THE

CHURCHMAN

MAY, 1903.

ART. I.—BAPTISM: ITS PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM, ITS PART IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

I.

IT is a primary subject, for the Church and for the man; conspicuously prominent at the foundation of the Church, and thenceforward its door of admission; in Christian life the ordained starting-point, the investiture with its title and its rights. Hence, questions concerning it are amongst the first to be encountered in an early stage of religious thought, and difficulties which they involve are soon felt in the process of formation of opinion, and are often felt for long. Perhaps these are first experienced in view of the language of the Office for Baptism, which does not allow it to be regarded as merely a ceremonial act of admission or consecration, but appears to identify it with regeneration, and to make it a conveyance of the remission of sin and of the gift of the Spirit. The next step is to find that this is the language, not of the Church of England only, but of the Church from the beginning, expressed in creeds, confessions, liturgies, and early patristic writings. The authority seems sufficient. Yet to attribute such great inward and spiritual effects to an external ritual act is felt:

1. To be hardly reconcilable with psychological principles, with certain Scriptural teachings, and with our general habits of thought.

2. To be unsupported by facts in the religious (or irreligious) histories of a large proportion of baptized persons.

3. To be detrimental in effect, as obscuring the truth of spiritual regeneration and detracting from the necessity of conversion.

A man who has, on the one side, a preliminary confidence in the voice of the Church, not only from dutiful reverence for its authority, but from reasoned trust in its testimony, and who has, on the other side, a lively sense of such difficulties as have been mentioned, will find that his first business is, not to deal with formulas or objections, but to gain as distinct a view of the place of the Sacrament in the Christian system and its part in personal life as he can derive from the written Word. Only from that standpoint would he be able to see his way in the questions which ensue. It will be understood how this was felt by one whose early ministry was cast in the days of the Gorham controversy, when the subject of Baptism occupied all minds, and seemed to have the field to itself, and debates on the other Sacraments had scarcely yet begun. Briefly and rapidly must the case be stated here, without reference to authorities, discussions of diverse opinions, or exegetical arguments which have been traversed in reaching the results.

Historically, baptism appears as the sign of a new departure, the ordinance of a fresh commencement. Of all beginnings that there have been in the history of the world, the grandest is that announced in the words of St. Mark: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." And what was that beginning? "John did baptize in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins." And that was on account of what was coming. "The kingdom of God was at hand." The voice penetrated men's souls, and awakened conscience to the sense and confession of sin. This found expression in the baptism, which was the pledge of forgiveness; but it was also an acceptance of God's purposes, and an obedience to His call. So the reception of it became One who would "fulfil all righteousness," though He had personally no part in repentance and remission of sins: "Jesus also came and was baptized." As He came up out of the water He received the anointing of the Spirit and the heavenly testimony, and entered on His mission to mankind; and thus the baptism of John was a preface to the great message and an inauguration of the great mission. While the preparatory stage of the Divine order lasted, Jesus united Himself with it, making, it is said, and baptizing (by the hands of others) more disciples than John. When that work was ended, and He withdrew into Galilee, it appears that baptism ceased; if so the suspension served to separate between the baptism of the day of preparation and that of the day of fulfilment. Christian baptism belonged to another level of revelation, and another stage of the kingdom, and another dispensation of grace—namely, those which are in

Christ. Only when He had finished the manifestation in the flesh, and accomplished redemption by death, and been "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead," did the Lord give the final charge, in which the majesty of announcement and the fulness of promise accord with the grandeur and completeness of the scheme. "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo! I am with you all the days, even to the consummation of the age." It is not a ceremony or a symbol which is instituted in such words and in such a context, but an essential ordinance in the life of the Church, and a factor in human salvation. In that character it is also included in the few rapid words which, in a different tone, convey the same commission, as recorded in the fragment attached to St. Mark's Gospel. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation: he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be condemned." So in this double form we have the Lord's mind concerning the place of the Sacrament in the Christian system to be established through the world.

Therefore, at Pentecost, to the eager inquiry, "Brethren, what shall we do?" the Apostles had the answer ready: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And so by water and the Spirit men entered into the kingdom of God.

