

OUR BAPTISMAL FORMULARIES.

IT is a long time now since the Gorham controversy, and a new generation has arisen for which it is only a matter of history that the Church of England was once as much agitated about the doctrine of Baptism as it is now about the doctrine and ritual of the other Sacrament. And there is a comfortable proverb which says, "Let sleeping dogs lie." But the grounds of the Gorham controversy are still with us—two parties in the Church use the same words in senses so different that they cannot both be true; and one of these senses is seized upon by some important adversaries of the Church as an effective weapon in their attack upon Church schools. If the dogs are asleep within our borders, there is very loud barking outside, and I venture to offer some remarks in the hope of throwing light on a long-disputed question.

Five-and-twenty years ago the Home Reunion Society did me the honour to print a tract of mine under the title of "Peace in the Sacraments"; and my object was to show that the sacramental doctrine of the Prayer-Book was all but identical with that of the then new Congregational Hymn-Book. I sent the tract to that very able and eminent Congregational minister, Dr. Dale, of Birmingham. It was reviewed in *Church Work*, the monthly paper of the Guild of St. Alban. These widely-differing judges both agreed that my argument was inconclusive. "We regret this strained mode of exegesis," said the reviewer, "because it cannot fail to sound unreal." Dr. Dale said the whole argument seemed to him "phantasmal and unreal." Verdicts thus coincident demanded my respect, and I reconsidered the subject; and, though I could not admit that the argument was unreal, yet I thought I could see why it seemed unreal, so far as Baptism was concerned, both to minister and to reviewer. And the conclusion I came to then remains with me still. Prayer-Book and Hymn-Book alike seem to me to be charged with reminiscences of obsolete or obsolescent doctrine—doctrine which was formerly held as a tremendous reality, but which survives now, where it does survive, chiefly or entirely in thread-bare phrases of small practical effect. Thus in the Congregational Hymn-Book we read as part of a baptismal hymn, No. 851,

Son of God, be with us here,
Listen to our humble prayer;
Let Thy blood, on Calvary spilt,
Cleanse this child from nature's guilt.

So in the Prayer-Book: "We pray Thee for this infant, that he, coming to Thy holy Baptism, may receive remission

of his sins by spiritual regeneration." The Hymn-Book speaks of the child as needing to be cleansed from "nature's guilt," an obvious synonym for what in our ninth Article is called original or birth-sin. And as an infant has no sins of his own to be remitted, the "remission of his sins" in the prayer can mean nothing else than the remission of what the hymn calls "nature's guilt." Why the plural number "sins" was written by our Reformers I cannot say. The prayer is taken from the older Office, which was in Latin; it is the only prayer in the whole Office which is so taken; but in the original there is no mention either of sin or of sins. No doubt our Reformers thought they were improving the prayer when, in fact, they were making it worse than they found it. The prayer immediately before it is said to have been originally used by Luther, and it contains—at least, in our version of it—the phrase "didst sanctify water to the mystical washing away of sin," and prays thus: 'that God will mercifully look upon the child: wash him and sanctify him by the Holy Ghost, that he, being *delivered from His wrath*, may be received into the ark of Christ's Church,' and so on.

The Catechism takes up the same idea: "Being by nature born in sin, and children of wrath, we are hereby [that is, by Baptism] made the children of grace." Mr. Maurice suggested that "children of wrath" in the Catechism and in the passage of St. Paul which the Catechism takes it from (Eph. ii. 3) might mean "children of passion, of mere impulse" ("The Church a Family," p. 22). But he did not press the suggestion; and it cannot stand. For if the "wrath" is the child's, so is the "grace"; if the "grace" is God's, so is the "wrath."

The idea that the child is guilty, has sins to be forgiven, and is consequently under God's wrath, is expressed, briefly but clearly, in the words of the hymn, "Cleanse this child from nature's guilt," and as clearly in the Catechism. It runs all through the form for the public baptism of infants, and is suggested by the words at the end of it: "It is certain, by God's Word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved."

