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ART. I.—CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

The name of Constantine the Great is identified with one of the most important epochs in the history of Christianity, when it ceased to be an oppressed and persecuted sect, and became the established religion of the Roman empire. A grateful posterity has given him the surname of the Great, and he may be said to be fully entitled to it, not, indeed, by his moral character which is far from approaching the ideal of a truly Christian ruler, but by his military and political ability, his far sighted statesmanship, and especially his liberal protection of the Church which he raised from a state of depression to well deserved honor and power.

Constantine, the first Christian Cæsar, the founder of Constantinople and the Byzantine empire and one of the most gifted, energetic, and successful of the Roman emperors, was the first representative of the imposing idea of a Christian theocracy, which assumes all subjects to be Christians, connects civil and religious rights and regards Church and State the two arms of one and the same divine government on earth. This idea was more fully developed by his successors, it animated the whole middle age, and is yet working under various forms in these latest times; though it has never been fully realized, whether in the Byzantine, the German, or the Russian empire, the Roman Church-State, the Calvinistic republic of Geneva, or the early Puritanic colonies of New England. At the same time, however, Constantine stands also as the type of

removed from Nicomedia to Constantinople, and deposited, with the highest Christian honors, in the Church of the Apostles, while the Roman senate, after its ancient pagan custom, enrolled him among the gods. Soon after his death, Eusebius set him above the greatest princes of all times; from the fifth century he began to be recognized in the East as a saint; and the Greek and Russian Church to this day celebrates his memory under the extravagant title of the "equal of the apostles."¶ The Latin Church, on the contrary, with truer tact, has never placed him among the saints, but has been content with naming him "the Great."

P. S.

ART. II.—THE OLD DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

I. *An Extract from the Twelfth Homily of St. John Chrysostom on the Gospel of St. Matthew.*

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him." Why were the heavens opened? In order that thou mightest learn, that when thou also art baptized the same thing takes place, God calling thee to the country above and urging thee to forsake the fellowship of earth. That thou seest it not, is no reason why thou shouldst not believe it. For it is the general rule, that in the beginning of extraordinary spiritual dispensations such sensible visions and signs should appear, because men are so slow to perceive spiritual realities, and require to have their attention roused by things which strike the senses; in order that even without the same signs afterwards, the

¶ Comp. the Acta Sanct. ad 21 Maii, p. 18 sq.

things once certified by them may be accepted as sure by faith. Thus upon the apostles, we are told, there came the sound of a mighty rushing wind and the appearance of cloven tongues of fire ; not for their sake, however, but on account of the Jews then present. Though there be then no visible signs, let us still receive what they have once served to reveal. For the dove also appeared at this time, that it might as a seal designate to those present, and to John, the Son of God. And not for this only, but to teach thee also that the Spirit descends upon thee in like manner at thy baptism. We have no longer need of the sensible vision, faith answering for all ; for signs are "not for them that believe, but for them that believe not."

But why in the form of a dove ? It is a gentle and pure animal. And so the Holy Ghost, as a spirit of meekness, takes its appearance. There is regard in it besides to ancient history. For when the general flood was upon the earth, threatening to make full shipwreck of the human race this bird appeared, announcing the end of the storm, and with the olive branch proclaimed the glad tidings of peace upon the earth ; all which was a type of things to come.

As then indeed matters were in much worse state than now, and men deserving of far greater punishment. That thou mayest, not despair then, call to mind that history. For even in that desperate extremity there was a certain relief and restoration ; then however through punishment, whereas it is now through grace and unspeakable gift. On which account also the dove appears, not bearing a branch of olive, but pointing out to us the deliverer from all evils, and holding forth to us heavenly hopes. A messenger, not to bring one man out from the ark, but to conduct the whole world to heaven, offering to the race at large instead of an olive branch the precious boon of adoption. Considering then the greatness of the gift, let not the dignity of the giver seem any less great in thine eyes from his appearing in such form. For I hear some say, that as much difference as there is between a man and a dove, so much there is also between Christ and the Spirit, since the

one appeared in our nature and the other in the form of a dove. But what must we say now in answer to this? That the Son of God did indeed take upon him the nature of man; but that the Spirit did *not* assume the nature of the dove. Hence the evangelist also does not say, in the nature of a dove, but in the form of a dove; in which form, accordingly, the Spirit appeared only at that time, and not afterwards. But if this be taken to imply inferiority, the cherubim by parity of reasoning will be found to be likewise of higher dignity, in proportion as an eagle is superior to a dove; as being fashioned to such likeness; and the angels again must be counted higher also, since they have often appeared in human form. The truth, however, is widely different from all this. The reality of a dispensation is one thing, the accommodation of a transient vision altogether another. Be not ungrateful, therefore, toward thy benefactor, and think not poorly of him who has bestowed upon thee the fountain of blessedness. For where the dignity of sonship is, there the removal of all evil is also, and the gift of all good.

