those who delayed baptism were devoid of any moral interest in religion, and were eager to enjoy the pleasures of sin to the brink of hell, while calculating on baptism as the price of a passport to heaven which would serve every purpose if taken out before death. In speaking to these people he expatiates on the awful risk of sudden death, the possible loss of consciousness, or of reason, or speech, when sickness befalls, the absence of a Christian minister, and the ignorance or negligence of friends. With fervid eloquence he denounces also the meanness of a policy which thinks to outwit both God and the devil, depriving God of the service which is His due on earth, and defrauding the devil of his right to possess all those who sell themselves to him, and receive the price in years of pleasure.

The extent to which this gambling for eternal stakes prevailed, and the shameless manner in which it was avowed, may be best inferred from the fact that Chrysostom accuses many who had



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been baptized during illness, of openly deploring their hastiness, and of envying those who still kept baptism in reserve, and had therefore no need to practise self-denial. He describes a typical man of this sort as being "as vexed as if some great harm had been done him" (Hom. i., on Acts i. 5). He paints an equally grim picture of newly-baptized persons who are in health being derided by their friends as either unlucky or unwise to incur restraints which are evaded by those who contrive to time their baptism more nearly at the end (Hom. xxiv., on Acts). Such pictures show the depths of degradation into which multitudes had sunk through a presumptuous trust in baptism as a magical charm against damnation.

If prudential counsels, fervent expostulations, scathing rebuke, and scalding streams of contempt, could influence such persons, Chrysostom must have prevailed. The majority, however, were too seared in conscience to respond. While the prayers were offered, and the golden-mouthed orator declaimed, these procrastinators, young and old, were talking and jeering one another, stupidly unconcerned, even when on their knees; "filthy nuisances," as Chrysostom described them, unworthy to be called men; fit only to be swept from the cathedral as dirt, yet so numerous and bold that no one in the congregation ventured to reprove their conduct.

It seems an awful thing that such miscreants were not plainly told that they were planning for

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themselves a refuge of lies; and that neither God nor the devil was so imbecile as to be cheated by their devices, however successful they might be in timing their baptism. Chrysostom could not believe in their success, but he was too much shackled by his sacramental theory to thus warn them of the wrath to come. He could only talk to them about the risks of delay, instead of predicting the certain failure of the best-calculated fraud. When baptism was not his immediate subject, he freely insisted on the absolute necessity of faith, hope, and charity, as conditions of salvation. He even went so far as to extol love as of more value than Church unity and an orthodox creed; but when urging the vital necessity of the ordinance, he was powerless to deny that its benefits would be precisely the same for those who might manage to secure it in the last moments of a wicked life, as for those who promptly followed his advice.

But while the great mass of procrastinators were shameless profligates, who calculated on sinning with impunity, there were some who feared to accept baptism lest, in spite of all their efforts, they should forfeit its benefits through inability to maintain a faultless life. In opposing this timid plea, Chrysostom insisted that moral failure is not inevitable. This abstract doctrine gave small encouragement to those who looked around on existing members of the Church, and listened to their Bishop's castigations of his erring sheep. Hence his chief effort was to intensify the terrors of the

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world to come. After describing the punishments which men have sometimes to endure in this life, he exclaims: "Yet all these things are but plays and a joke unto those (future) punishments. For these punishments are temporal; but there neither the worm dieth nor is the fire quenched." Calling up the anguish of Dives and of the five foolish virgins, he entreats his hearers, young and old, to flee from the wrath to come: "For none shall be able to deliver us in that day; neither brother, nor father, nor child, nor friend, nor neighbour, nor any other; but if our works play us false, all will be over, and we must utterly perish" (Hom. ix., on 2 Cor. iv. 13).

But while using this dangerous weapon, Chrysostom, in his clearer moments, perceived its impotence to produce a courageous life. He saw what the most ancient Puritans sadly failed to recognise, namely, that despair works death. "That man truly deserves to be despaired of who despairs of himself. That man has no more salvation, nor any hope." Deeply imbued with this great truth, a truth which is one of the presuppositions of the hope set before us in the Gospel, Chrysostom made it one of his chief endeavours as a preacher to convince men that their salvation was never impossible as long as they were on this side of the grave. Hence, while urging men to undertake the Christian warfare without fear because it is in our power not to sin, he added an assurance that no sin and no number of sins need

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be fatal. It is in our power not to sin, but if we sin, "It is in our power to recover ourselves. Great are the medicinal virtues of repentance; let none despair of himself. It is not the having fallen into a depth of evils, it is the lying there when fallen that is dreadful; it is not the having come into such a condition, it is the making light of it that is impious. . . . Of the soul, there can be no incurable wound; for the body there are many such, but none for the soul" (Hom. xxiv., on Acts xi. 1-18). To the same effect he said, on another occasion, "For even if we have offended in ten thousand things, it is possible to recover ourselves so long as we are here" (Hom. xxii., on 2 Cor. x. 18).

In saying these things the preacher's intention was excellent, but his language likely to delude many. No preacher is entitled to set any limit to the patience and longsuffering of God, but the readiness of God to forgive is one thing, and man's ability to repent at discretion is another. It would be untrue to say that Chrysostom took a light view of what repentance means, or that he consciously encouraged his hearers to count upon a convenient opportunity to repent if they neglected the present season, but he sadly failed to point out the besotting influence of dalliance with sin, the strengthening grip of habit, and, worst of all, the awful way in which a man's own conscience mocks him when at last he desires to reverse the wicked choice of many years, and in the hour of calamity, or the

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imminence of death, seems to hear devils laughing at the fraud he planned to perpetrate at God's expense.

Like many in after ages, *Chrysostom did not perceive that freedom of the will does not imply that a man can do whatever he wills to do at any given moment.* He may will to rise up and get away from an express train which is rushing toward him, but if lying on the track with broken limbs, he cannot make them obey his undoubtedly sincere behest. It is not our inability to will that Paul deplotes in the seventh of Romans, but our inability to act out our volitions. So, the most awful spectacle which can be witnessed by a death-bed is the sight of a fellow man willing with all the force of his nature to change his moral tastes, to produce in himself an unfeigned hatred of evil, as evil, and not merely as ruinous, yet compelled by the resistless veracity of conscience to confess that his will to repent is not repentance. Chrysostom, like many of the Fathers, and like Pelagius and Augustine themselves, never sounded the depth of those words, "for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not." Like all his best known predecessors, he affirmed the freedom of volition, but he did not distinguish between this and the power of action. By this mistake he brought himself into collision with experience, contradicted the report of consciousness, and helped to prepare the Church for a denial of freewill as more congruous with man's shameful experience of failure than the

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assertion of human competence to transform a time-hardened character whenever a change becomes convenient.

## Augustine

**A**UGUSTINE stands out as the most prominent and most formative Churchman in the long period which elapsed between Paul and Luther. There were greater thinkers and truer teachers than he, but in all those centuries no man acquired so dominant an influence, or graved so indelible a mark on the Christian Church. His voluminous writings contain few original ideas, but he had the power to utter his thoughts in clarion notes, to which men had to listen; and he did it with an energy so intense, so persistent and indefatigable, that other voices seemed weak in comparison with his. He lived also in an age when a new stage of development was inevitable. The old order was changing throughout the world. While Augustine was a lad the Roman Empire was riven in twain, and throughout East and West a decayed civilisation was proving its inability to contain the new wine of Christianity. Paganism, though galvanised into some appearance of new life by Julian, was struggling in the throes of dissolution, but when dethroned from political supremacy, it avenged itself by infusing its super-

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stitutions into the conquering Church. Into the midst of this confusion new men were pouring from the outer world of barbarism. The new spirit of life needed a new physical form in which it might be embodied, and, as we now see, the flood of barbarism meant in truth a new basis of life for the modern world, the provision of a new manhood for new nations which might work out the problem of Christian civilisation. For the amazed onlookers of that time, however, it seemed to mean a return to social chaos. The Christian Church had become too vague and uncertain about its own beliefs and customs to feel conscious of power to take command of the struggling forces which raged and foamed like a troubled sea. Here, then, was the call of need for a master-mind to arise and order the battle. It is the glory of Augustine that, while Rome and Constantinople were threatened with destruction, and all the ancient cities were ready to perish, he could uplift the great ideal of a "City of God" which nothing could endanger. While the peoples raged and kingdoms were moved he had courage to utter his voice as a prophet of the Highest, to tell the shaken Church that her foundations were eternal, and to assure her members that God's purposes are everlasting, and the gates of His City so strong that all the forces of earth and hell may beat against them in vain.

Augustine has sometimes been called "the father of infant baptism," but this can be defended only as a popular way of stating that he did more



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than any other man to fix it securely as a foundation-stone of the Church to which he belonged. He certainly did not originate the practice, for, as already seen, it existed before he was born, and, especially in Africa, it had grown in favour before he figured as its champion. Prior to his day, however, it had no logical place in any system of theology; its significance and value were variously and vaguely represented, and by many it was regarded with aversion as irrational, and fatally inconsistent with the apostolic doctrine of faith in Christ. It will appear in the present chapter that Augustine laboured with immense courage and skill to supply his fellow-churchmen with an intellectual apology for the rite they passionately desired to maintain, and whatever we may think of his performance, there can be no doubt that, since his day, infant baptism has been regarded in the Church he served as an integral and absolutely vital part of Christianity.

In direct antagonism to the view which affiliates the altered rite to Augustine, there is widely prevalent an idea that he merely explained and defended what had been observed with unbroken continuity from the days of the Apostles. This opinion cannot survive a knowledge of the facts we have reviewed, but inasmuch as Augustine is supposed to give evidence in its favour, his alleged testimony cannot be ignored.\*

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\* See Appendix, Note IV.

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Perhaps the most surprising disproof of this opinion lies in the fact that Augustine's mother, Monica, absolutely refused to have him baptized, even when he was at an age to urgently ask for it, because she thought him unprepared to maintain a Christian life. The incident is preserved in his "Confessions." In his own judgment, and in that of the general Church, Monica was one of the most perfect women and most loving and judicious mothers who ever adorned the records of her sex. Her husband, Patricius, was not a Christian until Augustine had reached early manhood, but he honoured Monica's convictions, and left her free to educate their son as seemed right in her eyes. While her child was an infant she had him marked in the way Chrysostom advocated, as a sign of his consecration to God. "Even as a boy," he records, "I had heard of eternal life promised to us through the humility of the Lord our God condescending to our pride, and I was signed with the cross, and was seasoned with His salt even from the womb of my mother, who greatly trusted in Thee" ("Confessions," Bk. i., xi., 17). He then relates the circumstances under which he begged for baptism, and was refused. "Thou sawest, O Lord, how at one time, while yet a boy, being suddenly seized with pains in the stomach, and being at the point of death—Thou sawest, O my God, for even then Thou wast my keeper—with what emotion of mind and with what faith I solicited from the piety of my mother, and of Thy Church, the mother of us

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all, the baptism of Thy Christ, my Lord and my God. On which, the mother of my flesh, being much troubled—since she, with a pure heart in Thy faith, travailed in birth more lovingly for my eternal salvation—would, had I not quickly recovered, have without delay provided for my initiation and washing by Thy life-giving sacraments, confessing Thee, O Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins.”

From this passage it may be inferred that Augustine made his request to some representative of the Church as well as to Monica, and that the refusal was not hers only. This may not be absolutely certain, but other essential points are clear. Monica was a ripe Christian before her child was born. Before his birth she dedicated him to the Lord. Immediately after his birth she called in the aid of some Christian minister to give the outward seal of this consecration in the fashion then usual; and yet, neither as an infant nor as an intelligent boy, did she present him for baptism, and there is not a hint of any remonstrance being offered by a minister of the Church or by private friends. All this is utterly incompatible with the supposition that infant baptism was the rule, and its administration regarded as a duty.

Monica's motive for thus refusing her son's request was the usual fear of post-baptismal sin, and for this Augustine was inclined to blame her. “Thus my cleansing was deferred,” he laments, “as if I must needs, should I live, be further polluted; because, indeed, the guilt contracted by

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sin would, after baptism, be greater and more perilous." Looking back upon a prolonged course of sensual indulgence which followed his recovery from panic, Augustine was tempted to think that he would have escaped some of this pollution if he had been baptized, and rather weakly exclaimed, "I beseech Thee, my God, I would gladly know, if it be Thy will, to what end my baptism was then deferred? Was it for my good that the reins were then slackened? or were they not slackened?" (18).

He was never quite sure of the true answer to these questions. On the one hand, he saw that the postponement of baptism was too often treated as an indulgence to commit iniquity, and he probably knew in his own heart that he himself had felt somewhat freer to do wrong than he would have felt if baptized. On the other hand, he recalled the fierceness of the passions which had been played upon in youth by alluring temptations to enjoy the pleasures of sin. Hence he was led to inquire: If the denial of baptism was not a slackening of the reins of moral obligation, "whence comes it that it is still dinned in our ears on all sides, 'Let him alone, let him act as he likes, for he is not yet baptized'?" Against this abominable advice he reasons that, as regards bodily health, "no one exclaims, 'Let him be more seriously wounded, for he is not yet cured!' How much better, then, had it been for me to have been cured at once; and then by my own and my friends'

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diligence, my soul's restored health had been kept safe in Thy keeping, who gavest it! Better in truth. But how numerous the great waves of temptation appeared to hang over me after my childhood! These were foreseen by my mother; and she preferred that the unformed clay should be exposed to them rather than the image itself."

Confining our attention, at present, to the historical significance of this passage, it will be observed that it indicates a widespread habit of mind. If Monica had been exceptional in her reluctance to have her boy baptized at an early age, this fact could scarcely have escaped comment when her action was being criticised. But this negative evidence is not all that we have for our guidance. Augustine was forty-three years of age when he wrote the Confessions, and yet even then (A.D. 397) he could use the present tense in making the sweeping statement: "It is still dinned in our ears on all sides, 'Let him alone, let him act as he likes, for he is not yet baptized.'" Such language denotes the existence of a large class of unbaptized people who were more or less closely in touch with the Christian Church, and were a source of anxiety to Christian parents. "Let him act as he likes, for he is not yet baptized," could not be said about Pagans, or about anyone outside the pale of Christian society. It points most naturally to young men in the position of Augustine himself, as the child of Christian parentage. It certainly does not describe Monica's moral attitude,

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but it indicates what many may have said to her when they saw how she strove to restrain her son. In all these respects it corresponds to what we have seen in earlier chapters: some people shamefully delaying baptism for the sake of sinning with impunity; others timidly delaying it for the sake of lessening the weight of judgment in the case of honest failure to live a sinless life.

A second proof from Augustine that infant baptism had not generally displaced the baptism of believers appears indirectly, but all the more forcibly, in the course of an ethical controversy. In discussing certain questions of extreme delicacy, which need not be recited, Augustine required to prove that suicide can never be justifiable on Christian principles. After dealing with several cases in which suicide had been much applauded by Pagan writers, he came finally to the question, "Whether voluntary death should be sought in order to avoid sin." On this point Christian opinion had been divided. Some Christian women had put themselves to death in time of war to avert violation, and slaves had sought refuge from lustful masters by the same expedient. In the turbulent times then passing over the Roman world, the question thus raised was an urgent and instantly pressing one, and one which the Church had almost everywhere to face. On this question Augustine took an opposite view to that held by many English Christians in our time, and notably during the Indian Mutiny. He held that, neither to avert the

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endurance of wrong, nor even to avoid "falling into sin either through the blandishments of pleasure or the violence of pain," is suicide excusable. To clinch his argument he advances a plea which shows how naturally his thoughts of baptism moved upon the assumption that it is the act of persons who are able to discern good and evil. "If this reason were a good one," he insists, "then we should be impelled to exhort men at once to destroy themselves as soon as they have been washed in the laver of regeneration, and have received the forgiveness of all sin. Then is the time to escape all future sin, when all past sin is blotted out. And if this escape be lawfully secured by suicide, why not then specially? Why does any baptized person hold his hand from taking his own life? . . . What reason, then, is there for consuming our time in those exhortations by which we seek to animate the baptized, either to virginal chastity, or vidual continence; or matrimonial fidelity, when we have so much more simple and compendious a method of deliverance from sin, by persuading those who are fresh from baptism to put an end to their lives, and so pass to their Lord pure and well-conditioned?" ("The City of God," Bk. i. 27).

It cannot be contended that this passage proves that infant baptism was rare in A.D. 413, but it certainly indicates that the practice had not been in vogue long enough to allow of a generation of baptized infants growing up into maturity. For such persons, salvation by suicide was not merely

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wrong, but a natural impossibility. The only means of saving baptized babes from committing sin would be the practice of infanticide, for suicide was not in their power.

Another striking evidence of the fact that infant baptism was still viewed with suspicion and uncertainty in Augustine's own day may be found in his correspondence with Bishop Boniface of Rome. It appears that Boniface sent a series of rather puzzling questions to Augustine, mainly in regard to the effect of parental action on children. The first of these questions exhibits a genuine feeling of perplexity, but also a dry humour, and a shrewd ability to put his honoured colleague on the horns of an uncomfortable dilemma. He first asks the apparently innocent question, "Whether parents do harm to their baptized children when they attempt to heal them in time of sickness by sacrifices to the false gods of the heathen?" To this query he wanted a definite answer, "Yes" or "No." If Augustine hastily answered "No," Boniface was ready with a quotation from Cyprian, who regarded parents who acted thus as murderers of their children's souls, and roundly declared that baptized children, when thus profaned, "lost, while yet in their infancy, that which they had received as soon as life began." But if, on the contrary, Augustine ventured to contradict Cyprian, Boniface presented the other horn of his dilemma, thus, "If they do thereby no harm to their children, how can any advantage come to these children at their



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baptism, through the faith of parents whose departure from the faith does them no harm?" (Letter 98, dated A.D. 408).

Augustine's reply, was adroit, if not conclusive, and will have to be noticed in another connection, but I pass now to the last question in the series submitted by Boniface, which was even more difficult than the first. The question was thus stated: "If I place before you an infant, and ask, 'Will this child, when he grows up, be chaste?' or, 'Will he not be a thief?' you will reply, 'I know not.' If I ask, 'Is he, in his present infantile condition, thinking what is good or thinking what is evil?' you will reply, 'I know not.' If, therefore, you do not venture to take the responsibility of making any positive statement concerning either his conduct in after life or his thoughts at the time, what is that which parents do, when, in presenting their children for baptism, they, as sureties (sponsors), answer for the children, and say that they do things which at that age they are incapable of even understanding, or, at least, in regard to which their thoughts (if they can think) are hidden from us? For we ask those by whom the child is presented, 'Does he believe in God?' and though at that age the child does not so much as know that there is a God, the sponsors reply, 'He believes'; and in like manner answer is returned by them to each of the other questions. Now, I am surprised that parents can in these things answer so confidently, on the child's behalf as to

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say, at the time when they are answering the questions of the persons administering baptism, that the infant is doing what is so remarkable and so excellent; and yet if, at the same hour, I were to add such questions as, 'Will the child who is being baptized be chaste when he grows up? Will he not be a thief?' probably no one would presume to answer, 'He will' or 'He will not,' although there is no hesitation in giving the answer that the child believes in God, and turns himself to God" (7).

There is an exquisite irony in this humble inquiry which makes it delightful reading for those who are not called upon to answer it, but Augustine found it very disconcerting while he read it "over and over again," and pondered it as far as his "limited time permitted." Nor was his trouble lightened by the further request with which Boniface had the cruelty to close his letter. "To these questions I pray you to condescend to give me a short reply, not silencing me by the traditional authority of custom, but satisfying me by arguments addressed to my reason." In reply, Augustine wrote a long paragraph to explain the difficulty of giving such an answer as Boniface demanded, but finally set about his task with the by no means superfluous, and evidently heart-felt, prayer: "The Lord help me to accomplish what you require" (8).

Keeping to the historical import of these inquiries it will be seen that they derive an additional significance from the status of the correspondents.

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Boniface was one of the foremost men of the day, and was the first to make a formal claim to be acknowledged as the supreme Bishop of the entire Christian Church; and he recognised in Augustine not only a man of transcendent ability, but the champion of the custom he called in question. We may honour Boniface, therefore, as a candid thinker who sought to get at the heart of things, and was not satisfied to fall in with a growing custom merely because it was in vogue, but he was also a great official, who had found himself unable to justify that custom in the face of doubters and opponents. Nearly all the voices of that age have died away into silence, and we have no report of the private discussions which were carried on in the homes of the people. The millions of Christendom, with all their doubts and fears and restless agitations, are buried out of sight, and all the lights of history are but as twinkling lamps shining in the midst of a great space of darkness which they have no power to disperse. Confessing this, it yet needs little presumption to suggest that Boniface was a truly representative man; a man whose most natural misgivings were felt by multitudes. He represents a state of mind which needed at least a plausible theory to justify a religious service which on the face of it seemed to contradict the plainest facts of nature.

It would be possible to multiply the evidences furnished by Augustine himself to prove that he

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did not find infant baptism established in the Church as an undisputed and universal custom, but on this point enough has been said, and we may now pass to a review of the theory which he wrought out and was able to commend to his contemporaries. In doing this it will be convenient to begin with the answers given to the questions to Boniface, for they cover the main points of Augustine's theory of baptism.

The first question was "Whether parents do harm to their baptized infant children, when they attempt to heal them in time of sickness, by sacrifices to the false gods of the heathen." To this wide, abstract question, no direct and explicit answer was given, but Augustine boldly dealt with the particular kind of harm which was contemplated by Boniface. The grave question was: Did the child lose the benefit of its baptism? Did the parental action amount to spiritual murder, as Cyprian maintained, or was the child still a regenerated being?" In answering the question thus re-stated, Augustine made his opinion very clear, though the reasons by which he supported it were not quite so plain as Boniface desired. "When the grace of Christ has been once received, the child does not lose it otherwise than by his own impiety if, when he becomes older, he turns out so ill" (2).

In thus writing Augustine pronounced the final verdict of the Church on the great principle involved. She had already decided that the blessings

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of baptism could not be forfeited through the heresy or immorality of an administrator, and on precisely the same grounds she was compelled to say that those blessings could not be forfeited through the faulty motives or the misconduct of parents. But, having made this declaration, Augustine had to meet the force of the question, If parents do no harm to their children by presenting them to false gods, how does it happen that "any advantage can come to these children at their baptism, through the faith of parents whose departure from the faith does them no harm?" Nor was this the only question at issue. Boniface did not ask, but Augustine was compelled to anticipate the inquiry, How can you say that children will suffer only for their own sins, and not for the sins of their parents, while you maintain that prior to baptism they are chargeable with the guilt of Adam's transgression?

Taking first his treatment of this latter question, we shall find reason to commend Augustine's subtlety, if not the soundness of his logic. In brief, he tried to solve the problem by discriminating between parental sins prior to the personal and separate existence of a child and sins committed afterwards. For the former sins he declared that the child is responsible, and a partaker of their guilt, but for the latter he has no responsibility whatever. With truly splendid audacity he quotes the words of Ezekiel, "Both the soul of the father is mine," saith the Lord, "and the soul of the son is mine;

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the soul that sinneth, it shall die," and then most properly adds: "But he does not sin whose parents (or any other person) resort, on his behalf, but without his knowledge, to the impiety of worshipping heathen deities" (i.).

Thus far, his answer to Boniface was admirable, but it required him to reconcile his doctrine of original sin with Ezekiel's magnificent repudiation of hereditary guilt. On this account, therefore, he proceeds to say: "That bond of guilt which was to be cancelled by the grace of this sacrament he derived from Adam, for this reason, that at the time of Adam's sin he was not yet a living soul having a separate life, *i.e.*, he was not *another* soul regarding which it could be said, 'both the soul of the father is mine, and the soul of the son is mine.' Therefore . . . he derived guilt from another, because, at the time when the guilt was incurred, he was one with the person from whom he derived it, and was in him. But one man does not derive guilt from another, when, through the fact that each has a separate life belonging to himself, the word may apply equally to both—'The soul that sinneth, it shall die'" (i.).

It would be interesting to know what Ezekiel would have said to this handling of his words. It is obvious that the distinction thus set up would reduce the prophet's utterance to an insensate mockery of the captive Israelites. They were pining in exile brought upon them by the sins of their forefathers, and resenting this as an injustice,

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they complained, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." To repel this impeachment of Divine government the prophet was commissioned to proclaim that every soul of man would be judged for his personal conduct and for that alone. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." Where was the comfort of this assurance if it applied only to sins committed during the lifetime of each son, but left him responsible for sins committed thousands of years before he had any being? If this doctrine were true, Ezekiel was a lying prophet, and all who believed him were most cruelly deceived.

In dealing with the second question put by Boniface, Augustine would have saved his readers much trouble if he had bluntly told Boniface that his question unfairly assumed that the benefits of infant baptism, if there are any, flow through a parent's faith. He did not say this, but nothing could be more explicit than his denial that a child is regenerated through the faith of his parents. He admitted that the will of the parent is useful to his child, inasmuch as it secures him the sacrament; but he denied that the validity of the sacrament is in any degree due to the faith which induces the presentation. Thus he writes: "It is not written, 'Except a man be born again by the will of his parents, or by the faith of those presenting the child, or of those administering the ordinance,' but 'Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit'" (2).

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To prove the vital importance of this principle, Augustine pointed out that some parents who presented their children for baptism had no faith, and even no thought of regeneration in their minds, but merely a superstitious idea that the rite would work as a remedy for bodily ailments. If, therefore, the Church had taught that this absence of faith and right intention nullified the rite, it would have cast doubt upon the efficacy of infant baptism in every case, for who could vouch for what was in the secret thoughts of any parent? To dissipate any misgivings on this point he gave the unequivocal assurance, "Let not this disquiet your mind, because their regeneration is not prevented by the fact that this blessing has no place in the intention of those by whom they are presented for baptism." In addition to this, he observed that "many are not presented by parents . . . sometimes the infant children of slaves are presented by their masters. Sometimes, also, when their parents are deceased, little orphans are baptized, being presented by those who were able to manifest their compassion in this way. Again, sometimes foundlings which heartless parents have exposed . . . are picked up by holy virgins, and are presented for baptism by those persons, who neither have nor desire to have children of their own" (6).

It is not too much to say that on no other principle would it have been possible to establish infant baptism in the Catholic Church. The consequences which followed from any other view were so terrible



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that humanity would have drawn back from them with horror.\*

We come now to the last and "most difficult" of the inquiries made by Boniface, in which he challenged the truthfulness of the assertions made by sponsors when presenting infants for baptism.

In order to pave the way for a reply which he evidently felt to be peculiar, and likely to surprise his correspondent, Augustine prefaced his remarks with an interesting homily on the difficulty and danger of short answers. After this anticipative apology, he cited several common forms of speech, in which some things are said to be what every one knows they are not, for which inaccuracy no one is blamed, and by which no one is deceived. "You know," he observes, "that in ordinary parlance we often say, when Easter is approaching, 'To-morrow, or the day after, is the day of our Lord's passion,' although He suffered so many years ago, and His passion was endured once for all time. In like manner we say on Easter Sunday, 'This day the Lord rose from the dead,' although so many years have passed since His resurrection. But no one is so foolish as to accuse us of falsehood when we use these phrases." The most rigorous lover of truth will, of course, assent to this statement, for the language is used merely to avoid a cumbrous and pedantic explanation which no one needs. But Augustine went on to declare what is certainly untrue, namely, that we give such names to these days

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\* See Appendix, Note V.

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on the ground of a likeness between them and the days on which the events referred to actually transpired . . . and the event itself being said to take place on that day, because . . . it is on that day sacramentally celebrated." Every one knows that the great days of the ecclesiastical year were not named because commemorative services were held upon them, but services were appointed because of the fact denoted by their name. In the same way we receive presents or congratulations on what are called our "birthdays," but assuredly they are not called "birthdays" because of the gifts and greetings which they occasion.

Having prepared his correspondent's mind for a peculiar use of language, Augustine went on to inform him that, although the words of sponsors were not literally true, they were true sacramentally. That is to say, the infants do not really believe in the sense of perceiving and assenting to truth, but are said to believe because they receive the sacrament which signifies faith, and the sponsors do not speak falsely, because "an infant, although he is not yet a believer in the sense of having that faith which includes the consenting will of those who exercise it, nevertheless becomes a believer through the sacrament of that faith. For as it is answered that he believes, so also he is called a believer, not because he assents to the truth by an act of his own judgment, but because he receives the sacrament of that truth" (ix.).

It would be interesting to know what Boniface

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thought of this dexterous playing with his difficulty, but he would have been very dull had he failed to perceive its worthlessness. For the sake of argument, let it be supposed that baptism conveys some sort of faith, so that, in the language of the Council of Trent, little children, *though they have not actual faith, are, . . . after having received baptism, to be reckoned among the faithful*" (Can. xiii.). But even this dogma does not alter the fact that the sponsor's words are untrue when uttered. No sacramentalist can invert the order of events so carefully specified by the Council, and Augustine's letter is equally explicit. "By the water, therefore, which holds forth the sacrament of grace in its outward form, and by the Spirit who bestows the benefit of grace in its inward power . . . the man . . . is regenerated in Christ alone." Hence it follows that "sacramental faith," whatever that may be, has no existence when the minister says, "Does this child believe?" and the sponsor replies, "He believes." It must be observed, also, that this declaration not only comes first in the order of time, but it is prior to the rite as the avowed and indispensable condition of its bestowal. Hence it is obvious that, whatever the sponsor means by faith, his words are false, for the child has neither the one kind nor the other. For "actual faith" he must confessedly wait until capable of understanding truth; for the unreal, the imputed, or "sacramental" substitute, he has to wait until the minister has laid him in the water, in the name

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of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The most exquisite part of Augustine's letter will be found in his closing denunciation of all who might fail to accept his solution of Boniface's difficulty: "He who does not believe this, and thinks that it is impossible, is assuredly an unbeliever, although he may have received the sacrament of faith; and far before him is the infant which, though not yet possessing a faith helped by the understanding, is not obstructing faith by any antagonism of the understanding, and, therefore, receives with profit the sacrament of faith."

