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REGENERATION AND BAPTISM.



AN EXPOSITION
OF
THE DOCTRINE
OF THE
United Church of England & Ireland
CONCERNING
REGENERATION AND BAPTISM,
COLLECTED FROM
THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER
AND THE HOMILIES,
AND COMPARED WITH
THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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REGENERATION AND BAPTISM.

NOTWITHSTANDING the abundance, perhaps superabundance, of what has been written on the subject of *regeneration and baptism*, the writer of this work is persuaded that there is still much room and need for explanation. It is evident that, after all, there is a great variety of opinions afloat upon the troubled sea of controversy, and also upon the tranquil surface of private and brotherly intercourse. Among these there are at least two of such an extreme but opposite character, that, like ships sailing towards opposite points of the compass, they must ultimately meet in the same meridian, if not in the same point. It is not intended to attempt the reconciling of such differences. It is scarcely hoped even to produce a partial subsidence of the waves; but the writer trusts that it is his aim and prayer to be enabled to promote the attainment and the love of truth, and to contribute gradually to a right understanding of our more immediate topic of discussion. Endeavouring, therefore, to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of

peace," he takes the liberty, without further preface, of announcing his plan as follows:—

FIRST DIVISION.

1. An examination of the three baptismal services in the Book of Common Prayer; primarily with regard to the phraseology in which regeneration and the new birth are expressed.

SECOND DIVISION.

2. An examination of the same services, primarily, with regard to the mention or omission of "remission of sins."

THIRD DIVISION.

3. A comparison of the preceding review, with the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England; and also with the Office for Confirmation and the Church Catechism; and throughout every part appealing, as occasion may require, "to the law and to the testimony."

1. The office for the public baptism of infants, after a question, whether the child has been previously baptized or no, begins with an exhortation, stating the necessity of regeneration, "forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin; and that our Saviour Christ saith, None can enter* into the kingdom of God ex-

* It may appear to some, that from this impossibility of entrance, an inference ought to be drawn of the necessity of the new birth to infants. But an answer is found in the progressive nature of the kingdom of God, which is manifest in the history of the New Testament, in the parables of our Lord, and in the petition of the Lord's Prayer—"Thy king-

except he be regenerate and born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost." Without undertaking, at any length, a discussion upon the institution of infant baptism, it may be sufficient for our purpose to remark, that the necessity is universal. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh,*" applies to every age and degree, and the similarity of the disease would lead us to presume a similarity of remedy, so far as the subordinate difference of circumstances may admit. And that there is no difference sufficient to exclude infants from the privilege of baptism, may be inferred from the part of St. Mark's gospel so appropriately quoted in this service. There our blessed Lord plainly declares infants to be capable of being received among his disciples and subjects, for "of such is the kingdom of God." Does it not follow that they are entitled, by the covenant of grace—where the requisite sureties are found for Christian education—to the same seal of the righteousness of faith, which is applied to believing adults? And that such a measure of the Spirit is bestowed upon them, their parents,

dom come." Hence infants may be inheritors of the kingdom, and even enter its precincts; and yet they may be consistently taught, when capable of catechetical instruction, to expect a more abundant entrance by faith in Jesus Christ. In the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew we read, that even adult disciples (who must have been, in a manner, already within,) were warned by the Lord, that, without conversion, and becoming as little children, they should not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

sponsors, and teachers, as is needful for bringing them up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?” There seems, however, no ground to consider the grace of baptism as more than incipient, though it is fully adequate to the intended purpose, of “daily increasing in God’s Holy Spirit more and more.”

The baptismal offices present even a marked distinction between regeneration and the new birth, which perhaps begins to appear, in some degree, in the quotation already given from the opening exhortation. There the conjunction “*and*” is used, and not the disjunctive “*or*.” The disjunctive *might* imply that the words “born anew,” explain the term “regenerate;” but “*and*” rather indicates the addition of a more mature and ample gift. No great stress, however, could be laid on this distinction, if not corroborated by language more explicit. But such is not wanting. Let us compare the remarkable gradation which occurs in the three offices: first, that for infants publicly baptized; second, that for the public reception of any which have been privately baptized; third, that for the baptism of adults.

In the first we pray that the infant “*may be born again;*” we announce that it is “*regenerate;*” and we offer thanksgiving to our most merciful Father, saying—“that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit;” but there is no affirmation of new birth, or thanksgiving for it. Still

there might be room to allege that we have what amounts to the same thing, if it were not for the gradation before alluded to.

In the second office, a parallel prayer occurs to that quoted from the first. Instead of "may be born again," we find "that being born again," &c. ; and when we come to the corresponding part of the office for baptizing adults, the difference becomes so very striking, that it appears to have been designed emphatically to mark the distinction between the privilege conferred upon an unconscious recipient, and that which is consequent in the order of divine grace, upon the actual exercise of repentance and faith, testified by being voluntarily baptized in the appointed way. In this case, on the supposition of sincerity, there can be no doubt of the immediate admission of the baptized to the full privileges of the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. Accordingly we observe a decision here, which is strongly contrasted with the language of the preceding offices. The prayer which precedes the address to the sponsors in the baptism of infants, is repeated in the corresponding place for those of riper years, and contains the same petition that they "may be born again." But, after the actual administration of the rite of baptism, and the reception into the congregation of Christ's flock, besides a similar thanksgiving, there occurs a special and appropriate prayer—"Give thy Holy Spirit to *these persons*, that being now born

