

THE BAPTISMAL FORMULA.

THE words ascribed to our Lord at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel, "Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost,"¹ have been regarded by many recent writers as of doubtful genuineness. It is pointed out that this formula (as it is called) for the administration of baptism is not mentioned again in the New Testament. In the Acts the phrase used of those received into the Church is, "they were baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ"² (*ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰη. Χρ.*), or "into the Name of the Lord Jesus"³ (*εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Κυρ. Ἰη.*); and it has been supposed that this shorter and simpler formula was employed in early days, and that baptism in the Name of the Trinity was a later practice. At a time when it had become the established custom to use the longer and fuller formula, the Gospel according to St. Matthew assumed its present form, and it was then that the concluding words, containing the great missionary commission of the Church, were added.

Commentators have adopted different expedients for escaping this unwelcome conclusion. For instance, it was suggested by Cyprian, who seems to have perceived the difficulty, that while it was sufficient to baptize a Jew "in the Name of Jesus Christ," since he already confessed the true God, in the case of Gentiles the full formula reciting the threefold Name was essential. In the case of Jews, where the shorter formula was used, e.g. by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 38), he notes, "Jesu Christi mentionem facit Petrus, non quasi Pater omitteretur, sed ut Patri Filius quoque adiungeretur."⁴ This solution is ingenious, but it will not explain the language of the Acts,

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

² Acts ii. 38, x. 48.

³ Acts viii. 16, xix. 5.

⁴ Cyprian, *Epistles*, lxxiii. 17.

for in the account of the baptism of Cornelius and his companions, who were Gentiles, it is only said that it was administered "in the Name of Jesus Christ" (Acts x. 48).

Another attempted explanation is based on the view that baptism in the Name of Christ is virtually baptism in the Name of the Trinity, and that therefore it did not matter which formula was used. No disobedience to Christ's parting command was implied in substituting for the formula prescribed by Him a shorter formula which is equivalent to it. But whatever view may be taken of the "validity" of baptism accompanied by the shorter formula, it is extremely improbable that in such a matter the Apostles would have disregarded the direct command of Christ, supposing it to be really His, and that it enjoined the use of certain words.

A much better solution is that favoured by Dr. Plummer,¹ as well as by other recent writers. Dr. Plummer suggests that when St. Luke says that people were baptized "in the Name of the Lord Jesus," he is not indicating the formula which was used in baptizing, but is merely stating that such persons were baptized as acknowledged Jesus to be the Lord and the Christ. And he thinks that in all the recorded cases of baptism in the *Acts* the longer formula may actually have been employed, although it is not explicitly rehearsed in the narratives. This is a theory which deserves careful consideration, and it seems in several ways to co-ordinate the facts better than any other that has been put forward, although it is perhaps not entirely complete. It is, indeed, all but certain that the earliest forms of the baptismal confession of faith were single, not triple. The verse inserted in the Western text of the story of the baptism of the Ethiopian by Philip expresses accurately the profession that was demanded of those wishing to be baptized: *πιστεύω τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν* (Acts

¹ Hastings, *Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Baptism."

viii. 37). In brief, they were required to say, "Jesus is Lord"; cp. Romans x. 9, 1 Corinthians xii. 3, Philippians ii. 11. So of the people of Samaria it is recorded: *ὅτε δὲ ἐπίστευσαν τῷ Φιλίππῳ εὐαγγελιζομένῳ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐβαπτίζοντο ἄνδρες τε καὶ γυναῖκες* (Acts viii. 12). And thus when St. Luke says, a few verses further on, that they were baptized *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ* (Acts viii. 16) he seems to mean no more than this, that they were incorporated into the society or kingdom of which the Lord Jesus was the Head. But it will be asked, Is this the natural meaning of the words *βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς ὄνομά τινος*? Do not such words imply a definite formula accompanying the baptismal act? The question goes to the root of the matter, and it is the purpose of this paper to examine it afresh. The true solution, as it seems to me, was given long ago by Gerard Voss. He argued (*Disput. de bapt.*, Thes. v. p. 48) that if the Lord's intention was to prescribe a formula for recital during the act of baptizing, He would have put His command in the form, "Make disciples of all the nations, *saying, I baptize thee in the Name,*" etc. But as He said merely "Make disciples, etc., *baptizing them,*" etc., no form of words is prescribed. This view is adopted both by Neander¹ and, more explicitly, by Stier,² but it has not found acceptance of late years. Despite Stier's long argument it seems to be tacitly assumed by most commentators that the words of Matthew xxviii. 19 prescribe a form of words; and this assumption will be found, I believe, when tested, to lack evidence. It is the more desirable to examine the question *de novo*, as Neander does not argue the point at all, and Stier envelopes the discussion in such a mist of words that it is hard to discern his meaning. Besides, he does not seem to me to have put the case at all as forcibly as he

¹ *Planting of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 21 (Eng. Tr.).