The completion of the Jewish baptism thus is the beginning of ours; and what took place in the case of the passover, happens also in this case. For there one transaction is made to embrace both the old and the new, in such a way as to abolish the one and introduce the other; and here, having fulfilled the Jewish baptism, he at the same time opens the doors of the Church, as in one table there, so in one river here, filling out at once the shadow and adding to it the truth. For this baptism alone has the grace of the Spirit; that of John was destitute of this gift. Hence nothing of the sort occurred in the case of the others who came to his baptism, but only in the case of him who was to bestow this; showing it to be thus, not from the sanctity of the baptizer, but from the power of the person baptized. Then also, accordingly, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended. For from this time he leads us forth from the old into the new order of life, both opening for us the celestial gates, and sending his Spirit from

thence to call us to the country above ; and not simply to call us, but to do this also with the most exalted honor. For he has not made us angels and archangels, but constituting us sons and beloved of God, he draws us thus toward that inheritance.

Considering then all these things, show a life worthy at once of him that calls thee, and of the heavenly citizenship, and of the honor thou hast received. Being crucified to the world, and having it crucified for thyself, cultivate the life of heaven with all diligence; neither suffer thyself to think, that because thy body has not yet passed into that higher world thou hast anything in common with this earth; for thou hast thy head seated above. And for this reason, the Lord, having come here first attended with angels, when he had taken thee into union with himself afterwards returned on high, in order that thou mightst learn even before thy ascent thither, how it is possible for thee to occupy the earth as heaven. Let us continue then to hold fast the nobility which we have received from the beginning, and let us seek every day those royal abodes, holding all things here as a mere shadow and dream. For if only an earthly king, finding thee poor and begging, should suddenly make thee his son, thou wouldst not surely make account of thy hovel and its mean provision ; although the difference in that case would not be so very great. Here then also make no account of things before ; since thou hast been called to far greater things. For he that calls is the Lord of angels, and the benefits given exceed all utterance and thought. He doth not translate thee from earth to earth, as a king might do, but from earth to heaven, and from a mortal nature to immortality and glory unspeakable, which can only then fully appear when we come into its possession. Being about to partake of such blessings, then, dost thou make mention to me of riches, and cleave to the show of this world ? And canst thou refuse to look upon all things visible as more mean than the beggar's rags ? How then shalt thou appear worthy of that honor ; and what defence shalt thou have to make or rather what

punishment shalt thou not endure, having returned from such a gift to thy former vomit. For not now as a man simply shalt thou be punished, but as a son of God falling into sin, and the greatness of thy dignity will be for thee the passport to greater indignation. As we ourselves also do not inflict the same punishment on offending servants, as upon our children offending in the same way; especially if these have received large favors at our hands. If he who possessed paradise, was made to suffer so many dire evils, for one disobedience, after such high distinction, what indulgence shall *we* have—we who have possessed heaven and have been made fellow heirs with the Beloved—if after the dove we betake ourselves to the serpent? We shall not hear any more, “Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return,” “Till the ground,” and those other words of the former curse, but things much more grievous than these, outer darkness, eternal chains, the undying worm, the gnashing of teeth. And with good reason. For he that is not made better by so great favor, should of right suffer the last and heaviest punishment.

Elias of old opened and shut heaven, so as to bring down and to hold back rain; but for thee heaven is opened not thus, but so as that thou mayest thyself ascend thither; and what is still greater, so as that thou canst not only thyself ascend, but if thou wilt mayest bring others there also, such liberty and power hath he given unto thee in all that is his own. Since then our home is there, let us there lay up all things and leave nothing here, that we may not suffer loss. For here, though thou mayest apply keys, and use bolted doors, and have thousands of servants to watch, and though thou shouldst surmount the arts of the dishonest and avoid the eyes of the envious, and though thou shouldst escape the moth and the decay that comes by time, which is impossible—still thou wilt not therefore escape death at last, and all these things shall be taken from thee in the twinkling of an eye; and not only taken away, but often so left as to pass into unfriendly hands. But pass all into that higher home, and thou shall be master of all. No

keys, no doors no bolts are needed there; such is the strength of that city; so inviolable is the region, and so completely beyond the reach of all corruption and evil.

How is it not then the extreme of folly, to heap up all where that which is laid away is sure to dissolve and perish while not even the smallest part is placed there, where what is stored is not only safe but certain to become more—and this too, when we are to spend there our whole future life! Hence it is, that the Greeks also refuse to believe the things spoken by us; for they choose to make account of what we do, rather than of what we say; and when they see us building splendid houses, constructing gardens and baths, and buying fields, they will not believe that we are preparing for removal to another country. Since if that were the case, they say, we would see them converting all things here into money, and sending it there beforehand; and this they infer from what is usual in the present world. For we find always that those who have means employ them to purchase houses, and fields, and all other things, in those countries especially where they expect to remain. But we act differently; the earth, which we are to leave in a little while, is sought with the greatest diligence, not only money but blood itself being sacrificed for some acres of land and a few houses; whereas for the purchase of heaven we grudge to spend even our superfluous means, though we can have it at low price, and if we buy it are to hold it forever. For this reason the heaviest punishment awaits us if we pass into the other world naked and poor; and not for our own poverty simply, but for what we do also to make others poor, shall we meet severe retribution. For when the Greeks see those who have enjoyed such mysteries taken up with these things, they will much more cleave to the present world themselves. In this way we heap much fire on our own heads. For when we, who ought to teach them to despise all visible things, ourselves most of all encourage them in the love of these things, when may we hope to be saved, being held accountable for the destruction of others? Dost thou

not hear Christ saying, that he has sent us forth to be for salt and as lights in this world, that we may exert a preserving power in the midst of its corruption, and shine in the midst of its darkness. But if, instead of this, we help to draw men into darkness, and promote their corruption, what hope can there be of our salvation? None whatever; but with wailing and gnashing of teeth, bound hand and foot, we shall go away into hell-fire, after having been thoroughly consumed by the care of riches here. Considering then all these things, let us break the bands of such present delusion, that we may not fall into those which shall consign us to unquenchable fire hereafter. For whosoever serveth riches, shall be subjected to bonds both in this world and eternally in the next; but he that is freed from this desire, shall find liberty both here and there. Which that we also may obtain, breaking the heavy yoke of avarice, let us wing our souls for heaven, through the merciful kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom be glory and power through all ages. Amen.

II. PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS.

It is easy to see from this passage, that Christian Baptism was held by Chrysostom to be an actual regeneration, by the grace of God, to the power of a new and heavenly life. It was no sign simply of a spiritual fact, supposed to have place at some other time or in some other way; the token of an inward change already past, or the pledge of an inward change which was yet to come. It was not an act of profession merely, by which the catechumen became bound to the service of Christ, in the sense of what is called a church covenant among modern Congregationalists. The force of the sacrament was not subjective only, holding in the convictions and purposes, the views and feelings generally, of the human parties engaged in the transaction; it was at the same time most really and truly objective also, carrying with it the power of God's grace, and making what it signified to be actually at hand for its subjects, and available for their use thenceforward, as it had not been before.

All this is regarded as flowing necessarily from the relation, which the baptism of Christ himself sustained to the Jewish use of the ordinance, advanced to its highest meaning in the ministry of John. The whole Jewish system was typical and prefigurative of things to come; it was not itself the substance of what it exhibited in the way of grace, but only its shadow and promise; and this character it retained on to the very last. Even in the person of its last and greatest representative, the immediate forerunner of the Messiah, its mission was still that of preparation only, showing the kingdom of heaven to be indeed at hand, but at hand after all in a form wholly different from itself. Greater than all born before him in the old order of things, the Baptist was at the same time, we are told, less than the least in the new order which was now about to take its place. His baptism thus had no power answerable to the proper spiritual significance of all such washing; it ended in being nothing more than a sign and type; there was no efficacy in it to take away sin. Of this no one was more sensible than John himself. "I indeed baptize you with water," he says, "unto repentance"—engaging you to confession of sin, and to such change of mind as may fit you to receive the grace by which sin is to be pardoned and taken out of the way—"but he that cometh after me," whose way I am sent to prepare, in whom all my ministry is to find its full sense and end, "is mightier than I; whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." In other words, his baptism shall be in full effect what mine is in shadow only and outward form; it will be not the symbolical washing of water only, but along with this the power of inward purification also by the Holy Ghost, which is needed to make the symbol complete. This relation of the two different kinds of baptism, that of the Baptist and that for which it was to prepare the way, comes strikingly into view in the history of what took place, when Jesus came to be himself baptized of John in the river Jordan.

It became him thus "to fulfil all righteousness," to take

up into his own person the last sense of the Old Testament, and so to complete it and bring it to an end, while at the same time he brought in the higher reality itself in the presence of which the preparatory shadow was to pass away. Such is the general relation of the New Testament to the Old; Christianity appears in one view as the true historical continuation of Judaism, its legitimate outbirth, in which the peculiar significance of it is carried forward finally to its last result, and yet in another view it is the introduction of an absolutely new creation, transcending the measure of that old economy altogether, and turning it into mere figure and show. The baptism of John became thus, in the case of Christ, something far more than it had been in its own nature previously as applied to others. The Baptist saw his work as it were taken out of his hands, and carried forward by the intervention of another ministry infinitely higher than his own. The coming down of the Holy Ghost was the inauguration of a new baptism, a new order of truth and grace, which served to proclaim at once the advent of him whose way he was sent to prepare. "I knew him not," we hear him saying, "but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." The new dispensation joins itself historically with the old, in the earthly ministration of John; but it is at once borne immeasurably above it, and beyond it, by another ministration, which comes not from earth at all, but directly and wholly from heaven. So much the transaction itself was clearly intended to signify and represent. "The heavens were *opened*," it is said—making way for a supernatural revelation which was not in the world before—"and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him"—entering into his person and abiding with him: "and lo, a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The relation between the old and the new here, according to Chrysostom, is parallel with what had place at the

institution of the Lord's Supper, the other Christian sacrament; when the celebration of the Jewish Passover was made the occasion of substituting for the type, the glorious reality which it foreshadowed from the beginning. As that transaction was made to embrace both the Jewish feast and the Christian, abolishing the one by completion, and introducing the other as a new and higher fact; so here also, "having fulfilled the Jewish baptism, he at the same time opens the doors of the Church, as in one table there, so in one river here, filling out at once the shadow and adding to it the truth."