again, and being made *heirs* of everlasting salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, they may continue thy servants, and attain thy promises," &c. What can be the reason of giving prominence to the adverb "*now*" in this connection, which is not elsewhere united with the new birth throughout the whole of the baptismal services? The writer's answer to his own question, which he earnestly submits to consideration, is this:—the emphatic *now* appears manifestly designed to express, that adult baptism is the only case in which the baptized can be expected to attain, at once, the exalted dignity and rich treasure of being born again; according to the declaration of the apostle John, in the first chapter of his gospel—"To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name." Thus we see that faith is an indispensable prerequisite; and that the Church of England does not teach an inseparable connection between the outward sign and the *whole* inward grace. Our church indeed entertains a very high estimation of the gift immediately bestowed upon a baptized infant. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit, whose vivifying presence is with the appointed means; and is not a mere form or symbol of an absent thing. No; he is himself the precious gift, and, at the same time, the divine agent in an incipient stage of his heavenly regenerating work. It is a progressive work, not an *opus operatum*: or in any sense finished, as to the inward

grace or thing signified. It is analogous to the natural creation and growth ; and as natural existence and life begin and proceed before birth, so it is in the Spirit's work of new creation. He regenerates even passive subjects of his grace ; but new birth implies and requires an actual exercise of the breath of life, and of living faith, and its effects become manifest at once ; as it is written—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit."—John iii. 8. It may perhaps be answered that the same Greek word signifies regeneration as well as new birth. True, it does ; but it happens that, in this instance, the English language is more accurate ; and the context enables a translator to decide which term is to be preferred, as conveying the sense in any given place. Thus in the verse above quoted, the comparison to sensible effects, proves that "*born*" is the right translation.

If this position, that our baptismal services distinguish between regeneration and new birth, and only pray for new birth in the office for infants as a future blessing, should be strange to the reader, it is hoped that he is at least prepared to see a strong confirmation in the remarkable precision of the words used in the public receiving of a child which had been privately baptized. In that formulary, viz., in the prayer following the Lord's Prayer, and preceding

the questions put to the sponsors, we pray—"Give thy Holy Spirit to *this infant*, that *he* being born again," &c. Is it possible to attribute the accuracy of this variation — "*being born again*," in its intermediate position between the two public forms of baptism—to any thing but design in the compilers? The first form prays for new birth only as a future blessing; the third employs the expression of present time; the second, or intermediate form, uses words which may be either prospective or retrospective; and why? Most probably because the reception of a child, which had been privately baptized, might be so long delayed, as to give time for the opening of the faculties, and the exercise of the mind and affections, and so for the possibility of new birth. If such opening has taken place, then it may be that this is one of the "babes and sucklings," out of whose mouths God has "perfected praise;" and, in that case, the words "being born again," would be equivalent to *having been born again*. But, on the other hand, if the unconscious infantine state should still continue, then the samé words would only express a prayer for future blessing,* like "may be born again" in the public baptism of infants. Surely such a marked gradation cannot have been accidental; and

* There is a remarkable example of the transfer of the participle *being* to futurity, in that part of the act of settlement, which limits the crown of Great Britain to the Electress Sophia, and the heirs of her body "*being Protestants*."

if any one can show that a design, of the nature imputed, was not according to the private opinion of some or any of the compilers, then it must be recollected, that their duty was to express the common consent of the church, and to use language in which all orthodox churchmen could agree; and that, in aiming at this concord, it may well be supposed, they were favoured with special guidance from above. If Caiaphas, being high priest, was overruled to prophesy, is it too much to believe such a superintending care over the minds of the framers of our liturgy, as caused the result to be a manifestation of God's design in the application of the seal of the righteousness of faith, with its various accompaniments? It is not pretended that such *must* have been the fact. That would be, to assert the monstrous doctrine of infallibility. But nothing more is intended, than a probable inference, in this one instance, (though others may be similar,) drawn from the actual state of the phraseology, compared with the doctrine and promises of holy Scripture. How cheering to the Christian parent's heart, to find these promises "to us and to our children," inasmuch as they are "to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

This exposition lays a sure foundation for bringing up children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and is perfectly agreeable to the true doctrine of grace, which exhibits the love of God as the foun-

tain from which every blessing flows: so that he gives grace to enable the tender child to understand and embrace parental teaching; to love the good Shepherd who carries the lambs in his bosom; and to rejoice in the sweet narrative, telling how the blessed Jesus “took little children in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” Surely he is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;” and those who are brought to him in faith shall receive the blessings promised in the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah—“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.” Doubtless these precious promises belong to the New Testament church, as well as to the Old, for “all are one in Christ Jesus;” “and if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. iii. 29. On the same ground, that beautiful simile in the one hundred and twenty-eighth Psalm ought to be evangelically understood—“thy children like olive plants round about thy table.” And from the well-known and general application of oil as a typical emblem, we are taught to interpret it as a promise of grace, suited to the early growth of those

who are holy to the Lord, by his own covenant of mercy.

It is now time to turn to our review of the baptismal offices. Let us look at the first collect for the public baptism of infants. It does not appear necessary as yet to make any other observation than that it contains a very comprehensive prospective petition, extending through this life and into eternity—that the child “being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally *he* may come to the land of everlasting life.” Hence, it is evident that we are not to limit our views and desires merely to immediate effect and present blessings. This remark, though obvious, is not superfluous; because some ascribe all that is to be looked for pertaining to regeneration and the new birth, to the very moment of the administration of baptism, and also identify it with justification. The comparison already exhibited of the language of the three offices, ought to make the maintainers of that opinion pause before they venture to put it forward as a doctrine of the Church of England; and it is hoped that the further we proceed the more clearly their error will be manifested. Perhaps the second collect may be considered by them as giving countenance to their tenets. They may possibly be disposed to quote with confidence—“We call upon thee for *this infant*, that *he*, coming to thy holy baptism, may receive remission of his