² *Words of the Lord Jesus*, vol. viii. p. 341f. (Eng. Tr.).

might have done ; and, further, evidence is now available as to the meaning of *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*, of which he did not know.

The usage of the Old Testament as to the meaning of the phrase "the Name of Jehovah" must first be scrutinized. Whatever the Hebrew word *שׁוּם* originally meant, it is used in the Old Testament as suggestive (i.) of the personality or character of the person named ; cp. Isaiah ix. 6 ; (ii.) of the idea of authority, and so of ownership ; cp. Amos ix. 12 (quoted Acts xv. 17), where "all the nations over which Jehovah's Name was called" are all the nations which had recognized Jehovah's authority ; see also Jeremiah xiv. 9. Finally (iii.) the "Name" of Jehovah is used as equivalent to the Person of Jehovah ; and in this, "its most characteristic and frequent usage,"¹ it is significant of Jehovah as manifested to men and as entering into relations with them ; cp. 2 Samuel vii. 13, Isaiah xviii. 7, etc. The "Name" of God in the Old Testament "denotes all that God is for men" (Cremer). So Bishop Westcott observes on John i. 12 : "The revealed Name gathers up and expresses for man just as much as he can apprehend of the Divine nature."

Before we go further, we must observe that a usage of *ὄνομα* identical with (i.) and (ii.) above is to be found in the Greek papyri of the early Christian centuries. Thus we have several times the expression *ἔντευξις εἰς τοῦ βασιλέως ὄνομα*, i.e. "a petition to the king's majesty," the *name* of the king being the essence of what he is as ruler.² This is like sense (i.) and is also comparable to sense (iii.) Again, in an inscription, probably of the end of the first century (*C.I.G.* ii. 2693 *e*), there is mention of the sale of certain objects being effected *εἰς τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὄνομα*, i.e. they were sold so that henceforth they belonged to Zeus and became the

¹ G. B. Gray, in *Hastings' Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Name."

² Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, p. 146 (Eng. Tr.).

property of the god. This implies the sense of *ownership* as in (ii.) above. Another illustration of the same usage is afforded by a second century inscription (*B.U.* 256₅) τὰ ὑπάρχοντα εἰς ὄνομα δυεῖν = "that which belongs to the property of the two."¹

We have, then, abundant justification, both from the LXX. and from the papyri of the early centuries, for the suspicion that ὄνομα may be used in these metaphorical senses in the Greek of the New Testament. It *may* connote character or personality, or even authority and ownership, if the context permits us to translate it so. And, in fact, in Matthew x. 41, ὁ δεχόμενος προφήτην εἰς ὄνομα προφήτου μισθὸν προφήτου λήμψεται κτλ, the meaning of receiving a prophet "in the name of a prophet" is plainly "having regard to his prophetic character and calling," which is practically equivalent to sense (i.) specified above.² The employment of the word ὄνομα does not necessarily point to the recitation or invocation of any particular name.

We have next to determine the meaning of the phrase βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς τινά in the New Testament. Here we can get no help either from the Old Testament or the papyri, and our only course is to examine the New Testament

¹ *L.c.* p. 197. There are several instances in the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (Grenfell and Hunt, Part II. 1899) of ὄνομα being used in the sense of *property*. See, e.g., Nos. 247, 248, 249, 250.

² Matt. xviii. 20, οὗ γὰρ εἰσιν δύο ἢ τρεῖς συνηγμένοι εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα is a difficult phrase. It probably means "where two or three are gathered together to meet Me," or "with thoughts of Me." But we cannot always distinguish εἰς ὄνομα from ἐν ὀνόματι. As Blass points out (*Grammar of N. T. Greek*, p. 122), in Hellenistic Greek εἰς with acc. is often used where we should expect ἐν with dat., e.g. ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην (Mark i. 9). And it is possible that εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα in Matt. xviii. 20 is equivalent to ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι ἐμοῦ, and means "in My Name," i.e. "with the invocation of My Name." But despite the looseness of the use of εἰς in the N. T., I believe that the phrase εἰς ὄνομα in all the instances of its occurrence in the N. T. is best rendered by giving to εἰς its strict prepositional force. To equate εἰς with the acc. to ἐν with the dat. may be permissible, but it is certainly not a sound canon of exegesis to lay down that the two phrases *must* always mean the same thing.

contexts where the phrase occurs. It may be premised that it is certain that the Jewish practice of baptizing proselytes on their admission to the covenant of Israel dates from pre-Christian times.¹ Thus the passage in which St. Paul says of the Israelites of the Exodus, πάντες εἰς τὸν Μωυσῆν ἐβαπτίσαντο ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ (1 Cor. x. 2), did not need explanation of its terms. "They were baptized unto Moses," i.e. they were baptized into the dispensation or polity of Moses; the Cloud and the Waters sealed the nation's adoption of Moses as leader and guide. So in Romans vi. 3 and in Galatians iii. 27, where St. Paul writes of baptism εἰς Χριστὸν, he means by that phrase incorporation with Christ:² "As many as have been baptized into Christ, they have put on Christ." Or, as he writes elsewhere, εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν (1 Cor. xii. 13). And, again, we miss the point of the question ἢ εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε (1 Cor. i. 13), if we do not perceive that to be baptized εἰς ὄνομά τινος is to be incorporated in a man's party and to be numbered among his followers.