It is easy enough, however, to own this difference between the baptism of John and what was superadded to it in the case of Christ, without any faith after all in the divine power of the Christian sacrament in its ordinary form. It may be allowed, that our Saviour's baptism did indeed inaugurate the kingdom of heaven, showing that the way was now open for spiritual influences to descend upon men as they had not been known before; but this may be regarded at the same time as having place, mainly if not exclusively, under the form of a purely inward baptism, which is then taken to be the proper sense of the Christian sacrament as analogically set forth in the transaction of Jordan, while the outward rite of the sacrament is considered to be only the symbol of this grace, having no more necessary connection with the real presence of the grace itself, in the end, than the Old Testament baptism of John. But no such Gnostic apprehension as this was admitted in the mind of Chrysostom. He sees in the transaction of Jordan a revelation, not only of the power of the Holy Ghost, as it was to be exercised by Christ in a general spiritual way for the salvation of his people, but of this power as it was supposed to enter now into the constitution of all Christian baptism, making the sacrament to be as a whole something altogether different from what he depreciates in his own ministry as being a baptism of water only and nothing more. The Christian sacrament includes in itself really and truly, according to St. Chrysostom, what the

other served only to prefigure as a weak outward sign ; it carries with it the power of the Holy Ghost, answering in full to what took place at our Saviour's baptism, when the heavens were opened, and the Spirit came down in bodily shape upon his person.

The opening of the heavens on this grand occasion, he tells us, is to be regarded as a representation of what takes place in the sacrament of Christian baptism through all time. It matters not that the visibility of the fact is not repeated; that, like the sensible manifestations of the Day of Pentecost, was only to verify the commencement of the dispensation ; for faith now, the mystery, once evidenced in this way, remains permanently sure, without the help of sense. In all Christian Baptism then, there is a real rending of the heavens—the canopy that separates the world of nature from the world of grace ; way is made for the saving presence of the Spirit as it was not at hand before ; an adoption takes place into the family of God—the constitution of a new filial relation, or sonship, which did not exist previously ; and along with this goes the power of a divine vocation, a “voice from heaven,” calling the favored subject of the ordinance to forsake the present world and seek the heavenly inheritance, and offering at the same time all the grace that is required to obey the call.

It will not do to say, that these high sounding representations are with Chrysostom mere rhetorical figures, employed to set forth the general privilege of those to whom the Gospel comes with its offers of mercy ; the meaning of which must be reduced simply to this, that baptism certifies to men the great fact of the Christian salvation, and the possibility of their having part in it by repentance, faith, and new obedience—a possibility, however, which is in no sense conditioned by what takes place in this sacrament itself, but is to be considered equally open and nigh in fact to all who have the gospel preached to them, whether baptized or not. What is here affirmed, or rather we may say taken for granted, of the Christian sacrament, goes

most manifestly very far beyond all that. The privileges and prerogatives of its subjects, while they are taken to be of the highest supernatural significance and most real objective force, are viewed at the same time as exclusively peculiar, the result strictly of that new position to which the baptized have come by means of the sacrament itself, and in no sort something common to them with the unbaptized world around. All men to whom the gospel is preached have the opportunity of being saved, and may be said to be placed thus within the range of the heavenly economy, by which it is made possible for sinners to become the children of God, and to enter into everlasting life; and this undoubtedly is a great distinction and privilege, which it must ever be a sin like that of Esau to undervalue or neglect. But here we have the idea of vastly more than this. Baptism is for its subjects not simply an expressive sign, picturing to the mind the sense of that general grace, which is offered to all, and which all are bound to receive; it is an actual election and vocation of God to gracious privileges, heavenly relations, special possibilities and powers of salvation, which are not at once comprehended in the general presence of Christianity. The subjects of it are brought into a new condition or state, broadly different from that of the general world around them. For others the presence of the Gospel is simply the opportunity of coming into the Christian fold in this way, and thus securing to themselves the rights and faculties of the kingdom of heaven; but for those who are in the fold by baptism these rights and faculties are already actually possessed; they have the power of being saved, not mediately only and through something else, as in the other case, but immediately in their position itself; a difference exactly like that of being in the ark, in the days of Noah, and of being only warned and called to take refuge in it from the impending flood.

It never could have entered into the mind of Chrysostom, to address the world at large in the language of Christian instruction and exhortation. His homilies are not for men

in general, congregations composed promiscuously of baptized and unbaptized; they are properly speaking for the baptized alone; regard being had to others at best only as they had already become catechumens and candidates for baptism; while all besides were viewed as unbelievers, for whom the doctrines, promises, and precepts of Christianity could not be said to be of any practical account whatever. For all such it could have but one message still, as on the Day of Pentecost: "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." Without this first great act of submission to the heavenly constitution of the Church, they must be held to be spiritually incompetent for all the privileges and duties of Christianity beyond this; so that it could be only a sort of profane mockery to make such duties and privileges the matter of homiletic exhortation for them in any way. Full earnest is made thus with the distinction, between being in the Church and being out of the Church. The difference is taken to be not simply nominal, but in the most material sense actual and real.

Baptism, in the view of Chrysostom, is not merely a public profession of faith in Christ, but the act of putting on Christ and entering into the fellowship of his kingdom; a translation from the power of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel; a new birth, bringing with it the title and power of sonship in the family of God; which is such a dignity again as brings with it, we are told, "the removal of all evil and the gift of all good"—the remission of sin, in other words, and whatever of grace is needed for securing everlasting life.