Before leaving this correspondence it may be advisable to advert to the functions of the sponsors, or sureties, as these were understood in the ancient Church.

The true origin of sponsors, or God-parents, as under some circumstances they were appropriately called, is not obscure, nor is it disputable. As soon as churches were founded, and began to do their work, they had to deal with the business of admitting new members into fellowship. At the outset the conditions were simple, and, as we see in the New Testament, the form of admission was little more than a prompt and cordial welcome of all who confessed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. While the dread of persecution surrounded the Church like a wall of fire there was little need for anxiety respecting the sincerity of candidates,

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yet even then the community as a whole could have no knowledge of converts from Judaism or heathenism except through the report of some trusted individuals, and at all times there was some risk of receiving spies and traitors, and a possibility of being deceived by men who, like Simon Magus, had no part or lot in the faith. Thus a primitive kind of sponsorship came into existence almost simultaneously with the foundation of the Christian community; and with or without the name it has existed, and must always exist, wherever there is a real Christian society into which members are introduced.

As time advanced and the reproach of Christ was lightened, the danger of receiving unfit persons increased, and to meet this peril, more formal and precise confessions of faith were enforced, and credible assurances were demanded that candidates were living in a manner which agreed with their professions of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (See Origen's description of the process in his day, p. 190.) In accordance with this natural demand, the duty imposed on those who introduced candidates was more seriously regarded, and the formal office of sponsor was evolved by a natural and really inevitable process.

The original duties of sponsors were thus perfectly intelligible, but assurances which were rational and indispensable in the case of professed converts, became anomalous when transferred to infants. The anomaly was so great that such a

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change never could have been made in a sudden manner without conscious fraud on the part of the clergy, and an epidemic of insanity in the churches which allowed themselves to be deceived.

The almost unconscious manner in which the change was effected is attested by the fact that the old order of service was allowed to survive long after it had ceased to be appropriate. When the Church began to baptize young children who could ask for the rite in words only, and had no notion of its meaning, she still treated them as catechumens, and tutored them to repeat verbally the old confessions, holding herself bound in charity to believe that God would not damn these little ones for their intellectual defects. When, by almost imperceptible stages, she came to baptize quite speechless babes, there was no abrupt breach of continuity, but simply a further triumph of charity to believe that infants who could say nothing were quite as fit for baptism as those who could understand nothing, but could talk a little. Thus sponsors were still required to attest the fitness of those presented for baptism, although every mark of fitness as defined in the service was absent. The transformation, when completed, was extraordinary, but its progress was so gradual and so subtle that there was no particular moment when a shock of revolution was experienced, and in no single generation was there a startling innovation. Tertullian saw how things were tending, and made a futile protest. Vast numbers of so-called "heretics"

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denounced and abjured the non-apostolic practice, but the bishops and priests increasingly favoured it, and Boniface was probably the last highly-placed official of the "Catholic" Church to give utterance to the perplexity which was excited in the minds of independent thinkers as they pondered the amazing statement made by sponsors, that unthinking babes believed in God, and in all the items of the Christian creed.\*

For historical purposes the letter to Boniface has pre-eminent value, but we shall find a fuller exposition of Augustine's theory of baptism in his larger works, and will turn in the first instance to his controversial writings against the Donatists.

Augustine's position in this battle was peculiar, and needs to be clearly understood by those who seek to follow his course of argument. The question at issue was primarily ecclesiastical, and the Donatists were the attacking party. They found no fault with the creed or with the ritual of the "Catholics," but protested against the laxity of their discipline, and particularly their sufferance of unworthy men in the office of bishop. Founding their action on this very old Puritan principle, they claimed to be "The Church," and not only spurned the pretensions of the so-called "Catholics" to monopolise this title, but denied that they formed even a part of the true Church of Christ. In repelling this assault, Augustine never condescended

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\* See Appendix, Note VI.

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to acknowledge that the claims of his own party were disputable, and adopting a lofty tone, he addressed the Donatists as schismatics, whose duty was to repent of separation as a mortal sin. At the outset he may have faintly hoped to induce the main body of the Donatists to re-consider their position; but this hope, if it ever existed, soon passed away, and his line of reasoning and his general tone indicate that he wrote chiefly to dissuade his own sheep from straying from the fold.

In the course of this dispute, the validity of baptism as administered by both communities became a chief subject of contention. The Donatists maintained that corrupt men could not administer the sacraments, and under controversial pressure they went so far as to say that the toleration of such men was a participation of their sin, and vitiated every ministerial act, whether performed by offenders personally, or by fellow-servants who had only a guilty knowledge of their character. This principle led to the conclusion that there was not a single bishop or priest in the "Catholic Church" capable of administering a valid baptism, whether to believers or to infants. This again compelled the appalling inference that the multitudes who had been baptized by incapable ministers had either died and been cast into hell, or were foredoomed to destruction unless re-baptized in a pure communion. On this pretext the Donatists re-baptized all who came to them from the Catholic Church, and by their confident assertions they were



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able to frighten many who cared little for either party, but were anxious to be on the safe side.

In taking up this position the Donatists were able to plead the authority of Cyprian and the decrees of the Council of Carthage. This added immensely to Augustine's difficulties. Unless prepared to repudiate the verdict of the general Church, he was compelled to declare that Cyprian and his Council had erred. The declaration was made, but not without violence to Augustine's reverence for Cyprian, nor without some risk of damage to the idea of catholicity.\*

Augustine's admission gave the Donatists a great strategical advantage. The simplest minds could see that safety lay in being baptized where, by consent of both parties, the rite would be effective, and the new birth be certainly conferred. Even those who preferred the Catholic Church were led to ask: "Why should we risk our salvation, or the salvation of our little ones, by choosing a sacrament which many proclaim worthless, when offered another which no one disputes?" The problem was, How could people who cared more for safety than for any Church be dissuaded from becoming Donatists? This problem gave Augustine an opportunity for a notable display of his superb dialectical skill.

As the Donatists had magnified the authority of Cyprian for their own advantage on one point, Augustine dexterously appealed to him upon

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\* See Appendix, Note VII.

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another. It was true that Cyprian had said that there is no valid baptism outside the One Church, but he had not become a separatist on this account. He had so much honoured the principle of Unity that he had remained in communion with his opponents. When introducing the disputed question to an African Council, he had uttered noble words, which Augustine quoted with great effect: "It remains," he observed, "that we severally declare our opinion on this subject, judging no one, nor depriving anyone of the right of communion if he differ from us. For no one of us sets himself up as a bishop of bishops, or, by tyrannical terror, forceth his colleagues to a necessity of obeying, inasmuch as every bishop, in the free use of his liberty and power, has the right of forming his own judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he can himself judge another" (Bap., Bk. 2, ii., 3). Extolling these words, Augustine demanded: "What then, ye Donatists, what have ye to say to this? . . . wherefore have ye broken the bond of peace? . . . Answer me, wherefore have ye separated yourselves?" With many angry reproaches he pressed home the plea that, if they were to follow Cyprian, they must return to the communion from which he never departed.

As a polemical retort, this was clever, but ineffective. The Donatists gladly embarrassed their critics by quoting Cyprian, but they were not bound to follow his example; and Augustine's fierce reproaches did more to repel them from his

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Church than to attract them to its portals. With more force, therefore, he advanced a subtle argument to prove that, although the Donatists could administer a perfect baptism, they could not secure its substantial benefits for their disciples. Having extolled Cyprian's plea for unity, Augustine proceeded to exalt it into the highest conceivable place as a primary condition of salvation. The Church, he said, is the body of Christ, and every man who is outside that body is thereby cut off from life, and from all the means of grace. The Church is the abode of the Holy Spirit, therefore he who despises the Church sins against the Spirit, and can never be forgiven until he obtains restoration to the Mother he has forsaken. Thus the man who seeks baptism among the Donatists with an astute prudence, because they confessedly can give it, does thereby outwit himself. By suspecting, and by declining the service of the Catholic Church, he casts contempt upon it, commits the sin of schism, and consequently will obtain no benefit from his baptism unless re-joined to the body of Christ. For this sin there can be no forgiveness until the offender repents and humbly sues for admission into the Church he has despised.

Here, then, was a view of things which might well make a cautious doubter pause. Whichever way he turned he was threatened with damnation. If, being scared by the prospect of a suicidal regeneration, he resorted to the Catholic Church, a voice behind him cried: "She is not the Church,

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but a synagogue of Satan. Her font is defiling, and there is poison in her Eucharistic feast." If, on the other hand, he turned to the Donatists to secure an absolutely undisputed baptism, another voice exclaimed: "It will profit you nothing. You are born again, but while gaining the new life you have lost it. You have received the Holy Spirit, but while He entered your door you sinned against Him. Your sins have been remitted, but while taking God's gift you have provoked His anger, and robbed your own soul of grace." A man of strong convictions could afford to laugh at these attempts to frighten him. But the waverer, the man who wanted to be on the right side, but had no faith in either, must have been terribly perturbed.

A clever controversial stroke is often expensive, and is apt to rebound upon the striker. To some extent this was Augustine's experience. Having conceded the flawless completeness of their baptism, he could only deprive the Donatists of any substantial advantage by reducing the intrinsic value of the ordinance wherever administered. If the benefits of baptism are insecure, and may be unexpectedly forfeited one way, they may conceivably be lost in other ways, and directly this doubt has been started it brings into view other possibilities; and further thought discovers that baptism, though still said to be indispensable, is after all only one of several factors equally indispensable, because the absence of any one is fatal to

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the effectiveness of each and of all the rest. An admission that the benefits of baptism are conditional sets the rite in a position which may be likened to that of a modern insurance policy, on the back of which are inscribed in small print a series of conditions which few read, and fewer still understand, but on any one of which the sum insured may be legally forfeited.

It is very much to Augustine's credit that he not only saw how his insistence on unity reduced the relative value of baptism, but also ventured to diminish it still further by strenuously insisting on some other essentials which are moral and spiritual. His knowledge of the Scriptures, and his own religious experience, compelled him to insist on the inexorable claims of righteousness and faith and love. By so doing he burdened himself with the formidable task of co-ordinating sacramental and ecclesiastical conditions of salvation with those which pertain to the hidden man of the heart. The difficulties of this task are so great—indeed, they are so insuperable—that he was foredoomed to failure. It is evident that he himself was oppressed by these difficulties, and it will become us to mingle pity with respect while we watch his valiant yet futile endeavour.

The extreme perplexity of which Augustine was conscious leaks out in a frank confession, which has received less attention than it deserves. As a natural result of many subtle refinements and

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cautious qualifications, he became afraid to commit himself to any positive definition of the net value of baptism, or of the benefits it alone has power to confer. Thus he observes: "*What the exact value of the sanctification of the sacrament is . . . and what is the effect produced upon a man by its physical application, it is not easy to say.*" (Bap., iv., 23.) Our remaining task will be to follow step by step his effort to describe what baptism can, and what it cannot, do, and how it stands related to those other conditions of salvation on which as a Christian man he felt obliged to insist.

The first requisite of salvation to be considered as additional to baptism is Conversion of the Heart.

Augustine had personally undergone a great transformation of heart and character before he had been baptized, and he never forgot that experience, or willingly disparaged its importance in the interests of his sacramental theory, of his Church polity, or of any dogma. Whatever we may hold to have been the actual effect of his teaching, we must discriminate between the logical issue of his reasoning and the heartfelt purpose of his life. He had such a profound sense of the reality and the absolute necessity of a change of heart, that he often wrote as if it alone would set men right with God. He could not, however, consistently treat conversion as "the one thing needful."

The principle he laboured to commend in a form which should involve no contradictions, and

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should sanction no soul-destroying hopes of entering heaven with unclean hands and an impure heart, is thus succinctly stated: "The sacrament of baptism is one thing; the conversion of the heart is another; but man's salvation is made complete through the two together" (Bap., iv., 25).

If these two things, being equally necessary, were always found together, it might be possible to frame a plausible and comparatively harmless theory of their conjoint action. But they are not always found together, and Augustine had to say what would happen if one were present and the other absent.

Again, if he were free to say that, although both these things are desirable and right, and neither should be lightly esteemed, yet that only one of them is absolutely vital, a perfectly clear and satisfactory answer could be given. But he was not at liberty to say anything of the kind, because it would constitute a denial of his most fundamental article of belief. If he said that baptism might sometimes be dispensed with, he thereby renounced the sacramental theory that only in baptism can a man be born again, and the guilt of original sin be washed away. If he said that an uncleansed and unreconciled heart might be welcomed into the Holy City, he would be consciously echoing the vilest heresies which had ever defied the judgment of God. In regard to these alternatives there could be no hesitation. Neither could be entertained for a moment.

But failing either of these logical exits, how was

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he to evade the awful consequences of his doctrine? If conversion of the heart could never be dispensed with, what had become of all the baptized infants who had died while incapable of such an experience? Again, if baptism could never be dispensed with, what would become of a converted catechumen who died on the eve of the day appointed by the Church for his baptism? What would be the fate of the most sincere penitent who, on a sick bed, turned to God, but had to pass into the other world unwashed? Worse still, what had become of the vast number of faithful, but unbaptized, martyrs who, for the love of Christ, had languished to death in noisome dungeons, or been burned at the stake, or been torn to pieces by wild beasts, bearing witness to the Saviour's name with their latest breath? The Church had always gloried in these men, and had seen that their blood was precious to God, and to His saints—more precious than anything the world had seen, except the blood of Christ Himself. Had the Church been wrong? Were these men, who died in faith, now lapped in unquenchable flames because they were hindered from baptism by persecution, or death, or by the ceremonial customs of the Church, which kept them waiting at the doors of everlasting life? Augustine had great courage, and he dared to announce some truly awful doctrines, but he lacked the hardihood to affirm that such atrocities as these had conceivably taken place under the eyes of Him who died for our salvation.



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When placed in a similar difficulty, many theological system-makers have found relief by running into a cloud of evasive language. Augustine was an adept in this art, but on this occasion the dilemma was too obvious, too awful in its character, and too enthralling in its interest for every human heart, to allow the success of evasive tactics. Nothing but a plain answer would satisfy friends, or enemies, or neutral auditors, and if a plain answer could not be found, it must be invented, and invented it was.

Augustine began by admitting that the difficulty was not imaginary, or even hypothetical. It had to do with actual facts, and he freely owned that he had to maintain his thesis in full view of cases in which persons were authoritatively declared to have been saved, some without baptism, and others without conversion of the heart.

Neither in his letter to Boniface, nor in any controversy, did Augustine pretend that infants were capable of repentance toward God or of faith in Christ, yet he and his fellow ministers were constantly proclaiming that all was well with babes who died after being sanctified in the font. Going back to apostolic teachings and precedents, he boldly recalled the case of the thief on the cross, who was unbaptized, and was not a martyr, yet was assured of Paradise by the dying Saviour. With equal candour he cited the case of Cornelius and his friends, who were ordered by Peter to be baptized, not with a view to their salvation, but be-

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cause they had already received the Holy Spirit. In this way Augustine developed the problem to be solved, and then he propounded his solution. He could not say that God ever dispensed with either baptism or conversion, but he took upon himself to announce that when either of these was "involuntarily lacking," God Himself supplied it.

Let us first commend the use of the qualifying term, "involuntarily." Whatever difficulties this proviso might incidentally raise, it enabled him to offer the solemn warning: "But when either of these requisites is wanting intentionally, the man is responsible for the omission." (Bap., iv., 25.)

Let us then proceed to ask, What did Augustine mean to teach when he said that God supplies the "sacrament of baptism," or "conversion of the heart," when either of these requisites of salvation is involuntarily lacking?

(I) What is the meaning of the statement that God supplies the sacrament of baptism when this is absent in cases similar to those of the dying thief and of many martyrs?

The mere statement of this question is enough to convince most unsophisticated minds that it is unanswerable. Whatever else it may be, a sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Hence no inward and invisible gift can be a sacrament. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration declares that water, material water, outwardly laving the body, is essential to the *sacrament*, and in that particular point it is

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obviously correct. It follows, therefore, that if the dying thief was really supplied with the missing sacrament, water must have been used, and if so, we must conclude that God directly, or through some unknown servant, provided water, and administered the rite. Where, then, and at what time, was this outward, visible, and material sign administered? Who saw it done? Who informed Augustine of its performance? We are left to guess whether it took place on earth, or in Hades, on the way to Paradise. But as the outward and visible sign was certainly not supplied before any earthly witnesses, and as a *post-mortem* baptism is unthinkable, the only rational conclusion is, that the dying thief went to Paradise without it.

(2) What is meant by the statement that God supplies a converted heart to baptized infants?

Viewing this dictum in relation to Augustine's theological system we have no difficulty in perceiving its vital importance. But when we begin to ask, in the dry light of reason, What is the real nature of this Divine gift? and, Who authorised Augustine to announce it to the world? there is no reply discoverable in all his writings, nor can the wit of man propose one which will bear a moment's examination. We know what the conversion of a sinner means. We know what is meant by the admonition to repent and turn to God. But what sort of conversion is this which God gives to hearts incapable of either enmity or friendship, of either faith or disbelief, incapable of lisping God's simplest

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name? Nothing is too hard for God which is not necessarily and inherently impossible. He can work miracles, for this means nothing more than a modified use of the power which is always working wonders. But even God cannot make a circular triangle, or render a part equal to the whole. He cannot make a falsehood true, or theft a virtue, or hatred beautiful, nor can he make an infant change his thoughts while he has none to change, or cause that same infant to renounce the devil and love Christ while ignorant of both. Even God cannot give what a babe is unable to receive. Judged by any rational standard, Augustine's dictum thus appears too obviously absurd for refutation. It remains true, however, that he laid it down as a fundamental truth—a solid rock on which the Church might rest her faith—that all is well with little ones who swiftly pass from the font to the grave.

There is only one imaginable way in which the hypothesis of infantile conversion could have been commended to serious attention. If Augustine could have taken a pagan inquirer to the homes of his people, and could have called upon the parents of baptized children to bear witness that their families were holy, and their little ones free from the defects and blemishes common to other children, he might have challenged the visitor to account for such signs and wonders apart from some transforming act of God. But, unfortunately, these holy families have never been on view, and

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Augustine never hinted at such religious phenomena. There were then, and there are now, no such mysterious facts inviting speculation. Like the dogma of Transubstantiation, this theory requires us to believe in an unthinkable miracle, which is not only invisible as a process, but produces no visible effects. With bread and wine before our eyes, and subject to all the usual incidents of human consumption and natural decay, we are informed that the substance has been changed, although the accidents remain. Augustine made a similar demand upon credulity by asserting the creation of a new heart in baptized infants, in spite of the notorious fact that, in the only samples open to our view, all the moral characteristics of ordinary human nature remain unchanged.

We now come to a third requisite of salvation (or the second in addition to baptism), namely: Incorporation in the Catholic Church.

We have already met with this incidentally, but have now to consider it more carefully as an integral part of Augustine's Church polity. As used against the Donatists it appeared to be little better than a scourge to drive waverers away from heretical fonts. In its wider relations it becomes of supreme importance, for this proud denial of salvation outside the walls of the organised Catholic Church has been used with tremendous effect, and with ever-increasing arrogance, down to the present day.

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In discussing thus far the requisites of salvation, the position of infants has been chiefly before us, but in dealing with church membership we shall have to consider it more particularly in relation to those of riper years. There is, however, one point in connection with infants dying after heretical baptism which demands a passing notice.

If there is anything in the plea that God will Himself supply an involuntary defect, it must hold good always. If it be true that, to meet an emergency, God will do the work of a baptizer, or the work of a spiritual transformer, without the use of ordinary means, He can have no difficulty in conferring the boon of church membership. Indeed, this act seems to be immeasurably easier than either of the others, for, unlike them, it involves nothing strange or mysterious. If, as all Christians believe, there is but one Church, one family in heaven and earth, the act of admitting these little ones into heaven would constitute an admission into the Church. Why, then, should not God use His own keys, and open the everlasting gates, rather than cast these regenerated babes into hell? If Augustine was not pressed with these deadly questions, it could be only because his works were not then diffused in a collected form, and thus the scattered sayings I have brought together escaped comparison.

Coming now to consider the position of adults, new problems arise. The requisites of salvation are verbally the same, but under the same names new

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factors are introduced. For those who outgrow infancy, conversion denotes no longer a miraculous gift, in which the recipient has no conscious part, but an actual change of thought, affection, and purpose. Church membership is no longer a recognition by the Church, which is neither sought nor responded to by its object, but is a privilege granted to voluntary applicants, and to such of these only as are supposed to possess the rightful qualifications. The differences thus indicated are fundamental, and they necessitate a fuller statement of Augustine's conception of the Church, and the part she has to play in the work of salvation.

Augustine's most valuable utterances on this complex subject are not given in an abstract form, but are interwoven with recollections of his own personal experience. The most interesting and luminous are to be found in his "Confessions," and in his criticism of the "Epistle of Manichæus." His teachings on this subject are by no means uniform and self-consistent, and the two works I have named exhibit two incompatible views, corresponding to two contradictory accounts of his own conversion and introduction to the Church. In the one he ascribed the glory of everything that had happened to him to the authority of the Scriptures; in the other he ascribed it to the authority of the Church. One version shows that he was a true founder of the Papacy; the other, if read alone, would almost bespeak him a place among the precursors of the Evangelical Reformers of the

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sixteenth century. It will not be difficult to decide which of these views became the governing principle of his career as a leader.

Writing to the Manichæans, about A.D. 397, Augustine freely confessed that he had once shared their beliefs, and "barely succeeded, by God's help," in getting rid of them. It is, indeed, doubtful whether he ever did emancipate his mind from their influence, and his partial success was not purchased without a violent effort which made all belief more difficult. In giving an account of his "discovery of the simple truth," he states that it was "after much and long-continued bewilderment" he sought the cure of his "mental obscuration." He does not say what steps he took as a seeker, but intimates that he had a mournful experience "till the immutable and inviolable Existence vouchsafed to convince me inwardly of Himself, in harmony with the testimony of the sacred books" ("Against the Epistle of Manichæus," iii., 3).

If these statements stood alone, most readers would infer that a diligent search of the Scriptures was crowned by a spiritual manifestation of the things of God. But reading further we learn that the inward conviction was produced through the agency of the Church, and not by a direct shining of the truth into his heart. "For my part," he exclaims, "I should not believe the Gospel except as moved by the authority of the Church . . . for it was on the testimony of the Catholics that I



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believed the Gospel." This strong expression cannot be set aside as saying more than the writer really meant, for he proceeds to put the case more strongly still, protesting that if his faith in the Church were destroyed his only reason for believing the Gospel would be gone. "Should you succeed in finding in the Gospel an incontrovertible testimony to the apostleship of Manichæus, you will weaken my regard for the authority of the Catholics; and the effect of this will be that I shall no longer be able to believe the Gospel either, for it was through the Catholics that I got my faith in it; and so whatever you bring from the Gospel will no longer have any weight with me" (iv., 5). This may, or it may not, be a true account of the origin of Augustine's faith, but, if true, it would amount to a confession that he had no faith at all, in the proper sense of that term.

Turning to the "Confessions," we find a totally different version of his experience. He there makes it clear that the strongest influence which led him to faith and godliness was that of Monica, through her teaching and example, and, above all, her loving and prayerful solicitude. He went far astray, both in thought and life, from the paths in which she sought to guide him, but he never lost the impressions she produced on his heart and conscience, and on his imagination. While living as a sensualist in the "far country," he knew himself a prodigal son. Fascinated by the intellectual allurements of philosophy, he sought with eager

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hopefulness for mental certitude, for the secret of the universe, the explanation of Nature, the interpretation of man's life, and, above all, for the pathway by which our souls may attain the vision of God; but throughout the years of philosophical inquiry he never lost the feeling that his mother knew more of the Divine mystery than was known to any of his Pagan masters. When, wearied with futile speculations, and dejected by the discovery of foolishness where he looked for wisdom, and of ignorance where he was promised knowledge, he became a confirmed sceptic, and was ready to sink down from high thinking to base living; but even then he was beset by thoughts of the God of his childhood, and, coming at last to himself, was glad to turn once more to the Book his mother loved.

Referring to this experience, he wrote: "No wranglings of blasphemous questions, whereof I had read so many among the self-contradicting philosophers, could once wring from me the belief that Thou art—whatsoever Thou art, though what I knew not—or that the government of human affairs belongs to Thee. Thus much I believed, at one time more strongly than another, yet did I ever believe both that Thou art, and that Thou hast a care for us, although I was ignorant both of what was to be thought of Thy substance, and what way led, or led back to Thee." ("Confessions," Bk. vi., c. v., 7, 8.)

With tender gratitude he recalled how he had

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been rescued from moral and intellectual despair : "After that, O Lord, Thou, by little and little, with most gentle and merciful hand, drawing and calming my heart, didst persuade me, . . . that not they who believed Thy books . . . but they who believed them not, were to be blamed. . . . Seeing, then, that we were too weak by unaided reason to find out the truth, and for this cause needed the authority of the sacred writings, I had now begun to believe that Thou wouldest by no means have given such excellent authority to those Scriptures throughout all lands, had it not been Thy will thereby to be believed in, and thereby sought."

Thus far there is no mention of the authority of the Church, and the absence of this becomes more marked in a distinct statement that after a time he ceased to ask for any explanation of the Biblical marvels and discrepancies which had hitherto seemed incredible, and rested solely on the authority of the writings themselves: "For now those things which heretofore appeared incongruous to me in the Scripture, and used to offend me, having heard divers of them expounded reasonably, I referred to the depths of the mysteries; and its authority seemed to me all the more venerable and worthy of religious belief, in that while it was visible for all to read it, it reserved the majesty of its secret within its profound significance. . . . These things I meditated upon, and Thou wert with me; I sighed, and Thou heardest me; I vacillated, and Thou didst guide me; I roamed through

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the broad way of the world, and Thou didst not desert me." (Bk. vi., c. v., 8.)\*

Passing over the history of a prolonged conflict with enthralling passions, bewildering doubts, and intense desire for "honours, gains, wedlock," we are brought to a culminating experience. On a certain day Augustine sought solitude in a garden, hoping, and yet dreading, to bring this struggle to a close, and there felt the anguish and the joy of a new birth. While praying for mercy, with strong crying and tears, he heard a mysterious voice saying: "Take up and read; take up and read." Interpreting this as a command from heaven, he restrained his tears, and hurriedly sought for the "Volume of the Apostles," determined to read the first chapter he lighted upon, hoping, like Antony, to meet with an oracle charged with converting power. The paragraph on which his eyes first fell was this: "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in

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\* It should be carefully noticed that the only human influence here recognised is a reasonable exposition of some Scriptural difficulties bearing no resemblance to the authentication of Scripture by the Church. It is significant also that, though these explanations appealed to his reason, they did not solve the mysteries which perplexed his intellect. On the contrary, these unsolved difficulties which had before offended him, were now transmuted into the tokens of a deeper wisdom, and of a higher authority than would have been displayed by self-evident truth! This glorying in intellectual tribulation is all the more curious as he had just before abandoned Manichæanism, on the ground that they demanded an abject credulity, and actually forced many fabulous and absurd things upon belief "*because they were not capable of demonstration.*" (Bk. vi., c. v., 7.)

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chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." This was the result: "No further would I read, nor did I need; for instantly, as the sentence ended, by a light, as it were, of security infused into my heart, all the gloom of doubt vanished away." (Bk. viii., 28, 29.) Shortly after this experience he was baptized, and became "incorporated into the Catholic Church."

No ingenuity can reconcile this story with the statement that Augustine believed the Gospel only upon the authority of the Church. The brand of sincerity is burned into the story of the "Confessions," whereas a suspicion of controversial bias casts a shadow on the reply to Manichæus. No one, therefore, can rationally doubt that a conversion which included repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, did, in Augustine's case, precede his admission to the Church. How, then, are we to deal with these irreconcilable accounts? We cannot escape the difficulty by saying that one gives abstract theory, and the other gives a bit of autobiography, for in both stories Augustine professes to relate his own experience, and in both he has an argumentative design. The discrepancy is deplorable, but we must be satisfied to determine which of these views represents the ultimate doctrinal position of the man as a teacher and builder of the Church.

Some further insight into Augustine's mind

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may be gained by recalling the story of Victorinus, which he used to illustrate his own experience and to confirm his doctrine of the Church. Victorinus was a man of great distinction, who taught philosophy and rhetoric in Rome, and was honoured with a statue in the Forum. In his old age he became a student of the Christian writings, and became a thoroughly convinced, but secret, disciple of our Lord. Speaking in confidence to Simplicianus, he said, "Know thou that I am a Christian." Simplicianus replied, "I will not believe it, nor will I rank you among the Christians, unless I see you in the Church of Christ." Whereupon, Victorinus, with pungent satire, made the memorable retort, "*Is it, then, the walls that make Christians?*" This conversation was frequently repeated, with no visible effect on either side, until one day Victorinus startled his friend by saying, "Let us go to the church; I want to be made a Christian." Immediately the two went together: Victorinus was admitted to "the first sacraments of instruction," and not long afterwards "gave in his name, that he might be regenerated by baptism, Rome marvelling, and the Church rejoicing." ("Confessions," viii., 4.)