This declaration, first inserted in 1661, is abridged from "The Institution of a Christian Man" (1537), and among the words omitted are "and else not," meaning that if they die unbaptized they are not saved. This terrible alternative had been argued out by St. Augustine with confident, but most illogical, logic. Over and over again in the first book of his treatise, "De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione," he asserts without the least shadow of doubt that all human beings whatsoever, little children included, who die without baptism, are aliens from salvation; they have not life; the wrath of

God abideth on them. The wrath of God, he says, would be less severe with babies than with conscious men; but to all eternity He could never love them; they must lie for ever under His imperial wrath! He thinks all that our Lord did and said when little children were brought to Him was only an acted parable, for the benefit, not of the children, but of the lookers-on, meaning that anybody who wished to enter into the kingdom of heaven must be possessed of childlike humility! Thus our dear Lord, according to Augustine, could embrace little children with His own merciful arms, lay His hands upon them and bless them, for the instruction of the men and women around Him; knowing all the while that those same children, if they died without baptism, of which He seems to have then said nothing, would have to pass an endless existence under the wrath of God—that is, under His own wrath. Baptism was for the remission of sins. Therefore a child must have sin or sins to be remitted in baptism. The child had committed no actual sins. Therefore his original or birth-sin was remitted in baptism, or if he died unbaptized he died unforgiven, and remained so for ever.

Our Reformers seem to have shrunk from this horrible conclusion. And in their beautiful address, immediately after the Gospel, they say out clearly that our Saviour exhorteth all men to follow the children's innocency, and by His outward gesture and deed declared His goodwill toward them. It is for us to go a step farther. The children cannot, at one and the same time, be both innocent, and under the wrath of Almighty God, needing remission of their sins. Our ninth Article, of Original or Birth-sin, is full of Augustine's language, and comes very near to affirming the guiltiness of the poor innocent babies; but, in the overruling providence of God, it has just escaped so terrible an assertion. Original sin, it says, is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam . . . and therefore in every person born into this world IT deserveth God's wrath and damnation. In the Latin Article the word for "deserveth" is "meretur," a word which often means more than "deserves," namely, "deserves and gets." But we need not be alarmed; it is not persons, but IT, the fault and corruption of their nature, that merits and meets with the wrath of God. St. Augustine's argument starts from Rom. v. 12: "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." Just as in Heb. vii. 9, 10 we read, "Through Abraham even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes; for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedek met him," so St. Paul would have us understand

that through Adam all mankind became sinners because they were yet in the loins of their father when he yielded to the tempter. No doubt there is a kind of truth in all this. But it is noteworthy that our Saviour deals with the children as if nothing of this in any way unfitted them for the kingdom of God. Grown men, He says, shall in no wise enter into that kingdom unless they turn and become as little children. And again: "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. ix. 3, 10).

As a matter of fact, we are by nature inclined to evil, and that in a very large degree, though not exclusively so. Our parents were so before us. Our children will be so after us. So far as ordinary history goes, we never get beyond the presence of this original or birth-sin. St. Paul's statement quoted above is therefore fairly justified. But, then, we must take his statement on the other side also. That very chapter from which Augustine inferred the damnation of unbaptized children annihilates the inference. "For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift of the grace of the one man Jesus Christ, abound unto the many" (Rom. v. 15). If Augustine was right, St. Paul was wrong. Again, "As through one trespass [the judgment came] unto all men to condemnation, even so through one act of righteousness [the free gift came] unto all men to justification of life" (v. 18). Augustine's gloss is "unto all men that are baptized." Certainly, in the next chapter (Rom. vi.), St. Paul goes on to speak of baptism, but not as condemning to the eternal wrath of God all those who, through no fault of theirs, were not baptized, but as a motive for holy living on the part of those who had been baptized. If the evil infection which we have by nature deserves God's wrath, we who have inherited that infection by no fault of our own deserve His pity. That evil infection came upon us by the will and ordinance of God Himself, ultimately for a good purpose, no doubt. And He has provided a remedy. *How* the remedy is applied by Him to the guilt of original sin, which is not the guilt of us the persons, but of "it," the thing, we are not told. It is enough to be assured that the remedy is greater than the disease. We do not deserve to be punished for having come into the world with a nature inclined to evil, though we do for yielding to our evil inclinations. The final issue is not clearly revealed to us, though we cannot but see that the promised bruising of the serpent's head is capable of a very glorious interpretation.