The ordinance which gave form to the Church is implied ever after, and is expressly mentioned in special and peculiar cases, as of the Samaritans who are "baptized, both men and women," the Ethiopian proselyte, Saul of Tarsus, Cornelius and his friends, the first Gentiles chosen of God, or Lydia and the gaoler, "with their households," first converts in the West, or the twelve men at Ephesus, who had been baptized with John's baptism.

Christian baptism did what John's baptism did not: it constituted a society, which had its head and centre in a Person; not, as in other schools and societies, a name and a memory, but a risen, living Lord, present with His people and acting among them by His Spirit, and about to return in glory. The Sacrament which associated men with this society separated those that were within from those that were without, or (in the language of the Acts and Epistles) "the saints" from the world, in virtue of the personal relation which it gave them with Jesus Christ Himself. Hence the baptisms of

the first period were all "in the name of Jesus Christ," or, as St. Paul puts it shortly, "ye were baptized into Christ." It may seem strange that the Apostles, who had received the commission to baptize, did not apparently use the prescribed formula. But was it a prescribed formula, or did they take it so? Was it not rather a declaration of the significance of baptism—of the revelation of God and the relations with God into which the neophyte was brought? These would be well understood from the intention of the act and the virtue of the ordinance, whatever liturgical form was used. We can see how naturally at first the form might be what it seems to have been. It was not tenets or doctrines which were preached to men, it was the risen Lord who drew them to His side, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. In Him they knew the Father, and from Him received the Spirit; and so it proved to them a baptism into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Not less clearly we can see how naturally, how necessarily, in the next generations the Church adopted as its settled form the words, comprehensive and definite, in which we are now baptized. "In the name of Jesus Christ" was no longer a security when speculation was rife and heresies were rising, which gave to that name inadequate or perverted interpretations. At the end of the first or early in the second century, when these uncertainties demanded more definite confessions of faith and the Gospel of St. Matthew had obtained circulation, a resource was found in the terms of the institution there recorded; and everywhere the Sacrament of admission was administered in the sacred Name, which is the summary of revelation and the foundation word of the Church.

Thus, Christian baptism had its origin in the manifestation of Jesus Christ—in His example at the beginning of it, in His institution at the end of it; and by His administration in the Spirit through His Apostles it was constituted the fundamental act and effectual sign of Christianity, in respect both of personal salvation and of formation of the Church.

On the latter subject little need be said, but that little is important. Christian baptism, it has been observed, was an advance on John's baptism, in that it created a distinct society. That effect was manifest while the Church was only Jewish, and conspicuous when it became Catholic. We are not here concerned with its part in the world, but with what membership was and is to its members. The ordinance which joins them to the Lord associates them with a great society—that is, by the will of God and according to the constitution of our nature. Man develops and becomes truly man only in society—the family, the community, the country. The con-

sciousness of being a part of this larger life, its exigencies, its influences, go to the making of him. It is the same with the Christian life. So Christ ordains. Its birth, its nourishment, its setting, and its exercise are in the Church which He founded. A man does not baptize himself, the Church baptizes him by its officers and in the congregation; and if necessity demands exception, still the authority of the Church is understood. Reception into the society is a main part of the intention, as is expressed in our Office by the prayer that the persons to be baptized "may be received into Christ's Holy Church, and be made lively members of the same"; as afterwards by the thanksgiving, that "they have been grafted into the body of Christ's Church," or "incorporated into His holy Church." This incorporation is everywhere assumed in the Epistles, which are addressed to persons living in that corporate state, described as "the household of God—the house of God, which is the Church of the living God—builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit"; or as a "body compacted together by that which every joint supplieth—the body of Christ, and everyone members one of another," with many like sayings. One who should count his spiritual life a wholly separate thing, without the sense of association with the corporate life of the Church, would so far be out of harmony with the Apostolic teaching, and would suffer untold loss in the expansion of heart and elevation of mind which accompany the conscious participation in a larger life than our own.

The relation of baptism to the corporate life is sufficiently plain, and may be taken as well understood. We cannot say the same of its relation to personal salvation. The question is before us, What virtue and power for this end belongs to the ordinance? What inward and spiritual effects are attached to the outward and visible sign?