There is some uncertainty about the interpretation of this story and the precise meaning of what each speaker said. It is possible, as Augustine, in using the incident, assumed, that Simplicianus deliberately intended to assert that no man can become a Christian except by passing within the

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walls of the Church. On the other hand, it is more probable that he had no such rigid dogma in his mind, and meant only to disown Victorinus as a Christian, while afraid, or ashamed, to confess Christ before men by joining His disciples and sharing their reproach.

Whichever of these views may be correct, the ironical reply of Victorinus shows a keen insight into the great principle that a Christian cannot be made by passing the walls of an organised society. No genius could put the case more aptly.

That Victorinus was already a Christian in the purest and most spiritual sense of that word is proved by the sequel, for none but a Christian could have made such a sacrifice as presently he made in joining the Church. He was an old man, and venerated as the most brilliant exponent of the new Paganism which was fashionable in Rome. In confessing Christ, he had to confess that all his life-work had been vain, all his opinions wrong; and with this humbling admission he had to renounce the prize for which he had toiled. This was assuredly the most convincing evidence of a converted heart.

In reading his story we are reminded of the older tales of Nicodemus, and of Joseph of Arimathea. These two men are distinctly acknowledged to have been Christians before they flung off their fears. They were disciples, yet secretly, for fear of the Jews. They loved Jesus, and revered Him as a teacher, and they expected Him to

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demonstrate His Messiahship in due time; but meanwhile they waited for events to make confession safer. The sort of demonstration they anticipated never came. Instead of a Coronation there was a Crucifixion. The dead body of the Master they had stood aloof from in life, alone remained; but that cold, macerated frame smote their hearts, and in an hour when long-avowed disciples hid themselves in a panic, these two falterers waxed valiant, and won an everlasting name. These heroes had not been baptized, they had never been admitted to the circle of disciples, yet the sincerity of their hidden love is verified by the fruit it bore. They were Christians outside the walls, and solely because they were such they passed in through the strait gate to take their part in the reproach of Christ, to share His Cross, and in due season to behold and reflect His glory.

It is instructive to note that, when Victorinus had gathered strength from reading and meditation, he ceased to urge his question, and humbly said: "Let us go down to the church; I wish to be made a Christian." He thus confessed himself unworthy to be called a Christian, but this does not alter the fact that he was one, and whatever theory the Church might frame, his welcome by the Church was her joyful recognition of an accomplished fact.

This story is interesting as a fragment of biography from which Augustine derived an ennobling impulse, but it is still more valuable historically, because it represents on a small scale



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the origin and development of a dogma which Augustine hardened into an adamantine bulwark of the Catholic Church. The attitude of Simplicianus was the attitude of the confessing host toward secret discipleship, not only in his day, but throughout preceding centuries. We see a trace of it in the Gospels, where the disciples wished Christ to suppress a man because he followed not with them. From the earliest days when persecution began, faithful men who suffered, or were ready to suffer, as Christians, regarded with suspicion those who covertly professed to have sympathy with them, yet acted like Naaman when he bowed his head in the house of Rimmon. Some were more severe than others, but the most lenient among them denied those who denied Christ before men, and only differed from their sterner brethren in allowing room for repentance. In a corresponding manner Victorinus represented the humble spirit in which the severe judgment of the Church was respected and justified by all secret disciples whenever they emerged from their hiding-places. No man who cast off fear and shame, and became a confessor, ever defended his former cowardice, or censured those who had previously denied him the name of Christian.

There is an infinite difference between being a Christian and being worthy of the name; but Augustine, in telling the story, and in using it, totally ignored this difference. He took for granted that Simplicianus meant that no man is or can be

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a Christian until made one by incorporation in the Church. He was singularly acute, yet there is nothing to indicate that he felt the ironic sting of the old rhetorician's words, "Is it, then, the walls that make Christians?" With great astuteness, or with greater obtuseness, he treated the later words of Victorinus, "I wish to be made a Christian," as an acceptance of the view he had previously derided, and, therefore, quoted them as a notable assent to the dogma that no man can be saved outside the Catholic Church. Thus the story of Victorinus represents this dogma in its earliest and in its latest stage of evolution.

In formulating this dogma, Augustine gave explicit utterance to an idea which had long been tacitly assumed in the language and actions of "Catholics." The thought lay in many minds, waiting for definition, and when Augustine gave it form, it was instantly recognised and accepted as a familiar truth.

There is an important sense in which it may be said that we have now heard the conclusion of the matter, Fear the Church, and keep her "commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." But there is a deeper sense in which it may be said that the gravest problem of salvation has not yet been more than opened to view. "Submit to the Church" is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last word that Augustine had to say to those outside her membership, but he had much

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more to say to those inside. Their submission to authority could not be conceived as a single act, which no subsequent conduct could deprive of its value. It was an act which committed men to a lifelong course of obedience, and any failure in this obedience entailed the heaviest condemnation. The consequences, moreover, were just as serious for those who were introduced into the Church in infancy, and by the act of others, as for those who entered of their own accord in later life.

In this respect, Church membership resembled baptism. If a man or an infant died immediately after incorporation, all was well; but if he lived, his cancelled debt would inevitably be revived in ways which have now to be considered. His position in the Church was at best but little more than a necessary vantage ground on which he might work out his own salvation. Outside, he could not be saved, but having passed inside, he might still be lost. The Church undertook to guide him to glory, but he must work out her will in all things, and while he worked, she gave him ample cause for fear and trembling by the requisitions which she made.

At this point, an interpreter of Augustine's scheme of salvation, who wishes to present it in a logical and symmetrical form, finds his task extremely difficult, if not impossible. The scheme, thus far examined, abounds in inconsistencies, but we have now to recognise the commencement of what is practically a new scheme, differing from

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the first in its most fundamental principle. The first may, roughly speaking, be described as a method of salvation by grace; the second is one of salvation by works. The benefits of the first are unbought gifts of God; the benefits of the second are laboriously earned by human endeavour. The first is the method of salvation from the state of death and condemnation into which the whole world was plunged by Adam's transgression. The second is the method by which men inside the Church are saved from the guilt and power of their own post-baptismal sins.

The first method of salvation is effective for those who die as soon as it is obtained, but for them alone. All it does for those who continue to live is to make them salvable. Without it there can be no escape from eternal perdition; but, as will immediately appear, those who obtain salvation are unable to retain it unless instantly taken from the world. Augustine taught that every regenerated creature whose life is continued for a single day is certain to forfeit the gift he has received. For all practical purposes, therefore, the second method is the only one which baptized members of the "Catholic Church" are called upon to consider. Those who are "made Christians" in infancy discover on their first awaking to reflective life that they have already forfeited the gift of God, and have no remaining spiritual asset, except the fact of salvability. From the dawn of religious consciousness, therefore, each of them has to face the new

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problem, "How can I regain what I have lost?" Our business now is to consider the answer of the Church to this bitter cry of her children.

The first word of the Church to her offspring, as formulated by Augustine, is to inform them that they are no longer under grace, but under law. This new Gospel consists of an all-inclusive demand for righteousness, and it was presented in so threatening a manner that it sounded like a knell of second death over every regenerated creature, unless some new way of escape could be disclosed.

We are thus brought to consider a fourth requisite of salvation (or the third in addition to baptism), namely : Righteousness.

Augustine explicitly teaches that no wicked man, dying in his wickedness, whether inside or outside the Church, can inherit the kingdom of heaven. His language on this point is so strong and unqualified that he sometimes appears to be substituting an ethical for a sacramental or ecclesiastical condition. But this appearance is deceptive. He distinctly affirms that righteousness alone will not save: "Let us suppose someone, therefore, chaste, continent, free from covetousness, no idolater, hospitable, charitable to the needy, no man's enemy, not contentious, patient, quiet, jealous of none, envying none, sober, frugal, but a heretic; it is, of course, clear to all that for this single fault, that he is a heretic, he will fail to inherit the

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kingdom of God." ("Bap.," Bk. iv., 18.) The ethical test, therefore, is not to be regarded as a substitute for any other, but it is none the less clearly declared to be so vital that it constitutes a moral limit to the value of Baptism, Conversion of the Heart, and Incorporation into the Catholic Church.

This demand for righteousness in members of the Church is insisted upon in the most uncompromising fashion, as the following extracts will show. After asserting the perdition of a righteous heretic, the same doom is pronounced over a wicked Catholic. After depicting such a man, he asks: "Can it be that for this sole merit, that he is a Catholic, he will inherit the kingdom of God? . . . If we say this, we lead ourselves astray. . . . Let us, therefore, not flatter the Catholic who is hemmed in with all these vices, nor venture, merely because he is a Catholic Christian, to promise him the impunity which Holy Scripture does not promise him; nor if he has any one of the faults above mentioned, ought we to promise him a partnership in that heavenly land . . . there remains no sentence for them to hear, like goats, from the mouth of the Shepherd, except this: 'Depart into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (xviii., xix.)

To the same effect we read in a later section: "For He who said, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,' said also Himself, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the

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Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.'” The former being written that even the righteous catechumens may not feel secure until baptized, the latter in order “that the unrighteousness of the baptized might not feel secure because they had received baptism.” (xxi.) Summing up the value of these two things, Augustine adds: “The one were too little without the other; the two make perfect the heir of that inheritance.”\*

Augustine deserves sincere respect for displaying so much zeal for righteousness, but zeal is not always according to knowledge. In setting up righteousness as a condition of salvation, instead of insisting upon it as an evidential fruit of salvation, he inverted the true order of thought as observed in the New Testament. The absurdity of this mistake is shown in the fact that, having made it, Augustine immediately confessed that righteousness is a condition which the best of Christians is powerless to satisfy. His doctrine is that in the best of God's children sin remains, so that to the end of life the crucial question is, Can post-baptismal sin be pardoned? Thus he writes: “For setting aside the grace of baptism, . . . whence *commences* man's restoration, and in which all our guilt, both original and actual, is washed

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\*In view of this dictum it is curious to recall once more the similar, and equally rash, statement that “the sacrament of baptism is one thing, the conversion of the heart another; but that man's salvation is made complete through the two together.”

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away, the rest of our life, from the time that we have the use of reason, provides constant occasion for the remission of sins, however great may be our advance in righteousness. For the sons of God, as long as they live in this body of death, are in conflict with death. And although it is truly said of them, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,' yet they . . . advance toward God under this drawback, that they are led also by their own spirit, weighted as it is by the corruptible body; and that, as the sons of men, under the influence of human affections, they fall back to their old level, and so sin." ("Enchiridion," lxiv.)

The practical effect of this demand for righteousness, coupled with the confession that it is one which the best of Christians are utterly unable to satisfy, is to re-open the problem of salvation, and to re-open it on the distinct understanding that the remedies for sin thus far discussed have proved so ineffectual that the sons that were found have been lost again, and those that were made alive from the dead have died once more. Font-made Christians, therefore, had need to raise the old cry, "What must I do to be saved?" but the old reply, "Repent and be baptized," had no adaptation to their case. Whether they had been baptized in infancy, or, in later life, at their own request, the responsibilities of the Christian life lay heavily upon them, and could by no means be evaded or de-



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clined. Thus, for all alike, the old cry had to take a new form. One day of conscious endeavour after righteousness made it too late to ask, "How can I keep the things I have gained?" The crucial question was, "How can I regain what I have forfeited?" and almost instantly this would resolve itself into the more painful cry: "How shall I keep what I have regained?" and yet once more, "How shall I keep to the end what I am distinctly told I shall daily lose afresh?"

To this cry of her imperfect children, the Church had ready her reply, and in outline it is exceedingly simple: "In the order of the Creed, after the mention of the Holy Church, is placed the remission of sins. For it is by this that the Church on earth stands; it is through this that what had been lost, and was found, is saved from being lost again." ("Ench.," lxiv.)

In reading Augustine's answer to the cry of faulty Christians, it is impossible to lay too much stress upon the word "Church." It means, and was intended to mean, that outside the Church there is no effectual remission of sins, and none inside the Church except that which she herself bestows. She did not pretend to be God, or a substitute for God, but she was God's representative on earth, to whom He had committed the prerogative of binding and loosing, and He would never so deal with any single suppliant as to supersede, or in the least degree impair, the authority He had constituted. She was the Mother of all God's children, and no

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man outside the Catholic family had any right to say "Our Father, which art in heaven . . . Forgive us our trespasses," nor might any Catholic expect to be pardoned by God in a private way which would leave the claims of the Church unsatisfied, and elude her maternal discipline. She did not claim to be Christ, or instead of Christ, but she is the body in which He is still incarnate. In her He shows Himself to the world. She has His mind, and by her voice He speaks to the world; in her labours He still seeks and finds the lost; and by her rod and staff His sheep are comforted. She did not claim to be the Holy Spirit, or instead of Him; but she boldly said that in her alone the Holy Spirit dwells. Therefore, in harmony with these high pretensions, Augustine wrote, *Transgressions*, "however great, may be remitted in the Holy Church; and the mercy of God is never to be despaired of by men who truly repent," but the contrite soul must not hide his penitence from the Church, so that "the Church in which the sins are remitted may be satisfied; and outside the Church sins are not remitted. For the Church alone has received the pledge of the Holy Spirit, without which there is no remission of sins." (*"Ench.," lxxv.*)

This language is strong, but stronger remains, for he went so far as to denounce a persistent contempt of the prerogative of the Church as the consummation of all wickedness. "Now the man who, not believing that sins are remitted in the Church, despises this great gift of God's mercy, and

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persists to the last day of his life in his obstinacy of heart, is guilty of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, in whom Christ forgives sins." (lxxxiii.)

This insistence on the Church as the plenary representative and agent of God on earth was pregnant with stupendous issues, for it logically led to the Papacy, with its claim of supremacy in things temporal as well as spiritual, and so to the Inquisition, with its peculiar methods of discovering the secrets of all hearts, and of reducing men and nations to submission to the saving discipline of the Church. It is, therefore, of so much importance that, at the risk of repeating some things which have been said already, we must set forth: (1) The manner in which Augustine cleared the ground, theologically, for the outworking of any method of salvation prescribed and presided over by the Church; and (2) The terms and conditions of salvation which (according to him) the Church prescribed.

(1) Many critics have noticed the rarity of Augustine's references to the work of Christ, when expounding the way of salvation, and some have considered it a sign that he had no deep sense of its importance. It is a fact that he often seems to ignore, if not to set aside, the work of Christ as a ground for forgiveness; but it is also true that the sacrificial death of Christ was the basal fact on

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which his whole plan of salvation by the Church was reared. His explanation of the reason why it was necessary for Christ to suffer, is, to a modern thinker, too grotesque for serious criticism, but he certainly held that the death of Christ was absolutely necessary, and that without it man's redemption was impossible. On this subject he distinctly declares that the sin for which the human race was condemned "cannot be pardoned and blotted out, except through the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. . . ." ("Ench.," xlviii.) Whatever the Church did, therefore, she did as the almoner of benefits which God Himself was not righteously entitled to bestow until the right had been purchased by the precious blood of Christ.

The above statement is rigorously exact, but it does not mean what the same words would mean from the lips of a modern evangelist. Augustine saw no moral difficulty in the way of Divine forgiveness, as long as the transaction lay between God and a truly penitent sinner, and between them alone. According to him, the question of justice lay between God and the devil, whose thrall man had become by committing sin at his instigation. God could freely forgive sin as a wrong done against Himself, but He would not commit theft, even to save men at the expense of the devil. Hence the need for the death of Christ, as a ransom price which God paid to His adversary in exchange for the souls of many sinners. Hoping to defeat the

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Saviour, Satan slew Him, and thus robbed God of His sinless Son, and therefore could not complain if God repaid Himself by reclaiming a multitude of lesser lives. Thus, said Augustine, "it was in the strictest justice, and not by the mere violence of power, that the devil was crushed and conquered; for as he had most unjustly put Christ to death, though there was no sin in Him to deserve death, it was most just that through Christ he should lose his hold of those who by sin were justly subject to the bondage in which he held them." ("Ench.," xlix.)

This theory of redemption made it easy for Augustine to recognise the absolute necessity of Christ's death for our salvation, and yet to virtually set it aside as a ground of forgiveness for all who had been baptized, whether in infancy or in later life. It enabled, and indeed compelled, him to limit Christ's work to the task of rescuing Satan's bondmen, so that God could deal with them as His own wisdom and goodness might determine. Redemption, thus understood, was a strictly business transaction between God and the devil, and was perfectly distinct from God's dealings with the men He obtained in exchange for the inestimable life of His beloved Son. That Son's life was so infinitely precious that He might have claimed the entire race, and still held Satan His debtor. For some inscrutable reason, however, He required only a small portion of mankind. In choosing these He had no will or pleasure to consult

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except His own, and, having chosen them, He was also equitably free to save them from sin and its ruinous consequences on any terms, and by any process He might select. In this way Augustine prepared a clear field for the outworking of a method of salvation prescribed by God, but committed by Him to the Catholic Church, and presided over and administered by her in all its details.\*

(2) Having thus seen how Augustine cleared the ground for a scheme of ecclesiastical salvation, we must review his statement of the terms and conditions which the Church imposed upon her members.

This statement has to some extent been anticipated, by the mention of penitence as the remedy of sin for Catholic Christians, and this, taken alone, provokes no adverse criticism except from those who deny the forgiveness of sins on any terms whatever. Christ has not falsified the ancient words, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." But these sacrifices, which are visible to God, and, as seen by Him, may safely be accepted, are invisible to men, and this one fact renders the administration of mercy by the Church precarious. We are boldly informed that God has entrusted the Church with

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\*See Appendix, Note VIII.

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authority to retain and to remit sin, but no one has ever pretended that He has endowed her with His own omniscience. Her anointed ministers may have great sagacity, and keen insight into character, but they are liable to be deceived, for they cannot read the secrets of the heart, nor have they eyes in every place, beholding the evil and the good which call for their judgment. They claim the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but neither Augustine nor any Roman apologist has suggested that the Spirit takes the things of other men and shows them to a priest in a fashion which dispenses with ordinary sources of information.

If for a moment we compare the functions ascribed to the Church with those of a secular tribunal, it will appear that her demand for information is necessarily much more exacting. The main object of a secular magistrate is to protect society by becoming a terror to evil-doers. He can deal with conduct only when it is brought before him by accusation, and his decisions are based on the testimony of witnesses, whose evidence he has to sift. He may try to extort confession, but neither confessions nor denials are trustworthy when they conflict with the evidence of independent witnesses. But when the Church sits in judgment she has to deal with conduct, not as a breach of human law, but as sinful in the sight of God, to whom all things are naked and open; and this includes actions done in secret which no earthly court could

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punish. Moreover, conduct is only a small part of her alleged jurisdiction. She has also to do with states of mind, with secret thoughts and feelings, and with motives and intentions which never issue into action. Civil magistrates judge of motives as far as they affect the nature of an offence and the measure of punishment, but it is always the action they punish, not the thought or feeling as such; they punish murder, not hatred; they punish theft, not covetousness; they punish rape, not lust. Magistrates, therefore, take knowledge of only a few people out of the many over whom their powers extend, and these few they try but once in a lifetime, or, at most, occasionally, at distant intervals, and always on account of well-defined illegal acts. But the Church requires to know the entire history of every single life. She cannot depend on eye-witnesses, for these can tell of actions only, and of no more than an infinitesimal proportion of these. She must know the facts which are hidden from every eye save that of God, and can be discovered only through the self-accusation of the sinner. Hence the vital necessity of Confession.

In insisting on the duty of confession to the Church, Augustine introduced no new principle, but, by magnifying the functions of the Church, he made this duty more urgent, and enlarged its scope. Confession to God had always been an inexorable condition of pardon. Christ also made confession and a profession of repentance the con-



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dition of forgiveness between man and man. There is much spurious teaching about the Christian duty of forgiveness which omits this condition, but the tendency of all such sentimentalism is immoral. On all grounds, therefore, it should be acknowledged that the Church is bound to demand the confession to herself of all that needs to be forgiven *as a wrong done to herself*.

Opinions have widely differed as to what constitutes a wrong done to the Church as a body, but the principle that, when such a wrong has actually been done, confession must in some way be made to the aggrieved party, is clearly recognised in the New Testament, and has never been disputed by any community which pretends to maintain the feeblest sort of Church discipline. In the early Church the demand for open, and therefore humiliating, confession was sparingly made, but the Novatian controversy caused this almost penal form of confession to be required in an increasing variety of cases. In course of time, however, this greater stringency brought about a reaction. It repelled not a few from the Church, and encouraged backsliders to withdraw from communion, or to defer their reconciliation. Worse still, good men saw that the scandal and contamination caused by the frequent uncovering of sin before young and innocent minds tended to spread vice, rather than purge it; and to avoid this evil, ministers sought to dispose of many cases in private. In this way it became usual for them to be consulted in secret

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as to the necessity of public humiliation. Origen approved of this practice, and advised all sinners to find a learned and merciful physician who could decide whether their maladies "ought to be exposed in the meeting of the whole church." (Hom. Psm. xxxvii.) Gradually the custom of public confession died out in some Churches, and was much restricted in all. When enforced it was rather as a punishment imposed by a priest than a necessary condition of forgiveness by the whole body. Augustine evidently felt no need to specify the persons to whom confession is to be made, or the manner of making it. His system compelled him to constantly speak of the Church as the judge, but he regarded the Church as acting in and through her official servants, and had no idea of any corporate action except through these representatives. In his opinion, whatever was told to the priest was told to the Church; and when the priest pronounced censure, or granted pardon, he was at once the voice of the Church and the voice of God.\*

Confession is indispensable if the Church is to exercise discretion in remitting or retaining sin, but it is not sufficient without safeguards and sanctions of a penal character. Words are cheap, and it is easy for shameless sinners to recount their misdeeds; much easier for them than for trembling and contrite souls, to whom sin is still hateful; and

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\*See Appendix, Note IX.

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the magisterial office would be reduced to a farcical pretence if judges were to believe all that they are told. Christ commands us to forgive the brother who has sinned against us as often as he may turn and say "I repent." He does not permit us to go behind the words, or to allow a suspicion of insincerity to hinder our response, even though the same words are repeated "seventy times seven" in a day. But no one has ventured to apply this law of unlimited credence to the confessional. Our Lord's commandment is based upon the truth that no man can judge his brother's heart, and upon the further truth that the attempt to do this impossible thing is incompatible with fraternal relations. But when the Church has been exalted into the place of God, and is credited with magisterial duties, she cannot subject her ministers to the rules which govern ordinary disciples of Christ. Her wisest servants are still erring mortals, liable to deception by hypocrites, and powerless to detect innocent failures of memory and imperfections of self-knowledge; but although they are without God's searching sight, they are called upon to do God's work, and because of this they must strive to penetrate to the inmost recesses of the mind, and to read the truth as it is known to the consciences of all who come before them. Their ultimate object is not the detection and punishment of sin, but its removal; they are ministers, not of condemnation, but of mercy; yet, if their people are to be saved, they must never pronounce the Divine

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forgiveness unless fully satisfied that penitence is genuine and deep. Hence the necessity of Penance as at once a test of sincerity and a means of discipline.

In later times the word penance acquired a much wider significance than it bore in Augustine's day. As defined by the Council of Trent, "the sacrament of Penance" includes the absolution pronounced by the minister, and three "acts of the penitent himself, to wit, contrition, confession, and satisfaction. . . . Which acts, inasmuch as they are, by God's institution, required in the penitent for the integrity of the sacrament, and for the full and perfect remission of sins, are for this reason called the parts of penance." (Fourteenth Session, cap. vi.)\* In earliest usage the Latin term *pœnitentia* was adopted as the equivalent of the Greek word which signified in the New Testament a change of mind (*μετάνοια*). Unfortunately this rendering failed to preserve the most important element of the Christian idea, and emphasised the emotion of sorrow, rather than the rectification of judgment and purpose which is the result of reflection. By easy stages this penance came to mean the outward acts by which sorrow for sin is testified. When these outward acts were appointed by the Church, penance became specifically the name for ecclesiastical discipline, and sometimes for the place where penitents were stationed for public humiliation. In Augustine it

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\* See Appendix, Note X.

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signifies about the same thing as the word "satisfaction" in the Decrees of Trent.

In order to understand Augustine's insistence on penance, and the power of the clergy to enforce it, we need to recall some well-known, but often forgotten, facts. From a variety of causes the clergy had actually become magistrates toward the end of the fourth century. When Christianity became the religion of the Roman State her ministers were granted the same privileges as had been enjoyed by pagan priests, and this included exemption from the burdensome and costly duties then imposed on magistrates. But this exemption was followed by a recognition of church discipline as, within certain limits, a substitute for civil judgments. The clergy were freed from the jurisdiction of civil courts for all purposes, and private Christians were handed over to church discipline for all offences against the rules of the society they had voluntarily joined, and, more inclusively, for the trial of cases affecting religion. This limitation was, of course, indefinite, and led to constant disputes. In the eyes of churchmen all moral offences were sins against the society and against religion; and thus there was a constant struggle to widen the area of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. As a practical necessity, church courts were set up in every province, and penal codes came into force for the regulation of procedure and for the adjustment of punishment to offences. In the disorganisation of civil institutions which accompanied the decay of Pagan Imperialism,

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and was completed by the deluge of barbarism which broke up all the machinery of government, the Christian Church remained as the sole representative of law and order. In this way the Bishop's Court, sitting in the old capital cities, became the chief seat of authority in each province, and was thankfully appealed to for justice. Religious authority lent sanctity to judgments pronounced in civil causes, and civic power gave a magisterial character to church discipline. For a time both priests and people loved to have it so, and herein lurked the foundations of the Papacy, as a system which theoretically unites in one head the undivided and unlimited authority of government on earth.

I shall not attempt to analyse thoroughly the subtle process by which the acquisition of civil authority reacted on the internal discipline of the Church. The Fathers seem to have been too unconscious of the stream of tendencies on which they were drifting to preserve the materials which historical students would most prize. I must be content to point out that no bishop could discharge the duties of a magistrate without a deepened sense of obligation to punish transgressors, even when he believed them to be truly repentant, and therefore in a state to receive Divine forgiveness. He might sometimes say to himself: "As a magistrate, I must pronounce this man guilty, and inflict upon him a punishment which will maintain the majesty of justice, and so protect society; but, as a priest,

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I must absolve him." He might also strive to distinguish between the knowledge gained through the sinner's secret confession and the evidence of others given in open court, but he would find the task beyond his ability. The inevitable tendency of his mind would be to unify the double duty, and this would often lead to the lightening of sentences on grounds which could not be publicly guessed or explained, and at other times to a more severe imposition of penance than was necessary for the spiritual good of a broken-hearted penitent. The scandalous laxity of ecclesiastical courts in the Middle Ages no doubt had its origin in these conflictive ideas of duty, and to the same source may be traced the awful severities of the Inquisition. The story of the strife between ecclesiastical and civil courts in the Middle Ages is one of the most appalling chapters in human history, but I refer to it now only because it throws back an explanatory light upon the development of the dogma of penance which Augustine did not a little to advance.

In some respects it might be urged that Augustine did little to enhance the importance of penitential discipline above the estimate avowed by his predecessors. The controversies of the second century produced a widespread scorn for mere lip professions of contrition, and, in self-defence, the Roman clergy made a great show of zeal for righteousness by insisting on the public exhibition of shame for the sins they forgave. Other motives

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gave additional impetus to this tendency, but as the standard of moral conduct in the Church became debased, the people clamoured for easy absolution, which careless ministers found their profit in bestowing, while those more faithful strove to stem the tide of wantonness by demanding works meet for repentance, including a docile submission to humiliating and painful sufferings.

Many Fathers might be quoted in illustration of this statement, notably Tertullian, Cyprian,\* and Basil; but while it is true that Augustine's idea of penance was not novel, it is also true that he gave this idea a new importance and an extended application by his victorious championship of infant baptism, and his exaltation of the Catholic Church.

Infant baptism notoriously introduced into the Church a host of members whose regeneration and enlightenment were sacramental only, and whose lives were not transformed by glad obedience to the will of God. Abundant evidence has already been given that the Church had upon her hands a countless multitude of disobedient children, who sadly needed chastisement and restraint. Crime and vice were rampant, and the old Roman law had become a dead letter. Paganism was dead, but superstition lived, and the depraved multitude were haunted with guilty fears, though they had no faith. Here, then, was a boundless sphere of operations for the Church in her judicial capacity.

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\* See Appendix, Note XI.



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Infant baptism brought myriads within her alleged jurisdiction, all of them willing, and most of them eager, to receive her pardons, and ready in times of emergency to cringe before her priests; yet sadly needing to be rebuked and chastened until convinced of sin, and humbled to a godly sorrow and a sincere purpose of amendment. Therefore, if penance had been important when the Church dealt only, or chiefly, with those who had become her members after lengthened teaching, and on a profession of loyalty to Jesus Christ, how much more important it became when, with vaster numbers to train, she had also to deal with a class of persons who had never become Christians by any act of choice and self-dedication to the Lord! By declaring them regenerate she had stripped herself of those spiritual weapons which in other days had proved themselves mighty for the subjugation of hostile minds, and for bringing the hearts and thoughts of men into captivity to the obedience of Christ; but, while lacking the weak weapon which, through God, is mightiest, she had armed herself with another which appeared much stronger, and having multiplied her children by the font, her sole hope of saving them alive lay in correcting their transgressions with the rod.