But with all the account which is thus made of the sacrament, as being the gate of paradise, the mystery of regeneration, and the very power of God unto salvation, we do not find the opinion entertained for a moment that it was sufficient of itself to insure the salvation of those who were its subjects. On the contrary, it is everywhere taken for

granted, that it carried with it no such assurance whatever. Every homily of St. Chrysostom proceeds upon the assumption, that those who were baptized, and thus made the children of God and the heirs of eternal life, might notwithstanding abuse this grace, allow themselves to continue still in the service of sin, and so come short of heaven at the last. It is painfully apparent indeed from his own discourses, that the great body of those to whom he himself preached, as the regenerated subjects of Christian baptism, were Christians in outward form and name only, whose walk and conversation, instead of adorning the doctrine of Christ, brought reproach upon it every day. He goes even so far as to say in one place, that too generally they were not to be distinguished from the unconverted world around them at all, except when they were seen to approach the sacramental altar. Hence in our present extract also, we find him turning what he conceives to be the unspeakable gift that goes along with Christian baptism, into an occasion for apprehension and alarm for those who enjoy it, in view of the possibility of its not being properly improved. As partakers of the heavenly adoption, they may still destroy themselves by sin; in which case, however, their perdition must be something worse than that of men who perish without having enjoyed the same high distinction. "What defence shalt thou have to make, or rather what punishment shalt thou not endure, having returned from such a gift to thy former vomit? For not now as a man simply shalt thou be punished, but as a son of God falling into sin, and the greatness of that dignity will be for thee the passport to greater indignation." "If he who possessed paradise was made to suffer so many dire evils for one disobedience, after such high distinction, what indulgence shall *we* have—we who have possessed heaven, and have been made fellow heirs with the Beloved—if after the dove we betake ourselves to the serpent?" The entire exhortation proceeds throughout on the supposition, not only that it was possible for those who were thus constituted the children of God to lose the benefit of

their supernatural birthright, and to make shipwreck of their souls, but that there was in truth great danger always of such disaster, that it was sadly frequent and common, and that it needed all diligence to avoid it, so as to make the Christian calling and election finally sure.

But still this view of the matter is not allowed in the least to discredit, or bring into doubt, the objective reality and significance of the grace conferred by baptism. This it is precisely that is taken to be the ground of special condemnation, in the case of those who have enjoyed that grace and yet yield themselves to the power of sin. What aggravates their guilt, is not just that they have had the gospel preached to them, that they have been placed under a general dispensation of mercy, that they have enjoyed the opportunity of embracing and using the means of salvation; nor yet, farther than this, that they have taken upon them the profession of Christianity, assumed its engagements, and joined in its solemn acts of worship; but that they have been made actually to possess the gift of righteousness, the power of salvation, that a price to purchase heaven has been fairly placed in their hands, and that notwithstanding all this they have forced their way down to everlasting death. This is the condemnation. Having been constituted the children of God, by adoption in Christ, they have despised that glorious birthright, and allowed themselves to become again the children of the Devil. Having been washed from their sins, they have returned to wallowing in the mire. Having been called to holiness, and endowed with power from on high to follow after it to the end, they have turned aside to unrighteousness, and profaned the heavenly gift in the service of sin.

What is particularly remarkable, is the facility with which these contrary and seemingly inconsistent conceptions are thus constantly held together in the same system of thought, over against such an order of things as is known to have prevailed at the time in the outward Church. The notion of baptismal grace was apparently contradicted every day by the notorious fact, that the greater part of the

baptized gave no evidence whatever of being in any better condition for the purposes of Christian piety, than multitudes around them who had never enjoyed the same heavenly privilege. How could that be a supernatural regeneration in any sense, a birth into God's family by the power of the Holy Ghost, which allowed its subjects to continue still the willing slaves of Satan and sin? Was not the lie given continually to Chrysostom's theory of sacramental saintship, by the crowd of professed believers, called in this way to be saints, whom he himself describes as patterns of selfishness and covetousness; examples of all worldliness; pleasure seekers, who could run from the church to the theatre, and there feast their eyes, and pollute their imagination, with licentious heathen spectacles and shows; brawlers, profane swearers, worshippers that carried the poison of asps under their tongues even in the sanctuary itself, blessing God and cursing man almost in the same breath, and filling the temple with noise and confusion in the very midst of the sacred services which were going forward at the altar? Such monstrous practice might indeed go along with a simply human profession. But did it not show, that the profession at last was human only, an act on the part of those who made it, and sealed it by the rite of baptism, and nothing more? Did it not make void at once the idea of any properly objective force in the sacrament, and demonstrate in the most convincing manner that the established ecclesiastical style of speaking on this subject—with its terminology of regeneration, illumination, initiation, divine filiation, donation of the Spirit, remission of sins, and other such high sounding benefits—was in truth rhetorical only, and in no sense in strict agreement with the truth? Must not Chrysostom himself have known, in full view of the facts before him, that his way of dealing with such terms was more oratorical than logical; that he was discoursing of what ought to be in the case rather than of what existed in fact; that the outward symbols of the Christian salvation were made in his view, for the moment, to pass for the proper spiritual

verities which it was their office only to represent? So it is natural to feel, in looking at the matter from the standpoint of what is considered to be spiritual Christianity at the present time. The case is found to involve a difficulty, at all events, which seems to demand some explanation; and we are apt to think, that such a man as Chrysostom must have felt himself constrained to take notice of it in some way. But, strange to say, it does not appear to give him any sort of embarrassment whatever. He moves along in his didactic and parænetic course, as though no such obstruction crossed his path, or as though he at least had no eyes to note its presence. The modern dilemma in regard to baptismal regeneration, gore whom it may with its merciless horns, comes not at all apparently into his view. Both sides of the supposed difficulty are embraced in his thinking at once; and he passes back and forth from one to the other continually, without experiencing, as it would seem, the slightest sense of contradiction.

