

wrote, " We shall see Him even as He is " (1 John iii. 2)—both human and of the Godhead. And as (probably) another was inspired to declare, yet more emphatically of His universal manifestation, " Every eye shall see Him, even they who pierced Him ; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him. Even so, truly ! " (Rev. i. 7). Surely this means a beholding with the eyes of the flesh, since the majority of mankind will still be too carnally bemused for spiritual vision, not to mention those who participated in His crucifixion. A few will, we may conjecture, be privileged actually to feel Him, as when He aforetime laid hands on the ailing for their healing, or touched His three most intimate followers after His first—very fleeting—revelation in heavenly radiance, to rouse and assure (Matt. xvii. 7).

A great crisis in the world appears to be developing, about to involve the whole human race, with vast potencies for ill and also for good, for death and also for greater life. Have we then very long to wait before we really see Him Who alone has authority to determine the issue of this crisis for the supreme good which the Creator and Father, of His all-embracing love, has ordained and will accomplish? For, as His Son has assured us, " With God all things are possible ".

## The Baptismal Relevance of Mark x. 13ff

BY THE REV. J. A. MOTYER, M.A., B.D.

**I**N *Baptism in the New Testament* (p. 28) Oscar Cullman quotes the following words of Leenhardt : " It is customary to cite, as Biblical foundation for Infant Baptism, New Testament texts which do not speak of Baptism at all, while the New Testament texts which do speak of Baptism do not apply to Infant Baptism ". This charge, if proved, is, of course, extremely serious. At any rate, it is a peculiarly appropriate introduction to a study of Mark x. 13ff., which Leenhardt may have had in mind, for it is a passage which, though not mentioning Baptism, is yet widely used in Baptismal connections. Thus, for example, Article 27 of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England declares that " the baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the Institution of Christ ", and, as if in support of this claim, Mark x. 13ff. is the set Scripture for the service of " The Public Baptism of Infants ", wherein it is followed by an exposition relating it directly to the occasion.

How far can Mark x. 13ff. bear a weight of Baptismal Theology ?

### A SURVEY OF THE PASSAGE

St. Mark tells us that the candidates for blessing were *παιδια* ; and in the parallel passage, Luke xviii. 15, the word *βρεφη* is used. The usage of these words is given by Grimm Thayer as follows : *παιδιον* is used of an infant just born (John xvi. 21) ; also of a child recently born (Matt. ii. 8 ; Luke i. 59, etc.) ; and also of a mature child (Mark ix. 24)—this last being its most extensive category. *βρεφος* is more

limited. The same authority gives the following instances : unborn child, fœtus (Luke i. 41) ; newborn child (Luke ii. 12, 16 ; xviii. 15 ; 1 Peter ii. 2).

Secondly, it is important to clarify the attitude of the disciples. We are not told on what grounds they opposed, but it seems to be assumed commonly that they doubted the fitness of children as candidates for blessing. This can hardly be correct. The parallel place in Matthew (c. 18) makes Christ's valuation of children abundantly clear. The Parable of the Lost Sheep is interpreted with direct reference to children. Likewise, the words, " Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven," whatever they mean, at least rate children in the highest category. Again, Mark ix. 37 has shown the disciples the regard the Lord had for children. It is far more likely, therefore, that they acted out of some sort of mistaken anxiety for Jesus, than that they disputed the fitness of the children.