Given a sincere belief in the functions of the Church as propounded by Augustine, the highest sense of duty and the purest love of souls would constrain the best of bishops to esteem their exercise of rigorous discipline as the one thing

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needful for salvation. Protestants hate the name penance—as a counterfeit of repentance—and I have no small share of this feeling. At the same time, however, I recognise that when once a Church has substituted a sacrament for conscious “repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,” penance, as taught by Augustine, is the sole remaining safeguard of morality. A Church which makes children members of Christ at the font, yet will not, or for any avoidable reason cannot, make effective efforts to know and remedy their faults, is immeasurably more culpable than is any church which resolutely carries out the Decrees of Trent, in which Augustine's doctrine of penance obtains its logical development and definition. The relative strictness with which penance is enforced is a sort of ethical metre, showing the moral level of the Roman Church in different countries and periods. It was by making light of penance that she reached the state of decay which filled Europe with disgust in the sixteenth century; and nothing did more to resuscitate her influence than the passionate zeal for discipline which was kindled by Ignatius Loyola. This new zeal constrained the Council of Trent to avow that one of her chief objects was “the reformation of the Christian clergy and people,” and there can be no doubt that this commendable object was to some extent attained through the vigorous effort of the Council to enforce a more rigorous administration of penance.

Nothing more need be said to exhibit the

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supreme importance of penance as a sequel to the baptismal regeneration of infants, but I must add a few words on the extended and modified application of it which is observable in Augustine's day.

As magisterial functions devolved increasingly upon the clergy, they acquired not only increased power over their own flocks, but some power over those outside. In dealing with erring sheep, they, as previously remarked, were naturally led to unify their civil and religious duties, and so welcomed civil authority as an adjunct to the spiritual. In dealing with aliens, they were in a novel, and, to thoughtful minds, a perplexing position. Penance, as now defined, is a sacrament which belongs exclusively to the regenerate. In the fifth century no such definition existed, but it was clearly understood that the Church could ask and receive satisfaction from her children alone. What, then, could be the right attitude of a Christian bishop toward an unbaptized criminal brought before him for judgment? Was there any way in which he could make his action as a civil magistrate subserve his desire for the man's salvation? He might have no scruples about inflicting punishment for the protection of society, but could he be content with this secular aim? Dare he, as a Christian minister, ignore the man's spiritual need? He could not remit the sins of an unregenerate person, nor might he suggest that such a lost creature could lighten his load of guilt by any sufferings, without being born again of water and of the Spirit; but,

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pondering his duty, a faithful bishop would reason that, as God's representative, he had a mission to the world as well as to the Church. The imposition of a penalty could not benefit an alien in the same way as it benefited a child of God; but might it not benefit him in some other way? God chastens His own people for their profit, but does He not also punish the wicked? Do not these providential chastisements often serve to awaken conscience, and to plough up hard soil to receive the Gospel seed? Why, then, should God's servants fear to inflict on the unregenerate that salutary pain which protects society, and may at least provoke a sinner to consider his ways, and listen to the word of God with a more receptive heart?

Once started on this line of thought, the good bishop would not lack corroborative pleas. A very slender acquaintance with history would suggest to a contemporary of Augustine that the power which had come into his hands was a new talent providentially bestowed by God, and was meant to be employed in the interests of his Master. A few generations back Christians had not dreamed of asking for more than a tolerant permission to live, and to worship God after their own hearts, within the Roman Empire. After prolonged sufferings, this liberty had been allowed. Thus encouraged, they ventured to petition for the removal of sundry disabilities, and little by little they had been relieved. Presently they were emboldened to demand as a right civic equality with pagans.

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For political reasons, Constantine gave them more than equality; for, having enthroned himself by their strength, he put down Paganism, and set up Christianity in its place. First permitting, he next enjoined, the heads of the Church to act as judges, while he upheld their authority with financial, social, and legislative support. When the Empire was crumbling to pieces through internal disorder and foreign invasion, the City of God remained unmoved, and her bishops were honoured and trusted as a refuge and strength when all other ruling powers were submerged in the tumult of the people. Was not this a sign of God's will? Was it not well for Christ to judge the people through His saints? The shaking of earthly kingdoms could mean nothing less than the removal of obstacles to the reign of the King of kings; and the King's servants should therefore rejoice in every accession of power as the strengthening of their hands for His business, and a means of benediction for the world.

As yet there was no Hildebrand, but when churchmen found themselves exalted to social dignity and civic authority they must have been very dull and unambitious unless they felt some vague premonition of Hildebrand's magnificent yet pernicious dream. Whether in Augustine's time episcopal magistrates distinctly foresaw the ultimate goal toward which their own teachings, working in unison with political events, were impelling the Church, may be doubted, but the fact that

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temporal power had begun to pass into the hands of Christian ministers is clear; and it is no less clear that, in accepting and exercising that power without protest, they gave a new development to the traditional idea of penance. The motives by which bishops were actuated were, of course, varied, for some loved power for its own sake; some sought it as an instrument of unrighteousness; others sought, or accepted it when offered, for the sake of doing good; but, by their efforts to sanctify the dispensation of justice to the furtherance of repentance and faith, they were all preparing the way for some future Head of the Church to claim a worldwide imperium as the earthly Vicar of Christ, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords.\*

It is unnecessary to discuss the details of penitential discipline, but Augustine's ruling ideas must not be passed over in silence.

It stands to his credit that he discountenanced a growing opinion that the mere endurance of pain has in itself a saving efficacy. He could not deny that pain may have some contributory influence, he viewed with alarm the popular tendency to regard suffering as a satisfaction for sin, apart from genuine contrition.

But while Augustine honestly tried to counteract a deadly mistake, he did much to foster it by confounding acts of penance with the inward penitence they were supposed to express. For example,

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\*See Appendix, Note XII.

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having declared that fire cannot save "those of whom it is said that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God," he completed the sentence by adding, "unless after suitable repentance their sins are forgiven them." We ask at once, "But what is a suitable repentance? Is it a sincere change of mind, or is it an outward act?" Augustine answers forthwith: "When I say 'suitable' I mean that they are not to be unfruitful *in almsgiving*." ("Ench.," lxix.)

Having laid this stress on almsgiving, Augustine was aware that his language was fraught with grave possibilities of abuse. Hence he continued: "We must beware, however, lest anyone should suppose that gross sins, such as are committed by those who shall not inherit the kingdom of God, may be daily perpetrated and daily atoned for by almsgiving. The life must be changed for the better; and almsgiving must be used to propitiate God for past sins, not to purchase impunity for the commission of such sins in the future. For He has given no man licence to sin, although in His mercy He may blot out sins that are already committed, if we do not neglect to make proper satisfaction." (lxx.)

It would require pages to sift the chaff from the wheat in this utterance. Without offering an elaborate criticism, I may ask attention to a few salient points. It will be noticed that Augustine does not deny that even gross sins may be atoned for by almsgiving, but only that such atonement

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cannot be repeated "daily." He fails, however, to say how often, and at what intervals, this can be done. He declares that the life must be amended, but the minimum degree of improvement which will be tolerated is not, and, of course, could not, be defined. Nothing is said about a subjective change of mind, although without this an outward change of life can never be more than the wearing of a disguise before the world, while the real man remains the same before God. No reference is made to Christ as the perpetual "propitiation for our sins," that is to say, for the sins of the Apostle John, and for the sins of all who are walking in the light, though not without fault. Almsgiving itself is treated as a propitiation or satisfaction offered to God, and is thus transmuted into a display of selfish kindness to others, for when "good works" are done with an eye to self-salvation the motive is selfish, and they are mere counterfeits of goodness. They may be described as bad money offered as a bribe to God.

No ingenuity can explain away the defects thus indicated. Unhappily they are not defects of expression, but defects inherent in the system which calls upon the baptized man to save himself by making satisfaction to God in and through the Church.

We have now to hear what Augustine prescribed as "proper satisfaction."

In the first place, he accords some atoning value to "daily prayer": "Now the daily prayer



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of the believer makes satisfaction for those daily sins of a momentary and trivial kind which are necessary incidents of this life. . . . And this prayer certainly takes away the very small sins of daily life. It takes away, also, those which at one time made the life of the believer very wicked, but which, now that he is changed for the better by repentance, he has given up." ("Ench.," lxxi.)

Prayer had a large place in Augustine's own life, and he wrote many beautiful things in praise of it. It would be untrue to say that he commended it to others solely as a "satisfaction" offered to God as a propitiation for past sins. The passage quoted, however, is a concise and carefully-prepared statement of his maturest thought, and no other view of prayer culled from more devotional writings can be held to qualify this utterance. He could not direct believers to go straight to God for the pardon of any but small and trivial sins, because this would amount to a denial of *the absolute necessity of making confession and satisfaction to the Church*. His system compelled him to represent prayer as a form of penitential discipline, a sort of consideration, or solatium, offered to God, rather than a simple, childlike supplication, which the Father hears and answers; and, even in this sense, he had to restrict its efficacy as a "proper satisfaction" to those little faults which are "necessary incidents of this life."

Augustine regarded almsgiving as the most effectual antidote to the sin of believers, but he

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saw the evil tendency of this doctrine, and honestly, but feebly, tried to mix an antidote with the poison. He recognised that already there were many persons living in shameful wickedness, who took no care to reform their lives and manners, and yet, amid all their crimes and vices, did not cease to give frequent alms, taking comfort to themselves from the saying of our Lord: "Give alms of such things as ye have; and behold all things are clean unto you." Against such atrocious delusions he hurled unsparing denunciations, and sought to avert the awful corruption of which they were an omen, by two 'corrective lessons.

The first of these instructions has been sufficiently indicated in words quoted above: "Almsgiving must be used to propitiate God for *past* sins, not to purchase impunity for the commission of sins in the future." If this principle could have been enforced, the last and vilest development of the doctrine of Indulgence would have been impossible.

As a further correction of popular delusions, Augustine sought to enlarge the meaning of the word "almsgiving," and to interpret the significance of it in a purely ethical and even spiritual sense. Very finely he declares that our Lord's saying, "Give alms," applies to "every useful act that a man does in mercy. Not only, then, the man who gives food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, . . . not this man only, but the man who pardons the sinner also

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gives alms; and the man who corrects with blows, or restrains by any kind of discipline one over whom he has power, and who at the same time forgives from the heart the sin by which he was injured, or prays that it may be forgiven, is also a giver of alms, not only in that he forgives, or prays for the forgiveness of, the sin, but also in that he rebukes and corrects the sinner: for in this he shows mercy. . . . And thus there are many kinds of alms, by giving which we assist the pardon of our sins." (lxxii.)

In this expansive interpretation of the word almsgiving, Augustine wished to include also the love of self and the love of God. Thus he observes: "For the man who wishes to give alms as he ought should begin with himself, and give to himself first. For almsgiving is a work of mercy; and most truly is it said, To have mercy on thy soul is pleasing to God. . . . This is our first alms, which we give to ourselves when, . . . judging truly of our own misery, and loving God with the love which He Himself has bestowed, we lead a holy and virtuous life." (lxxvi.)

No Christian thinker would lightly criticise this effort to dispel the hideous delusion that sin can be atoned for by lavish gifts to the poor and needy. But it is an abuse of language to describe as almsgiving that which we bestow upon ourselves; and even gifts rendered ostensibly to others are unworthy to be called alms when impelled by a calculating hope of some reflex benefit to self. "Love

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seeketh not her own." If I am kind to my neighbour for the sake of assisting my own pardon, self-love is the motive; and no subtlety can transmute the dross of self-seeking into the fine gold of self-denial. Thus the holiest of the gifts which Augustine extols with so much beauty, are inherently and eternally impossible to those who attempt them with a self-regarding motive.

It thus appears that what we most admire in Augustine's description of acceptable "almsgiving" is vitiated by the place he assigns to it in his scheme of salvation. As an account of what God requires, and the Church should labour to cultivate in her members, it is excellent. But as an account of what man should offer God as a propitiation, it poisons the very springs of conduct, and transmutes the gold, frankincense, and myrrh of obedience and worship into an offence against the freedom of God's grace.

The futility of Augustine's effort to refine and elevate the prevalent conception of penance is written large in history. Penitential discipline increasingly took the form of insisting on those outward forms of satisfaction which he tried to keep in a subordinate position. It was inevitable that this should take place. For the practical purposes of discipline the Church was compelled to impose tests and penalties which might operate within the sphere of human observation. Hence she was constrained to inflict pain, to impose laborious tasks, or repulsive ministries, and to demand from those

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who were not in abject poverty, donations in money or in kind, for distribution to the needy, or for the support of Christian institutions. In course of time, money, jewels, and land were found to be more useful to the Church than the sufferings of her faulty members. In spite of all opposition, the system of commutation came into common use. As usual, the motives which gave rise to an evil custom were not gross, but the end of it was death.

At the stage of thought now reached, Augustine was confronted with a difficulty which he could deal with only in a timid and faltering fashion. The discipline of the Church was of necessity imperfect, and its defects could be neither concealed nor ignored. No questioning, and no tests, however skilfully devised, could always detect insincerity, or remedy forgetfulness, or supply the lack of that self-knowledge which is essential to a complete unveiling of the inner life. Thus the most sagacious and experienced minister had to act on imperfect information, and might fail to impose an adequate penance.

Apart from these prolific sources of error, the Church lacked power to keep her children here on earth until they had done or suffered all that she deemed necessary for their correction. Many confessions were made on death-beds, when it was too late for penance to be performed, and in no case would the angel of death ever stay his hand

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on account of unfinished satisfactions. Hence the question arose, Can death annul the sentence of the Church? Must there not be some expedient in God's hands, whereby He will rectify the defects of human discipline, from whatever cause they arise?

Unless prepared to renounce his doctrine of salvation through the Church alone, Augustine was compelled to affirm some extension of penitential discipline beyond the grave. He was able to do this without introducing any startling novelty, because a belief in non-eternal punishments after death had become prevalent, and some of the chief Fathers had taught that few, if any, Christians would attain to heavenly felicity without being subjected to some amount of suffering in an intermediate state. Augustine assumed the general truth of this doctrine, but was keenly aware that he was treading on dangerous ground, and wrote with an evident desire to dissipate some illusory hopes of *post mortem* salvation which were rife in the Church.\*

With this object before his mind Augustine divided mankind into two classes—those inside and those outside the Church.

Those outside the Church included Pagans, heretics, schismatics, and all unbaptized persons, whether adults or infants. These all, if they died in the same condition, were doomed to everlasting punishment.

Those inside the Church were divisible into

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\* See Appendix, Note XIII.

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three classes. (1) The very good, who, having been cleared from original sin by baptism, have either died without having committed actual sin, or have made adequate atonement for all the faults of their Christian course. These, needing no repentance and no further chastisement, will at once attain to a state of felicity. (2) The very bad, who persist in great wickedness, together with all who, though not grossly immoral, commit the sin against the Holy Ghost by despising the authority of the Church to remit sins. These are doomed to share the everlasting torment of God's enemies, without any hope of respite, and with the certainty of being beaten with more stripes than are laid on those who were never gathered into the fold. (3) Those who are neither very bad nor very good, and have not forfeited their sonship, yet have at death an unpaid debt of satisfaction. These cannot escape all suffering, but are still among the children for whom the Church will pray. Their penance will be according to the measure of their guilt, but they are assured of ultimate pardon, and will be numbered with the saints in sinlessness and joy after the final resurrection.

In maintaining this classification of the dead, Augustine also fought against a modified form of Universalism which believed in the ultimate purification by fire of all Catholic Christians, however evil their lives, unless they actually deny the name of Christ, or otherwise sever themselves from the Church. ("Ench.," lxvii.) He spoke with unwonted

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gentleness of those who held this view, as "led astray by a kind of benevolent feeling natural to humanity," but firmly insisted that fiery sufferings, however prolonged, have no inherent power to produce penitence, and possess no virtue to compensate for its absence, or for the absence of good works.

To this extent his opinions are quite clear, but his denial of what may be called Catholic Universalism left room for a less extreme doctrine of purgatory. Many have said that he was the first who ever taught a definite doctrine of purgatory, and others have said that he denied it. The truth seems to be that he neither affirmed nor denied it. He certainly taught that almost all believers will have to suffer to some extent after death, and he reluctantly admitted that these sufferings may be purifying, as well as punitive. Beyond this cautious position he never advanced. Thus he wrote in the "City of God": "For our part, we recognise that even in this life some punishments are purgatorial" (xxi. 13). Elsewhere he admits that "it is not impossible that something of the same kind may take place even after this life. . . . It is a matter that may be inquired into, and either ascertained or left doubtful, whether some believers shall pass through a kind of purgatorial fire." ("Ench.," lxix.) To the same effect he wrote again: "If it be said that such worldliness, being venial, shall be consumed in the fire of tribulation, either here only, or here and hereafter both, or here that it may



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not be hereafter—this I do not contradict, because it possibly is true" ("De Civ.," xxi. 26).\*

Another prevalent belief which Augustine disliked, but could not totally deny, was, That the punishment of believers in the intermediate state may in every case be alleviated and shortened by the prayers and alms of surviving friends, offered through the Church. But here, again, he could only make a vague and feeble protest that "these services are of advantage only to those who during their lives have earned such merit that services of this kind can help them. For there is a manner of life . . . so bad that when life is over they render no help. Therefore, it is in this life that all the merit or demerit is acquired which can either relieve or aggravate a man's sufferings after this life." ("Ench.," cx.)

The scruples which made him thus reluctant to ascribe a cleansing efficacy to the fires of Hades were creditable, but were only strong enough to embarrass himself. For ordinary minds they were little better than quibbles. If the after-pains of death actually terminate in purity of soul; and if these pangs can be mitigated through the mediation of the Church, neither priest nor people will be fastidious in defining the precise nature of the sufferings thus reduced.

In a similar way, Augustine's well-meant attempt to distribute deceased Catholics into three classes was necessary futile. Such arbitrary distinctions do

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\* See Appendix, Note XIV.

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not correspond to the realities of life, where moral qualities are strangely mixed, and the degrees of man's universal imperfection are infinitely varied. Those who love righteousness the best are "conscious most of wrong within," while hardened offenders appropriate the flattering solace that they are not among the "very bad."

Augustine may be praised, therefore, for trying to discourage presumptuous hopes of cheating God; but his effort was vain. The one thing which stood out in his teaching on the subject, and the one thing on which base men would most certainly fasten their hopes, was the positive assertion that, unless they were "very bad," their sins might be atoned for by penance worked out in Hades, and that this painful remedy might be alleviated and shortened by the prayers and alms of compassionate friends, in conjunction with the sacrifices and intercessions of priests.

For studious, as well as less critical, minds it is often true that doctrines are better understood, and more fairly appreciated, when seen in their effects on individual experience, than when presented in an abstract form. For this reason I make no apology for introducing here an incident related in the Confessions, which exhibits the melancholy workings of Augustine's own heart when his mother died.

Augustine tells us that he went through a period of agonising uncertainty concerning Monica's lot in the unseen state. He believed that she was

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one of the "very good," and, therefore, one who might have no need of intercessory prayers, yet, instead of saying, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," his spirit was "broken by thoughts of the dangers of every soul that dieth in Adam." His doctrine of "merit" forbade him to "rejoice and give thanks to God," after the fashion described by Aristides. Hence, having ceased to weep for his personal loss, he began to pour "tears of a very different sort" on behalf of the dear one who had gone out into a world where "the uttermost farthing" of every debt must be paid. He knew that she "had so lived as to praise" God's name "both by her faith and conversation," yet he dared not say to the great Judge, "From the time Thou didst regenerate her by baptism, no word went forth from her mouth against Thy precepts." Believing that the acceptance of his intercession for Monica depended on the "merit or demerit" she had acquired "in this life," his mind was tortured by thought of the possible sins unknown to him, and perhaps unremembered and unconfessed by herself, and therefore unatoned for before death.

Perhaps the saddest feature of the story lies in the fact that Monica, when dying, piteously besought the prayers of her family and of the Church, instead of committing her spirit to her Redeemer, in childlike faith that there is now "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." In a similar spirit of dependence on human aid, Augustine craved the helpful inter-

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cession of others who might read his book, and, with beautiful absurdity, entreated God to constrain many people to pray to Himself on Monica's behalf. "That so my mother's last entreaty to me may, through my confessions more than through my prayers, be more abundantly fulfilled to her through the prayers of many" (Bk. ix., cap. xiii. 34-37).

Augustine has preserved some of the prayers he offered under the shadow of bereavement, and it is cheering to perceive that their deepest note is faith in "that Medicine of our wounds who hung upon the tree." But in this faith Augustine was better than his creed, because that creed said that the sacrifice of Christ had no avail for Monica's sins "contracted during so many years since the waters of salvation." His faith may have been larger than he knew, or could justify, and I think it was, but it was limited by the inexorable lines of his doctrinal system to an assurance that, unless Monica had committed the unpardonable sin, she would not be kept in the fire for ever!

To this poor crumb of consolation was the Gospel feast reduced by the evolution of doctrine which ensued when the germ of baptismal regeneration had been dropped into the field. If the death-bed of such a woman as Monica was darkened, and in the darkness awful visions of retribution eclipsed the face of Him who died to save us from bondage to the fear of death, what must have been the perturbation of less saintly

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Christians in their last hours? If on her behalf there was so much painful solicitude among survivors, what anguish would the same creed produce where the departed were known to have been infirm and prone to go astray?

The painfulness of a creed is no disproof of its soundness, and it is better to bear pain than to say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." But when we contrast such fears as Monica and Augustine felt with the joyful confidence in which the early Christians departed "Homewards," and with the triumphant faith in their felicity which inspired the epitaphs still legible in the Roman Catacombs, an immeasurable loss of human happiness and Divine glory is revealed.

This loss of human happiness would not be deplorable if we could regard it as a wholesome discipline, a loss compensated by an exceeding weight of moral gain and of ultimate benediction for those who suffered it, and for their posterity. Religion should not be appraised as an emotional luxury, or as the secret of a successful pursuit of pleasure in this life or in the next. But the essential genius of Christianity lies in the fact that it is "glad tidings of great joy," and everything which deprives men of the joy of salvation which this message was designed to afford, diminishes its power to beget new sons of God, and to nourish true religion in their hearts. God giveth not the spirit of fear, for fear is the antithesis of the filial trust which glorifies Him in the highest degree

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our minds can appreciate. On this account, therefore, the trembling anguish of Monica and Augustine was not merely regrettable as so much suffering, but as the symptom of a morbid spiritual condition, directly induced by a denial of God's righteousness in the free forgiveness of post-baptismal sin. Even so, the injury suffered by two individuals would count for little if they alone were victims; but they must be multiplied by thousands in their day, and by an ever-growing multitude as generations came into the world and lived under the shadow of a Church which eclipsed the face of Him who came to give the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that so the nations might sing aloud of God's righteousness, and sinners be converted unto Him.

Augustine's doctrine of future discipline was an integral part of his scheme of salvation by the Church. Without it his demand for righteousness and his conditional promise of pardon by the Church would alike have been stultified. The Church must retain her hold upon her children in the next life, or lose her authority in this. There were dangers in the doctrine, but they had to be risked; and Augustine's halting words amounted to little more than an impediment in his speech while articulating the dogma of Purgatory.

The doctrine of Purgatory inevitably led to a further magnification of the Church, since it

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armed her with the terrors of the world to come. Thus once more, and finally, we are brought back to the conclusion that the one thing needful for salvation is to fear the Church and keep her commandments. Outside her walls there is no salvation; and inside those walls only the docile and obedient can be saved.

This concentration of redemptive authority involved a most real, if not a theoretical, depreciation of the prior requisites of salvation. It did not dispense with baptism, but the Church alone could confer the benefits of the Sacrament. It did not dispense with Faith, but the Church alone could expound the Scriptures, and she alone could authenticate doctrine, attest miracles, or deliver the perplexed from uncertainty. It did not dispense with Conversion, but the inward change of heart was not allowed to be sufficient unless, or until, it culminated in membership, and was verified by the benediction and welcome of the Church. If men went through a spiritual experience like Augustine's, the Church would smile upon them and be proud of them as saints; but if they had no such tale to tell, the Church had in her hands all needful means of grace; she could baptize them, and so secure the remission of all past sins, together with the regenerating gift of the Holy Spirit; and by opening her door to those who knocked, she was opening the Kingdom of Heaven. The career for which she thus equipped her sons was not immune from terrible temptations, but throughout

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its course the warring pilgrims could experience no new needs for which the Church did not undertake to provide, and could encounter no new perils from which she was unable to protect them with the shield of her salvation. The one thing needful was to hear her voice and comply with the directions she would never fail to give.

No account of Augustine's theology would be complete without a criticism of his views on Predestination and Freewill, but it is doubtful whether such an abstruse discussion would shed much light on our immediate subject. Augustine clearly saw that infant baptism was indefensible unless every child enters into the world under a burden of hereditary guilt before its career as an intelligent moral being has commenced. Sometimes he sought to prove the necessity of infant baptism by assuming the fact of original sin, and at other times he tried to show the truth of original sin by insisting that, if it were false, infant baptism would be a senseless practice. Again, he saw that neither infant baptism nor the doctrine of original sin could be reconciled with the old patristic doctrine of Freewill, especially in those extreme forms to which the reader's attention has been called in the writings of Chrysostom, and as developed by Pelagius.

The intimate relations thus discoverable would justify an extended effort to trace the course of thought and feeling which led to Augustine's



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assertion of God's unconditioned choice of men for salvation; but, while justifiable, such a discussion would be wearisome, and would yield no adequate advantage.

The clear teaching of Augustine is that God's predestination of men to eternal life or death is unconditioned by anything He can see in them or in their conduct. In warring against Pelagius, he reduced the Will to a mere name for a part of the human machinery which is driven by the Will of God according to His pleasure. He said that Adam was free, because he was capable of willing either good or evil, but lost this power, for himself and his posterity, by his choice of evil; and, in consequence of this, men are able to will evil only. In regeneration, freewill is restored; but, with splendid audacity, Augustine described this "freewill" as power to choose good, and good only. On account of this astounding "freedom," he declared that regenerated men are more free than Adam was before his fall! But even this paradoxical freedom has nothing to do with a choice of the better part, because freewill is not obtained until the new birth has actually taken place. It is idle, therefore, to discuss how the separate parts of Augustine's scheme of salvation are effected by his determinism, because the entire scheme, like every imaginable system of conditional salvation, is reduced to a mocking illusion.

According to Augustine, this earth is a stage, on which a drama is being acted by mankind.

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Of this drama God is the author, and by Him all its incidents were pre-arranged: by Him the players were created and their respective parts assigned. In performing their parts they are not merely conforming to His will, but are swayed and impelled by His power, so that His energy effects, through His creatures, a perfect fulfilment of His own eternal design. In rewarding faith and virtue, God is simply "crowning His own gift": and in punishing sin, He is showing forth His hatred of evil on persons appointed by Himself to become the exemplars of His wrath.

If all this be taken seriously, it becomes absurd to discuss the terms and conditions of salvation, for these are but parts of the great drama, and not Divine requirements which men are invited to consider and are free to accept or reject. On this hypothesis it is untrue to say that men are saved by baptism, by conversion of the heart, by incorporation into the Church, by righteous conduct, by repentance, by almsgiving, or by purgatorial fires, or by all these together. These are but pre-arranged details; and, when watching them, we simply behold the unfolding of a drama in which the moving figures are neither automata nor volitional actors, but skilfully created instruments of the one and only Will worthy of the name in all the universe. If men are so happy as to be "saved," it is by God's unconditioned choice; and if they are among the miserable "lost," it is also by His determination, and this is influenced by nothing outside His own mind.

## Augustine

No one has ever correlated this theory with any practical view of human life and duty, with any system of ethics, or with the Gospel as a sincere offer of salvation. Warnings, expostulations, entreaties, encouragements, commandments, are alike unreal if addressed to creatures to whom God has granted no choice of good and evil. The proclamation of the Gospel to such helpless wretches as are appointed to sin and death would be wanton wickedness if it were not protected from blame by the plea that preachers as well as hearers are but doing what they are made to do by a higher power.

In discussing the requirements of God and of the Church, Augustine seldom, if ever, allowed himself to be hampered by an inconvenient respect for consistency. He constantly assumed that his readers were responsible agents. Even when discussing the problems of infant destiny, he never fell back on the simple solution of all difficulties, that they would have the portion prepared for them by eternal decrees, whether baptized or unbaptized, and whether linked by paternal action with Donatists, or Catholics, or Pagans. In all this he was, I believe, quite sincere. In fighting Pelagius, he could play with words like a juggler, as when he defined freewill to mean inability to choose anything but good! But when expounding what he conceived to be the Divine demands and promises, he was filled with a passionate earnestness, and forgot his figment of an invisible potentate

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

moving men like puppets on a stage. On this account I refrain from any attempt to show in detail how his scheme of ecclesiastical salvation would be reduced to an awful mockery of human impotence by his perverse attempt to glorify God's power at the expense of His righteousness.