sins by spiritual regeneration.” But why may not this be offered as a prospective petition, in like manner with that quoted from the first collect? Under our second division of the general subject, an opportunity will be afforded of considering more fully the manner in which remission of sins is mentioned or omitted in different parts of the solemn services now being examined, for the purpose of ascertaining their true interpretation. For the present it may be sufficient to take notice, that the plural word “sins” is not strictly applicable to an unconscious individual infant, except by anticipation. Most true it is that he is “born in sin,” and as such is “a child of wrath;” but the sin is one; it is what is called *original sin*; it “is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam.” Ninth article. Infants “have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression;” they have not committed one actual sin, and therefore (be it spoken with reverence, if not contrary to any part of the word of God,) they are not chargeable severally with a plurality of sins, and need not yet remission of *sins*, although they do—of guilt. There is a passage near the beginning of the first part of the Homily of Salvation, which may appear, at first sight, to militate against this exposition. It is in these words:—“Insomuch that infants being baptized, and dying in their infancy, are by this sacrifice washed from their sins, brought to God’s

favour, and made his children, and inheritors of his kingdom of heaven." But this quotation is entirely expressed in the plural number; whereas the formulary for the *public baptism of infants* is applied individually. Therefore, because in the homily baptized infants are mentioned *collectively*, the plural form becomes inevitable in speaking of their sins; even without anticipating their actual transgressions. But it is not so with respect to the original guilt of a single infant. Let it be observed again, that an infant, strictly speaking, does not *come* to baptism, he is only brought. Is there not a probability that the petition may have respect to a future time, when the baptized may be capable of reflecting on their inestimable privileges, and seek to realize an entrance into "the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?" If the question be answered in the affirmative, it follows that there is an equal probability that the "spiritual regeneration" prayed for is a future blessing, to be coincident with the exercise of faith, and harmonising with the doctrine of St. James, where he says, (i. 18,) "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." In this view, there is a perfect agreement with the doctrine of justification by faith, which is clearly inculcated in the sponsorial answers and in our catechism. But it is proper to add, that there could be no objection to pray for spiritual regeneration, as an immediate privilege and

blessing to infants, except in connection with the remission of sins.

The idea here presented of coming to Christ's holy baptism, by an actual and intelligent entrance into the name of the ever-blessed Trinity, is consonant to a manner of speaking, which is familiar in the holy Scriptures. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."—Isaiah lv. This is an invitation not to be complied with by any locomotion, but by mental acts and spiritual affections. "I said, Behold me, behold me, to a nation that was not called by my name."—Isaiah lxxv. Accordingly our blessed Lord has proclaimed in his Gospel, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. xi. 28. And again—"all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." "It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."—John vi. 37, 45. The analogy of our prayer-book also corroborates the interpretation which has been offered by the simply spiritual view it presents of the other sacrament, that is, of the Lord's supper, in case of necessity precluding the enjoyment of a participation of the outward signs. It is one of the rubrics annexed to "the Communion of the Sick."

"But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness, or for want of warning in due time to the

curate, or for lack of company to receive with him, or by any other just impediment, do not receive the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, the curate shall instruct him, that if he do truly repent him of his sins, and steadfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the cross for him, and shed his blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving him hearty thanks therefore, he doth eat and drink the body and blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the sacrament with his mouth."

Is it not equally competent to an expounder of the sacrament of baptism, whether minister, parent, or sponsor, to remind the catechumen, that repentance and faith are required of those that are baptized; and that infants are baptized in the happy anticipation, through the blessing of the Lord upon their Christian education, that they will be disposed, in mature age, to come to the "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," and to seek for that "heavenly washing," which cannot be realized "by the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but by the answer of a good conscience toward God."—1 Pet. iii. 21. And would not this expounder be authorized to add—"You will thus experience an answer to the prayer which was offered up for you at your baptism, that '*coming*' to it in heart you should receive remission of your sins? If you truly understand and value the privilege of

having been 'born of water,' which was accompanied with the invisible agency of the Holy Spirit, employing the outward sign 'as a means of receiving the inward grace,' then you have in some measure 'heard and learned of the Father;' you are drawn by his grace, and you will come in faith, and with a contrite heart, to plead the promises of God, 'which he for his part will most surely keep and perform.' Trusting in his faithfulness, you will feel filial love springing up in your heart, one effect of which will be to assure you of the remission of your sins; and there will be no difficulty of seeing how it is received by 'spiritual regeneration;' for this is but another name for 'faith working by love;' and the happy subject of it, increasing in the Holy Spirit more and more, will be prepared to be addressed in the words of the apostle Peter, as 'being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.'" Such an address of course could not be understood but by one of considerable ripeness of intellect: it is given only for the sake of illustration, but by no means offered as suitable instruction for the earliest openings of tender thought. These openings, however, are often such as to surprise, as well as delight a Christian parent; and to confirm the blessed hope, in which thanksgiving was offered to God, "*that it hath pleased him to regenerate the infant with his Holy Spirit.*" The ground and duty of such gratitude would be justified by the

lowest view that can be taken by those who adhere to infant baptism “as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.” For a change of state, which implies a title of gift to the means of grace, and a covenant relation to the eternal Trinity, is in itself a beginning of a new existence, and a commencement of recovery from the consequences of our fall. It is regeneration begun by Him who “moved upon the face” of the chaotic waters, and who also carries on the whole process of the new creation. But there is abundant warrant for expecting more than a change of state, although it seems impossible to ascertain the degree of influence which the Holy Spirit exerts in various, or in any circumstances. When our blessed Saviour took little children in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them, there is every reason to believe that he imparted to them a spiritual blessing; and a similar effect is to be expected in baptism; but it does not appear to have been scripturally proved to amount, in any case, to entire renovation of nature. Every proposition which asserts or implies so great a change instantaneously, is inconsistent with the progressive work which the Bible describes, and rather tends to repress than to promote endeavours after spiritual growth and improvement. On the other hand, if we do not believe that the quickening power of the Holy Spirit has actually been working with us in bringing a child to “the laver of regeneration,” what encouragement can we derive from the ordinance,