When we examine our Lord's behaviour, we note what He felt, what He said, and what He did. Jesus was " moved with indignation ". The verb used is ἀγανακτεῖν, which is found elsewhere six times in the New Testament. The usage falls into two broad cases: (a) In Matt. xxvi. 8, with the parallel Mark xiv. 4, and in Luke xiii. 14 it is used to describe anger at the violation of a principle or policy. Thus, the ruler of the Synagogue is " moved with indignation " because Jesus violated the principle of the Sabbath ; and the disciples are likewise moved by the alleged waste of the ointment, and the violation of the principle of charity. (b) In Matt. xx. 24, with the parallel Mark x. 41, and in Matt. xxi. 15, the verb is used of anger at something closely offending the person so moved. Thus, the ten disciples are " moved with indignation " at the personal slight offered by James and John in seeking pre-eminence. The present instance exhausts the use of the verb, and therefore only here is it used of the Lord Jesus. If its meaning is governed by the other significances, then Jesus was deeply moved in His own Person, and considered that the action of the disciples was in violation of the recognized policy towards children. The rest of the narrative bears out this interpretation, as we see immediately, when we examine the words of Jesus. He designated children as possessors of the kingdom. This is the correct translation : " of such " means " in possession of such ", the use being paralleled in Matthew v. 3 ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶ ἡ βασιλεία, " for theirs is the kingdom. . . ." And children are not only possessors, but also patterns, for we read that the only acceptable reception of the kingdom is that which " like a child " receives it. Finally, as if to give visual emphasis to His words, He acts. Again the terminology is to be noted. The verb, which occurs here only in the New Testament, is both intensive in form and continuous in action—κατηύλογει, " He blessed them repeatedly and fervently ".

#### THE RELEVANCE OF THE PASSAGE TO BAPTISM

The survey above will have indicated in general terms the suitability of the passage to the occasion of Infant Baptism. That is to say, on each occasion parents bring their children to Jesus to seek His blessing ;

and in the emotion, words and deeds of Jesus we find justification for this parental action. However, it is one thing to seek the blessing of Jesus on children; it is another thing to make them candidates for Christian Baptism, which implies more than a vague wish for blessing. So far, then, our study of the passage has elicited facts concerning the attitude of Jesus towards children, and His desire for their spiritual welfare; but it has not yet justified the baptism of children. Such justification is, however, to be found in this passage, and it arises from two things: (a) The assumption that children are fit candidates for Christ's blessing; and (b) The teaching concerning the kingdom.

(a) *Children as candidates for blessing.* This point is nowhere argued. The parents assume that it is so; they do not ask if they are allowed to bring their children. We have seen that it is unfair to the disciples to make them opponents of the parents' plan. The attitude of Jesus in support of the parents is beyond doubt. Therefore, it may be taken as an established fact that children, including infants, are capable of receiving a spiritual blessing. Either Jesus was deceitfully acquiescing in the sentimentality of the parents, or else He was approving of their spiritual care for the souls of their little ones, and was performing an action of spiritual reality. The use of the strong verbs *αγαπακτειν* and *κατευλογειν*, as discussed above, proves the latter to be the truth.

The point must be pressed further. From whence did this assumption arise? If it is as absurd as some assert that infants be brought to Christ, whence did the parents derive their assurance in the matter? In a word, from the attitude of God towards children as taught by their own Church. This teaching found expression in two ways: Proselyte Baptism, and Circumcision. Proselyte Baptism was a subsidiary rite, and need not be discussed here, saving to mention the well-known fact that even the infants of proselytes were baptized. At the least this shows, as does circumcision, that the spiritual experience of parents is open to their children as such. Genesis xvii teaches this clearly. Circumcision is a "token" of the covenant; male infants are to be circumcised at eight days old; every male joining Abraham's clan is to be circumcised; failure to comply with this regulation involves death for the breaking of the covenant. Membership of the covenant is thus open to the children and other dependants of members of the covenant. Exodus xii. 44 adds materially to our information about the benefits to which circumcision gave admission. The person who is circumcised is given a full place within the redeemed community: he is allowed to partake of the Passover. We shall return to this point presently, but immediately we must pause to trace a correspondence between Circumcision in the Old Testament and Baptism in the New. St. Paul deals with the matter concisely in Colossians ii. 11-12. The movement of thought is as follows: v. 11, In Christ, Christians have experienced a circumcision, but according to a new idea, differing from the old circumcision; as to its character—for it is "not made with hands", it is a transaction in the spiritual realm; as to its extent—for it involves, not a single member and a single item of flesh, but a "complete stripping off

(ἀπεκδυσίς) of the body of the flesh"; and as to its author—for it is not the circumcision of Abraham, nor of Moses, but of Christ. v. 12: This circumcision is none other than their Baptism, the sign of their saving relatedness to Christ in His death and resurrection. The parallel between circumcision and baptism is thus deliberate and explicit. Only an exercise in expository gymnastics can avoid this plain meaning of the verses.