Somewhat close parallels to this phrase are, indeed, to be found in Jewish treatises, and the little we know of the ritual of the baptism of proselytes on admission to the Jewish covenant is highly instructive. The essential requisite in that ceremonial was the presence of witnesses, who played a part afterwards taken up by Christian sponsors. There is no evidence that the person baptized then received a new name; this Christian practice was the natural out-

¹ See Schürer's *The Jewish People*, Div. II., vol. ii. p. 327 ff. (Eng. Tr.). The idea of ceremonial washings was familiar to the Jews, and the point in which John the Baptist's practice marked a new departure was that for him there was no thought of technical or ceremonial defilements. With him baptism was εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν: it was the outward symbol of purification from the moral defilements of the heart and conscience.

² Similarly of the heretical baptism of Menander, Irenæus says, "Resurrectionem enim per id, quod est in eum baptismum, accipere eius discipulos, ut ultra non posse mori," etc. (*contra Haer.* I. xxiii. 5). His disciples were baptized in eum (εἰς αὐτόν). Theodoret says the same thing, and notes that Menander's view was σώζεσθαι δὲ τοὺς εἰς αὐτόν βαπτιζόμενους (*Haeret. Fab.* i. 2).

come of the desire to put away every association of the old heathen life, but it is not the essence of the baptismal act, nor was it any part of the ritual of Jewish baptism. The Babylonian Talmud describes this very briefly: "They baptize him in the presence of two wise men, saying, '*Behold he is an Israelite in all things.*'"¹ The person thus "baptized unto Moses" was thenceforth reckoned as a sharer in the covenant of Israel and as one of God's people. And we find an illustration of the phrase *εἰς ὄνομά τινος* in a curious Talmudic rule about the baptism of children found in the streets: "One finds an infant cast out and baptizes him *in the name of a servant*—do thou also circumcise him in the name of a servant; but if he baptize him *in the name of a freeman*—do thou also circumcise him in the name of a freeman."² The meaning of baptizing "in the name" of a servant or of a freeman is, clearly, baptizing "into a condition" of servitude or of freedom. So Maimonides in later times wrote of the baptism of slaves: "Even as they circumcise and baptize strangers, so do they circumcise and baptize servants that are received from heathens *into the name of servitude.*"³

I submit, then, that in the language of the New Testament *βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς ὄνομά τινος* is equivalent to *βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς τινά*, and that the use of the word *ὄνομα* proves nothing as to the recitation of any special "name" accompanying the baptismal act. What Christ enjoined upon the Apostles was that they should, by baptism, bring the nations into His Church and so into contact, as it were, with God. As time

¹ See Ugolini's *Thesaurus*, xxii. 818.

² *Jerus-Yebamoth*, fol. 8. 4 (לשם עבד). I take the reference from Wall, *Infant Baptism*, Introd.; but have verified it with the assistance of my friend Dr. Abbott.

³ *Isuri Bia*, c. 14, *apud* Wall *ut supra*. לשם עבד are the words. So again in the Babylonian Talmud (*Yebamoth*, fol. 47b) it is said of the baptism of women proselytes that they were baptized שפחות לשם=*in nomen servitutis*. Note that in all these Talmudic quotations we find לשם, not בשם, i.e. *in nomen*, not *in nomine*.

went on it was inevitable that the words of Matthew xxviii. 19 should be interpreted as a strict formula to be used at every baptism, and we can see how desirable and even necessary it was that they should be so used to secure a clear understanding of what was being done on the part of baptizer and baptized alike. No words could so clearly exclude heretical intention or innocent mistake. It is possible that the Apostles used them from the first, but of this we have no evidence. The two earliest notices of the explicit recitation of a formula at baptism are found in Justin Martyr and in Irenaeus, and they are worth citing in full.