or how can we persevere in prayer for blessings upon our baptized offspring? It is surely not the genuine state of a Christian mother's heart to look upon her precious babe as "*flesh*" that must continue flesh, at least for a season, without any hope or possibility of the movements of heavenly life! Shall the grass grow up, we know not how? and the bones also in the womb of her that is with child? and are there no secret operations of the Spirit upon the mental faculties, and the dispositions of the soul? Why should it be asserted that these operations must be withheld from such a passive subject, although we have a full assurance that "the free gift is come upon all men, unto justification of life."—Rom. v. 18. The truth is, that we have reason to hope for grace in answer to prayer, not only according to the analogy of natural growth, but even contemporaneously, and *pari passu* with it? Why should it be thought a thing incredible, that He, in whose book all our members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them—that he should carry on at the same time, though in secret, a spiritual work of mercy, proceeding from his covenant in Christ, and not more beyond the reach of our conceptions, than the creation and progressive formation of our bodies? Why should it be incredible, that the Holy Spirit purifies and strengthens even natural faculties, which it is better to have than to be without?—which, though

injured and defiled by the fall, are not themselves a part of our depravity? For example, that lovely instinct and essential *storge* or natural affection, the absence of which is reckoned by St. Paul, (Rom. i.) among our worst corruptions; and conscience, that wonderful witness for God, implanted in the soul, enabling us, in a measure, to discern between good and evil, with the respective degrees of approval and disapproval which are due to each. Besides, that God, who made man "in his own image," has not permitted his image to be utterly destroyed, although it be deformed by sin. It was not totally obliterated, even by the corruptions which called for the judgment of the flood. Otherwise creation, in the image of God, could not have afforded a reason for the law which he delivered to Noah concerning the punishment of murder. Hence it is evident, that the work of the Holy Spirit is not the communication of a nature entirely different from that which existed before; but is more like the cure of a disease. And who is warranted to pronounce any limits to the grace of our heavenly physician? What hinders him from sanctifying natural affection in its original elements, so as to prepare it for being subservient to education "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?"—and to the reception of "the sincere milk of the word," in the earliest development of the mental powers, parentally watched over in faith,

and love, and prayer? If such prayer be a duty and a privilege before the child can cry—"My father, or my mother," why should it not be offered even before the birth of a child? There is no cause to render the promise inapplicable—"Ask, and ye shall have." The conscientious faculty may be invigorated—the evil propensities may be weakened—the dispositions may be sweetened. And are not these, and such like, regenerating operations? They may precede baptism, and be increased thereby; and such an assurance and manifestation may have been given by the administration of the blessing of the Lord having been sought, according to his covenant of mercy, that there should be a decisive warrant to say—"Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate." Yet we ought not to conceive the grace restricted to the rite, as if the baptized had been mere flesh before the pouring of the water, and then immediately transformed. The washing of water is a sign and seal—a seal implies the pre-existence of a covenant, and that covenant is not inefficacious, even before the application of the seal. Abraham was justified by faith while yet in uncircumcision; and his posterity were added to the people of God, in successive generations, as soon as they were born. This privilege did not wait for circumcision, although it was liable to forfeiture by a wilful omission of the appointed

sacrament.—Gen. xvii. 14. In like manner, the child of a believer in Christ is “*holy*” to the Lord as such. For the apostle Paul says, that an unbelieving partner is sanctified by the believer; and it is implied, that the issue of such a marriage is sanctified by its relation to the believing parent, because it is added—“Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” From this it follows, that they are entitled to baptism, and that they are to be baptized—not to *begin* to be made holy, but because they *are* holy. The second answer of our church catechism may seem opposed to this conclusion; but a more convenient opportunity of discussing this objection will be presented under the third division of our subject. In the meantime, what has been advanced may be corroborated by the example of John the Baptist, concerning whom it was promised—“He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.”—Luke i. 15. This may remind us also of the case of Sampson, whose mother was charged “Not to drink wine nor strong drink, and not to eat any unclean thing” (Judges xiii. 4); by which we are taught a typical lesson of the sanctifying influence of sanctified parents upon their children. But the case of John the Baptist affords explicit proof of the possibility of the Holy Spirit being bestowed in most abundant measure, even upon the youngest infant. It may be said that the example was extraordinary, and the gift

was extraordinary. Still it proves the possibility alleged: for the gift was bestowed from the womb; and what was done in one instance, is possible in all not decidedly excluded.* It may also be said, that we are not concerned in it, because we are not to expect miraculous gifts. But the fact is very remarkable, that it is expressly recorded "*John did no miracle;*" so that we have no reason to suppose that the abundance of the Spirit bestowed upon him, was what is called miraculous, in contradistinction to the ordinary operations of the Holy Ghost. The miraculous effusion did not take place until the Lord was glorified; and on the very day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended in the likeness of fiery tongues, although it was the purpose of God that tongues should cease (1 Cor. xiii); yet on that extraordinary occasion the apostle Peter said—"The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The same apostle bears witness to the possibility of the gift of the Holy Spirit being antecedent to baptism; or rather the Spirit himself bore witness while Peter was preaching to Cornelius and his company. Peter, however, asked—"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"—Acts x. 47. Indeed

* See Jeremiah i. 5.

