

using the word in its comprehensive sense, is absolutely necessary for infants and adults to enable them to obtain remission of original sin and entrance into the kingdom of God.

THREE KINDS OF BAPTISM.

We must bear in mind that there are three kinds of baptism—(1) Baptism of water, or the Sacrament of Baptism; (2) baptism of blood, or martyrdom; and (3) baptism of desire, or an act of perfect love of God, or of contrition, in which is implicitly contained the desire of receiving the Sacrament if possible.

In cases of necessity, when the Sacrament cannot be received, the baptism of blood, or of desire, will suffice for the sanctification and salvation of the adult. In the case of infants it is certain that the baptism of blood or martyrdom supplies the place of the sacrament, and obtains for them the remission of original sin. St. Thomas says: 'The shedding of blood for Christ takes the place of baptism. Whence, as in children, the merit of Christ operates through the grace of baptism and obtains glory for them, so in those slain for Christ the martyrdom of Christ operates, and obtains for them the palm of martyrdom.' St. Cyprian calls martyrdom 'the most glorious and greatest baptism of blood.' Hence the Holy Innocents who were slain by Herod have been always reckoned amongst those who are reigning with Christ.

But, except in case of martyrdom, we must hold that since the Gospel was promulgated the Sacrament of Baptism is necessary for the salvation of infants. There are many persons to whom it seems difficult to reconcile this disposition of God's providence in regard to infants with His mercy, or even with His justice. Baptism is necessary for salvation, they say, and still it is not in the power of the infant to procure baptism for itself. It may be deprived of baptism through the fault of its parents, or without fault on the part of anyone, but simply because it died in its mother's womb. In no case and in no circumstances can there be any personal fault on the infant's part. The infant is apparently punished on account of the fault of our first parents, by whom 'sin entered into this world, and by sin death, and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned.'

To illustrate their difficulty they ask would it be just to punish a child for a crime committed by one of its remote ancestors? If not, how can we reconcile with God's justice the exclusion from heaven of an unbaptised infant, who is thus, apparently, punished for the crime of the most remote of all ancestors?

But, as we shall see, this and like difficulties, no matter how speciously put forward, are really founded on a radical misunderstanding of the relations which exist between God and man.

It will be useful, therefore, to dwell a little on

WHAT GOD OWES TO MAN,

or on the mutual claims which exist between God and His rational creatures.

It pleased God in the beginning to establish two orders—the natural and the supernatural. He need not have established either as far as men were concerned, or He might have established one without the other—the natural without the supernatural. He might have appointed a purely natural end for man, to consist in natural happiness, and to be attained by purely natural means. If God had so determined, man would have no cause of complaint. The words of the Apostle are intended to give a vivid idea of the absolute dominion of God over all His creatures: 'O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why hast Thou made me thus? Or had not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?' (Rom. ix., 20-1.)

In this natural order God might have created man without many of even the natural gifts He gave to Adam. He might have created Adam with the same defects, except sin, to which men are at present liable, possible in his mortal body, limited in his imperfect understanding, and prone to concupiscence in his wayward will. Man had no claim to even natural perfection, except such as God chose to bestow. St. Thomas says (Dist. 3, 31 quest., art. 3) that when God formed Adam, and bestowed on him such exalted gifts of nature and of grace, and destined him and his posterity for the highest supernatural happiness, He might, at the same time, have formed another man, and given him only the bare requirements of human nature; leaving him liable to death and disease, and pain, and the attacks of concupiscence.

If God was not bound to bestow on man any certain degree of natural perfection, much less was He bound to bestow on him the supernatural gifts of grace and to destine him for the supernatural happiness which consists in the sight and enjoyment of God Himself for all eternity. The most that man could claim from God would be the natural powers which would enable him to work out his natural destiny. But there is no proportion between the exercise of such natural powers and the supernatural reward of the beatific vision. God could not, therefore, be bound by any attribute of mercy or justice to hold out heaven as a reward to men, no matter how perfectly they might exercise their natural powers and faculties. There is a much wider difference between the natural and supernatural order than between the lowest and the highest grades in the natural order. As no being in a grade lower than that to which man belongs—a horse, for instance, no matter how perfect the horse might be—could have any claim to the privileges bestowed on man, such as reason, so neither could man, unless God most freely willed it, have any claim to the happiness of the supernatural order.