In his first *Apology* (c. 61) Justin thus writes: *ἐπ' ὀνόματος γὰρ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὄλων καὶ δεσπότητος θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου τὸ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι τότε λουτρὸν ποιοῦνται . . . ἐν τῷ ὕδατι ἐπονομάζεται τῷ ἐλομένῳ ἀναγεννηθῆναι . . . τὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὄλων καὶ δεσπότητος θεοῦ ὄνομα, αὐτὸ τοῦτο μόνον ἐπιλέγοντος (al. ἐπιλέγοντες) τοῦ τὸν λουσόμενον ἄγοντος ἐπὶ τὸ λουτρὸν (no other name can be given to God without impiety) καὶ ἐπ' ὀνόματος δὲ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ σταυρωθέντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου καὶ ἐπ' ὀνόματος πνεύματος ἁγίου ὁ φωτιζόμενος λούεται.* It seems to be quite distinctly implied in this passage that the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is invoked over the candidate for baptism. It will be noticed that the phrase used is *ἐπ' ὀνόματος* and not *εἰς ὄνομα*.

Next, Irenaeus, speaking of the heretical baptism of the Marcosians, records: *οἱ δὲ ἄγουσιν ἐφ' ὕδωρ καὶ βαπτίζοντες οὕτως ἐπιλέγουσιν εἰς ὄνομα ἀγνώστου πατρὸς τῶν ὄλων, εἰς ἀλήθειαν μήτερα πάντων, εἰς τὸν κατελθόντα εἰς Ἰησοῦν, εἰς ἔνωσιν καὶ ἀπολύτρωσιν καὶ κοινωνίαν τῶν δυνάμεων.*¹ This, again, by the word *ἐπιλέγουσιν*, asserts the use of a baptismal formula among the heretics, and so (by implication) among the Catholics of the late second century.

¹ *Contra Haer.*, I. xxi. 3.

I do not know of any clear statement of the use of a prescribed formula earlier than these two notices. It is generally asserted, indeed, that in the *Didache* the triple formula is ordered for use; but an inspection of the passage will show that this inference is highly doubtful: *περὶ δὲ τοῦ βαπτίσματος οὕτω βαπτίσατε· ταῦτα πάντα προειπόντες βαπτίσατε εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐν ὕδατι ζῶντι . . . ἔκχεον εἰς τὴν κεφαλὴν τρεῖς ὕδωρ εἰς ὄνομα πατρὸς καὶ υἱοῦ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος* (*Didache*, § 7). Here the words ordered to be said (*ταῦτα πάντα προειπόντες*) are the previous exhortations about the Two Ways (if, indeed, we may take the *Didache* as a complete work), not the formula "In the Name," etc. The *Didache* orders no more than is ordered by Matthew xxviii. 19, viz. baptism "into the Name" of the Trinity. And it is clear from § 9, where it is said that communicants must be *οἱ βαπτισθέντες εἰς ὄνομα κυρίου*, that the compiler of the *Didache* regarded it as all one to be baptized "into the Name of the Lord" and "into the Name of the Trinity." So, indeed, it is, if the significance of applying *ὁ κύριος* to Christ be apprehended; but the two phrases, if they were used as formulae of invocation, could never have been regarded as *identical*.

The only other quotation worthy of note is from *Hermas*, *Vis.* iii. 7, 3, *θέλοντες βαπτισθῆναι εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου*, which again gives no information as to the use of any formula.¹

The result of the whole investigation is that the words "baptizing them into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" do not necessarily enjoin the use of a formula for recital. They set forth the purpose and effect of Christian baptism, whereby converts were baptized into the Trinity, i.e. taken into close covenant

¹ Cp. *Hermas*, *Sim.* ix. 16, 3, *πρὶν γὰρ φησι, φορέσαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸ ὄνομα [τοῦ υἱοῦ] τοῦ θεοῦ, νεκρὸς ἐστίν.*

relation with God, revealed in Christ as "Three in One." It was inevitable that the words should come in time to be used as a formula expressive of the intention of the Church in ministering baptism: but there is no evidence that they were so used when St. Luke wrote the Acts. On the other hand, St. Luke's phrases, "baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus" and the like are in no way inconsistent with his knowledge of the words in Matthew xxviii. 19; and therefore we cannot argue from the language of the Acts, as some writers have done, that the concluding words of the first Gospel are a later addition to the evangelical tradition of our Lord's commission to His Church.

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*THE NEW TESTAMENT AND JEWISH
LITERATURE.*¹

PART I.

JUST as Christianity is a development of Judaism, so the books of the New Testament start from Jewish thought and Jewish literature. Our subject therefore is a study in the method of Divine Revelation; of the way in which the new heavens and the new earth of the kingdom of God arose out of that ancient dispensation which, as the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, was becoming old and waxing aged, and was nigh unto vanishing away. We shall not, however, deal with the whole of this great process of the Divine working; we leave on one side abstruse questions of history, of doctrine, of sacred metaphysics, and confine ourselves to the humbler, simpler, and more concrete branch of the subject—the relation of the sacred books of the New Covenant to the literature of the Chosen People. We may say in passing that the influence of Pagan literature

¹ The inaugural lecture at New College, London, 1901.