the previous necessity of repentance and faith proves the precedence of some degree of spiritual regeneration in adults; why then should we not be prepared to expect such a degree of regeneration in infants as they may be capable of, even before the administration of the rite of baptism? It may also contribute to elucidation to recollect that ordinary gifts of the Spirit accompanied the pentecostal effusion of the extraordinary; as we read in the proper preface for Whitsunday—"Giving them both the gifts of divers languages, and also boldness, with fervent zeal, constantly to preach the Gospel unto all nations." But the principle intended to be deduced from the time and order in which the Spirit is recorded to have worked in the cases of John and Cornelius, is one which ought to be very easily admissible, from the whole tenor of the Scriptures—namely, that of growth in grace, connected with the plainly-revealed doctrine concerning "the Lord and Giver of life." This teaches that God is the prime mover in salvation, and there is nothing to delay its commencement, either to adult age, or to the rite of baptism. These propositions appear to be abstractedly admitted by many who stumble, notwithstanding, at the thought of considering regeneration in any other aspect than that of a sudden and at once completed effect. But how has the term acquired this fixedness of meaning? Perhaps from some technicality of system; it cannot be from analogy, or the use and propriety of language. It may illus-

trate, in some degree, to recollect the meaning of the opposite term "*degenerate*." Does any one regard that as conveying any other idea, than of gradual deterioration, though susceptible of more or less rapidity in a downward course? And why should not amelioration be conceived and interpreted in a corresponding manner? There is a difficulty arising from the rare occurrence of the term in question in the holy Scriptures. But the passage in which the Lord made a glorious promise to his followers, to be accomplished when he should "sit upon the throne of his glory," seems strongly to countenance the idea of progression. If we read, "ye who have followed me in the regeneration," it must evidently mean the progressive spiritual work carried on by the Lord in his ministry. But if we take "*in the regeneration*" as the beginning of a clause, and with Parkhurst, should be of opinion that those words "may then be most easily and naturally referred to that *greater and more signal renovation*, which commenced after the resurrection and ascension of the Redeemer;" or if, with others, we think they ought to be understood of the period of his second coming, in either case the propagation of the Gospel, or the process of judgment, and of "the restitution of all things,"* must render the meaning of the term "*regeneration*" progressive. The passage in Titus, also, by connecting "regeneration with washing," unavoidably suggests the idea of progression. For

* See Acts iii. 21.

“washing” is an act continued until all filthiness be purged away, and of longer or shorter duration according to the necessity of the work. The need of spiritual and heavenly washing continues through this life: we ought always to pray—“Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee.” There is no other place in the New Testament where the word in question occurs.

It is perhaps from a habit of inseparably uniting a sign with the thing signified, that they are supposed to co-exist with an exact precision, not admitting of any difference of duration either antecedent or subsequent. Besides, the first and proper decision of the church, that baptism cannot be repeated, may be taken by some to be applicable to “the inward grace,” so as to exclude progression and repetition, even where there has been a falling from grace. But St. Paul did not hesitate to write to the Galatians—“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.”—And although the sacrament of the Lord’s supper be not perfectly parallel, inasmuch as it is in its nature an ordinance to be repeated, yet it affords illustration of “the thing signified” extending in duration beyond “the sign.” The Lord said—“Do this in remembrance of me;” not limiting that remembrance to the accompaniment of the external act; but that this should be a means of remembering the atoning death and love of our

Redeemer every day of our lives ; and that we should thereby have our souls “strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ,” even in the absence of the symbols which “show forth his death until he come.” In like manner, although baptism, as an initiatory and outward rite, is not to be repeated, we may continually come to it in heart and mind, (which we do in confirmation, and in witnessing the baptism of others,) as a means of “increasing in the Holy Spirit more and more, until we come to the heavenly kingdom.”* We find the holy Scripture using a similar figure of speech, in reference to the crucifixion of our Saviour, both in a bad and a good sense. The former occurs in that awful passage in the sixth chapter of Hebrews, where the apostle assigns as a reason of the impossibility he had warned of — “Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” The instance alluded to of a good sense, is in the beginning of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, where the apostle reminds them of the great privilege they had enjoyed in the clear declaration of his ministry: “before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you.” The atoning sacrifice of Christ admits of no repetition: “nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others ;

* See first Rubric of Baptism, and the concluding exhortation.

for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world ; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”—Heb. ix. 25, 26. However, in the preaching of the Gospel, and in the celebration of the Lord’s supper, which “shows forth his death,” the crucifixion of the Redeemer is vividly exhibited, and the grace of his passion is communicated through faith. So baptism is once administered, but its inward part is continued and increased, and it may even be refreshed and revived. Continuance and increase are the happy fruit of believing that the Holy Spirit is given for use, and that he is always near and ready to bless parental instruction, and every means of grace. Refreshment and revival must be the consequence of a “godly sorrow working repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.” But that such mercy is not excluded, and that it is not improper to speak of it as a new birth, or in kindred language, according to various degrees and circumstances, is proved by the strong expressions of St. Paul to the Galatians, conveying his earnest longings and prayers that Christ might be “formed in them.” Thus it is hoped that a true and safe middle-way may be discerned and pursued, which is coincident with him and his glory, who alone is “the way, and the truth, and the life;” avoiding, on one hand, an extreme which supposes baptism completed in the administration ; and, on the other hand, an interpretation

which reduces baptism to a significant form, only sometimes made at once a means of grace, and consequently paralysing the gracious exhortation :—“Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will likewise favourably receive this present infant.” Faith must have an anchor to lay hold of; and if it be only in some cases that a special blessing is granted, how is it possible to avoid the painful doubt and fear, that the immediate subject may partake of nothing more than the outward sign, though spoken of by the name of the thing signified? Surely this was not the belief of the composers of the office. They felt a spiritual joy in contemplating the precious sight of little children in the arms of the Saviour; and they encouraged an assurance of his loving embrace, because he is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” It is admitted that if the *form* satisfy, without seeking the *power*, loss must be apprehended. But if the officiating minister’s own heart be in harmony with the service, though he may often have causes of grief and humiliation, he need never understand the thanksgiving to God for his regenerating grace, in any lower sense than the words have been asserted to convey in the course of this exposition. No gloomy dread of exclusion ought to be permitted to intrude into “this charitable work” of bringing an infant to his holy baptism; for all are “his offspring;” Christ is “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;” he “tasted death for every man.”—Heb. ii. 9.