There is not the shadow of evidence anywhere, that the stress which he lays upon the heavenly side of Christian baptism was in his own mind a figure of speech only, substituting the sign for the thing signified, or allowing outward profession to pass for inward fact. Such a supposition would stultify his entire system of theological thought. In one view it might have been a relief to look at the matter in this light; as it would have served to show that the divine pretensions of Christianity were not to be tried or measured in any way by the unfruitful lives of bad nominal Christians, who as such must be considered hypocrites only, and not partakers at all of the proper supernatural power of the Gospel. But Chrysostom has no thought of saving the credit of the Church in this way. On the contrary, in full face of the acknowledged fact that thousands were all the time receiving the benefit in vain, he only insists the more upon the reality of the heavenly gift which was supposed to be conferred in baptism. That was not to be doubted or called in question, let it fare as it might with those who had received it. Let God be true, though all the world

should be found false ; his faith was not to be made of no effect, however widely it might be met with unfaithfulness on the part of men. The objective presence of the grace which was lodged in the Christian sacraments, must not be measured by mere outward observation of any kind ; it belonged to the sphere of faith, and was to be owned, therefore, independently of all experimental tests. To make it contingent on the purely subjective operations of the human mind, was necessarily to set aside the idea of its objective force altogether, and in the end to reduce Christianity to the character of a simply natural religion. If it might seem to be for the credit of the Gospel, to say that hypocrites and false professors had no part in its proper supernatural grace, and that *therefore* no argument could hold rightly against the reality and power of this grace, because it was found to have no salutary effect on their lives ; it was undoubtedly for the true credit of the Gospel much more, that it should not itself be shorn of its own heavenly prerogative, as a system whose province it was, not merely to shadow forth, but to embody and exhibit in a real way, the blessings of salvation. This was an interest which lay much nearer to the faith of Chrysostom than the other. The Gospel, in his view, was the power of a new order of life always actually at hand in the Church. Christian Baptism was in full effect, what the Baptism of John had been only in figure and sign ; it answered strictly to the contrast drawn by the Baptist himself, as being a baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire in distinction from a baptism with water only. It opened the heavens ; brought down the Spirit ; wrought the remission of sins ; regenerated its subjects, by a divine adoption, into the state and dignity of children of God. And yet this grace, transcending as it did the whole course of nature, might be abused, wasted, and utterly thrown away by men, just like the common blessings of nature itself. Chrysostom finds no more difficulty apparently, in supposing it possible for the subjects of such supernatural calling and election to miss the end of their heavenly qualification, than in conceiving

it possible for those who are called and chosen, by real opportunity, to any simply worldly good, to come short of it in the same way ; a failure, which does not show then that there was no qualification in their circumstances for securing the benefit, but only that there was no care to turn the qualification to right account. So we have the two conceptions continually moving, as we have said before, hand in hand together ; without any sense of contradiction ; without any thought of explanation.

It will be borne in mind, that we are not at present sitting in judgment, in any way, on this view of Christian Baptism. Our object is simply to exhibit it, as the view that was held by St. Chrysostom, without any argument upon its theological merits.

The view, however, be its merits as they may, was in no sense peculiar to this eminently pious Church Father. It belonged to the universal orthodox Christian thinking of the age. And as we look farther, we find it in the thinking of previous ages also, back to the first Christian times. The ancient ecclesiastical Fathers are everywhere full of testimony on the subject. It is idle to quote particular authorities in the case ; for the authorities are all one way. The universal Church in these first centuries held and taught, that Christian Baptism was not simply "unto repentance," like that of John, not merely a sign to represent the profession of Christianity, on the one side, and the power of its cleansing and renovating grace on the other ; but that it was the very sacrament of this grace itself, the form of its first actual exhibition for the use of sinners, the power of God really and truly unto salvation, carrying with it the remission of sins, the gift of adoption, and the full possibility of eternal life. It was not pretended, that it secured the salvation of its subjects ; they might prove unfaithful to their heavenly calling, and destroy themselves still by a life of sin ; multitudes, it was too plain, were constantly falling into this condemnation ; but no consideration of this sort was allowed to disparage the supernatural

force of the sacrament itself. That remained an article of faith, under all circumstances, and in the face of all difficulties.