It was, therefore, owing entirely to the bounty of God that

ADAM WAS ELEVATED BEYOND HIS NATURAL CLAIMS

to a supernatural state, and destined for supernatural happiness. But Adam, by his transgression, fell from the supernatural state in which he was created, and forfeited the special privileges both of nature and grace with which he had been endowed. And Adam's fall affected not only himself, but all his posterity. This is what

appears hard to those who have not reflected on it. But an example or two taken from the affairs of men will help to make us understand both the action of God and the relations between the common father, Adam, and all the children of men. Suppose that a king or queen selected a subject, and invested him with the highest honors of the State, and bestowed upon him large estates, and promised that these honors and estates should descend to his children and his children's children if only he proved faithful to one duty which the sovereign laid upon him. And suppose that this highly honored and highly endowed subject, instead of being faithful to his sovereign, proved a traitor, and went over to the worst enemy of his benefactor; who would say in such a case that it would be unjust or unreasonable of the sovereign to deprive the unworthy subject of the honors and possessions bestowed upon him, and to allow his children and his children's children to be affected by the deprivation? In truth, this is what has occurred over and over again in the history of nations, and no one has dreamed of questioning the justice or equity of such a punishment.

If we substitute the Almighty for the earthly sovereign, and Adam for the subject, we shall see at once that the parallel holds in every respect. Or, again, if a peasant boy was adopted into the family of a powerful nobleman, and was promised that he and all his descendants should be always treated as members of the household, provided that he complied with some very easy condition imposed as a test of his fidelity; but if he not only failed to fulfil the condition imposed, but also offered insult and injury to his benefactor, who would say that the privileges of adoption, including residence in the benefactor's home, could not, and should not, be withdrawn from the offender without the slightest violation of justice or mercy?

Such, in truth, were the relations existing between God and Adam, the father of the human family, before the fall. God had adopted Adam and descendants into his own household. He had elevated them from the lowly state in which He might have left them. He had prepared a place for them in His own Kingdom, and had given them authority to be called and to be the sons of God. He had promised to exempt Adam and his posterity from the heavy tax to which nature is of itself liable: from ignorance, from concupiscence, from pain, sickness, and death itself.

But God required that

THE OBSERVANCE OF ONE EASY PRECEPT

should be the test of Adam's obedience, and should be the condition on which his own and his children's future happiness should depend. By the violation of the precept, and by the non-fulfilment of the condition imposed, Adam forfeited those privileges, and God might, without any want of justice or mercy, have for ever deprived him and his posterity of favors so liberally bestowed, so recklessly squandered.

But after the fall, God's mercy granted what His justice might have denied. A Redeemer was promised who would restore man to his lost inheritance. The merits of the promised Redeemer were to extend backwards to the fall of Adam and forwards to the death of the last of Adam's children. The first effect of Redemption was to provide a means for the remission of original sin. What that means was before the introduction of Circumcision has not been clearly revealed. But as St. Augustine says, 'It is not to be believed that before Circumcision was given, the people of God who believed in the future Redeemer had no sacrament for the salvation of their children, though the Scripture, for some wise reason, does not tell us what the sacrament was.' (Contra Jul. C. 2.) An external act of oblation or of prayer expressive of faith in the Redeemer to come, and offered for a particular infant, was probably sufficient for the remission of original sin.

But after God had entered into a special covenant with Abraham and his posterity, and had given Circumcision as at once the sign and instrument of this covenant, the rite of Circumcision, if not originally instituted for that purpose, seems to have been universally adopted by the Jews in case of male infants, as a substitute for the sacrament which had been previously used. In case of female infants, and in case of male infants in danger of death before the eighth day, and also during the 40 years of wandering in the desert (Jos. vi. 2-7), the sacrament in use before Circumcision was introduced, was used for the remission of original sin.

But after the Gospel was sufficiently promulgated the sacrament of Baptism is, in case of all infants, unless they share in the martyr's crown, universally and indispensably necessary for salvation. We need not dwell on the clear proofs of this proposition which are derived from the New Testament. It will be sufficient to quote among the early Fathers, St. Augustine, who thus testifies to the faith of the primitive Church: 'Let not eternal life be promised to infants except through baptism, whereas Holy Scripture, which is to be preferred to all our human reasoning, does not promise it on any other condition.' (De Peccator Merit. Lib. I. Cap. 23.) Again he says (Lib. III. De Anima et ejus Origine Cap. 9) 'Do not believe, nor say, nor teach that infants who are snatched away by death before they are baptised can obtain the remission of original sin, if you wish to continue a Catholic.' Finally in his 28th Epistle to St. Jerome, he says, 'Whosoever holds that such infants shall be made partakers of the spiritual life of Christ, as have not received the Sacrament, without doubt puts himself in opposition to the Apostolic teaching, and condemns the universal Church which makes every effort and uses all haste to procure baptism for infants, because it is a point of undoubted belief that they cannot otherwise be regenerated in Christ.'

Unbaptised infants cannot, therefore, enter the Kingdom of God, but neither are they condemned at death to enter the prison of the damned. 'The punishment of Original Sin,' says Innocent III. (Cap. Majores), 'is the deprivation of the beatific vision; but the punishment of actual sin is the endurance of never-ending torments.'

What then will be the future condition of infants

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