The thrilling story of the Confessions, and the devotional fervour with which his best writings are imbued, have given Augustine a place in the hearts of millions who care little for his dogmas or his ecclesiastical pretensions, and, if space and my design in writing would permit, I should be delighted to give more copious extracts to show how beautifully, and with what rapturous joy in fellowship with God, he could expatiate on the blessedness of personal religion. In his happiest hours he saw that love for God is spiritual life, and that where love is absent, death reigns. He saw also that all love is of God, and that if we love God it is solely because God has first loved us, and commended His love to our hearts in the life, and, above all, in the death, of His Son. That he did not found his entire theology and his conception of the Christian ministry on this spiritual rock is one of the most deplorable facts in Christian history. But he did not. He was a mystic, delighting to meditate on the unseen and eternal verities, and passionately yearning to have his whole being suffused with the light and warmth which radiate from the face of Christ; but his mysticism is like

## Augustine

a living soul imprisoned in a dead body of ecclesiasticism. Above all things, and before all else, he was a military Churchman, wielding words as a sword for the defence of the organisation he idolised, and fighting for every dogma she formulated, and for her sole right to administer the effectual means of grace. He was a saint, but while his saintliness charmed, it was not the chief secret of his dominance. It was his exaltation of the Church which commanded the suffrages of bishops and priests; and it was this which provided a brief and legible guide to salvation. "Submit to the Church" was a formula which every priest could repeat and every inquirer could understand. It is also a formula which for many centuries has proved acceptable to the most diversified characters, including some of the best and some of the worst that can be named. At one extreme, careless men of the world have found a pleasant soporific for their consciences in casting the burden of responsibility on the Church which claims it; and, at the other extreme, earnest men, intensely religious, but racked with intellectual difficulties, and, like Augustine, despondent of discovering a fair haven of mental certitude, have renounced the task of thinking, and sought rest in the acceptance of apparent untruths for truth, at the bidding of the Church. As the universal provider of things which impart and accompany salvation, the authoritative Catholic Church of Augustine has thus drawn a mixed multitude into her bosom; and nothing

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

which he ever did or wrote was so pregnant with worldwide issues as the resolution of all the conditions of salvation into an unconditional surrender to her absolute possession and control.\*

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\* For an addendum to this chapter, calling attention to some important, but seldom noticed features of Augustine's doctrine of hereditary guilt, see Appendix, Note XV.

## Augustine's Victory

**W**ITHIN the lifetime of Augustine, or immediately afterwards, the practice of infant baptism became the rule in the Church he did so much to consolidate and magnify. Pelagianism fought for several generations against the dogmas of original sin and human impotence, but it allowed babes to be baptized, and held that they were thereby regenerated. This, in addition to other points of weakness, proved fatal, and Augustinianism triumphed all along the line of controversy.

In no small measure this triumph was a personal victory for Augustine, and his name will always stand for the system which he fathered. But his victory was mainly due to the fact that he fought with all his heart on the side of a cause which was winning before he was born. He was the most representative Churchman of his age, and used his genius to give form and cohesion to doctrines and pretensions which were already rife in the minds of the clergy, and tacitly consented to by the people. Some of the ideas he expressed

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

were so little his own that he received them as an act of obedience to the Church, and taught them as her loyal servant. The doctrines that he added and the alterations that he introduced were accepted with little demur by those who hailed him as their champion and exulted in his defence of their position.

But this triumph, though partly due to Augustine's personal influence and partly to the prevalence of slowly-developed convictions which rendered infant baptism a relief from the horror of infant damnation, must also be attributed in no small measure to the ever-increasing pressure of hierarchical authority and a corresponding suspension of religious thought. What thought there was among the people favoured a cheap insurance of safety for children; but the most active and earnest thinkers among the laity either retired from the Catholic communion or were cast out. Perplexed inquiries and contemptuous criticisms, such as Augustine arrogantly denounced, ceased to be heard inside the dominant Churches of East and West, where doubts were effectively silenced, if not dissipated, and authority, if not logic or spiritual insight, prevailed. The social and political turmoil which accompanied the collapse of civil government so agitated men's minds that religion generally languished, morality, long decadent, still more grievously declined, and over a realm of spiritual inertia, bishops bore an almost undisputed sway. It is not strange, therefore, that, wherever the



## Augustine's Victory

Hierarchy ruled, no opposition to infant baptism was tolerated. Within the Catholic pale the rite was no longer a thing to be defended by argument, but an imperative duty to be enforced.

## An Unconquered Remnant

HAVING now followed the evolution of infant baptism to its culminating point, when the general Church was irrevocably committed to its maintenance, it is not my design to follow its history down to modern times, or to discuss the various modifications of theory or practice which are well known in the present day. But while recognising its complete triumph within the limits stated, I cannot leave the subject without reminding the reader that these limits left room for much outside resistance. It has often been asked whether the sway of the established priesthood from the beginning of the fifth century onwards was as complete as partisan writers, and particularly ecclesiastical historians, liked to think. More definitely, many Baptists have asked whether their principles have ever been without faithful witnesses, even during those darkest years, miscalled "the age of faith." Was there no considerable body of Christians which had the constancy and the courage to maintain the apostolic doctrine and practice, and to endure contumely as protesters against the deformation of the Christian religion?

## An Unconquered Remnant

On the face of it, this question appears to be very simple, and one to which an answer should be easily given. In reality, however, the difficulty of rendering a definite and convincing reply is very great.

When we come down to a period in which the lamp of history shines a little more clearly, we meet with numerous sects in many parts of the Continent and in these islands who suffered persecution as heretics. They were of different nationalities, and wandered as refugees in many lands. They were known by a variety of names, and may have differed considerably in some of their doctrinal tenets, but their names were the reckless coinage of popular prejudice, and do not represent any accurate distinctions. We know little of them except through the accusations of their enemies, but these charges have common features, which show that their antagonism to the dominant Church was mainly directed against its sacramentalism; and that, in almost every case, the head and front of their offending was a denial of baptismal regeneration, coupled with a refusal to have their children baptized. Records of furious persecution on this account are numerous from the twelfth century onwards.

The existence of so many anti-Pædobaptists in the middle period raises a presumption that these bodies must have had predecessors. This presumption is so strong that their non-existence would be more difficult to account for than their exist-

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

ence; but there has been a great lack of information concerning them. That there were many "heretics" all through the obscure centuries is amply certified, but, from various causes, our information concerning them, as provided by ecclesiastical chroniclers, is deplorably vague and undiscerning, if not wilfully untrue. To surely trace connecting links between dissenting bodies of different names, and in different countries and periods, we need to read their own words, but this has been almost entirely prevented by the wholesale destruction of their writings.

It has often been said that persecution is always unsuccessful, and, viewed in relation to eternal issues, the saying must be true, but within the limits of our earthly vision, it is false. Neither Satan nor his human servitors can do anything against the truth, except hide it, but this, alas! they have often done with benighting effect. A little persecution stimulates enthusiasm, elicits courage, excites sympathy, sanctifies and lends lustre to the cause it assails. But there is a continuous, remorseless, desolating persecution which decimates, and sometimes exterminates, its victims in a given time and place. Moreover, there are forms of persecution which do more harm than those directed against the lives of men. The burning of a saint may make him a hero in the eyes of many, and the blood of a martyr may speak more persuasively than his tongue could plead if he were allowed to preach for many years. But

## An Unconquered Remnant

calumny may make a saint or a sect so odious that its very name shall become an offence; and false charges, if once accepted, may be repeated for ages as indisputable, if sufficient care be taken to destroy the only evidence by which they could be refuted.

Religious persecutors have well understood that it is comparatively useless to silence the voice of an adversary by intimidation, imprisonment, or death, if you allow his written words to propagate his opinions. The burning of printed books in modern times has usually been an impotent display of spite, but when manuscripts were few and costly, fire was an effective expedient. Decay and accident, quite apart from malicious destruction, soon made an end of works which could not be safely or profitably reproduced, and when, in addition to natural wastage, an obnoxious book had been condemned, and the possession of a copy was made a criminal offence, its existence could seldom be prolonged. By means such as these a vast puritan literature has perished. Precious samples of it may be hidden in libraries which no Protestant scholar may search, and in tombs, and buried in ruins, whence they may some day be exhumed. Meanwhile, justice, which can never be uncharitable, commands us to believe that, if we could read those ancient writings, we should find less to call for censure or forgiveness than is commonly supposed.

The loss occasioned by the destruction of

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

"heretical" literature is immeasurable; and to a great extent it must remain irreparable. It is like the tearing out of an important chapter from the history of mankind. Happily, a few leaves of that chapter have recently been recovered, and these leaves quicken the hope that others may be found. Searching in the library of the Armenian Holy Synod, Mr. F. C. Conybeare found a mutilated copy of a work entitled "The Key of Truth," which proved to be an old Church Manual of the Paulicians.\* The discovery was made in 1891, but for some time its value was not suspected. It was published, with an English translation and a scholarly introduction, in 1898. As a contribution to the study of an almost obliterated portion of Church history this volume is invaluable, though, for reasons which may readily be surmised, it has not received the attention it deserves.

In regard to the history and lineage of the Paulicians "The Key of Truth" is a voice from the dead past, calling upon us to reverse many adverse judgments which have been generally accepted for centuries, but signally confirming the generous verdict passed upon them by Gibbon, in a chapter which should be re-perused, and compared with the further evidence now in our hands. (Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," c. liv.)

In writing his account of this defamed and cruelly persecuted people, Gibbon more than suspected the veracity of the only authorities he was

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\* See Appendix, Note XVI.

## An Unconquered Remnant

able to consult. In the course of his researches he had become familiar with breaches of the ninth commandment; and this led him to premise that, as the Paulicians "cannot plead for themselves, our candid criticism will magnify the good, and abate or suspect the evil, that is reported by their adversaries." It cannot be denied that Gibbon wrote too frequently under the influence of an anti-Christian bias, but it should be remembered to his credit that he had more respect for religion in its simpler and more spiritual forms, than for the fashions it assumed under ecclesiastical development. It was this preference for primitive Christianity which enabled him to discern good in the maligned Paulicians, and "The Key of Truth" proves that his kindly feeling not only did not obscure, but clarified, his critical insight, for it strikingly confirms some of his most important conclusions.\*

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\* See Appendix, Note XVII.

## “The Key of Truth”

**I**N its present form, “The Key of Truth” was probably written about the middle of the eighth century. The precise date cannot be fixed, but excellent reasons have been given for the statement that it could not have been produced before the seventh, or later than the ninth, century. The work is obviously a compilation, and has been well compared to the English Prayer Book, as containing a collection of prayers, creeds, and services of many different dates. It was prepared by some zealous and trusted Paulician leader, to “meet the prayers of many believers,” and under a sense of “supreme necessity,” to set in order the things most firmly believed among his people, and to embody them in a compendious literary form which might be handed down to posterity as a faithful memorial of the doctrines and ordinances which their fathers had held fast from the beginning.

As might be expected from this avowed object, the work abounds in polemical references and protests which relate to a state of things which the author saw and lamented in his own time, and



## “ The Key of Truth ”

by these, the period, though not the exact date, of composition can be determined. But the author gloried, not in the originality of his thoughts, but in his fidelity to the old and undiluted “ Truth of our Lord Jesus.” His supreme desire was to preserve the spiritual treasures of the past, and among these riches there are prayers which, on highly critical grounds, are declared to be “ pure and limpid examples of the classical speech ” of the Armenians in the fourth or fifth century; while some of the ordinals appear to be as old as any to be found in the Apostolical Constitutions, and are possibly of still greater antiquity.

Glancing for a moment at the least ancient content of the book, we may judge its tone, and perceive its general attitude toward the dominant Churches, by a few sentences, taken from an exposition of “ Important sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“ Again I ask you, gainsaying Popes and your followers—you who baptize them that are catechumens still in their mothers’ wombs, by all sorts of means, though they have not yet come into the world, or are born dead; some of them in the womb and some in death, ye baptize conditionally. All these things are devilish, and not Divine.\* For the God of all who bestows such gifts of grace on His loved ones, since He is Himself sincere, has also bestowed gifts of grace which are sincere and true. Hence it is clear from your deeds how

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\* See Appendix, Note XVIII.

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

ye sometimes are convicted by the truth, and are forced to speak the truth, as when ye say: 'Let no catechumen, nor any that is wanting in faith, nor anyone that is unrepentant or impure. It is not meet that he should draw near to the holy Divine mysteries.' Now, if ye do not hearken unto God, Christ, and the Universal and Apostolic Holy Church; ye should anyhow obey your own false testimonies and promises. For there are three Divine mysteries, which He proclaimed from above to His only-born Son, and to St. John, the great prophet. First, repentance; second, baptism; third, holy communion. For these three He gave to the adult, and not to catechumens who have not repented, or are unbelieving. And again, I ask you, violators of ordinances, about this catechumen of yours—When did he ask, or where did he petition, the false witness, saying: I ask from thee faith, hope, love, and all other good works, from a false witness? For if your catechumen asks from his tenderest age, then why does he not ask it direct from you, violators of the ordinances? So, then, your very falsehoods serve to show forth like the sun the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. And your whole custom is found to be false and mere deceit" ("The Key of Truth," p. 116).

This extract clearly reveals the attitude of the Paulicians toward the Greek and Latin Churches, and abundantly explains the fierceness of the persecution to which they were subjected. They

## “ The Key of Truth ”

assailed the dominant Churches as conscious and as self-convicted violators of the ordinances of Christ. Basing their claim on the plain teachings of the New Testament, and on the unchanging creed and practice which their forefathers had guarded with their blood, they claimed to be the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and at the same time appealed to the common-sense of the people to recognise the absurdity of the innovations against which they protested. These men were not content to be silent doubters, nor would they veil their dissent behind a curtain of prudential conformity to customs they hated. They were faithful and valiant witnesses, who loved truth better than life, and, as Pilate and Herod found reconciliation in the judgment of Christ, so the Churches of East and West forgot their mutual animosities to vie with one another in the endeavour to exterminate a people whom they could neither convince nor intimidate.

Passing now to some of the older material preserved in “ The Key of Truth,” and to that part of it which bears directly on our subject, our attention is first claimed by a Naming Service, held on the eighth day after a child was born. The meaning of the service and the order to be observed are thus stated: “ When children are born of their mothers, then it is necessary for the elect\* after

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\* For an adequate account of the elect ones, I must refer the reader to “ The Key of Truth,” cap xxii., and Intro-

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

seven days to proceed to the house of the children born, on the eighth day; and he shall comfort the parents with great love, and give to them good spiritual advice, that they shall train up their children in godliness, in faith, hope, love, and in all good works, as St. Paul writes " (p. 87).

The enforcement of parental responsibility for the religious education of their offspring, and the futility of any rite to take the place of moral discipline and thought-awakening truth, was a chief object of this service. Thus it is said: "Likewise, according to the canons (or precepts) of the holy Apostles it is necessary for the parents themselves ever and always to give for instruction and study to their infant offspring as it were milk; and they shall not be at all sparing thereof. . . . So then, for us also and for the parents, it is right first of all to perform the name-giving of the catechumens, and then after some time we cause them to be instructed in good works. . . . For this cause St. John, our mediator and intercessor, Jesus Christ, and His holy disciples, first showed the faith, then brought to repentance, and last of all bestowed baptism; . . . so must we also perform baptism when they are of full age like our Lord; so that

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duction, pp. xxxiv., xxxvii., cxxiv. Their qualifications were strictly moral and spiritual. Every candidate for election was required to be "on all sides free from blemish," and after severe testing he was set apart in a public service which was a simple and spiritual form of ordination. Everything akin to a sacerdotal hierarchy was hateful to the Paulicians.

## “ The Key of Truth ”

they may seek it in faith from us, and that then we may give them baptism and perfect blessing.”

After the elect one had repeated the Lord's Prayer, he was directed to unite with the parents and all who might be present in offering the following prayer: “ Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we beg and entreat Thee, keep this catechumen from evil, and fix Thy holy eye upon him, and keep him from all temptations of the world; and give him life according to Thy good will, that he may pass through the season of his childhood and become acceptable to Thee, to Thy Son, and to Thy Holy Spirit. And bring him through to reach holy baptism, and call him under the shelter of the wings of Thy beloved Son. And also bless, O my Lord and God, the catechumen through the mediation of Jesus, Thy beloved Son. Cleanse him from fleshly pollutions, and day by day prosper and increase him in Thy grace, and bring him in the full measure of the time to holy baptism, now and ever, and to eternity of eternities. Amen.” After reading 1 Cor. xiii. 11-13, the elect one asked for the name of the child, connecting this with the naming of Jesus on the eighth day. The naming was to be followed by a further intercession, saying: “ Glory to Thee, King of Glory, that Thou hast made this catechumen worthy to receive a name. We beseech Thy foreseeing majesty, guard him until he attain to the holy birth of the font, that we may praise Thee, Thy Son, and Thy Holy Spirit, now and for ever and ever. Amen.” The

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ordinal closes with an abrupt direction to the elect one: "Repeat the 'Our Father,' and go to thy house." Evidently there was to be no feasting or light talk, to efface the solemn impression of the service. As an addendum for the encouragement of all solicitous hearts, it is written, "God doth produce the fruits of grace." ("Key of Truth," cap. xvii.)

No Christian, whatever his opinions on the subject of baptism, can read this old Paulician Naming Service without feelings of sympathy and respect. It recognises that, while the advent of a little child is a source of pure joy to its parents, they need to be reminded of the solemn trust it involves, and of the unspeakable possibilities of good and evil, joy and woe, which lie before themselves and their offspring. The perils of birth safely passed, the perils of life are foreseen; and the shadow of impending conflict, with all its risks of failure and defeat, together with the certainty of death and judgment, mingle trembling with joy, and beget a sense of incompetence which can find no relief except that which comes through waiting upon God. These feelings are tenderly recognised in the obligation of the elect one to "comfort the parents with great love, and give them good spiritual advice," and in the after-word, "God doth produce the fruits of grace." By thus meeting the trembling solicitude of parents, by deepening their sense of duty, and by encouraging a quiet trust in God for the fulfilment of their hopes, the

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Naming Service could scarcely fail to promote the hallowing of family life, and would furnish just that link of loving interest between the Church and the home which has endeared infant baptism to multitudes who have no belief in it as a saving rite.

In view of the composite character of “ The Key of Truth,” it appears impossible to determine the antiquity of this service, or to say with confidence whether it was instituted before or after the prevalence of infant baptism. I am disposed to regard it as a sort of defensive institution, designed to fortify parents against the insidious influence of those doubts and fears which in other communities led to premature baptism, and to arm them against the reproaches of their Catholic neighbours for “ refusing to give redemption to their children.” Such a motive, however, could not operate apart from others of a deeper and more spiritual order. It could only prevent parents from being carried away by the currents of superstitious thought and faithless feeling which were the strength of Augustinianism, in so far as it set forth a reasonable faith in the preciousness of little ones to the Saviour, and illustrated the true and only means by which they could be brought up to obtain His blessing. Even this didactic motive would have failed to commend the service, and secure it a permanent place in the Paulician Church, unless it had satisfied a common yearning for some definite expression of the emotions excited by the gift of a new life to nurture and train for God.’ These motives, when linked

## The Evolution of Infant Baptism

with the suggestive example of the naming of Jesus on the eighth day, would amply account for an early development of spontaneous pastoral visits into a fixed service, before any defensive substitute for infant baptism could be provoked. It appears certain, however, that the Naming Service was continued, if it did not originate, as a protective measure to exclude the obnoxious rite by filling the only space it could occupy.\*

The Paulician doctrine of baptism is fully given in a special chapter devoted to directions for administering the rite, and in a catechism prepared for the instruction of Christians desiring to be baptized. The "Directions for those baptizing" are thus introduced: "But as the Lord commanded in His holy canons, even so shall ye baptize those who come unto us. And St. John directed those who came to him to repent. Or, as the Holy Universal and Apostolic Catholic Church, having learned from our Lord Jesus Christ, did proceed; so also must ye after them do, as we said above. For they first taught; secondly asked for faith; thirdly induced to repent; and after that granted holy baptism to those who were of full age, and in particular were cognisant of their original sin.

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\*Without any possible knowledge of the Paulician service, a process similar to the one suggested in the text has spontaneously commenced in some Baptist Churches. It has not originated in a polemical or defensive spirit, but in a desire to blend the prayers of the church with those of parents, and to solemnise parental relations.



## “The Key of Truth”

Again ye, the elect ones, must observe the utmost care that they receive, before baptism, instruction and training, both of body and soul, as St. Paul saith: ‘Practise thyself in godliness.’ So must ye without delay bring those who come unto faith, hope, love, and repentance, and with extreme care and testing practise them, no matter who they be, lest peradventure anyone should be an impostor, or deceitful, or a wizard, like Simon, in Acts viii. 13. So also ye, my loved ones, must examine those who come to you, . . . whether priests, or doctors, or deacons, whether men or women, you must not at once baptize them, or communicate them, until they have been completely tested.” (xviii.)

The ordinal for the actual administration of baptism is in a mutilated condition, several pages of the manuscript having been torn out. These pages evidently contained a trenchant summary of “Orthodox Errors,” which candidates were required to repeat after the minister in the course of a private interview. Following this came a confession of belief and a prayer.

At this point the Key inserts a lengthy account of the “baptiser, what he must [be], or how he must live, or in what manner he shall bring the repentant to himself, or in what form minister to him.” This section contains much wholesome counsel, chiefly in the words of Scripture.

After this disquisition there comes an order of service to be observed in the presence of the

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people. As in the private interview, so in the public assembly, the novices are directed to present themselves to the elect one in gentleness and humility, "as our Lord Jesus Christ in gentleness and humility stood before St. John the Baptist. So also this new-born shoot must come before the elect one." Thus approached, the baptizer is to rise to his feet and say, "Come unto Me, all ye that are troubled and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

When the novice has publicly entreated baptism, the elect one is to say: "My little child, thou who wishest to be released from the bonds of the devils of Satan, What fruit of absolution hast thou? Tell it to us before the congregation." Before making his rejoinder to this command, the penitent, who has "learned and received the perfect faith, with unfeigned trust, shall at once come on his knees into the midst of the water," and thus, while in a state of almost complete immersion, he is to make an audible confession, closing with these words: "So do I make confession, and believe, serve, and worship God the Father, and the Son, Mediator and Intercessor, and the Holy Spirit, the dispenser of grace to us who believe."

"And then, as he that has believed completes his holy profession of faith, the elect one instantly

## “ The Key of Truth ”

takes the water into his hands, and looking up to heaven . . . shall directly or indirectly empty out the water over the head, saying: In the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit is baptized this man or woman (mentioning the name), by the testimony of the congregation here present.” He then reads an account of Christ’s baptism, taken from the four Gospels.

According to the Key in its present form, the trine immersion, effected by thrice covering the unsubmerged head with water, was performed a second time after the Gospel lesson. This may be correct, but such a duplication of the rite seems unlikely. Possibly the latest editor of the book preserved two varied, but substantially identical, forms for this part of the service, only one of which was actually used. In any case, the second part is fuller, and more explanatory, than the first.

This second rubric contains the following direction: “Next the elect one receives before him the novice; but the novices shall in fear and trembling on their knees draw nigh, naked, bending low their head, and with firmest faith, bearing in mind the release from Satan. But the elect one takes water in his hands, and with mystery (or sacrament), with word and with act, shall fully empty out the water over one head (at a time), and say first, In the name of the Father; and he shall empty out the water on the head three times (and after that), in the name of the Son and in the name of the Holy Spirit, . . . in union,

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because the Father giveth release from the bonds, the Son giveth hope to sinners, and the Holy Spirit is love in the hearts of those who listen, believe, are baptized, and the rest."

After a further series of readings and prayers the service was to be closed by a benediction in these words: "May the Peace of the Father, the Peace of the Son, and the Peace of the Holy Ghost, come unto you. Amen."\* ("Key of Truth," caps. xvii.-xxi.)

Turning now to the Catechism which had to be completely learned by all who desired to be received into the Church, we shall gain some further light on a peculiar feature of the ordinal to which I have not yet called attention; namely, that baptism was appointed for "those who were of full age, and *in particular were cognisant of their original sin.*" This use of terms which are vitally connected with Augustine's theory of infant baptism is very startling. But the Catechism is even more emphatic, and uses the more distinctly Augustinian expression, "original and operative sin." This perplexing phraseology provokes us to inquire, Where did Paulicians find these terms? and again, Why, or with what significance, did they employ them?

The first question may never be answered with certainty. These terms may have been borrowed from Augustine, but it is not impossible that the

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\* See Appendix, Note XIX.

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borrowing was on his side. At one time he held views of Christ's Person similar to those of the Paulicians (presently to be noticed), and it would not be strange if he appropriated some of their terms, and bent them to his own use in after life (See “ Confessions,” Bk. vii. 25).

The answer to the second, and only vital, question, is fortunately less dubious. The extant portion of “ The Key of Truth ” contains no formal definition of these terms, but it amply proves that in the Paulician vocabulary they do not mean what they mean in the pages of Augustine, and in the countless volumes which have been written to defend or to denounce the dogma of original sin.

On this point the following questions and answers are conclusive :

“ Q. How did the blessed Apostles believe? Teach us.

A. As St. John the Evangelist showeth, saying: ‘ We have believed and know that Thou art Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.’

Q. So then, as touching those who baptize catechumens (infants), is their baptism true or vain?

A. It is vain and a fraud. For catechumens have not repentance, have not hope, nor have they the holy faith. Wherefore their baptism is not true and is not salvation.

Q. Then whose baptism and communion is valid?

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A. Their holy baptism and communion only is valid who have original and operative sin.

Q. Surely catechumens who are (newly) born of their mothers have not original and operative sin?

A. Indeed, my children, they truly have not such sin, these catechumens."

Comparing these statements in the Catechism with those already quoted, it is possible to form a reasonable surmise as to their combined significance. In the one place baptism is granted to those who have been taught, have believed, have repented, are of full age, "and in particular were cognisant of their original sin." In the other place it is denied to infants, because they have none of these requisites. Here, then, we are compelled to recognise that by "original sin" the Paulicians signified some kind of evil of which a man can be conscious, and of which he becomes conscious only after a personal experience of moral conflict under Christian training. This at once shuts out the Augustinian idea of inherited guilt, just as it is shut out by many Evangelical theologians to-day, who allow the old term "original sin" to stand in their text-books and creeds, but repudiate the idea of culpability which Augustine and his disciple, John Calvin, ruthlessly affirmed. Whether theologians are wise in retaining terms which need so much purging of their historic import, may be gravely doubted, but in any case their practice illustrates the chief difference between the Augus-

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tinian and the Paulician use of the term “original sin.”

With this vital ethical distinction before us we can infer with some confidence that during the wearisome Pelagian controversy the Paulicians held a view of human nature and of Divine justice which gave them an entirely independent position, warring against, and hated by, both parties. They were not neutrals, nor were they trimmers, aiming at a safe peace with both parties; but lovers of truth at any price. Unlike the Pelagians, they recognised a racial sickness which was very real and deadly—a malady so deeply seated in human nature that no endeavours after righteousness could put it away; a wound so envenomed that nothing less than the Holy Spirit could cleanse and heal it. Unlike Augustine, they could not imagine that this passive injury makes infants the objects of Divine wrath. But like Augustine, they saw that no individual originates all the mischief from which he suffers; so that the man of to-day “is to no small extent the product of his progenitors and of the environment which has been developed by the history of the human race.”\* Perceiving this tragic phase of human life, but awfully misconstruing its moral import, Augustine said, Infants must be baptized, because they have original, though not active or personal sin. The Pelagians said, Infants have no sin of any kind, but, though in

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\*“The Christian Idea of Atonement,” p. 106, where the subject is more fully treated.

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no danger of punishment, they must be baptized before they can enter into the joys of heaven. The Paulicians, combating both these parties, said, Infants have neither original nor active sin, therefore their baptism is heretical and absurd.

There is little to be added to this explanation. It leaves several questions in a state of obscurity, but it enables us to understand why the Paulicians laid so much stress on the consciousness of "original sin" as a pre-requisite of baptism. Being convinced that salvation meant something immeasurably greater than the forgiveness of remembered misdeeds and the correction of conduct, it inevitably followed that this profounder need must be experienced before the gift of God could be duly appreciated. Until this painful self-knowledge came, there could be no adequate sense of an abject need of cleansing and renewal, and therefore no adequate repentance, no amplitude of faith, and consequently no intelligent reception of baptism. Hence their refusal of the ordinance, not only to babes and children, but to young men and maidens, until they reached a full age, and "in particular were cognisant of their original sin."\*

It is now necessary to make some reference to the teaching of "The Key of Truth" in relation to the Person of Christ. It is much to be regretted that large portions of the MS. which evidently dealt with this subject are missing, but those which

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\* See Appendix, Note XX.



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remain are sufficient for our general information, and I have no desire to entangle the reader in a metaphysical discussion. I should not introduce the subject at all but for the fact that the Paulician conception of Christ is intimately connected with their doctrine of baptism, and probably accentuated their persistent refusal to administer the rite to infants.

The baptismal service, as presented above, appears at first sight to be strongly Trinitarian. This characteristic stands out prominently in the emphatic use of the three Divine names, with a corresponding ritual. It is still more noticeable in the closing part of the service, which contains a series of three prayers, one addressed to the Father, one to the Son, and one to the Holy Spirit. On closer examination, however, it becomes evident that the mutual relations of these three persons were not understood in an Athanasian sense. There is ample evidence that, while the Paulicians freely used the triune name, and worshipped Christ, and offered prayer, not only in His name, but expressly to Him as the only-born Son of God, they did not think of His Sonship as eternal, and dated His accession to Lordship and Divinity from the hour in which a voice came out of heaven, saying: “Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased.”\*

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\*Luke iii. 22 is thus quoted in “The Key of Truth,” although there was an older reading which agreed with Psalm ii. 7, and would have been more favourable to the Paulician theory. Justin Martyr and others preserve this reading: “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee.” (“Dialogue,” cap. lxxxviii.)