“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”—2 Cor. v. 19. Having these assurances in the administration of baptism, we may be persuaded that we are engaged in the ministry of the Spirit; that he is himself present in his vivifying power, and using one of the means of regenerating fallen man, through the redemption that is in Christ.

Let us then cheerfully pass on from the second collect, to proceed in our survey of the baptismal offices.

The interesting narrative from St. Mark is very appropriately read, although the recorded act was not an administration of baptism: yet it fully proves all that it is appealed to for; and it establishes, by inference, the right of infants to be baptized. “For,” said the Lord himself, “of such is the kingdom of God.” The word signifies—“of this class of the human race”—not merely, “of such-like in disposition.” It is added indeed, “Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” But this is in the usual manner of our Saviour, deriving instruction from present occurrences, and the objects before him. He did so with respect to the miracles of the loaves and fishes, and the healing of the man who was born blind; and in many other cases, without disturbing the facts on which the parabolic similitudes were founded. We are warranted, therefore,

to hold fast the happy conclusion, that infants are capable of being admitted to the privileges of the kingdom of God; and if so, they are entitled to the seal of the promises which are made in the baptismal sacrament.

The minister then makes a brief exhortation to the congregation, upon the words of the Gospel, reminding them of the condescending love of the blessed Jesus, and “how by his outward gesture and deed he declared his good will;” the extension of which to all we ought not to doubt. But it is remarkable that in the enumeration of blessings to be earnestly expected, “*remission of sins*” is not mentioned. In the second division of the subject, an opportunity will occur of enlarging upon this omission. After this exhortation, thanksgiving and prayer follow; on which it has been observed already, that the compilers of our liturgy, in praying for the new birth, did not venture to go beyond a petition of a quite indefinite nature, in respect of time:—“Give thy Holy Spirit to *this infant*, that *he* may be born again.” The natural inference, upon a comparison with the subsequent formularies, has been stated and discussed already. In the next place, the sponsors are addressed. They are reminded of having “brought this *child* here to be baptized;” and, among other things, of having prayed our Lord “to release *him* of his sins:” but as this also is indefinite, the reader is requested to suspend judgment concerning time,

until the promised opportunity shall arrive. In the meantime it is expected, that a candid consideration of the questions and answers, concerning "the things required of persons to be baptized," will prepare the way for judging rightly. They are respectively proposed and given by anticipation, that is, as if expressly to and by the infant. In this part there is no engagement by the sponsors, except the implied duty (which is indeed an indispensable obligation) of using their best endeavours to realize the Lord's requirements. On this anticipation it is hoped that the third division of our subject may throw some further light. The design appears to have been to make it manifest, that the inward grace of baptism cannot be considered complete, until the baptized has experienced repentance and faith. In this view, it is substantially the same thing in every varying form; and the covenant of grace shines forth in all its simplicity and beauty. Perhaps some who may be ready to admit the identity, provided the baptized infant should live to a proper age for taking the promises upon himself, may be of opinion that the certainty of the salvation of infants, who die before the commission of actual sin, cannot be maintained, without asserting also a fulness of new creation. But ought we not to be satisfied with the consolation, that the Redeemer has embraced them with the arms of his mercy? and that, as he had called them to a state of salvation, it is impossible that the privilege

should be lost by death? But there is very little revealed concerning the precise condition they are in; and we must not intrude into things we have not seen. Analogy would lead us to suppose that the spirit of a departed infant is an infant spirit; and what may be the mode and circumstances of its growing up to maturity, are matters quite out of the reach of our knowledge: so that it is probably impracticable to argue from a case so obscure and difficult, to those effects of baptism with which we come in contact.

With respect to the alleged design of the sponsorial arrangement, and the necessity of faith to the perfection of the inward grace of baptism, although Dr. Hook, in the appendix to his visitation sermon,* entitled "A Call to Union," claims our venerable Cranmer as on his side, the very extracts which he has given in that appendix, afford a sufficient refutation of what he brings them forward to support. Some of them, if taken in a detached way, do certainly appear to attribute to baptism effects, which, considered all together, and in all their fulness, the preceding pages have argued not to be immediate attendants upon the outward sign. Nay, it is to be presumed, that Dr. Hook himself does not believe such a connexion to exist in any case. For he quotes with approbation, in pp. 97, 98, the opinion of Bishop Bethell, distinguishing between regeneration

* Fourth Edition: London, 1839.

and renovation ; and he also asserts that the fathers do not “ appear to have supposed that any positive or active renewal of the soul takes place in infants.” Now that is taking very low ground indeed ! And whosoever adopts it as his own position, cannot understand the following quotation from the archbishop’s sermon on holy baptism, as agreeing with the doctrine held by himself, and yet to be an enumeration of instantaneous accompaniments of the rite. The italics, as well as the remaining parts, are copied from Dr. Hook’s extracts, p. 90. “ And the second birth is by the water of baptism, which Paul calleth the bath of regeneration, *because our sins be forgiven us in baptism, and the Holy Ghost is poured into us as into God’s beloved children, so that by the power and working of the Holy Ghost we be born again spiritually, and made new creatures.* And so by baptism we enter into the kingdom of God, and are saved for ever, if we continue to our lives’ end in the faith of Christ.”

What then could be the meaning of the archbishop ? Let us hear his own explanation from p. 91, in answer to the question of an inquirer.