Meantime we can no longer pray with the Congregationalist hymn—

Let Thy blood, on Calvary spilt,
Cleanse this child from nature's guilt,

because the cleansing has already taken place, so far as the guilt is concerned; nor can we use the corresponding petitions in the Prayer-Book in the full sense that those who wrote them had in their minds. The children have no sins to be remitted. They need no deliverance from God's wrath. Such cleansing, remission, and deliverance, after what St. Paul has taught us, can be to us no more than ideal, and, so to say, dramatic. The reality has been accomplished once for all by God Himself through the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son upon the Cross. Need we retain in our Prayer-Book year after year and century after century the dark shadow of cancelled guilt? As the service for infant baptism stands, does not its reference to impossible effects weaken the expectation of effects that might be possible, and dull the sense of responsibility for leading up to such effects? Few, I think, will doubt that our whole system of suretyship at baptism needs great reform. We ought to aim at having none but communicant godfathers and godmothers; and in cases where there is any reasonable prospect of being able to exercise a wholesome Christian influence, the communicants in any church should be encouraged to undertake the office. Then for the questions and answers, instead of their being an imaginary transaction between the child and the minister, couched in quaint and technical language, I would turn them into a direct and simple dialogue in modern English between the minister and the godparents, such as none should afterwards have excuse for shirking on the ground of not understanding it, or through thinking they had made impossible promises. Of course, a revised Baptismal Service would involve a revision of the Catechism and Confirmation Service. But now for nearly fifty years I have had to witness the puzzled and often stolid acquiescence of sponsors at the font, and to feel the extreme difficulty of so dealing with some parts of the Catechism and Confirmation Service as to win more for them than puzzled acquiescence from children or older persons. I fear how these suggestions may be received by some whose excellence I can never hope to equal. But I believe these needless baptismal difficulties are one of the various causes which deter men, otherwise suitable, from being ordained. I suspect they cause many children to be baptized at chapel who would otherwise be brought to church. And I am sure that, if ever the deplorable gulf between the Church and Nonconformity is to be filled up or bridged over, and if the customary acquiescence of our own people at infant baptism is to be exchanged for intelligent enthusiasm, one step must be the clearing away of unscriptural accretions from the laver of regeneration.

To show more in detail the reforms which I think necessary, I here present

A SHORTER FORM FOR THE
PUBLICK BAPTISM OF INFANTS.

TO BE USED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE LESSON OR LESSONS AT MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER, OR AT SUCH OTHER TIME AS THE MINISTER MAY APPOINT.

Has this child been baptized, or no ?

If they answer No, the minister shall say,

Hear the words of the Gospel according to St. Mark, in the tenth chapter, beginning at the thirteenth verse.

They brought young children to Christ, etc. (? Revised Version).

Beloved, ye hear in this Gospel the words of our Saviour Christ, that He commanded the children to be brought unto Him ; how He blamed those who would have kept them from Him ; how He exhorteth all men to follow their innocency. Ye perceive how by His outward gesture and deed He declared His goodwill toward them ; for He embraced them in His arms, He laid His hands upon them and blessed them. Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that He will likewise favourably receive this present Infant ; that He will embrace him with the arms of His mercy, and make him a member of His body the Church, a child of His Father's chosen household, and a citizen of that kingdom which He preached and founded here on earth, but which reaches upwards and onwards into heaven.

Wherefore we being thus persuaded of the goodwill of our heavenly Father, declared unto us by His Son Jesus Christ ; and nothing doubting but that He favours and approves this charitable work of ours in bringing this Infant to His holy baptism, will you, as soon as this child is able to learn, endeavour to teach him, or to have him taught, both by word and good example, not to follow nor give way to the temptations of the devil, the bad customs of the world, or his own sinful wishes, but to believe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as it is set forth in the Apostles' Creed, and to love God and keep His commandments ?

Ans. I will, the Lord being my helper.

Let us all say the Creed :

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord, who by means of the Holy Ghost was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried ; He went into the place of departed spirits ; the third day He rose from the dead ; He went up into heaven, He is sitting on the right hand of God the Father, but will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost ; the holy Church for all nations ; the fellowship of Christians ; the forgiveness of sins ; the resurrection of our bodies ; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Min. Do you wish this child to be baptized into this faith ?