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The Christology of the Key must, therefore, be described as Adoptionism, because its central thought is that the Incarnation began, not at the Conception, or at the Nativity, of Jesus Christ, but when the Spirit descended upon Him in the Jordan. But theological labels are always dangerous, and it would be cruelly unjust to the Paulicians to call them Adoptionists without carefully guarding against an almost inevitable mistake. The name is closely, and by many writers exclusively, identified with the Spanish Adoptionists of the eighth century, and these people are remembered with extreme aversion, because they asserted the actual sinfulness of Christ. They declared that, inasmuch as all men have sinned, Christ was not "very man" unless He also sinned. They accounted sin to be a property of human nature, and not merely an evil disease, so that, in taking our nature, Christ was necessarily made sin for us in the most literal sense of these words. When saying that Christ conquered sin, they meant that His victory was not only an effectual repulse of Satan, but the consummation of a long course of self-conquest. But the Paulicians had no such thought. In their eyes Christ was without ancestral stain, and throughout His whole career remained without spot and blameless before God and man. The difference thus indicated is immense, and for religious purposes immeasurable.\*

The Adoptionist theory, thus guarded, carries

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\* See Appendix, Note XXI.

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us back to the ante-Nicene age, when Christian thinkers were struggling to give an intellectual expression to their faith in the Saviour who was both Son of Man and Son of God. The Church was harassed on one side by many Jews, who, with a host of Gentile sympathisers, were sufficiently drawn toward Christ to honour Him as the last and greatest of the Hebrew prophets and martyrs, and the Messiah for whom Israel had waited; but who totally denied His Divinity. On the other side she was courted by teachers of mingled Greek and Oriental culture, whose many-coloured theories of Christ's nature were legion, but who were all of one accord in denying His humanity. In the face of these mutually contradictory, yet equally dangerous, forces, the Church travailed to produce a doctrine in which the human nature of Christ should be maintained without detracting from His Divinity, and His Divinity be affirmed without maiming the humanity. Adoptionism represents one of the most widely accepted efforts to achieve this task; and those who most severely criticise its defects must frankly admit that it was a sincere attempt to interpret the amazing facts recorded in the Gospels.

The advocates of this theory insisted on the fact that after His baptism Christ wrought miracles; assumed authority to teach and command the people; declared as from His own personal knowledge the thoughts and purposes of God; and, above all this, that He not only forgave personal

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offences against Himself, but took upon Himself the responsibility of forgiving sins committed against God. To them, as to all who believe in the veracity of Christ, these facts were an adequate assurance that in Him God tabernacled. But they laid stress upon the equally obvious fact that the baptism of Christ, when the Spirit descended upon Him, marked a startling transformation in His life. Throughout the previous thirty years He had done no miracle, called for no homage, exacted no obedience, and made no disclosures of truth. Was it not at least superfluous, they asked, to affirm that God was as fully present in Jesus while emitting no radiant sign of His indwelling, as He was when men beheld His glory shining forth in refulgent streams of wisdom, knowledge, and power? By thus postponing the influx of the Deity to the beginning of our Lord's public ministry, Adoptionists thought to minimise the difficulty of believing in the Incarnation. We may pronounce their thinking superficial, and their apologetic labour futile, but we shall be wiser, as well as more charitable, to emphasise the merits, rather than the defects, of a theory which commended itself for many generations to some of the bravest and purest disciples of Christ, while more exalted theories of Christ's person were degraded into battle-cries by men who were more zealous for definitions than for righteousness, or for the faith which is a personal trust in the living Christ.

The mystery of Incarnation is not interpreted by restricting its scope to the period of super-

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human activity, but Paulician Adoptionism had the merit of affirming at least two vital elements of the Christian faith. It affirmed the true humanity of the Christ who lived and died and rose again; and with equal clearness it affirmed the Divinity of the present living Christ, the Christ of to-day, the Christ with whom we have to do as the Prince and Saviour and Judge, before whom all creatures both in heaven and earth must bow. For religious purposes these positive elements of truth rendered the speculative defects of the theory almost innocuous. However grave the difficulties created by the doctrine in relation to the pre-existence of the Son of God, it did not come between the disciple and his Master, the servant and his Lord. It did not wither reverence, or chill love, or hinder faith, or silence prayer. It failed to account for the sinlessness of the Son of Man between the Nativity and the descent of the Spirit, when He stood an unscathed victor, bathed, but not needing to be cleansed, in the waters of the Jordan. For highly-critical minds it probably created or left untouched more biblical difficulties and more metaphysical problems than it evaded; but for spiritual inquirers it gave an answer to the supreme question, What is Christ now? by saying: “He is our Elder Brother, exalted to the right hand of the Father, and in Him the fulness of the Godhead dwells, and is made manifest for ever.”

The suitability of baptism as a mode of ex-

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pressing repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is unaffected by any theory of His person which leaves Him an object of religious faith as the Saviour from sin; but without weakening this assertion we may fully recognise that Adoptionism helped to save the Paulicians from drifting with the stream of tendency which carried the general Church toward Pædobaptism.\*

The most obvious, though not the most important, of these safeguards may be found in the stress laid by Adoptionists on a specified year of life as most suitable for the reception of baptism.

The change of principle involved in the adoption of infant baptism by the general Church was very great, and it was possible only because the process was masked by a nominal demand for repentance and faith, while, behind this deceptive show of continuity, there was a gradual relaxation of the demand for mental capacity, until, at last, it was dispensed with altogether. But among the Paulicians this insidious process was rendered more difficult by the fact that they not only insisted on mental capacity, which might be variously measured and imperceptibly lowered, but definitely fixed on the age of thirty as the standard of maturity. Some kept rigidly to this age; others looked upon it as a minimum; but all upheld it as the most appropriate and ideally correct time for baptism, and one to be kept before the minds of young people as an epoch in their lives to

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\* See Appendix, Note XXII.

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be prepared for with aspiring zeal. This fixed period could not readily be altered into any lower figure. We may object to the rule on several grounds; but it must have had some effect in deterring the Paulicians from hastening the period for baptism, and thus it helped to keep their feet from a first step on the slope down which the general Church glided almost unconsciously.

This protective value of a sharply defined standard of maturity was enhanced by the preference of the Paulicians, not only for a numbered year of life, but for a particular day in the Christian calendar for the administration of baptism. It was commonly believed in the Early Church that Jesus was baptized on His thirtieth birthday. Hence there arose a custom of keeping the day as a festival to commemorate at once the Nativity and the showing of the Saviour to the world. This day became a favourite time for the baptism of disciples after their Lord's example (see p. 474). By slow, short steps, which may never be traced in detail, the general Church ceased to give prominence to the baptism of Christ and magnified the festival of Christmas because it emphasised the importance of the Virgin Birth as the true commencement of the Incarnation. But unhappily zealous Churchmen injured a good cause by bad arguments and ill-founded claims. Not content with affirming the Divine possession of Jesus from the beginning of His life, many confounded the humanity of which Mary was the

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mother with the divinity which was in no sense her child. This disastrous mistake was guarded against in formal creeds, but in spite of phrases it gradually led to the exaltation and worship of the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God.

Adoptionism offered a stolid resistance to this fascinating movement of misguided reverence. Whatever its defects, it could never develop into Mariolatry. Antagonism so irreconcilable as this could not fail to keep the Paulicians in a state of truceless controversy with "Catholics," and this again must have strengthened their insistence on all points of difference, however remote their subject.

These considerations are not insignificant, but one of more importance remains for notice.

Paulicians laid special emphasis on the idea that the baptism of Christ was the seal of His conquest over sin; not over sin in Himself, but over the legions of Satan and the forces of evil in the world around. Unlike the more notorious Adoptionists of Spain, they insisted that He had no need of washing for any cleansing purpose. Their contention was that, because found faultless and blameless after thirty years of probation, He was counted worthy of Adoption as a living temple for the indwelling and manifestation of God. Hence the baptism of disciples was interpreted as an act of conformity to Christ's example, in so far as this is possible for imperfect beings. It was held to be the seal of something which God could sincerely



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approve as a fairly victorious struggle to overcome the tyranny of sin; and, at the same time, a pledge that He would forgive all previous shortcomings, and confer all needful grace to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold of eternal life. To men baptized in this manner as honest and not ineffectual strivers after a Christian character, the Holy Spirit was assured, not without measure, as to Jesus, but in such a measure as would constitute them “anointed ones,” brothers of the Christ, children of God. This idea of baptism as a privilege to be sought and prepared for by an arduous and prolonged course of discipleship did not displace the demand for repentance and faith, but was something added thereto. In this respect it does not accord with the almost instantaneous baptism of converts which is recorded in the New Testament, but it makes the demand for mental and moral capacity so prominent, so vital, and so unmistakable, that no Adoptionist could part with it without a conscious surrender of his creed.

These considerations lend no sanction to the rather whimsical notion that Adoptionists are the only consistent upholders of believers' baptism, but no critical historian can ignore them as offering a partial explanation of the fact that the Paulicians were never drawn into the current of thought and practice which carried their opponents toward infant-baptism. This conclusion may be unwelcome to many, but we cannot write history to please ourselves, nor can we shield our most precious con-

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victions by ignoring facts. I could not write of the Paulicians without noting that they were Adoptionists, nor could I leave them under a name which others have made odious, without some effort to avert misjudgment. Beyond this endeavour to be just to a cruelly maligned body, I have no desire to defend or censure their creed. As men, and above all, as men of God, lovers of Christ, and faithful advocates of spiritual religion, they need no defence, and are above censure, as they are above praise. Of such men the world—or shall I say the Church?—was not worthy. They were martyrs, not for the sake of water baptism, but for the vital principles of personal religion, of which the ancient rite is a sacramental sign. In untold numbers they strove and suffered through centuries of wrong, and some are still enduring hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. It behoves us to honour their memory, not by adulation, but by the imitation of their fidelity and courage: not by repetition of their creed, but by following in the footsteps of their faith in Him, whose Person no man can analyse, but whom they worshipped as Divine, and served as Lord of all.

## The Final Issue

HAVING pursued the course of inquiry marked out in the introductory chapter, I now submit that the assumptions made in the title of this volume have been amply justified by evidence, and that the outline sketch of the history, given as a forecast, has been filled in and verified. With the historic facts now before us, the conclusion is irresistible that infant baptism is not an original institution of the Christian religion, and was not generally adopted in the "Catholic Church" until the fifth century. We have also seen that it was not at any time introduced as a startling innovation, but grew up in the Church by an evolutionary process of which the more important stages are distinctly traceable in early Christian literature. When introduced, it was not a mere modification of ritual, but was brought about by intellectual changes affecting the most fundamental ideas concerning the means and conditions of salvation. The earliest observable signs of change were slight, and such as arose from the infirmities rather than the faults of human nature, and from sincere but mistaken attempts to protect

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truth and enforce duty, rather than from unbelief, or disloyalty to Christ. Subsequent changes, viewed singly, were also comparatively small, and resistance to them was overcome because they were natural inferences from preceding changes of thought or practice. Given the earlier modifications, the later could almost always be logically defended, and might often be commended, as efforts to avert or mitigate the evil effects of past errors. Thus, what was at first an innocent exaggeration of the value of baptism, passed by slow transitions into a conviction that it is an indispensable means of salvation from the guilt and consequences of Adam's transgression. When this point had been reached, a new problem emerged. Regeneration could not be repeated, yet post-baptismal sin was universal. Hence a supplementary method of salvation became a moral necessity, and this method was developed by Augustine into a system which has remained substantially the same in the Roman Church for 1500 years.

If the process of development thus outlined can be justified, the Roman Church stands alone in an impregnable position; but if this process has been illegitimate, that Church has no defence. She herself has no illusion on this subject, and makes no concealment of the facts. Between herself and those who reject infant baptism, all disputes run up into the one supreme question of ecclesiastical authority. If the Church had a right to sanction the changes of

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thought which were slowly evolved in the first four centuries, she had also a right to approve the baptism of infants as their practical corollary. If she had no such authority, infant baptism stands condemned as a corruption of Christianity, and the entire system of post-baptismal salvation which has been built upon it must collapse when the judgment of God has been made manifest.

This supreme question of authority is already a closed controversy to all "Catholics," and to most Protestants. To those who have submitted, there is a sin of rebellion in the toleration of a momentary doubt. To those who glory in the Protestant revolt, the idea of submission is preposterous. It by no means follows, however, that nothing of any practical value remains to be said on the subject. In the present perturbed state of religious thought, vast multitudes, whom no man can number, are neither contented Catholics nor convinced Protestants. Uneasy souls, chafing under intellectual bondage, are looking for a safe path into liberty which shall not lure them into a sterile wilderness where no spiritual water flows to slake their thirst for God. Others, weary of a self-directed search for truth, are looking in an opposite direction for a spiritual authority which, if valid, should end their quest. Many others, belonging to no Church, smile at pretensions to overawe the use of reason, but are disposed to recognise the Church of Rome as the true historical representative of Christianity, so that, in rejecting her

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instructions, they reject what they suppose to be the Christian religion. For all these, therefore, and for others too varied for description, the question of authority has a vital importance, and I cannot close this historical study without offering a few thoughts upon one aspect of this vast subject.

In claiming the right to freely judge the words and works of every professed Church of Christ, we echo a familiar Protestant war-cry, but it means much more than many who loudly utter it have recognised. It is a principle which, if applicable anywhere, must be applicable everywhere; and in saying this I emphatically wish to exclude any possible exception. Some writers draw a line at the date of a particular Council: others distinguish between the first three centuries and those which followed: but others, seeing the futility of these attempts, make another, which, though more plausible, is equally mistaken, and, in the interests of Protestantism, even more to be regretted.

Not a few controversialists have referred to the "Apostolic Church," or the "New Testament Church," in terms which at least suggest that it radically differs from any similar community of a later date. They freely denounce the faults of the Mediæval Church, and refuse to sanction any proposed line of demarcation between a pure and an impure Church until they come to Apostolic times, but at this point they proceed to draw a line of

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their own, which I am compelled to describe as purely imaginary. Below this line they insist upon a rigorous trial of faith and conduct; above it, they point to the Apostolic Church as a standard by which all others may be tried.

I have great sympathy with the spirit and aims of those who make this distinction, but am convinced that the difficulty of drawing a line of demarcation between a pure and an impure Church is not lessened by going back to the Apostolic Age. It may for some purposes be convenient for Protestants to appeal from the Church of the fifth or of the fifteenth century to that of the first generation, but the appeal cannot be conclusive. The "Apostolic Age" is an indefinite expression, which points to a beginning at Pentecost, but admits of no chronological terminus. More important still, it is a demonstrable fact that the Apostles themselves were dissatisfied with the best results of their labour as Church builders.

In support of this opinion it will be sufficient to recall a few features of the New Testament history.

The writers of the New Testament make no attempt to give a complete or detailed account of any one of the Churches they mention or address. We know more of these Churches by the faithful reproofs and corrections they provoked than by any formal records or descriptions. Judging by the limited knowledge now available, the best of them were sincere but somewhat crude attempts to

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give a social expression to the spirit and principles of Christ.

Compared with any previous efforts to build a perfect society, the little communities which arose in the midst of Paganism were indeed admirable, but they were the efforts of human, and therefore fallible, builders. Their ideal was noble, but their actual condition was no more faultless than was the character of their individual members. There is no concealment of their defects. The book of the Acts of the Apostles records the dissensions by which the peace of these Churches was marred, their slowness to understand the significance of the Gospel, and their frequent failure in duty. The Epistles, and particularly those to the Seven Churches in Asia, are largely occupied with corrections of error and reproofs of disorder and immoral conduct. No denunciations of corruption by Martin Luther are more vehement than some which occur in the letters of John, James, Peter, and Paul. These Apostles were themselves Protestant Reformers. Thus the Churches which were Apostolic in a chronological sense were far from satisfactory to the Apostles; and when we resort to the New Testament for instruction, we must take it, not from the Churches, but from their founders and teachers—the men who deplored their fickle minds, their disturbed order, their lack of faith, love, rectitude, and spiritual insight: the men who agonised to bring them into true harmony with the first principles of the Gospel of Christ.



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The distinction between the Primitive Church and its original teachers is fundamental, and should never be lost sight of, but it is not a final solution of the problem of authority. It cannot be unwise to turn from infantile communities to their Divinely taught instructors, thus appealing from the sheep to the shepherds, but we cannot rest at this point, and say: Here is the ultimate authority. It may seem convenient to say, "We owe no allegiance to 'the Christianity of History' at any stage of its development; but we accept the authority of the Apostles as distinct from the Church or Churches they ruled." There is an appearance of sweet reasonableness in this plea which commends it to many, but it is not quite so conclusive as lovers of simple formulas could wish. Candour compels us to contemplate certain grave questions which affect the status of the Apostles themselves.

Reading Church history from its first introductory page, we see Christ surrounded with twelve men, and of these, one was "a devil." The remaining eleven were crude, though not unsuitable, material for the Master Workman to fashion for His use. Their chief merit was a teachableness which fitted them to be disciples, blended with a love which clung to the Master as their Friend, while He carried on His patient work to fashion them anew. Compared with their countrymen, they were loyal and self-denying followers of Christ, yet, after He had spent three years in their tuition, they were still tinctured with

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envy and selfish ambition, and were preserved in mutual amity only by the force of His personal sway over their hearts. Even as learners they were still incapable of hearing many things He had to say; still blind to the glory of His Person as one with the Father; still misled by wrong ideas of the kingdom He had come to set up on the earth.

Up to this point, therefore, these men are profitable to us because they were learners; as disciples, but not as masters. We learn of Christ through them because their ignorance and lack of wisdom called forth from Him a progressive revelation of truth. The dissipation of their darkness is our enlightening; the reproof of their faults is our correction; and by their chastening we are healed. Thus, through their discipline we are educated, but it is only as humble learners they can teach.

But without denying the truth of these words, it may be urged that, after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, these apt pupils became other men; and, being endued with power from on high, were transformed from disciples into Apostles. Before His death our Lord promised to send His followers a Heavenly Guide, who should be with them always, and lead them into all truth. Can we doubt, then, that this promise was fulfilled? Can we question its ample performance without renouncing faith in Christ?

This reasoning is unanswerable, but we must

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beware of construing our Lord's promise as a pledge of Infallibility to His servants. No Christian of any school doubts that, after the Ascension of Christ, His disciples became the first teachers of the Church, and in a profound sense the first makers and founders of the modern world. As the result of their training and subsequent spiritual equipment, these men were empowered to do a work which is unique in human history. But does this mean that they became infallible? Does it mean that they suddenly became perfect in wisdom, or knowledge, or righteousness? Neither the terms of Christ's promise nor the recorded acts and words of the Apostles make so exorbitant a demand upon our faith. On the contrary, the terms of the promise imply a continuous period of discipleship when the visible Teacher had departed; and the facts which are frankly presented as a sequel to the story of Pentecost show that the leaders of the Church were still in need of instruction in some of the first principles of the Christian religion.

Glancing first at a few salient facts it will be seen that the Apostles failed to understand the explicit terms of the great commission under which they served, and under bondage to this mistake they delivered to the Jews alone the message which was addressed to all the nations of mankind. Peter was taught by a vision to discard the distinction between Jew and Gentile, but on returning to Jerusalem after breaking bread with Cornelius, he had the utmost difficulty in convincing his brethren

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of a truth which we now deem axiomatic, and without which Christianity could have no place as a world-religion. This lesson might well have been accepted as final, but it was not. Long afterwards Peter incurred the public rebuke of Paul for a display of culpable disloyalty to this same truth at Antioch. Worse still, it is clear that the Mother Church, including most of the Apostles, declined to open their fellowship to uncircumcised believers, and for several generations she remained thus disobedient to a first principle of Christianity. The decree of the Church in Jerusalem to recognise Gentile Churches, while maintaining circumcision as a term of membership at home, was at best an illogical compromise, and, more strictly judged, it was in the highest degree schismatic. Paul may have accepted it for the sake of peace, but it never had his cordial approval, and it never ceased to breed confusion and strife until the ever-dwindling number of Jewish Christians who clung to it disappeared from history.

These are not trivial incidents, nor do they lie outside the region of things strictly religious. They are events of grave importance, and cannot be passed over as minor personal errors which need not detract from the official competence of the Apostles. They include acts performed in the course of pastoral duty, and gravely affecting the constitution of the Church. They betray on the part of the Apostles a lamentable misunderstanding of their Divine commission, and an unworthy con-

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ception of God's purpose in sending His Son into the world.

Such errors, if due to purely intellectual defects, would be serious, but, unhappily, the narrative shows that inability to understand was conjoined with reluctance to obey the clear command of Christ, even after its interpretation to Peter by a vision, and after its urgent reinforcement by Cornelius, who demanded to hear all that the Apostle had been commanded to teach. This reluctance to obey goes far to explain a previous dulness of sight, and shows that the slowness of the disciples to apprehend the universality of their commission was chiefly due to the beclouding influences of hereditary prejudice, national antipathies, and a contracted conception of the spiritual kingdom of God.

These statements of fact are not accusations, nor are they based upon the report of hostile witnesses. They simply repeat what is written large in the first annals of the Church, and providentially preserved for the information of the world. If we venture to blame the world's best servants, it is not as censorious critics, much less as arrogant judges, and our verdict is but an irresistible assent to the verdict passed upon themselves by those who erred and were corrected. The narratives of Luke and Paul are the guileless utterances of men who were imbued with the Spirit of Truth; and they prove beyond question that the Apostles were not suddenly endowed with infallibility or faultlessness by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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How then, if at all, can this conclusion be reconciled with faith in the fulfilment of Christ's promise? Unless we can find a satisfactory reply to this question, the study of Church history will be fatal. Lacking such an answer, "to be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant"; and for those who cannot follow Newman Romeward, it is to cease to be a Christian.

The vital importance of this issue, and the imperative necessity of dealing with it in relation to the Apostles, will best be appreciated if we recall the Roman theory of Infallible Authority in the Church.

This theory starts with an infallible company of Apostles, and affirms a series of official successors to whom their gifts and functions are transmitted. It assigns to these men an exclusive right to interpret the Scriptures, the decrees of Councils and all past teachings of the Church; including not only published writings, but also a sacred treasure handed down by tradition through the Fathers. As the stewards of Christian truth and heirs of Christ's promise, these privileged officials are alone able to unfold the real, though perhaps unsuspected, meaning of all previous teachings. Their interpretations may appear to uninitiated minds like flagrant contradictions, but they are not on this account to be rejected, but should be trustfully received as new disclosures of hidden wisdom, vouchsafed by the Spirit of Truth as time and occasion may require. To these heirs of the

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promise it is also given to learn and proclaim new truth whenever the necessities of a new age may call for such a blessing. According to this theory, therefore, there is a progressive education of the Church, but this may be defined as the gradual training of a fallible people, under the teaching of an infallible hierarchy, through whose indispensable mediation they obtain at second-hand the guidance of the Spirit into truth.

The more carefully this theory is examined, the more thoroughly consistent and symmetrical it appears. It is the finished product of many minds, engaged through many generations in building up a theory guarded at every point against attack, and adapted to silence the misgivings of those who are tempted to doubt the authority of the Church.

How then shall we meet the claim thus based upon the promise of our Lord?

We may follow those who deny that the promise was made for perpetuity. But if we do this we deny its terms, and our reward will be to leave the Church without any pledge of her Lord's abiding presence and tuition. The promises made by Christ to His first disciples are the only ones we possess. There are no others, and we cannot vary their interpretation to suit our occasional convenience. What they meant at first they meant in the age of Augustine and in the Middle Ages. What they meant in the past is what they mean to-day, and will remain their import until time writes "finis" to the history of the Church.

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As an alternative we may admit the permanence of the promise, but point to errors and misdeeds as a proof that the Roman Church has forfeited the gift. But if we presume to use this test, where shall we find a Church which can survive our inquisition? But again, if the discovery of errors and defects in a Church compels us to deny the presence of Christ and the tuition of the Spirit, what becomes of Peter and his brethren, whose errors are confessed in the New Testament? By such an argument we either prove nothing, or we prove that the promise of Christ has never been fulfilled from the day He ascended until now.

There is, indeed, only one vulnerable point at which the Roman theory can be assailed—that is, at its base, namely, the assumption that our Lord's promise of guidance into truth must be understood as a pledge of infallibility to His Apostles. When this assumption has been conceded, or even tacitly allowed to pass unchallenged, the superstructure cannot be shaken except by such a shock as would leave Christianity itself in ruins. What the promise meant at first it means to all legitimate heirs of Apostolic faith and service. If it guaranteed infallibility to any, it guarantees it to all for whom it was intended; and if Protestant writers disregard the force of this dilemma, they give away their case.

Here, then, we are brought back to the question, How, if at all, can we reconcile the



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discovery of fallibility in the Apostles with the fulfilment of Christ's great promise?

The essential utterances to be considered are two, namely, Matthew xxviii. 19, 20, and John xvi. 13. The first of these sayings contains a pledge of Christ's perpetual presence with His servants while discipling the world. The second assures them of a spiritual Teacher who will guide the disciples themselves "into all the truth."

When thus brought together, the two sayings are beautifully complementary. The disciples are to go and teach all nations, and, at the same time, are themselves to be taught of God. They have learned much, but need to learn much more, and this persistent need is to be supplied. "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world." "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth."

The most striking feature of these promises is their onlook to a vast but indefinite future. They assume that the task of discipling the world will tax the powers of the teaching staff, although their great Head will not leave them unaided. Relying on this word they may go forth assured of His presence to sustain and guide their toil. It is an assurance which becomes increasingly precious as the centuries pass, and the immensity of the task committed to the Church is made apparent.

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Every missionary who forsakes kindred and fatherland to spend his life among degraded peoples goes with a profound consciousness of personal weakness and incomplete equipment, yet is strong and of good courage through faith in the ancient promises of Divine companionship, protection, and instruction. Centuries of strife have brought Christians to supremacy in a vaster world than was dreamed of by those who received the original commission, yet their task is still unfinished. Centuries of thought and of enlightening experience have expanded their conceptions of truth and of time and space as the measure of God's realm: but they have not yet apprehended the fulness of meaning or the grandeur of purpose which were hidden for their finding in Christ's words. The heirs of the promise still find its wealth unsearchable, and the boundless realm of "the Truth" still stretches to a far horizon with many fascinating secrets unexplored.

Thus read, the terms of the twofold promise are in perfect accord with this prolonged experience of need. They address the disciples as travellers toward a remote country, who will require a Guide and Teacher to be with them always when the visible Master has passed out of sight. They contain no suggestion that the method of education will be radically changed, so that a miraculous endowment, with Divine attributes of wisdom, knowledge, and power, may foreclose the toils of scholarship. They warrant no expectation that difficulties

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of thought or life are to cease: that perplexities and failures to understand, believe, or obey, are to be abolished, and all their invigorating influence on character be for ever lost. On the contrary, they plainly recognise that there will be a prolonged course of education for the disciples as individuals, and of the Church of which they were to be the pioneers. On the part of the learners there must be an age-enduring effort to advance, and this will call for and receive the daily service of a Heavenly Teacher and Guide.

When the familiar facts of apostolic history are thus read in the light of the promise, and the promise is read in the interpretative light of the facts, their harmony is manifest. There is no sign of discrepancy, unless, indeed, it can be argued that no Divine Teacher was sent because His work was not completed on the day of His arrival, and that no Guide was provided because the journey into truth was not ended in the hour it was begun! The entire story told in the New Testament is not merely consistent with, but becomes a vivid exposition of, the Divine promise of a Guide, when once it has been perceived that our Lord had a prevision of the two facts—that the journey to be accomplished by His followers would be a long one, and that the people to be led in every generation would be slow to understand and quick to forget the lessons of their Lord.

The conclusion thus arrived at is fatal to any theory which formally or tacitly sets up the Apostles

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as a company of infallible teachers and commanders of the Church, but it in no degree impairs the authority of these Church founders in any sense in which they themselves can be shown to have ever exercised or claimed it. They never posed before the world, nor do their memoirs applaud them, as perfect in character or attainments, much less as lords entitled to have dominion over the faith or over the consciences of their brethren. The frank realism and unflinching honesty with which defects and limitations are confessed in the New Testament are a convincing token that these men were inspired by the Spirit of Truth; and thus even their lowly self-estimate sustains their genuine authority as the witnesses and messengers of Christ. In this capacity their qualifications are unrivalled, and as witnesses they can have no successors, for no man can remount the slopes of time to see, and hear, and touch what they saw, and heard, and handled of the Word of Life, and delivered once for all to the world. Their unique testimony, with its promised supplement in the co-witness of the Holy Spirit, must remain the sole basis for our faith; and we neither disparage the Apostles, nor depreciate their permanent value to the world, by confessing that they, like ourselves, and like all the prophets before them, were men subject to infirmity.

The soundness of the principle thus arrived at cannot be determined by its logical consequences; but whether they are to our liking or not,

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these consequences must be boldly and impartially acknowledged.

(1) The idea of a progressive education, whereby the Church is conducted under Divine guidance into an illimitable domain of truth, necessarily implies some kind of doctrinal development.

Timid Protestants—and some such anomalous persons exist—will shrink from this admission as dangerous. Their anxiety is needless, but, whatever happens, the admission must be made. There is ample evidence that some sort of doctrinal development was designed, foreseen, and prepared for by Christ. An exhaustive review of this evidence would require almost a reprint of the Gospels, but some indication of its general tenor will be sufficient.

The extant teachings of Jesus, unlike the mountainous mass of literature founded upon them, are brief and informal. From a handful of seed corn there has sprung up a harvest which waves like Lebanon throughout the fields of the world. The oracles of Christ are small in bulk, yet of infinite significance, and they are eternal in their adaptability to all the advancing needs and capacities of the human mind. It is inconceivable that the author of the parable of the Mustard Seed could find fault with the natural increase of His seminal ideas.

