

INFANT BAPTISM.

SINCE Mr. Spurgeon wishes just now to have "one word of Scripture" on the subject of Infant Baptism, and since Christian Regeneration happens to be the special lesson of Christmas, it may be well to oblige him not with one only, but many words on this subject. First, it is observable that our Lord gave two commissions on the subject of baptism, the first in reference to the baptism of adults, and the other in reference to the baptism of infants.

Those who, in the order of time, were first to be admitted into His kingdom, whether Jews or heathen, must, from the necessity of the case, be adults. And hence it is that baptism in Holy Scripture happens to be most frequently spoken of in reference to the particular manner in which the first converts, to whom the apostles preached and wrote, received it. In regard to them our Lord's words are, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." In their case preaching and believing could not possibly follow, but must precede baptism. But inasmuch as the children of those who were converts to the faith, were to be baptized also, our Lord adds another commission, which especially includes them—"Go ye, therefore, and make Christians of all nations, by baptizing them into the (one) name of the Father, &c., and by teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Everybody knows, as the margin of our Bibles tells us, that "teach all nations," is utterly inadequate, and most misleading, and that [the word used means "make disciples, or Christians of all nations." A glance at the margin of the last words in St. Matthew's gospel will show this, and all Greek scholars know that the participle "baptizing and teaching them," means the instruments whereby they were to be made and kept disciples. In this commission our Lord orders the baptizing, to precede the teaching, and He thus speaks prophetically of the ordinary method whereby Christians were to be made such "throughout all the days, till the end of the world."

Unless infants are admitted into His Church by baptism, this command cannot be obeyed. Infants under two years of age form the one-fifth part of nations; and it is as plain as a pike-staff that, if our Lord had continued the old Jewish rite of circumcision, and had said, "Go ye, and circumcise all nations," the Anabaptists would not have dared to ventilate their ridiculous fallacy.

That baptism is circumcision, and inasmuch as it is the "circumcision of the Holy Ghost," a great deal more both in power and extent; this St. Paul positively declares in Colossians ii. 11-13.

But our Lord goes further. He says of the *Brephé*, St. Luke xviii. 15 (*i.e.*, infants in long clothes), "Suffer them to come to Me, for of such is the kingdom of God."

But such infants cannot be brought to Him except in Holy baptism; and our Lord Himself positively declares this. He says that such are fit to enter His kingdom, but He also declares (and He cannot deny Himself) that "Except a man be born of" the two parents, "water and the Holy Ghost," he cannot enter His kingdom." Everybody knows that "a man" in this passage is "Tis," anybody; and even if his learning fell short of this, he might at least remember the similar passage in English (St. John xvi. 21), "for joy that a man is born into the world," where the word used is actually "man"—a human being, a man

child. Our Lord, therefore, declares that the regeneration of all Christians must follow the likeness of His own Incarnation; they must be "conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin" Church. He had a Divine Father, and an earthly mother, and so must they. The Font is the womb of the Church, the side of Christ, whence the second Eve was taken, "with all her members written," in water and blood. The parallel between nature and spiritual birth is complete. The Holy Ghost engenders and begets; the Church presents, *i.e.*, conceives, and receives back the heavenly seed.

But, in order the more thoroughly to confute the deadly error of the Anabaptists, our Lord goes prophetically further still. Knowing what Satan would do in order to becloud His love to little children, He says, "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." He not only tells us that "little children" are fit for the kingdom of heaven, but that adults shall never enter it except they become (by active repentance and faith) like little children. The Anabaptist says that "little children" must become "adults" before they can enter the kingdom by holy baptism, and our Lord says the clean contrary—"adults must become little children." Can the force of argument go further?

But that which our Lord thus taught the apostles enforced. In the first sermon ever preached, when the kingdom of God came upon earth at Pentecost, St. Peter says (Acts ii. 80, 81), "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise (of remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost in baptism) is to you and to your children." How the apostles practically carried out this doctrine we see in the case of the Philippian jailor, Lydia, Stephanas, and others, where, together with the adult converts to Christianity their families and households, which must necessarily have included many children, were all baptized with them.