“ But peradventure some will say, how can water work such great things ? To whom I answer, that it is not the water that doeth these things, but the almighty word of God, (which is knit and joined to the water,) and faith which receiveth God’s word and promise.” Can any thing be more distinct and ex-

plicit than this answer? It is scarcely necessary to observe that infants are incapable of faith; but the inference is exceedingly plain and important, that the archbishop speaks of persons of an age to take a retrospective view of their early privilege, and to consider its precious import, as interpreted by the word of God; with which they must be supposed in a measure acquainted, because they could not otherwise have that faith of which the passage speaks. If any doubt remain in the reader's mind, it ought to be removed by the extract at the bottom of the same page (91) of the appendix:—"And when you shall be asked, What availeth baptism? you shall answer, Baptism worketh forgiveness of sin, it delivereth from the kingdom of the devil, and from death, and giveth life and everlasting salvation to all them that believe these words of Christ, and promise of God, which are written in the last chapter of St. Mark, his gospel—'He that will believe and be baptized shall be saved, but he that will not believe shall be damned.'" Does not this answer suppose a keeping in abeyance of the specified blessings and privileges, until faith take hold of an express promise in which believing and being baptized are connected together? To say that baptism works all these things to all them that believe these words, implies that it does not work them in unconscious infants; and it strongly corroborates the interpretation before given to the prayer for receiving remission of sins by spiritual regenera-

tion, namely, that it is prospective : nay, it proves it to be agreeable to the private opinion of the compilers of our baptismal offices, at least to that of Cranmer. He addresses the catechumen in a manner equivalent to that which this tract has put into the mouth of an expounder ; and he leads his young audience (for he addresses children) to a persuasion that their baptism must be completed by believing, and thus come within the promise recorded by St. Mark. The doctrine of abeyance is asserted also by Bishop Bethell (as quoted in the appendix, p. 97) in the case of “those who receive baptism in a state of hypocrisy or impenitency :” he says—“pardon and grace are conditionally made over to them, and the saving virtue of regeneration which had been hitherto suspended, takes effect when they truly repent and unfeignedly believe the Gospel.” It is true, he does not apply the doctrine to the case of infants ; but he assumes the possibility of “the saving virtue of regeneration” being suspended ; and he so far resists the dogma of the inseparability of the sign and the inward grace. In the preceding section (3) his lordship seems to approach very closely to coincidence with opinions advanced in these pages. The entire section is short, and is copied *verbatim* as follows :—“As to those who fall off after regeneration, their covenant state abides, but without any saving effect, because without present renovation ; but this saving effect may be repaired and recovered by repentance.”

From the order in which this section stands, it applies equally to adults and infants; and indeed from the manner in which the bishop speaks of renovation, here and elsewhere, this tract appears to have the happiness of differing but verbally from his lordship on this part of the subject. He says, (97) “Regeneration comes only once in, or through baptism. Renovation exists before, in and after baptism, and may be often repeated. Regeneration, being a single act, can have no parts, and is incapable of increase. Renovation is in its very nature progressive. Regeneration, though suspended as to its effects and benefits, cannot be totally lost in the present life. Renovation may be often repeated and totally lost.”

But how is it proved that regeneration is a single act? So far as the writer of this tract knows, the proposition is a mere assumption. It is contrary to the idea of the term in the common use of language; and to the analogy of natural generation, which is the clue of exposition that Scripture itself has put into our hands. According to these guides it is much more consistent to consider regeneration as the commencement and continuance of renovation, up to and beyond that degree of maturity which the Scripture denominates *new birth*; and in this view, the meaning of the terms differ only in a variety of aspects.

In pp. 92, 93 of the appendix, there is a quotation from Bishop Latimer’s sermons too precious to be omitted:—“Now this sacrament of baptism is a thing

of great weight ; for it ascertaineth and assureth us that like as the water washeth the body and cleanseth it, so the blood of Christ our Saviour cleanseth and washeth it from all filth and uncleanness of sin."

In returning to the consideration of the baptismal office for infants, it is obvious that the prayers which follow the sponsorial questions and answers are of a prospective character, and imply that sort of progressive operation which has been here advocated, as the blessing meant by the service and its compilers, and which we are taught to look for in the use of it—"that the new man may be raised up"—"that all carnal affections may die"—"that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow"—"to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh"—"may also be endued with heavenly virtues, and everlastingly rewarded through thy mercy." Behold, "the new man" is not expected as an immediate effect; but according to the analogy of natural growth and maturity, to be "raised up." The dying of carnal affections is a gradual crucifixion, and the opposite life prayed for is such as may consist with the tenderest beginnings; but abundantly sufficient, by the constant presence and energy of the Holy Ghost, for the bringing up which is enjoined upon Christian parents, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." It requires no argument to prove that the third petition can find its answer only in the actual and successful wielding of spiritual weapons; and the

fourth comprises the whole superstructure of grace, to which the apostle Peter exhorts Christians in the beginning of his second epistle. Then follows what may be called the "Consecration prayer," the explanation of which, especially as to "the mystical washing away of sin," may be reserved for a subsequent division. But it is proper to notice here, that although the adverb of present time *now* is applied to the baptism in water, it is not applied to the reception of the "fulness" of God's grace, which, in conformity to the antecedent petitions, must be understood to be prayed for as a future blessing.

The next step completes the administration of the rite, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The signing with the sign of the cross is no part of baptism. It accompanies the reception consequent upon baptism, and the instructive import of it is fully and beautifully explained at the same time. The congregation is then invited to give thanks and pray, as "seeing now" that the child "is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's church." For these privileges have now been visibly manifested.*

As to what remains, the writer can declare, in full

* This observation may perhaps explain the clause "*according to this beginning*," and remove an objection from some minds. The beginning referred to is not the first operation of grace within, but the first open exhibition of it in the congregation of God's people.

sincerity, that he is in the habit of offering with joy the thanksgiving which follows the Lord's Prayer in this service:—"We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate *this infant* with thy Holy Spirit." He is far from desiring any change in this—nay, he would deprecate any endeavour to procure the slightest alteration. But he does not limit the meaning of the words to the moment of baptism. He believes that it has pleased our heavenly Father, at least when the child is "holy," to begin the work of grace with that of creation, and to continue it in various degrees, perhaps according to the prayers which have been presented for that blessing. We can neither explain, nor apportion the operations of Him, who worketh all in all—"the wind bloweth where it listeth;" but since Christ is "the light of the world"—since he "lighteneth every man"—and "the free gift is come upon all men," it cannot be too much to hope for, and expect a special blessing upon the offspring of Christian parents, accompanying the very origin of their natural life. If the design of the institution of marriage (as the prophet Malachi* informs us) was that God "might seek a godly seed," surely there must be a peculiar sanctification pertaining to it, through the Christian dis-