The process which Christ pre-ordained began immediately to operate, and can be traced in the New Testament, for all the Epistles are develop-

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ments of the sayings and actions of our Lord. Even the most abstruse doctrines and sustained arguments in Paul's Epistle to the Romans are defensive and expository expansions of the thoughts which Jesus clothed in picturesque simplicity for the hearts of peasants and publicans and sinners, as well as for scribes and lawyers, if they would condescend to hear.

It was impossible for this process to stop in the first generation. It has been intermittent, if not continuous, ever since, and no Church can condemn it without censuring herself. Every sermon preached on a text taken from the Gospels is either a faithful or unfaithful development of a germinal idea. The same may be said of all the great creeds of Christendom. The Confessions of Augsburg, Heidelberg, and Westminster are as truly developments of Christian doctrine as are those of Trent and the Vatican. No Church which claims the liberty of prophesying, and permits the study of Systematic, or even what is called Biblical, Theology can afford to denounce all development as intrinsically wrong.

(2) A second consequence which flows from the theory of progressive education which has been advanced is the right, or, more correctly, the duty, of Private Judgment.

If it be true that the tuition of the Church has from the first been progressive, and if it be also true that from Peter downward her best human

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leaders have been slow learners, and sometimes erring guides, it necessarily follows that modern seekers after truth must, to the best of their ability, distinguish between truth and untruth in the dogmas presented for belief; and, in particular, they are bound to scrutinise every proposed development of the original teachings of Christ. Forewarned of possible error, and unable to confide in any human authority as infallible, we are inexorably required to guard our minds against deception; and when any dogma is presented it is our duty to ask the most searching questions, and to be over-awed by no weight of numbers, or learning, or by the venerable antiquity of any creed. We are more than entitled to ask, Does this developed doctrine embody the original teachings of Christ? Does it give a luminous interpretation of His words? or, Does it contain foreign matter, or omit some essential element of truth?

Having recognised the lawfulness of development, we are not free to condemn all verbal variations. New terms and phrases may usefully express an old truth under new aspects, and in relation to new conditions of thought and experience. Such variations of language are sometimes requisite to save truth from being hidden by familiarity, or perverted by a traditional misuse of terms, or even falsified by the natural decay of language. Hence a narrow-minded or cowardly dread of new expressions may lead to self-delusion;

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but it must always remain true that, given the fact of universal fallibility in all ages of the Church, the criticism of proposed developments is the indefeasible right and inexorable duty of every seeker after truth.

The assertion of this principle is, of course, a direct contradiction of Roman teaching; but it is curious to find that Newman, with a characteristic parade of candour, recognised the fitness of some such trial of ecclesiastical dogmas as I have advocated. To this effect he wrote: "An intellectual development may be in one sense natural, and yet untrue to its original, as diseases come of nature, yet are the destruction, or rather the negation, of health." On this ground he admitted "that the causes which stimulate the growth of ideas may also disturb and deform them; and that Christianity might indeed have been intended by its Divine Author for a wide expansion of the ideas proper to it, and yet this great benefit hindered by the birth of cognate errors which acted as its counterfeit; in a word, that what I have called developments in the Roman Church are nothing more or less than what used to be called her corruptions" ("Development of Doctrine," p. 170).

Elsewhere he puts the case more tersely by declaring that the truth or falsity of any professed development depends upon whether it is "faithful or unfaithful to the idea from which it springs." To this it is justly added that "A false or unfaith-



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ful development is more properly to be called a corruption" (41).\*

My chief and most comprehensive objection to Newman's work is that, after exhibiting a satisfactory test, he consciously, or unconsciously, failed to apply it to the dogmas submitted for consideration. His method of treatment is so elaborate and subtle that the main issue is obscured. For any convincing conclusion to be reached it was essential for him to institute a comparison between the ultimate developments in question and the primordial ideas of Christianity, for only so can their likeness or unlikeness be perceived. Instead, however, of applying this crucial test, he skilfully leads us from one faint variation to another, each being minimised, or explained away, until, without suffering a shock of surprise upon the road, we are conducted to the Decrees of Trent, and almost persuaded by the charmer's spell to confess that these were reached without any breach of continuity in the faith of the Church. The process may be likened to the unrolling of an immense scroll, which at the beginning is white, and at the end black, but which passes from one to the other by imperceptible gradations of slowly deepening tints of grey.†

It is instructive to note that this illusory method strictly accords with Newman's preliminary sketch of the process by which the later developments of

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\* See Appendix, Note XXIII.

† See Appendix, Note XXIV.

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doctrine were reached. We have previously noted his confession that these "truths" were not recognised as such until after a period of "more or less determinate advance in the direction of them." We have also remarked his assumption that this movement in advance which brought about new definitions of truth was also their justification. Stranger still, we have heard his declaration that these final definitions must be taken as authoritative interpretations of all earlier teachings, including those of Christ and His Apostles. Hence it transpires that the defective method pursued throughout the book is precisely what is foreshadowed in its introductory pages. It is the filling in of its outlined forecast. It is a detailed review of the movement "in advance" which had already been commended, not only as justifiable, but as itself the justification of the doctrinal changes it brought about.

Holding such opinions, it was impossible for Newman to bring up the "primordial ideas" of Christianity as a test of later dogmas. According to him and all his fellow-churchmen, it is only through these later utterances of the Church that we have any trustworthy knowledge of what the primordial ideas actually were. The first Christians were unable to see the full significance of their own beliefs, and this became apparent to the Church only after many generations. If, therefore, we want to know what were the primordial ideas of Christianity we are directed to resort, not to the

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most ancient documents available, but to the more mature and reflective productions which tell what the infant Church really believed, but was powerless to articulate! How, then, can we use the unutterable ideas of the first age as a test of later interpretations? Such an attempt, when viewed from Newman's standpoint, involves the absurdity of testing the known by the unknown, the clear exposition by the hidden mystery which it alone unveils to our sight. In addition to this absurdity, the attempt to apply such a test impugns the authority of the Church.

In judging Newman's work, this dilemma should never be lost sight of, for it constitutes at once his moral excuse and his intellectual reproach. His mistake was fundamental and incurable. He proposed a rational test of doctrinal developments which his principles forbade him to use. He tried to use it, but inevitably lapsed into an appeal to authority. He fairly traced a process of slow and continuous "advance," but having done this he was constrained to present the historical facts as their own justification, instead of boldly asking whether the resultant creed was "faithful or unfaithful" to the primordial ideas of Christ.

Apart from literary and personal interest in a brilliant author, the fallaciousness of his method deserves attention, because it corresponds to, and helps to elucidate the actual process by which the general Church advanced toward, the position she reached in the fifth century and more perfectly

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defined in the sixteenth. Newman's failure to compare the later dogmas with the primordial ideas of Christianity is a repetition of the gravest error of the leaders who brought about a transformation of belief; and the lulling effect produced by the smooth flow of his historical survey helps us to understand the ease with which the common people almost unconsciously drifted away from the first principles of the Gospel. In reading his narrative we see that one idea follows another in logical sequence, and each variation appears to have been an inevitable deduction from some previously accepted belief. In a similar way, when studying the ancient literature of the Church, it becomes evident that the mental process extending over centuries was entirely similar to that by which Newman, not only in his book, but in his life, glided along a slippery path to an unexpected terminus in a creed formerly rejected as incredible. The secret of this subtle course of transformation in the great community of old was the same as in the modern student—failure to resolutely compare a current creed with the original ideas of Christ: a failure to ask at every point, Is this dogma which I am asked to believe "faithful or unfaithful to the idea" from which it professedly springs?

The only theory which can warrant a general application of Newman's crucial test without undermining faith in Christ is that which excludes infallibility from first to last from the individuals

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and from the communities under His tuition. It regards all Christian believers in all ages as heirs of the great promise—the one immutable promise which means the same to-day as it meant when first announced. It regards all sincere disciples as taught of God according to the measure of their spiritual capacity; so that, as the result of their thinking, their varied discipline and Divinely-supervised experience, the Church is being patiently led into clearer visions of eternal truth—the truth which is always old, yet ever new to those who find it.

It is easy for the champions of Authority to taunt us with the limited capacity of the ablest and most cultured minds, and with the positive incapacity of multitudes to test the truth of what they hear and read. We do well to lay these things to heart, and to beware of intellectual self-sufficiency while insisting on the duty of private judgment. But the derision of man's infirmity does not disprove his obligation to use what power he has, nor does it help to prove that any class or order has been raised above the level of ordinary humanity.

It should also be observed that our liability to err in the choice and application of tests does not militate against the theory of progressive education I have proposed, because that theory not only admits, but asserts, universal fallibility, and emphatically declares that God's promised guidance does not dispense with effort or preclude mistakes and failures, but rather transmutes them into con-

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tributory means of education. Denying infallibility to Peter and his colleagues, we cannot claim it for ourselves, nor have we any temptation to do so. Our consolation and support as erring seekers after truth are to be found in the promise of Christ as we see it fulfilled and verified in the continuous correction and enlightenment of His first disciples. Peter's vision on the housetop, like many other signs granted in the first age, may have no formal counterpart in this present time, but it remains a pictorial symbol of the cleared sight which comes in times of emergency to those intent on serving God. When we see a chief Apostle abjectly needing, and humbly receiving, light, we are encouraged to accept the conditions of human life and progress without dismay, and, in full remembrance of defects and dangers, we are emboldened to put our faith in the unseen Guide who will lead us through all devious wanderings into the eternal light of Truth.

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### *NOTE I., p. 207.*

In the letter quoted above, interpolations were made by some unscrupulous champion of the Papacy, but these do not appear in any MSS. earlier than the tenth century, and the history of their incorporation in the first printed text is known, and may be seen in Archbishop Benson's monograph on "Cyprian and his Times." These spurious sentences are still defended by Ultramontane writers, and have played a great part in the course of development which culminated in the Decree of Infallibility delivered by the Vatican Council. According to the author of this fraud, Cyprian taught that our Lord "established one chair"; that "Primacy is given to Peter in order that one Church of Christ and one chair may be pointed out; . . ." and that "he who deserts the Chair of Peter on which the Church was founded" does not "hold the faith," and is not "in the Church." The charge of forgery is supported by overwhelming evidence, but apart from the silent witness of all ancient MSS., and the admissions of eminent Roman Catholic scholars, the interpolations are so clumsy, and so contrary to Cyprian's theory of episcopal equality, that no impartial critic can have any doubt of their character. They occur in the course of a letter which abounds in scathing criticism of the Bishop of Rome, and holds him up to scorn as one "who would rather maintain his own evil and false position than agree in the right and true which belongs to another." This other person from whom Stephen ought to have received correction was, of course, Cyprian himself, and in quite a paternal spirit he reminds Pompey that Paul anticipated the advent of presumptuous prelates when he warned Timothy "that a bishop must not be litigious, or contentious, but gentle and teachable." To which he adds: "Now, he is teachable who is meek

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and gentle to the patience of learning. For it behoves a bishop, not only to teach, but also to learn." It is scarcely credible that in the same paragraph Cyprian would commend his despised adversary as an authoritative source of truth!

It should also be said that Cyprian maintained, and consistently acted on, the principle that even a great Council had no right to interfere with the independence of a single dissentient member, and if the many could not overrule the one, it is clear that no one could singly overrule the many. In the very paragraph in which the interpolations have been made, Cyprian distinctly declares that "the rest of the Apostles were also the same as Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honour and power."

### *NOTE II., p. 213.*

Having used the term "anabaptism," it may be well to point out that it does not correctly describe the reasoned theory of any Church or sect, whether ancient or modern. With rare exceptions, no body of Christians has ever advocated the repetition of a rite which it recognised as valid baptism. The Roman Church, while still repudiating Cyprian's view, baptizes converts from Protestantism, but she does so only provisionally, lest the ordinance previously administered may have been vitiated by some irregularity. With few exceptions (possibly with the sole exception of the present Empress of Russia), converts to the Greek Church are re-baptized, but this is not allowed to be a repetition of the sacrament. With more obvious consistency, Baptists, who hold that the only true baptism is a personal act of obedience on the part of those who confess repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, deny that such an act is the repetition of anything which was passively submitted to in the unremembered days of infancy. The Roman and Greek Churches (in the present day) most nearly deserve to be called by this name, for they follow Cyprian's practice, while repudiating his theory.

### *NOTE III., p. 252.*

The festival of the baptism was anciently called the Holy Day of Lights, in harmony with the use of Illumination as a name for the rite. There is an old tradition that lights appeared on the



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Jordan when Christ was baptized, but the name is older than the myth, and also older than the custom of carrying lighted torches, or candles, on the festival. Gregory Nazianzen explains its origin in his Oration on the Holy Lights. "Again My Jesus, and again a mystery; not disorderly, nor belonging to Greek error or drunkenness . . . but a mystery lofty and divine, and allied to the glory above. For the Holy Day of the Lights, to which we have come . . . has for its origin the baptism of Christ, the True Light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world. . . ." (Oration xxxix. 1). In the Western Church the festival of Epiphany lost its pre-eminence, and its connection with the baptism of Christ almost disappeared. In the Eastern Church it is usually called Theophania. It is a favourite time for the administration of baptism, and in other ways the ancient significance of the season is preserved.

### NOTE IV., p. 307.

The passage most relied upon by those who take this view is one in which Augustine denounced Pelagius for saying that he had never heard of anyone who objected to give "redemption" to children. Wall, relying too rashly on the common patristic usage with which the reader is familiar, declares that this proves that Pelagius had never heard of an objector to infant baptism, and thence he infers that this proves its universality. Ivimey and others have blamed Wall for converting "redemption" into "baptism," and thus a pretty quarrel arises. There is, however, no need, and indeed, no room, for dispute.

The plain fact is that Augustine was angry because his opponent used the word "redemption" in a sense which he himself abhorred, and considered fraudulent. These foemen were not warring about ritual. Neither objected to infant baptism, and neither was concerned to discuss its prevalence. Both referred to it as "redemption." What they quarrelled about was the special meaning of "redemption" *in the case of children dying in infancy*. Augustine maintained that such children were guilty of original sin, and would be cast into hell unless baptized (and thereby redeemed). Pelagius held that they were innocent, and in no danger of punishment, but admitted that, unless redeemed (baptized), they could not enter

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into the positive bliss of heaven ; and, like many earlier thinkers, he believed in an intermediate state for those who deserved neither punishment nor reward. Augustine scoffed at this idea, and charged Pelagius with deceit in calling anything "redemption" *except salvation from hell*. When, therefore, Pelagius declared that he had not refused redemption to infants, and had never heard of anyone who did, Augustine treated him as a crafty deceiver. Thus the propriety of administering some kind of baptism to children was neither questioned nor asserted by either combatant.

Taking any interpretation of the passages referred to, I am content to offer two observations. (1) Nothing which Pelagius said, or could have said, can affect the historical certainty that there were objectors to infant baptism in his day. (2) If Pelagius had never heard of such objectors, Augustine was not so ignorant. Of this fact ample proof is given in the text.

### NOTE V., p. 323.

But while Augustine showed that it was monstrous and irrational to admit that a parent's faith was essential to a valid baptism, and equally incredible that a parent's sin could deprive a previously baptized infant of eternal life, he was well aware that he was running counter to some great authorities, and to a widespread state of feeling. It is curious to see how he laboured to explain away the appearance of contradiction which might hinder the acceptance of his own theory.

It will be remembered that Cyprian had said that children carried in the arms of their parents for presentation to heathen gods, thereby "lost, while in their infancy, that which they had received as soon as life began." Augustine was intensely anxious to authenticate his own teachings by proving their identity with Cyprian's. Hence he was driven to declare that Cyprian did not mean that these ill-used children actually lost their gift of life, but only that they lost it as far as it was in the power of their parents to take it away, "they lost it, that is to say, in the purpose and wish of those who perpetrated on them such wrong." It is impossible to excuse Augustine's astute interpretation, because Cyprian depicts the poor little victims as rising up in the day of judgment to denounce their

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parents, saying, "the apostasy of others caused our destruction; we found our parents murderers, for they deprived us of our Mother the Church and our Father the Lord, so that, through the wrong done by others we were ensnared, because, while yet young and unable to think for ourselves, we were by the deed of others, and while wholly ignorant of such a crime, made partners of their sin" ("On the Lapsed," ix.). No ingenuity can reconcile this language with Augustine's doctrine that children are not responsible for the sins of their fathers, if committed after they themselves have entered upon a separate and personal life.

It is impossible to determine the extent to which Augustine was at variance with popular sentiment, or theological opinion, when denying that a parent's faith was essential to the validity of an infant's baptism. Probably there was a vague idea in many minds such as Boniface thus expressed: "As the parents have been the authors of the life which makes them (infants) liable to condemnation, the children should receive justification through the same channel, through the faith of the same parents." Such reasoning is plausible, and Augustine skilfully tried to make use of it by transferring the idea of parentage to the Church. "The presentation of the little ones to receive the spiritual grace is the act not so much of those by whose hands they are borne up . . . as of the whole society of saints and believers. For it is proper to regard the infants as presented by all who take pleasure in their baptism, and through whose holy and perfectly united love they are assisted in receiving the communion of the Holy Spirit. Therefore this is done by the whole Mother Church, which is in the saints, and the whole Church is the parent of each one of them." (5.)

This conception of the collective motherhood of the Church in relation to every infant she baptized was ingenious, and invested infant baptism with a new charm as an expression of human affection and solicitude, and more particularly in the case of orphans and foundlings. But its innocence and beauty must not blind us to the fact that it was altogether fallacious as a part of Augustine's argument. The Church was confessedly a mother only to those who were begotten of God through the new birth; but infants were baptized *not because they were children of the Church, but in order that they might become such*. If they had died before the rite was administered, the Church declared

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that they must perish everlastingly. On this account it was impossible for the Church to assume the rôle of a parent in presenting little heirs of wrath to be baptized.

## NOTE VI., p. 329.

It forms no part of my design to examine and compare modern baptismal theories and customs, but I must allow myself to make a brief reference to the two services of the Anglican Church, because they exhibit in a striking manner a painful sense of obligation to deal with the problem which troubled Boniface; and to deal with it in a fashion less repulsive than Augustine's. In this way these modern services throw back a strong reflected light on the ancient episode.

In the form appointed for "The Ministration of Baptism to those of Riper Years," sponsors have no part, except to tell the minister the name to be conferred. Prior to the public service, however, "the parents, or other discreet persons," are required to assure the bishop, or his representative, that the candidate "is sufficiently instructed in the Principles of the Christian Religion," and also "to exhort him to prepare for the Sacrament by prayer and fasting." What are in substance all the ancient questions are addressed to the candidate himself, and his replies embody a confession of faith which covers the whole ground of the "Apostles' Creed." This service fairly represents the order followed in most churches in the second, third and fourth centuries, and with very little modification it might be used in a modern Baptist church.

But when we turn to the form for the baptism of infants we find an order for which antiquity supplies no precedent. In order to avoid the moral difficulty which Boniface deplored and derided, the sponsors are not required to assert the obvious untruth that the child believes the Creed, renounces the devil and all his works, and desires to be baptized. As a substitute for the original questions, the sponsors are asked, "*Dost thou, in the name of this Child,*" believe in and do all these excellent things? It would be superfluous to investigate the precise date and authorship of this extraordinary change. The change itself is eloquent enough to be self-explanatory to every independent reader of the correspondence just reviewed. It stands revealed

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as an ingenious device to obviate the anomaly and scandal of a false declaration, which Augustine's apology made worse rather than better. It certainly succeeded in purging the service of a distinct falsehood, but it did this at the expense of introducing a new mystery of vicarious repentance, faith, and consecration, which it makes no effort to explain.

It is sufficiently dazzling to watch these transformations of a Christian ordinance, but others await us within the covers of the English Prayer Book. If we turn to the "Order of Confirmation," we find what is virtually a totally different theory of sponsorship. The vicarious profession of faith and repentance disappears, and in its place we are told of a series of promises. Before laying his hands upon the candidates, the bishop thus addresses them: "Do ye here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe, and to do, all those things which your God-fathers and God-mothers then undertook for you?" The same idea is even more emphatically taught in the Catechism which has to be learned before Confirmation. Referring to baptism, the question is put, "What did your God-fathers and God-mothers do for you?" and in response the catechumen has to say, "They did promise and vow three things in my name."

There is a strange discrepancy between this account of what was done and the words which were actually spoken by the sponsors, as becomes painfully evident when the two services are brought together. In the earlier service the minister puts three questions to the God-parents, but he receives only one answer which can by any straining of language be construed as a promise. To his first question, which begins, "Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works . . . ?" the reply is given, "I renounce them all." To the second, which opens, "Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth . . . ?" the answer is, "All this I stedfastly believe." Neither of these answers has any resemblance to a promise, but the third, from its nature as a vow of obedience, stands related to the future: "Wilt thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments and walk in the same all the days of thy life?" The answer to this is, "I will," and thus one

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third, but only one third, of the statement made in the Catechism is correct, and even this is correct only in terms and not in spirit.

I have no desire to dwell upon these discrepancies in the English Prayer Book. My object is to show that we have now before us no less than four theories of sponsorship, two of them ancient and two comparatively modern. In the first four centuries sponsors, whether speaking of adults, or young children, or babes, solemnly declared that candidates believed in God, and truly turned to Him in heart and life. In the churches which followed the lead of Augustine, it was admitted that infants had no actual faith or penitence, and sponsors were supposed to affirm nothing more than "sacramental faith," though they still used the old words. In the Anglican service both these declarations are abandoned, but the substituted form appears in one place as a vicarious profession of faith, and elsewhere this is otherwise represented as a promise. No human ingenuity can show that these four conceptions are identical or harmonious. They have at least this in common, that they all bear witness to the truth that there is no valid baptism which does not express the faith and repentance of the subject. Taking the last three, and comparing them with the original ordinance, they have also this further common quality: they show how painfully and how unsuccessfully men have struggled to reconcile the baptism of babes with the demand for repentance and faith.

Before leaving this point it may not be superfluous to add a few words on the origin of the terms, "God-father" and "God-mother." These titles date back to a very early age, and the duties they connote were recognised in the primitive Church. From the outset it was seen that converts of all ages needed careful teaching and loving oversight by those more advanced in knowledge and experience. The wisest convert was a babe in Christ, and, as such, would profit by a ministry which might best be styled "paternal." This need was most urgent in the case of those who came out of paganism, and had received no moral discipline such as prevailed in Jewish families; and scarcely less so in the case of young people who, though born of Christian parents, had become orphans. For all these the Church provided spiritual foster-parents, who undertook to become their advisers and guardians, watching over their conduct, and aiding them to fight the good fight of rectitude and faith. There can be no

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doubt that in many cases these duties were zealously and lovingly performed, so that the titles which they presently received beautifully described the relationship which had so wisely been instituted. In Christian families the natural and spiritual relations and duties were combined, and when infants were baptized, parents usually acted as sponsors. The titles "God-father" and "God-mother" are familiar to English ears, but I fear that they seldom correspond to any recognised duties of a parental or religious character.

### *NOTE VII., p. 331.*

Augustine justified his verdict on the teaching of Cyprian, whom he regarded as the greatest of the Fathers, by a vigorous assertion of the absolute supremacy of the Scriptures. His language on this subject is quite as strong as that for which in after years John Huss and Martin Luther were condemned. "But who," he inquired, "can fail to be aware that the sacred canon of Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, is confined within its own limits, and that it stands so absolutely in a superior position to all later letters of the bishops, that about it we can hold no manner of doubt or disputation whether what is confessedly contained in it is right and true; but that all the letters of the bishops which have been written, or are being written, since the closing of the canon, are liable to be refuted if there be anything contained in them which strays from the truth . . . ." He did not affirm the right of every man to compare episcopal teachings with Scripture, but he made room for his own judgment on Cyprian by saying that the mistakes of any bishop might be refuted by "the discourse of someone who happens to be wiser in the matter than themselves, or by the weightier authority and more learned experience of other bishops." Going beyond this, he maintained that local Councils "which are held in the several districts and provinces, must yield, beyond all possibility of doubt, to the authority of universal Councils which are formed for the whole Christian world; and that even of the universal Councils the earlier are often corrected by those which follow them . . . ." ("On Baptism," Bk. 2, iii., 4.)

This doctrine was, of course, useful for its immediate purpose, for on no other ground could the appeal of the Donatists to

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Cyprian and his Councils be held void. It was, however, a complete undermining of the position on which Augustine wished to upbuild the Catholic Church. No Church claiming authority to declare truth can demand intellectual submission unless prepared to back up this demand by an assumption of infallibility. On this account the Church of Rome has pronounced her anathema on the opinion that Councils can err, and that the Bible is the sole and ultimate standard of truth. While Augustine was making his admission, he was actually taking his stand on the authority of a Church which confessedly was liable to err! He had already (as I shall have occasion to show) abased his own intellect before this authority, and was now engaged in denouncing the Donatists for not doing likewise; and yet here he was sitting in judgment on her mistakes, and intimating that the teachings she was now imposing on her members might conceivably be revised, and even reversed, in a later age!

## *NOTE VIII., p. 368.*

This theory of redemption from the devil by the blood of Christ lent itself to Augustine more readily than any other which could be named, but it created a huge difficulty of which he must have been conscious, but to which I have found no reference in his writings. If the tempter had a just right to the ownership of those who yielded to his influence, he was obviously entitled to reclaim those whom he induced to sin afresh after their liberation from his yoke. When warning Christians to beware of Satan and his wiles, Augustine often recognised this danger of recapture; but in expounding the remedy for post-baptismal sins, he totally ignored Satan's recovered rights. If the theory were worth anything, the ransom price was due to Satan as often as men resold themselves by sin.

## *NOTE IX., p. 372.*

Augustine may not have altered his views on this subject to any great extent, but his expression of them became stronger as he grew older. In his letter to Honoratus, written about A.D. 429, he depicts the abject impotence of the Church in the absence of her official servants. This letter was called out by



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a question concerning the right of a bishop or priest to "flee to another" city in times of persecution. Deprecating a cowardly straining of Christ's counsel, he reminded Honoratus that, when peril of death is imminent, and flight for the many is impossible, the need of pastoral service is increased. At such times, he observes, "an unusual crowd of people . . . is wont to gather in the church—some crying out for baptism, others for restoration, others for the doing of penance, and all asking for consolation and strengthening through the administration of sacraments. If, then, the servants of God are absent from their posts at such a time, how great a perdition overwhelms those who go out of this life either unregenerated, or unloosed from their bonds" (8). The doctrine that God will not remit the sins of His children except through the agency of the Church, and that the Church cannot exercise her authority except through certain men who may run away when most needed, is too awful for calm criticism.

### *NOTE X., p. 374.*

It is right to acknowledge that the Council defined the law of absolution in such a way as would probably have satisfied Martin Luther, when, while still "a Papist," he nailed his Theses to the church door. Comparing the Theses with the Canons and Decrees, and making due allowance for the difference between official admissions and indignant denunciations, it will be seen that the Council confessed that the abuses which excited Luther's anger had actually existed, though, of course, ignoring their prevalence, and the complicity of the Pope and his Cardinals. The difference between the attitude adopted by the authorities in 1551, and that shamelessly maintained in 1517, is one of the most striking fruits of the great Protest. In the booths of Tetzel and his fellow-merchants, contrition and confession were dispensed with, and "satisfaction" was given in coin. Thus three parts of the sacrament were absent, and in default of them the priestly absolutions granted were, according to the Council of Trent, null and void.

The general laxity of penitential discipline in the Middle Ages is not denied by any responsible writer. The Crusades had a most demoralising effect in this direction. In 1087, Pope

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Victor II. offered a general remission of penance to all who bore arms for the recovery of the sacred places, and for two centuries this evil precedent was followed. Since that time there has been no serious attempt to restore the ancient rigour. The schoolmen found astute apologies for lax customs, and the mendicant friars, by their hasty dealing with people of whom they knew nothing, and whose after conduct they did not remain to observe, made the best of parish priests impotent to insist upon satisfaction.

### *NOTE XI., p. 378.*

Cyprian was naturally very strong in his demand for confession and satisfaction. After urging open apostates to repent, and submit to whatever discipline the Church might impose, he turns to those who have committed the same sin in thought, but have not translated thought into action. He speaks with warm approval of those who "with grief and simplicity confess this very thing to God's priests, and make the conscientious avowal, put off the burden from their minds, and seek out the salutary medicine even for slight and moderate wounds. . . ." ("On the Lapsed," 28.) To this he adds the much-quoted sentence: "I entreat you, beloved brethren, that each one should confess his own sin, while he who has sinned is still in this world, while his confession may be received, while the satisfaction and remission made by the priests are acceptable to the Lord." (29.)

### *NOTE XII., p. 384.*

I have purposely made the statements regarding prevision in a guarded form, and to some extent hypothetical, but taking Pope Leo I. as a contemporary of Augustine, it would seem likely that at least one man did foresee and consciously work toward the world-dominion of the Church. Leo, when a youthful acolyte, probably came into personal contact with Augustine, and undoubtedly felt the full force of his influence as a writer, and gave administrative effect to his principles. It has been said that Leo never ventured "to claim any judicial power for the Church." This is scarcely accurate. It is certain that Leo,

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like so many before him, did claim that "the power of the keys" included judicial powers within the limits of the Church herself, for he asserted that these belonged in a pre-eminent degree to himself, as the successor of St. Peter in Rome. It cannot be proved that he claimed, as a bishop, *ex officio* authority over the whole or any part of the outer world; but he came so near to this that his ambitious mind could scarcely fail to contemplate the height to which the Church was rapidly ascending. Whether Leo dreamed so imperially or not, is of minor importance. The stage of development reached in the earlier part of the fifth century is not over-stated in the text. Judicial power inside the Church was affirmed as the gift of Christ, and was exercised with the assent and protection of the State. This had been augmented from time to time, and the tribunals which arose attracted general respect and trust; thus judicial power was vested in the same hands as ecclesiastical authority, and the two were ready for fusion. This double endowment inevitably led to the thought that it had been intended and provided for by Christ, although in the days of her weakness the Church had not presumed to read so vast a meaning in her Master's words to Peter.