We might continue our extracts from Holy Scripture to a considerable extent, but in dealing with Anabaptists we are not dealing with those who are critically "learned in the Scriptures." We might go on to show how St. Paul taught that where one parent had embraced Christianity, the children were "clean," *i.e.*, fit for baptism. Their "holiness" and innocency from actual guilt, allowed no bar to the operation of God's mercy and grace in the Sacrament. The children of a Christian parent are as "holy" as was the faithful and penitent Paul himself after his conversion. Nevertheless, in their case as in his, it is the hand of God alone working His own appointed instrument of baptism, which can avail to "wash away sins," whether original only as in their case, or actual as in his (Acts xxii. 16). Again, in Hebrews vi. 2, where the writer speaks of "Baptism of teaching," the most learned commentators agree that he speaks of the two kinds of baptism—adult and infant, whereby men are made disciples and pupils in the Church of Christ. Such arguments, though clear and convincing to the scholar, are thrown away upon the prejudice and ignorance of the man who is brought up in heresy. We might also dilate on the fact, which we have already touched, that baptism in the Christian Church has superseded circumcision under the old covenant. It will suffice, in conclusion, to remind our readers that the only question that ever arose

in the primitive Church concerning infants, was not whether or no they should be baptized, but whether or no, as in the case of Jewish children, they should be baptized before the eighth day. Fidus, an African bishop, put the question before St. Cyprian (A.D. 247). To this question St. Cyprian and a council of sixty-six bishops returned this synodical answer: "As to the case of infants, whereas you judge, that they ought not to be baptized before the eighth day after they are born, according to the rule of circumcision, we are all in our council of the contrary opinion. It was our unanimous resolution and judgment that the mercy and grace of God is to be denied to none as soon as he is born. For, if the greatest offenders, and they that have sinned most grievously against God before, have afterward, when they come to believe, forgiveness of their sins (and no person is kept off from baptism and grace), how much less reason is there to prohibit an infant from baptism, who, being newly born, has no other sin, save that, being descended from Adam according to the flesh, he has from his birth contracted the contagion of the death anciently threatened—who comes for that reason more easily to receive forgiveness of sins, because they are not his own, but other men's sins, that are therein forgiven him?"

Here we have both the practice and the doctrine of the primitive Church of Christ; and Bingham in his "Antiquities of the Christian Church" (Book xi. chap. iv.), shows beyond all possible doubt that there never was any other doctrine concerning infant baptism in the early ages of the faith.

—Church Times.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE EVANGELICAL PARTY.

THE *Contemporary Review* for January, contains an interesting article under the above heading, by an earnest member of "the Evangelical party." The writer mourns over the tendency of modern Evangelicals to drift away from the old party moorings, and to draw nearer in heart and practice to their brethren of other schools of thought. He frankly admits that "the Evangelical party has declined in influence and members." Thirty years ago the *Record*, the organ of this party, and the *Guardian*, the organ of High Church, were equal in circulation, whereas to-day the *Record* has a circulation which is a mere fraction to the *Guardian's*. Since 1853 the income of the Additional Curates Society, which is High Church, has increased more than threefold, while that of the Pastoral Aid Society, which is Low Church, has not even doubled. A more conclusive test is the standing of the representatives of the Clergy in Convocation, wherein the writer admits "the High Church party has pretty much its own way." He declares that this falling off of the Evangelical party is "a decline in influence and motive force," and that as a party they fail to exercise that influence which their numbers entitle them to claim. He affirms, "not only in Church Congresses and in Diocesan Conferences, but in the whole working and organization of the Church, the High Church party have, if not absolute supremacy, at least a dominant and overpowering influence. By persevering work, by a noble readiness to undertake the forlorn hopes of the Church, the High Church party have fairly won for themselves the central position in the Church's line; a position which the Evangelicals, with their far greater advantages, might well have made their own! The cause of