First, it is necessary to distinguish certain spiritual experiences which are represented, not as following baptism, but as preceding it; as its conditions, not as its effects. These are repentance and faith, first summed up in the opening call of Jesus. He "came into Galilee, saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the Gospel." These are ever the qualifications for entering into the kingdom. So with us: "What is required of them that come to be baptized? Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament." Again, in the Office for those of Riper Years, the confidence is expressed "that He will favourably receive these present persons truly repenting and coming to Him by faith." It seems but an

inchoate stage of repentance and faith which is suggested by the Scripture in its accounts of numerous speedy and even sudden baptisms; and there was no doubt an intensity in the movement at first, which had to be compensated later on by more deliberate preparation. Still, the ordinance, by its nature, is one of commencement, and stands at the entrance of life in Christ; and it stands there as meeting, not as originating, the desires of awakened souls. These predispositions may exist in very different measures, for repentance and faith are words which include a great compass of experiences. Their sincerity and truth are one thing, their depth and enlightenment are another, and the Scriptural record supposes their admission at a very early stage. Baptism in the Acts is not the seal of a proved profession and recognised attainment (as in some modern systems), rather it responds to desire and accepts intention. And these are necessary in those who come to be baptized. But what of those who are brought to be baptized? Infant baptism may seem to dispense with the requisite predispositions, admission being granted without them. They are not dispensed with, but anticipated by such pledges as are possible. Repentance (*μετάνοια*)—the change of the natural mind which turns from sin to God—and faith in the Gospel promises made in that Sacrament are as necessary to the person who has received admission as to the person who comes to receive it, and without them the virtue of the Sacrament is suspended and the promises are in abeyance. Scripture teaches, and our formularies concur, that baptism has its essential effects in conjunction with repentance and faith, whether that conjunction exists at the time of administration or is reached as a later experience. Was a man baptized under transient impressions, or in a defective—or even, as Simon Magus, a wrong—condition of mind? Still, the Sacrament, as a constitutional act in the kingdom of Christ, could not be repeated, but remained in force, with all its promises secure for their fulfilment whenever the changed heart should turn to claim them. If that is true of adult, it is also true of infant baptism. The right given under the institution of Christ is given once for all, and awaits the mind that will use it. Only then is it fulfilled in the way of spiritual grace. It is in respect of the inward and spiritual grace that the Sacrament has its proper part in the personal life of the Christian. It has obvious and important effects even on the most superficial view of admission into the visible Church as "the sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened." The position thus marked and held, with the advantages and influences which attend it, is probably to

many minds their whole idea of the effect of baptism, as the Article seems to suppose. More worthy thoughts are theirs who, knowing the Church as "an habitation of God in the Spirit," regard the "admission into the visible Church" as an "incorporation into the body of Christ." But this association or incorporation, however it may affect the personal life, is yet external to it. Effects of another order, more inward to the soul, more potent for salvation and eternal life, are connected with this Sacrament in the Word of God.

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(*To be continued.*)

ART. II.—THE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.[1]

ON this occasion, as on a former one when I addressed the members of the League, I shall confine myself chiefly to the Old Testament. My reason for doing so is that in consequence of the Old Testament having no contemporary literature with which to compare it, it is difficult to confute theories which, when applied to the New Testament, are far more easily dealt with. And yet, when these theories *do* get accepted, they are very soon applied to the New Testament; and though less readily credited in regard to a volume which was written well within the historical period, they give a great deal of trouble, and tend indefinitely to spread the doubts about the authority of Old and New Testament alike which are very widely felt at the present time.

I shall deal with the question I have chosen on purely critical lines. I shall not assume the authority or inspiration of Holy Writ. I shall take as my text the preface written by the Bishop of Ripon for the "Temple Bible," a work which has, I believe, been conceived in a moderate spirit, and in which many commentators have taken part who are not supposed to be identified with the conclusions of the followers of Wellhausen. I have the honour of the Bishop of Ripon's acquaintance, and have the warmest respect and admiration for him. But I cannot but feel that, had he been less oppressed by the weight of diocesan business, which presses, as we have been lately told, so heavily upon episcopal

[1] This paper was read at a meeting of the Bible League at Bournemouth on March 12th, 1903.