### NOTE XIII., p. 392.

Roman Catholic writers claim a great antiquity for their doctrine of Purgatory. The truth of a doctrine cannot be determined by its age, but it may be useful to give a brief criticism of the historical evidence relied upon.

It is held that Judas Maccabæus believed in Purgatory because of an act recorded in 2 Macc. xii. 38-45. A careful perusal of the passage (even in the faulty Vulgate) shows that the inference is illegitimate.

The common Rabbinical doctrine of a later age was that all but exceptionally wicked Israelites will ultimately find their way to heaven, although a majority must pass through a "stage between death and eternal life, which serves for the final perfecting." The details of the sufferings to be undergone are revolting and grotesque, and the Rabbis seem to have allowed their imaginations free play in the effort to frighten Jews into good behaviour. The

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precise date of these fantastic inventions cannot be fixed, but they were current during the earlier centuries of the Christian era, and probably had considerable influence on the Church. When it is said, however, that because our Lord said nothing against this doctrine, or against prayers for the dead, He must be held to have sanctioned both, so baseless a plea requires no refutation. If all the foolish ideas of the different Jewish sects are to be attributed to Christ, because He did not go out of His way to deny them, we must credit Him with an eclectic theology, worthy only of an intellectual dustbin.

With singular obtuseness the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is brought up as evidence of a state of purgatory in Hades. In this parable there is no hint of cleansing by fire, or of any termination to future punishment. On the contrary, it is said that there is no path by which souls may pass from one place to another. There is a prayer, but it is not put up by the living for the dead, but by the awakened dead for relief, and it is refused. If Christ had shared the late Rabbinical belief in the purging of erring Israelites by fire, and in the value of prayer for their relief, how remiss He was not to wind up His discourse with an admonition to have pity on deceased friends!

The ejaculation of Paul in 2 Tim. i. 18, is cited to prove that the Apostle believed in Purgatory and in prayers for the dead. It may be freely confessed that Onesiphorus probably was dead, and the wish that he might "find mercy of the Lord in that day," was a Godward breathing of desire. I see no reason why sturdy Protestants should hesitate to endorse these admissions. If prayer for deceased friends had never taken a more objectionable form than a loving and trustful utterance of an irrepressible desire for their welfare, no Christian would ever have objected. It is the privilege of a child to pour out its heart to the Father, and if some desires are foolish, and others wrong, their utterance to God is the surest way toward correction. But this lends no sanction to such prayers for the dead as Augustine offered, and the Church of Rome enjoins. Surely Paul did not suggest that Onesiphorus was in Purgatory! nor did he invite Timothy to join in offering prayers, as a

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"satisfaction" on his account. The most offensive feature of these *pseudo* prayers is that *they are not prayers*, but proffered gifts. The same objection applies to them whether offered for the living or for the dead.

Other passages of Scripture are sometimes quoted to prove that the doctrine of Purgatory was taught by our Lord and His Apostles, but these need only to be read (Matt. v. 25, 26; xii. 32. Luke xviii. 3, 4). Responsible Roman Catholic writers do not claim that these contain "an explicit and direct reference to it."

Among the earlier Fathers there was a general belief in an intermediate state of unknown duration, into which the souls of men passed at death, there to await the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment. Some thought that the interval would be spent in sleep, and reasoned that without the body, souls could neither suffer nor rejoice. Others held that there would be anticipative pain and pleasure, though neither would be experienced in full measure. Tertullian argues in favour of this opinion, and in one place comes very near to a doctrine of Purgatory. "We also understand the 'uttermost farthing' to mean the very smallest offence which has to be atoned for there before the resurrection (Matt. xxv. 26). No one will hesitate to believe that the soul undergoes in Hades some compensatory discipline" ("De Anima," lviii.). The context makes the precise meaning of these words uncertain. It cannot be said that they teach a doctrine of purgation, as distinct from retribution, but they would be very likely to suggest it.

In his treatise "De Corona," he argues against those who demanded Scriptural authority for every practice of the Church, and gives a list of things which were in common use, though sanctioned only by tradition. Among these customs he mentions offerings for the dead, and much has been made of the fact, as proving the antiquity of the offerings commended by Augustine, and now in vogue. Tertullian, however, referred to something totally different. "As often as the anniversary comes round, we make offerings for the dead *as birthday honours*" ("De Corona," 3).

Clement of Alexandria believed in the ascension of

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souls from one mansion to another, in which perfection is approached through sufferings of increasing severity. Over this process certain angels preside, and detain souls which come burdened with any remnants of worldly passion, until they have paid toll (*Strom.*, iv. 19). These punishments cease when expiation has been completed, but Clement had no idea that they could be mitigated or abbreviated through the prayers or offerings of surviving friends. To his mind it appeared that nothing but an actual endurance of fire could profit the soul. He was careful, however, to explain that he did not mean "the all-devouring vulgar fire, but that of wisdom, which pervades the soul which passes through the fire" (vii. 6). It would have been a strange form of kindness to pray for less wisdom, even though its coming involved grief!

Origen gives great prominence to a doctrine of purification by fire after death, but it has little resemblance to Augustine's. He believed that the present life is but one of many states of existence through which immortal souls pass, each state being retributive in relation to the past, and purgative in relation to the future. The sufferings of the present life are the fires ignited by the sins of a former existence, and the fires of the next life are being prepared, and rendered necessary, by the misdeeds of those who fail to profit by their present discipline. He did not regard it as certain that each stage will be an upward step. Progress, though the law of the universe, may be chequered in its course. The highest and holiest may decline into sin, and the worst, even devils, may possibly recover from their fall (*De Princ.*, ii. 10. *Ad Cel.*, iv. 13. *Hom. Lev.*, vii. 4. *Psm.* xxxvi. 1).

Cyprian uses language which, apart from its connection, would be fair evidence that he believed in Purgatory, but it occurs in his letter to Antonian, in which he pleads for mercy to the lapsed, and discusses its moral effect on the Church. Most Roman Catholic writers admit that this passage refers to the penitential discipline of the Church which accompanied every restoration to communion. Cyprian's general tone in speaking of death as the Christian's escape from tribulation, is so triumphant, that the idea of Purgatory seems foreign to his mind.

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Cyril of Jerusalem, discoursing on the Mysteries, states that in the eucharistic "sacrifice of propitiation" for the welfare of the world, and, "in a word, for all who stand in need of succour we all pray and offer sacrifice." This included not only the living, for he adds, "We commemorate, also, those who have fallen asleep before us." Cyril leaves it on record, however, that this custom of the clergy was widely objected to as useless, for he adds: "I know that many say, What is a soul profited, which departs from this world either with sins, or without sins, if it be commemorated in the prayer?" (8, 9, 10.) He meets this objection only with a puerile illustration in which he likens God to an angry king who is propitiated by the gift of a crown presented by the relatives of a prisoner. There is no definite doctrine of Purgatory, but temporary punishment is implied.

Chrysostom refers to the subject of prayers and offerings for the dead in much the same way as Cyril. He deprecates mourning for the departed, whether holy or sinful. If they were holy we should rejoice in their crowning, if they were sinful we should be glad that their evil career had been arrested, and try to help them, "not by tears, but by prayers, and supplications, and alms, and offerings." He has the same apologetic note as Cyril, for he thinks it needful to protest that, "not unmeaningly have these things been devised, . . . our service is not mere scenery. God forbid!" Therefore he pleads: "Let us not be weary in giving aid to the departed . . . and it is possible from every source to gather pardon for them, from our prayers, from our gifts on their behalf." (Hom. on 1 Cor. xv.)

Similar evidence might be added to the above, but nothing which would modify the impression it produces.

### NOTE XIV., p. 395.

It is impossible to ascertain all the considerations which weighed with Augustine in disavowing the idea of purification by fire. It is worth noting, however, that belief in the efficacy of prayers for the dead is much more congruous with the remission of penalties than it is with the mitigation of

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purifying pain. Under some circumstances, punishment may be lightened with advantage to society and to the culprit himself; but it is neither wise nor kind to ask or to give a respite from a wisely-prescribed remedy, however painful it may be for the time. We do not ask a surgeon to forego the amputation of a mortifying limb, or to spare the caustic needed to burn out poisoned flesh.

### *NOTE XV., p. 408.*

Augustine's teaching on the subject of original sin marks a definite stage of development, but it seems impossible to determine accurately how much of it was new. The question of authorship, however, is of minor importance, and it is better to content ourselves with a recognition of the advance which can be discerned in his writings when compared with those of Cyprian. We have seen how vaguely this Father dealt with the corruption of mankind which exposed infants to the wrath of God, and rendered their baptism necessary. He wrote strongly on this subject, but he never formulated a doctrine of moral responsibility for Adam's sin. Some expressions may be held to imply this responsibility, but his mind was chiefly, if not entirely, occupied with the inherited taint which needed to be cleansed, the moral weakness and sickness which nothing less than regeneration could remove. Augustine retained and strengthened the idea of depravity, but without hesitation or vagueness he insisted on the idea of guilt. He scoffed at the distinction which Pelagius drew between injury passively suffered, for which no one could be blamed; and acts or states for which men can be condemned. Where earlier teachers had seen pitiable weakness and incompetence for the battle of life, Augustine saw absolute impotence, and yet, for this involuntary and inevitable damage, he said that the impaired being was deserving of hell.

In addition to this imputation of guilt for passive injury, he declared that every child of Adam was guilty of the first transgression. Up to this point his teaching was dogmatic and unqualified, and differs in no substantial way from the dogmatic definitions of the Council of Trent. But Augustine perceived that he could not draw a circle round the first transgression, and



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apply the doctrine of hereditary guilt to that alone. He saw no way of escape from the conclusion that, if we are responsible for the first sin of the first man, we may be held accountable for all the sins of all our forefathers. He could find no logical escape from this conclusion, but he lacked the hardihood to erect it into a dogmatic affirmation. Concerning the extent of our accountability for later sins, his language betrays a painful uncertainty. He thought it almost certain that "infants are involved in the guilt of the sins, not only of the first pair, but of their own immediate parents." (He applied this only to sins committed before the infant was born.) He thought it also scarcely doubtful that guilt is handed down to at least the third and fourth generation. Beyond this point his doubts became stronger and his language weaker. He flinched from the thought that God carries down hereditary guilt for ever, so that every infant dying unbaptized might be "compelled to bear, as original guilt, all the sins of all their progenitors from the beginning of the human race, and to pay the penalty due to them." He could not deny that his principles necessarily led up to this awful conclusion, but he could not bring himself to assert or even suggest its probability. Confronted with this appalling prospect, he was constrained to confess that it is too dreadful for belief, and yet, without sacrificing his doctrine of original sin altogether, he could not deny the possibility that "every one who is born is involved in all their accumulated acts, in all their multiplied original guilt, so that the later he is born, so much the worse is his condition. . . ." ("Ench.," xlv., xlvii.) Thus Augustine's only doubt touched the immeasurable bulk of the mountainous burden under which the unbaptized are crushed, but in its least dimensions it was a mountain. No Church has adopted the extreme doctrine from which Augustine recoiled with horror, and his frank, but dangerous, admissions are never quoted.

Augustine retained the old distinction between the sin before baptism, which is fully and freely removed in this sacrament, and sins which are committed afterwards, but this involved him in another of his many contradictions. According to him, penitence is no remedy for original sin, because it does not satisfy the claims of Satan, who laughs at the tears of his bondmen; and the work of Christ does not avail to put away our personal sins, because for these God requires contrition, and will take nothing in

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its place. Had the ground been clear, he would probably have preserved this line of demarcation when discussing the requisites of salvation. But the whole mass of tradition and many practical reasons forbade any such attempt. Thus, at one time he explained that the sole need for baptismal regeneration was that which arose from original sin, while penitence was both adequate and essential for all subsequent wrongdoing. At other times he declares in the most unqualified fashion that baptism removes the accumulated guilt of the longest life. "Here," he observes, "lies the necessity that each man should be born again, that he might be freed from the sin in which he was born. For the sins committed afterwards can be cured by penitence, as we see is the case after baptism. And, therefore, the new birth would not have been appointed, *only that the first birth was sinful. . . .*" ("Ench.," xlv.) Almost on the same page he wrote: "For from the infant newly born to the old man bent with age, there is none shut out from baptism, so there is none who in baptism does not die to sin. But infants die only to original sin; those who are older die also to all the sins which their evil lives have added to the sin which they brought with them." (xlvii.)

### NOTE XVI., p. 416.

Various opinions have been held respecting the origin and significance of this name. A distinction is sometimes drawn between the Paulicians and the Pauliani, but these are really the same name in different languages, the one being Greek and the other Armenian. In either form it was evidently used by enemies as a term of contempt. Gibbon sought to explain this name by linking it with the Apostle Paul, whose writings were specially studied by the great leaders of reform in the seventh and eighth centuries. It has also been connected with an alleged antagonism to the Apostle Peter. Neither of these suggestions will bear investigation. It is now demonstrable that the Paulicians had no dislike of Peter, and there is no foundation for the charge except that they denounced the misuse of Peter's name by the Roman Church. There is some reason to suppose that the leader pointed to by the name was Paul of Samosata. He was falsely called an Arian, but was really

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a follower of Theodotus and other ancient Adoptionists. It is also well known that some of his adherents were called Pauliani. These two facts render it highly probable that his name has been used to stigmatise his immediate disciples and all who have had anything in common with them down to the present day. These people have never called themselves Paulicians, but have always claimed to be the Holy, Apostolic, Catholic Church.

### *NOTE XVII., p. 417.*

The MS. found by Mr. Conybeare in 1891 came into the hands of the Armenian Synod in 1837, having been found in the possession of a man named George, who was the leader of a small band of Paulicians in Arkhweli, then undergoing a severe persecution. The MS. was in a mutilated condition, but this was not due to great age, as it was copied from an older document "in the era of the Saviour 1782." The mutilation was obviously intentional; and according to the records of the Holy Synod, parts of the book were torn out by the owner, when he "found that he was detected, and feared that it would be seized." This statement is probably correct, as the missing parts evidently contained attacks on the doctrines and customs of the dominant Churches.

It is painful to know that the Armenians, whom we have pitied so much for their ill-usage by the Turks, have themselves been relentless persecutors of the people they presume to call heretics. While endeavouring to break up the little community above named, they made repeated efforts to stir up the Russian Government to enforce its most stringent laws for the restriction of religious liberty, and in 1841, when the Czar had issued a proclamation granting pardon and relief to various sects, the Armenians petitioned that the Paulicians might be excluded from the benefit of his edict.

It is a remarkable fact that for many centuries the Paulicians found their best, and often their only, shelter under Mohammedan rulers. It would scarcely be too much to say that, but for the Saracens and the Turks, they would

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have been utterly exterminated. The story of their expulsion from the Roman territories, as told by Gibbon, partially explains how this kindlier treatment arose, and how, on some occasions, it issued in their fighting side by side with Moslems in defence of the lands wherein they had sought refuge. "The Key of Truth" suggests a further explanation by showing that some of their theological views were less obnoxious to Moslems, because free from the taint of idolatry which had excited the wrath of the iconoclastic prophet against the debased Christianity with which alone he was acquainted.

The story of the only copy of "The Key of Truth" which is known to exist fittingly illustrates the larger history of which it is a fragment. Gibbon records how in the seventh century a Paulician teacher, named Sylvanus, fled for his life, and found security under the government of the Arabs, but on returning to the dominions of a Christian Emperor, was put to death. In this connection he observes: "The laws of the pious Emperors, which seldom touched the lives of less odious heretics, proscribed without mercy or disguise the tenets, the books, and the persons of the Montanists and Manichæans; the books were delivered to the flames; and all who should presume to secrete such writings, or to profess such opinions, were devoted to an ignominious death." ("Decline and Fall," cliv.)

It is curious to note how events repeat themselves. Like Sylvanus, George had lived in peace under a Moslem power, but either through migration, or through the expansion of Russia after her war with Turkey in 1829, he and his people came under the shadow of a Christian Emperor. He there found his venerated book a dangerous possession. Before long it was taken away. He was imprisoned, and fined, and ordered to conform to Armenian beliefs and forms of worship, but, happily for us, his book was not burned. For this moderation let us be thankful.

Remembering that the term Manichæan is a term of reproach, indiscriminately applied to various sects, and that it has always been applied to the Paulicians (though in their case most falsely), it appears not impossible that the books referred to by Gibbon may have included the original,

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or some of the first copies of "The Key of Truth" itself. It is more likely, however, that at that time an older Church Manual existed which contained all that is most ancient in the present volume, and that "The Key" was written to take the place of that which had been destroyed.

### *NOTE XVIII., p. 419.*

To many people in these days it may appear incredible that such practices could ever have been devised, much less approved and defended, in any Church, and some readers may be tempted to regard the accusation made by the Paulicians as unfounded. The facts, however, are not denied, and are undeniable, though a sense of delicacy has caused many historians and controversialists to be very reticent. This is one of many cases in which enormities escape reprobation because too bad for description.

Logically, I ought perhaps to have dealt with the practices alluded to as the ultimate stage of ritual and doctrinal evolution, but I decided to spare the reader so unwholesome a discussion. I am constrained to say, however, that, much as I sympathise with the disgust expressed by the old Paulician writer, I recognise that there is something to be urged in extenuation of the offence he pronounced "devilish." The baptism of unborn babes, and of babes born dead, or dying in the moment of birth, is as repugnant to common sense as it is repulsive to good taste, but, given the position in which Churchmen were placed by the acceptance of Augustine's doctrine, the consideration of a further development was irresistibly forced upon them. They could not evade the awful question, If these little creatures have become human beings, and if no human being can be saved from hell without baptism, what are we to do for their deliverance? All the reasonings and all the gloomy fears which led men to baptize unthinking infants lest they should perish everlastingly, were seen to apply with equal force to those who were supposed to have entered upon a personal existence though not yet born. Even if life, with its appalling entail of hereditary guilt,

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were held to commence with the first breathing of our earthly atmosphere, there was always the danger of death before the saving water could be applied. It is not surprising, therefore, that the permissibility, or the duty, of forestalling the perils of birth, should have been painfully debated. With the first attempt to grapple with the agonising problem, questions multiplied, some physiological and others metaphysical, but these may be passed over in silence. The old Paulician Protestant, who saw his people hunted like vermin for their rejection of these and kindred superstitions, may be excused for exclaiming, "All these things are devilish, and not Divine!" But writing in peace and safety as a dispassionate critic, and in a far-off time, I am content to say, These things are not Divine, nor are they the natural offspring of the human heart. They represent the awful conclusion to which many were driven as the irresistible corollary of Augustinian doctrine; nor can they be condemned, except on grounds which are equally fatal to the dogmas of original sin and baptismal regeneration.

### *NOTE XIX., p. 430.*

Questions of ritual, apart from the ideas they represent, are too childish for serious discussion, and, as far as possible, I ignore them. In this place, the reason for trine immersion being given, the rubric has little more than a curious interest. It may, however, be worth while to point out some reasons for my supposition that either the author of the Key, or a later copyist, has partially preserved duplicate forms. The use of six immersions, however effected, seems improbable, though something similar exists in the Orthodox Armenian Service (see p. 244). Unlike the Armenial ordinal, however, the one before us implies a second recital of the baptismal formula, which is almost incredible. Again, it will be noticed that in each case the novice is directed to draw nigh to the baptizer on his knees. But if both parts belong to one service, this approach has already been made, so that the novice is now crouching down in the midst of the water, close to the minister, and therefore cannot "draw nigh."

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The extant copy of the Key bears evidence that someone through whose hands it passed detected a confusion of terms. As the text reads, we might understand it to enjoin considerably more than three pourings over the head: it might be four, or six, or even nine—that is to say, three for each name pronounced. But the translator mentions that an explanation has been added in the margin that there is to be but one for each name. "One before the Father: one before the Son: one before the Holy Spirit he shall fill." The need for such an annotation accords with the supposition that imperfect editorial skill has been busy with ancient materials; possibly with fragments of mutilated MSS., preserved from destruction in successive persecutions.

### *NOTE XX., p. 434.*

I have not pursued the inquiry into the origin of these technical terms, and the date of their introduction into Paulician theology, because scarcely necessary for my purpose. It seems highly probable, however, that the Paulicians echoed Augustine in the use of these terms, and that they did it partly to protect themselves from a charge of Pelagianism, and partly to deprive Augustine and his followers of the advantage to be gained by their exclusive use. Augustinians were winning victories all along the line, not only because of the strong forces at their command, but because they appealed to the common consciousness of a mysterious malady which no man wilfully originated, but from which no man was exempt, and from which no man could deliver himself. Pelagians failed in spite of their truer view of Divine justice, because they shut their eyes to the sickness and moral decrepitude of the race. It was of vital importance, therefore, for the Paulicians to disown the shallow diagnosis of human nature which ordinary men knew to be false in their own experience. It was equally important to insist that racial degeneracy does not imply that individual sufferers are blameable for their inherited defects. If, therefore, they adopted Augustine's language in order to make their position clear, they displayed

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a keen controversial instinct. It remains possible, however, that the terms were first used in the Paulician sense, and that Augustine impounded them.

## *NOTE XXI., p. 436.*

The Spanish Adoptionists probably sprang from a Paulician stock, but their assertion of Christ's sinfulness was a graft of their own introduction. Arius dreaded to admit the full humanity of Christ lest it should lead to the terrible inference that, because fallible, He must have been sinful. It was to avoid this peril he denied that our Lord had a human soul, and substituted for it a semi-Divine Logos. Apollinaris went farther, and declared that moral mutability implies inevitable failure, and on this account he denied that Christ had a human mind. He affirmed that a truly Divine nature was associated with the human, and thus improved upon Arius; but his expedient saved the moral character of Christ by eliminating His moral faculties. The Spanish sect took the Apollinarian view of human sinfulness, and ruthlessly applied it to the new Adam.

## *NOTE XXII., p. 440.*

Mr. Conybeare justly claims to have written his account of Paulicianism with the impartiality which befits the work of historical criticism, but I cannot refrain from expressing my regret that he should have allowed the following sentences to escape revision: "Modern Baptists, in accepting the current doctrine of the Incarnation, have both obscured their origin and stultified their distinctive observances. From the first ages Adoptionist tenets have as naturally and indissolubly been associated with adult baptism as has infant baptism with pneumatic Christology, according to which Jesus was from His mother's womb and in His cradle filled with the Holy Spirit, a pre-existent Divine being, creator, and controller of the universe." ("The Key of Truth," cli.)

The charge of obscuring their origin will not ruffle the



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feelings of modern Baptists. They will appreciate any light Mr. Conybeare can shed upon their history, and they are quite prepared to welcome any forefathers who may emerge from obscurity. Future research will, I trust, discover many new links between the Paulicians of antiquity and the misnamed "Anabaptists" of the sixteenth century. But no new evidence, however copious and convincing, can do away with what may be called the spontaneous generation of Baptists through a thoughtful reading of the New Testament. Judging the past by what is taking place in the present day, it may reasonably be inferred that the Anabaptist communities which sprang up in this country and on the Continent in the sixteenth century can be more satisfactorily accounted for by the spirit of inquiry and the habit of biblical study which accompanied the Reformation, than by any theory of ecclesiastical descent. Whether this be conceded or not, it is a certain fact that Baptists are so content with their Apostolic ancestors that they are not greatly troubled by any lacunæ in their intermediate pedigree.

The second half of Mr. Conybeare's charge is more serious, and, if it could be sustained, would be very damaging to the Baptist Denomination. As shown in the text, there is an intimate connection between Adoptionism and anti-Pædobaptism, but the assertion that those who reject Adoptionism are inconsistent unless they discard believers' baptism, has neither history nor logic to defend it. No Church, whatever its theology, opposes the baptism of believers, unless, like the Friends, it denies that baptism of any kind was intended to be a permanent institution. Between the Council of Nicea and the latter part of Augustine's life, infant baptism was not the rule in any section of the Church, nor did Athanasius, or any other champion of the established creed, pretend that its doctrine of eternal Sonship called for, or favoured, infant baptism. The Nicene Creed has not prevented the Latin, the Greek, the Anglican, the Lutheran, the Moravian, the Wesleyan, the Presbyterian, the Congregational, or any other Church that baptizes at all, from giving the rite to converts from non-Christian religions, or to other believing adults who did not receive

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it in childhood. In baptizing believers, therefore, Baptists do what has confessedly been done by the Church universal from the day of Pentecost until now, and is done now, without regard to Christological distinctions, by practically all Christians throughout all the world. They are exceptional only in refusing to stultify this ancient and universal practice by also baptizing unbelievers or non-believers. They say that infant baptism is equally anomalous, whether the administrator is an Arian, a Socinian, an Adoptionist, or an Athanasian, and for the simple reason that a babe has no sins to confess, no faith to express, no knowledge of God, or any Son of God, human or Divine, and has, in fact, no thoughts of any kind, but only latent faculties.

I shall not discuss whether modern Baptists or old Paulicians are, wherein they differ, the more Scriptural or more reasonable in their practice, further than to point out that the Paulician idea of baptism as the seal of advanced discipleship, and the crowning of a moral victory achieved, does not accord with New Testament precedents. At Pentecost, at Cæsarea, at Philippi, and on the desert path toward Ethiopia, baptism was immediate. There was no long period of probation, no delay for advanced instruction, no trace of any preference for the age of thirty, or for any annual festival or interesting date. As many as believed were baptized straightway; in any household bath, or wayside pool, or stream, at any time, winter or summer, day or night. This custom of liberty seems to have been maintained by preachers of the Gospel, until willingness to enter the Church ceased to be in itself a guarantee of sincerity and love. Baptists usually favour a short delay before granting the ordinance to candidates, but they recognise the right of individuals to give or to receive it, whenever and wherever a worthy demand is made, and hindrance deprecated. They prescribe no particular age, and welcome very young people when they evince the true marks of discipleship. They subject their candidates to no examination in the propositions of any creed, ancient or modern. Athanasius, Arius, and "little Paul" of Samosata are not mentioned in their instructions. Nothing is required as a condition, except a credible con-

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fession of trust in the living Christ, who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and now reigns as a Prince and a Saviour to grant repentance and remission of sins to all who call upon His name. In this practice they are likely to persist until some prophet shall arise to show them a more excellent way. Until then, I trust that no academic theory of Christ's Person will be allowed to take the place of a free individual interpretation of those Scriptures which testify of Him; and that no clerical subscription or verbal assent to any such theory will be required instead of, or in addition to, a confession of trust in Him.

### *NOTE XXIII., p. 467.*

An unsophisticated reader of this admirable statement might be tempted to construe it as an explicit sanction of private judgment. But Newman was too astute to be caught tripping in this easy way. In admitting the fitness of a trial, he said nothing about the persons who have the ability or the right to conduct it. Silence on this point left him at liberty, when occasion arose, to deny that a private layman, or even an individual priest, however high his rank, is competent to apply the prescribed test. Without a verbal contradiction he could still say that it is our duty to accept the interpretations of the Church, even when, to our uninitiated minds, they look like flagrant contradictions. This convenient theory reduces his proposed test to a mere logical formula, of no value to a layman in search of Truth.

As a back-door of retreat from every controversial difficulty, the theory which forbids thinking, and provides for the success of unconvincing arguments, is invaluable. It is, however, a door which Newman's fighting spirit never willingly used. While denouncing the use of reason, he was always reasoning; and while casting scorn on private judgment, he was constantly provoking its exercise. Thus it happened that his book on "Development" was a prolonged endeavour to persuade his readers to pass a favourable judgment on dogmas wrought out and approved by an infallible Church.

This appeal to human reason was inconsistent with the

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yoke to which the writer was at the time surrendering his intellect, but in this it merely illustrates the natural law which renders it impossible for any man to achieve a complete surrender of his own private judgment, or to extort such a sacrifice from his fellow man. There is no act of private judgment so amazing in its presumption as the self-contradictory attempt to renounce the use of it for ever. Newman was, therefore, consistent with the audacious inconsistency of a Church which demands that we should dare to take the individual responsibility of pronouncing her an infallible guide to truth and duty. Consistently inconsistent, therefore, he appeals to our reason, and presents us with a rational test by which the truth or falsity of a developed doctrine may be tried—by someone else!

## *NOTE XXIV., p. 467.*

The danger of tradition as a medium for the transmission of truth lies in its inevitable tendency to hinder, and ultimately dispense with, the necessary comparison of later teachings with the first. Those who are content to try their creed by noting its agreement with what their fathers held, must absorb all the accumulated errors which have crept in unobserved. The value of Scripture is that the text remains, and those who study it are face to face with "primordial" ideas which are just as sharp and clear in their expression to-day as when they were written. In the neglect of Scripture the way was opened for corruptions to enter and multiply, and from the state into which the Church relapsed there was no escape until some vigorous minds were awakened to the duty of applying Cyprian's neglected test to the creed of Christendom. When Luther found a dusty copy of the Bible, and read its contents, he applied this test to the current beliefs in which he had been trained. The result was the Protestant revolution. Unfortunately, he retained a lingering respect for tradition, and pleaded its sanction of infant baptism as a reason for retaining it in his reformed Church.