An article of faith, we say ; which as such, accordingly, entered with a kind of inward necessity into the whole system of theological thought with which it was joined. In this view it is especially, that the old ecclesiastical doctrine challenges serious attention. If it appeared as a mere accidental opinion simply, sustaining only an outward relation to the general faith of the Church, it might be comparatively easy to dispose of it as being the result in some way of a wrong use of terms. But for any one who is willing to examine the matter for himself, it is impossible not to see that the very reverse of this is the truth. The idea of baptismal regeneration, as involving a real translation from the kingdom of Satan into the family of God, underlies the universal religious thinking of the ancient Church. The old Patristic doctrine of Christian Baptism is clearly enough revealed, in particular passages bearing directly on the point. But such separate and special testimonies form in truth by far the smallest and least weighty part of the evidence, that properly belongs to the case. This comes out fully, only in the way in which all Christian truth and life are made to include the tacit assumption of the doctrine, as being a sort of fundamental axiom in Christianity. We can hardly read for instance a single homily of Chrysostom, without feeling that his view of the Gospel, as a scheme of redemption and salvation, is conditioned throughout by the conception of supernatural privileges and powers conferred upon men through the sacrament of Baptism. His theology is constructed, in all its parts, in the most perfect harmony with this thought. It is everywhere sacramental and churchly, in the fullest sense of the terms. And the same thing is true manifestly of the theology and religious life of the first Christian ages generally.

Have we not this fact, indeed, plainly exhibited in the structure of the ancient Creeds ? They were in one view

many; but the general tenor of them is always the same. They are in power and substance a single Creed; and this so constructed, as to be in itself a single whole, the organic evolution of one and the same grand fact from beginning to end. And here we find, conspicuous among its other articles, the doctrine of the Church and of "one Baptism for the remission of sins." What else is this than the sacramental theory of Chrysostom, and the old ecclesiastical writers generally? In no other view, indeed, could Christian Baptism be made an object of faith at all, in the sense of the Creed. For faith here, by its very conception, has to do with what is supernatural in Christianity, the objective presence and power of the new creation proceeding from Christ, in distinction from all subjective apprehension of it on the part of men. If Baptism then were not taken to be a mystery, hiding under its visible form, in the sphere of nature, the agency of God's Spirit working, at the same time, in a higher sphere, it could have no place properly in the Creed. The simple fact of its being there, as an article of faith, a primary constituent in the Christian salvation, is one of the clearest proofs we could well have of its being regarded all along in this light by the early Church.

That the view taken of Christian Baptism at the present time, in a very large part of the Protestant Church, is something broadly different from this, another theory of the sacrament in truth altogether, is too plain to admit of any question or to call for any proof. In the midst of much confusion in regard to what the ordinance positively does mean, there is a very general agreement in rejecting the meaning attributed to it by the Church of the first ages. The doctrine of St. Chrysostom on the subject is held to be unevangelical, and if he were alive to preach it now, would bring him into general discredit with all our evangelical sects. Whatever honor we may be bound to put upon the sacrament as a divine appointment, it must ever be a monstrous wrong, according to this reigning

modern view, to make it of one order in any way with the operation of God's Spirit, by ascribing to it effects that are supernatural, and such as it is the province of the Holy Ghost alone to produce.

It is absurd, we are told, and something at war with the true idea of religion, to suppose that any external rite of this sort should take away sin, or carry with it the power of regeneration. The proper spirituality of the Gospel, it is taken for granted, must always suffer, where Christianity is made to be thus formal and sacramental. Religion after all is an inward, spiritual transaction, between God and the soul ; which, as such, may go along with the outward forms of worship, imparting to them energy and life ; but which, at the same time, is not bound to them, or conditioned by them, in any really necessary way.

Baptism thus as an outward ceremony is one thing, and what it is used to represent is another thing altogether, which is supposed to have place fully on the outside of the sacrament, and apart from all virtue in it whatever. Christian baptism is indeed more than the baptism of John ; it regards as an accomplished fact, what this last anticipated only as something which was then still to come. It represents the grace of Christ as now actually at work in the world, through the Spirit, for the remission of sins and the conversion of souls. But in its relation to this grace, it is itself still only an outward washing with water, as much as was formerly the baptism of John. It has no saving efficacy in its own constitution ; no power to remove the guilt of past sin, or to regenerate children of Satan into children of God. It signifies this ; but only as a fact which must be spiritually experienced under another form. In the case of adults it should of right follow this experience, showing that it has already taken place—that the subjects of the ordinance, in other words, have already secured the spiritual reality of which it is the outward profession, are regenerated, justified, adopted into the household of faith, the citizenship of heaven, and in virtue of all this are entitled now to enter the visible Church in this

way, and so to become Christians in name as they are already Christians in fact. In the case of infants, the change may be supposed to precede the ordinance occasionally, or in some instances possibly to accompany it, by an act of sovereign power on the part of God; but more commonly it is to be considered as being still a sort of covenant possibility only, which is hopefully expected to issue in actual conversion at some future time. In any case, however, there may be no inward change at all, answering either prospectively or retrospectively to the outward sign. So with adults, who often profess religion in this way without any sense of its proper power; and so also with infants, vast numbers of whom, after baptism, grow up, and pass through life, plainly impenitent and unconverted to the end. In all such instances, the relation between the sacrament and the grace signified by it, is clearly shown to be nominal only and nothing more; and the broad example, with which we are thus continually confronted in such form, is held sufficient to show that this is in truth the character of the relation universally, and that it must ever be idle, therefore, to speak of baptism as being itself, in any real sense, the vehicle of grace or the power of a new birth to righteousness and life.