Ans. I do.

Minister.

Almighty, everliving God, whose most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of our sins, did shed out of His most precious side both water and blood ; and gave commandment to His disciples that they

should go and make all nations His disciples, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them, Regard, we beseech Thee, the supplications of Thy congregation ; let this water be used according to Thy will ; and grant that this child now to be baptized therein [or, therewith] may receive the fulness of Thy grace, and for ever remain in the number of Thy chosen and faithful children ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Name this Child.

Then dipping the child into the water, or pouring water upon it, according to the wish of those who bring it—

N. I baptize thee into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock, and do sign him with the sign of the Cross, in token that he must never be ashamed to own himself a believer in Christ crucified, but is bound to fight manfully under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil ; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end. Amen.

Take this child and tend him for the Lord. Remember him often in your prayers, and teach him to pray. See that he learns the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health. Lead him to love God with all his heart, and to behave to others as he would like others to behave to him if he were in their place. Encourage him to be confirmed by the Bishop, and to be regular and often at the Lord's Table.

Then may be sung a psalm or hymn.

Let us Pray.

Our Father, etc. . . . deliver us from evil. Amen.

O merciful God, who didst cause this child to be born into Thy great family of all living creatures, and hast now received him by water and the Spirit, as by a second birth, into Thy Church, Thy Household, and Thy Kingdom, we yield Thee hearty thanks for these Thy gifts, and humbly we beseech Thee to grant that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning. Amen.

Grant that the old Adam may be so buried in him that the new man may be raised up in him. Amen.

Grant that all evil inclinations may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may grow in him. Amen.

Grant that he may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh. Amen.

Grant that, as he has now been brought to Mount Zion, and been made a citizen of Thy holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, so he may rejoice to walk with all faithful people in its golden street, taking of the water of life freely, eating of the fruit of the tree of life, and plucking leaves from it for the healing of the nations. Amen.

Grant also, O Lord, that these who have brought this child here to be baptized may seek Thy grace, and find it, and use it to keep the solemn promises they have now made, and that both they and the child whom Thou hast given them, being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally they may come to the land of everlasting life, there to reign with Thee, and with one another, world without end ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¶ Then may follow immediately :

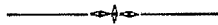
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, etc. Amen.

¶ Or, if in the forenoon, *Benedictus* may be first said or sung; or in the afternoon or evening, *Nunc Dimittis*; and this may be followed at the prayer-desk by the versicles and responses, O Lord, show Thy mercy upon us, etc., the Collect or Collects for the day, and the two which follow, with such of the Prayers and Thanksgivings upon several occasions as would have been said that day in the ordinary course, concluding with the Prayer of St. Chrysostom and the Grace.

At the end of the office for public baptism in the Prayer-Book of 1549 this direction is given: "And so let the congregation depart in the name of the Lord." This must mean that the remainder of the Morning or Evening Prayer was to be omitted after a baptism, and in that book the service ended with the third collect.

I am not vain enough to suppose that this form is ever likely to be adopted. And I have not troubled the printer with all the varieties of type that would be required in a prayer-book. But I think somebody ought to make a beginning in such reforms as I have indicated; and I commend my attempt to the fair consideration of those who, like myself, are not satisfied to go on indefinitely with the forms we have.

J. FOXLEY.



THE MONTH.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury's Call to Prayer for spiritual revival and the appointment of Whit-Sunday as the day of universal intercession throughout the Church of England are dealt with in another part of this issue, but we cannot refrain from expressing our deep thankfulness for this Call from the Chief Pastor of our Church. The following extract from the Archbishop's letter points to the greatest need of the Church to-day :

We are accustomed to dwell, and rightly, upon the multiplied activities, the manifold opportunities of service, which "our times," to use a large phrase, have brought within the reach of all. There is real need that we should recall ourselves and one another to the permanent necessity of personal fitness for such service—a fitness which He alone can give, for it involves deliberate self-surrender and the opening of the heart to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God.

Spiritual fitness and force for the purpose of doing God's work are primary essentials. As water never rises above its source, so work for God cannot possibly be higher or more effective than the state of our personal life of communion with Him. As is the source, so will be the stream, and if we