In the face of this, it is no great labour to justify Mark x. 13ff. in connection with Infant Baptism. The point can, however, be taken a stage further. Because circumcision admitted the non-Israelite to the Passover, it is clear that in a basic way it signified the passage from uncleanness to cleanness or holiness: such a person was reckoned a member of God's holy people, and accordingly was admitted to the sacred remembrance of redemption. References like Numbers ix. 6 teach that it is uncleanness that debars from the Passover. Whatever, then, admits to the Passover is equivalent to the removal of uncleanness. Turning now to I Corinthians vii. 14 we find St. Paul saying of the children of even one Christian parent, "now are they holy," and further, "else were your children unclean" (ἀκαθάρτα, the word used in Numbers ix. 6, LXX, of those debarred from the Passover). These children, by reason of one Christian parent, had crossed the bridge from "uncleanness" to "holiness". Under the Old Covenant this could only have pointed to their having been circumcised. Under the New Covenant, it can only point to their having been baptized.

In summary, then, we see that it is legitimate to use Mark x. 13ff. in connection with Infant Baptism. It not only teaches that children are fit candidates for spiritual blessing in a general sense, but, when the Old Testament practice of Circumcision is followed through into the New Testament practice of Baptism, we find, by the direct implication of St. Paul's teaching, and by comparing Scripture with Scripture, that infants have their place here also.

(b) *The Teaching concerning the Kingdom of God.* We noted in the preliminary survey of the passage that Jesus designated children as possessors and as patterns. They possess the kingdom, and their acceptance is the pattern of true acceptance and entrance of the kingdom. It is no great leap from this to John iii. 3 and 5. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Is this a baptismal reference? Some deny, but their efforts to supply an alternative explanation are not happy. Thus, some are content to treat "water and the Spirit" in v. 5 as parallel to "flesh and Spirit" in v. 6. To be born of water means to experience natural birth. In other words, only those can experience the second birth who have already experienced the first birth. If this is all our Lord meant, then we can have some sympathy with the bewilderment of Nicodemus! Alternatively, others suggest that "water and the Spirit" is to be interpreted as "the Spirit working as water", that is, the Spirit performing a cleansing work. This is a good scriptural thought, supported by both Old and New Testaments. The emphasis on cleansing, however, is not suitable as the total meaning of the

passage—though, of course, it is not excluded from the total meaning as we shall see. Cleansing would not have puzzled Nicodemus, but “new birth” does. The reference can only be to the full reality of the Christian experience, and to Christian Baptism as signaling that experience. John had baptized with water, for the remission of sins; he had promised the advent of One Who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. The reality of this came with Christ; John’s baptism pointed to Him, and He takes it up into the full experience of remission and re-creation which He makes possible, and He allows this fuller significance to flow outwards into the initiatory rite. Baptism therefore affords entrance to the Kingdom, the redeemed community of the New Covenant, just as circumcision did in the Old.

Secondly, we turn to Titus iii. 5. We are not concerned with the full exposition of this verse, but with only one point. At once, it is clear that we have something of a parallel to John iii. 5: the symbolism of water and the reality of the Spirit’s work. But the wording is different and significant. “Regeneration” is not the *γεννηθη ανωθεν* of John iii. 3, but the *παλιγγενεσια* of Matthew xix. 28. The word is only used in these two places in the New Testament. It signifies, accordingly, something wider than the experience of any individual, as it looks on and out to the full establishment of the Kingdom, with the Son of Man finally enthroned. Again, the relation of Baptism and Kingdom-membership is established.

By the teaching of Jesus, children are possessors of the kingdom. Can they possess the reality, and be excluded from the sign? By the teaching of Jesus, children set the pattern of entrance; can they do this and yet be denied entrance, and be debarred from the rite which declares entrance? The questions carry their own answer.