We merely state this view here, in general terms; as we have tried to state before the doctrine of the ancient Church. Our business is not now to discuss the actual merits of either theory. We wish only to place them in contrast, and to fix attention on the plain fact of their difference and contradiction. Such a difference, in a case whose bearings are so broad and profound, is justly entitled, we are very sure, to thoughtful consideration. It must ever argue a great want of seriousness, to regard it without interest or concern. It is not a matter, that we should be willing to have covered over with the mantle of historical ignorance. We are bound, in duty to ourselves, as well as in fidelity to the cause of religion, to bring the subject forward into the broad light of day, to converse

with it fairly and openly in its own form, to see and acknowledge in regard to it what is the actual truth. When this is done honestly and candidly, we can hardly fail to perceive that the fact thus brought into view, is one which demands explanation; and it will be felt at the same time, that what needs to be explained in the case is a question, not merely of theoretical curiosity, but of the greatest practical significance and account. Here are two widely different constructions of the religion of Jesus Christ. The sacramental system of the early Church, stands broadly opposed to the self-styled evangelical system of the present day, each protesting loudly against the other as an utter perversion of the true sense of the Gospel. Are they after all different versions only of the same faith? If so, how are their opposing modes of thought to be adjusted, so that we may have a right to be quiet and at rest in the modern theory, not ignoring the old, but looking it as a part of past history steadily in the face?

It will not do to say, there is no difficulty in the case; that the old view stands clearly condemned by the judgment of history itself; and that the truth is so plainly with the modern view, as to make it unnecessary for us to trouble ourselves with its justification. All *such* superiority to the claims of the problem is too easy, to deserve either confidence or respect. It demands a different solution. The conflict here is between forces, that are not simply imaginary but real. There are formidable difficulties on both sides. If the ecclesiastical system seem dangerous in one direction, we may not close our eyes to the fact that the evangelical system has its dangers also in another.

Without going into any wider view at present, it is easy enough to see, for example, what questionable consequences thrust themselves upon us, as naturally flowing from the modern purely spiritualistic theory of Christian Baptism. If the sacrament be only the outward sign of a spiritual transaction, which is in its own nature complete under another form altogether—which has no inward connection with the sign whatever, and which indeed as related to the

sign is purely ideal to such an extent that it may never become fact at all—it would seem certainly that no great stress should be laid upon the use of it in any way, and that it must always involve some jeopardy to the cause of true piety to suppose it dependent in the least upon any such form. Thus the Quakers, consistently enough, reject the outward sacrament altogether; it is for them a mere baptism of water; they will have only the baptism of the Spirit, which is a process that belongs by its very nature to the soul. This is an affectation of the highest order of spirituality; the dialectic counterpart and natural end of which, as we all know, is Socinian or Deistic Rationalism. Another less extreme, but for this very reason also less consistent, undervaluation of the outward sacrament, is exhibited in the ecclesiastical practice of the Baptists; who refuse to baptize infants, on the ground that they have no power to repent and believe in Christ, so as to be the subjects of that inward spiritual conversion of which baptism is the profession and sign, and without which it can have no meaning. What conclusion, indeed, can well be more logical, if we are to believe that there is no objective power, no supernatural grace, in the sacrament itself, and that the whole virtue of it resolves itself at last into what goes forward in the minds of its subjects themselves under a purely subjective form? With such a theory of the institution, it is perfectly certain that the practice of infant baptism never could have prevailed as it did in the ancient Church. It belongs to the old order of thinking on the subject, as we have it in St. Chrysostom and the Christian fathers generally, which made baptism to be the sacrament of a real régénération by the power of the Holy Ghost into the family of God. Why then should it not be given up, along with this, as an obsolete superstition? It is becoming but too plain, that the Paedobaptist part of the so-called Evangelical Christianity of the present day is not able to hold its ground steadily, at this point, against the Baptist wing of the same interest. The Baptist sentiment grows and spreads in every direction. It infects more and more, the secret thinking even of those sects which

still retain, in a traditional way, the old practice. The question of infant baptism is sunk in many quarters, as by general consent, into the category of *adiaphora*—things indifferent; as though it lay wholly on the outside of the proper sense and true actual substance of the Christian life. Some of our evangelical sects, it is easy to see, could at once part with the usage altogether, and not miss it in their scheme of practical religion. Hence, as a general thing, it appears to have fallen into very alarming neglect. Some of our more respectable denominations, or rather some thoughtful persons in these denominations, have in fact begun to take alarm from this cause, and are showing a disposition to lift the whole doctrine of Christian Baptism again, if possible, into a higher sphere, such as may correspond, in part at least, with the sacramental worth assigned to it in past ages. This, as far as it goes, is matter for congratulation. But it remains to be seen, how far any such reactionary feeling shall be able to stay and turn the tide, which still threatens to sweep all before it in the opposite direction. And who can say, what perils, not merely for the doctrine of Christian Baptism, but for the whole idea of the Christian Sacraments, for the very being of the Church, and in the end for the universal interest of Christianity itself, may not be involved in the full triumph of what claims to be the perfection of religion in such spiritualistic form!

What we mean by all this, is simply to show that the problem of settling the difference between the old doctrine of Christian Baptism and the view which has taken the place of it so widely in modern times—a difference which involves in the end two different schemes of Christianity,—is not just to be disposed of satisfactorily by the simple assumption, that the difficulty of the question lies wholly on the one side, the doctrine namely of the ancient Church, and not at all on the other. There are real difficulties of the most embarrassing kind on both sides; and it must ever be an argument of the most superficial thinking, not to perceive them, or not to acknowledge their force.

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