* Chap. ii. 15.

pensation; and while a Christian parent rejoices in beholding "his children like olive branches round about his table," he may be justified in tracing the lovely similitude to the earliest bud, and in praising God that "the unction of the Holy One," is not withheld until its outward emblem is applied. That application is, indeed, a sign and seal of the promises in Christ, and also an instrument in the hands of the same Spirit, for carrying on his blessed work, and a preparation for its continuance. It is, therefore, by no means intended to endeavour to explain away the strong language of the baptismal service, or to exclude the rite from an ample participation in the work of the Spirit, but to repeat what was before maintained as to the progressive and continued nature of regeneration, instead of holding it, with Bishop Bethell and others, to be a single act.

It is true that cases may and do occur of the baptism of infants, who derive no sanctification from their parents, or either of them, in any sense—as when the orphan children of heathens are providentially brought into the hands, and under the care of Christians, who wish and endeavour to educate them in the faith of their Lord and Saviour. Such instances, no doubt, demand careful discrimination. No hereditary holiness can be attributed to them; but that the church is right in adopting children so circumstanced, to the embraces and the nurture of her parental bosom, may be concluded from the exten-

sion of circumcision—the primitive seal of the righteousness of faith to him “that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger.”—Gen. xvii. 12. In similar cases of baptism, we cannot assert any previous commencement of regeneration, as we can where both parents are sanctified, or one by the other—nay, the expression—“*Else were your children unclean,*” seems to forbid the claims of so high a privilege. Yet as Christ is “the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe,” it cannot be inconsistent to hope, that the offspring of heathens are subjects of mercy and grace, in some manner and degree; so that, even in case of death without baptism, they are not cast into *Gehenna*, but saved (according to their measure) by the death and resurrection of the great Redeemer of mankind; while, as it were *a fortiori*, we enjoy a more decided and filial persuasion of the salvation of baptized infants, who have been removed to the invisible world before the commission of actual sin. But whatever opinion may be preferred on these unrevealed topics, it cannot affect that interpretation of regeneration, growing up into new birth and full renovation, which has been maintained as the true and literal sense of our formularies.

The reply of Bishop Heber,* to questions respect-

* Third volume of his Journal, page 158, and the following, in notes. Third edition, octavo. London: 1828.

ing baptism by the missionaries in Ceylon, appears to harmonize with the views here presented, as to the baptism of the children of heathen parents, in resting admission to the privilege on sponsorial engagements and the prospect of Christian education. In the seventh part of his answer, he says—"It will have been already seen that we have no right to refuse baptism to children actually adopted by Christians, provided those, or other Christians become their securities. This opinion has been ratified by the official acts of Bishop Wilson, who is referred to in the following extract from the *Missionary Register* for April, 1841, p. 214, &c. :—"The bishop paid several visits to Secundra. You are well acquainted with the origin of the Orphan Institution. No fewer than fourteen thousand persons died in the hospital of the Relief Society, at Agra, within six months. This dreadful mortality left hundreds of children, not only orphans, but entirely destitute." "But it must not be forgotten that this is strictly a Christian institution. The education given is based on Christian principles. Some of the children were baptized by our lamented friend and brother, the Rev. Frederick Wybrow, when on a visit to Agra, in 1838; the rest by Mr. Moore." "These orphan institutions (page 217) which are now becoming so numerous, form a blessed epoch in the history of missions. If wisely conducted, they

may have a most important influence, in a generation or two, on the spread of the Gospel in India. Trained from their EARLIEST years in the knowledge of Christianity, the youths will go forth as teachers," &c. . . . "On the 2nd of December, the bishop held a confirmation at Secundra, when about sixty of the orphans, male and female, took upon themselves the vows made for them by their god-parents in their baptism. His lordship also preached a Hindoostanee sermon on "*I am the light of the world.*" I wish I could describe the pleasing scene—the reverent manner in which they joined in responses—the chorus of their treble voices—their marked attention to the bishop's sermon."

But to return to our review. The concluding exhortation to the sponsors affords a corroboration of the preceding exposition, where it calls on them to remember, that "baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him, that, as he died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness," &c. Here is "the inward and spiritual grace," impressed upon our attention, as following after baptism, and almost in the very words of the definition of that grace, which we find in the church catechism. Are we then to deny, that there is, in any sense or degree, a death unto sin accompanying baptism? Certainly not. The death and

resurrection have begun in the baptized ; but they have not been perfected. If they had been perfected at once, there would be no room for the exhortation—"So should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness."

We are now arrived at the office for the ministration of private baptism, and the consequent public reception. But it is hoped that, after the comparative survey which has been already made, it would be superfluous to enter minutely into the parts of these services. The rubrics might invite discussion, but perhaps it would be beside our present purpose. It may, however, be remarked that, although the practice of private baptism ought, as much as possible to be discouraged, the permission of it is not limited to the case of dangerous illness or weakness. The people are to be warned, that "without great cause and necessity they procure not their children to be baptized at home in their houses. But when need shall compel them so to do, then baptism shall be administered" according to the direction of the third rubric. The Lord's Prayer is to be said, and so many of the collects in the Form of Public Baptism, "as the time and present exigence will suffer." These circumstances require the exercise of sound discretion. If there be no probable hope of the child surviving the present extremity, many of the prospective petitions would be evidently unseasonable. It would be proper to pray—"Grant that the old Adam may be

so buried, that the new man may be raised up;" but it would not be proper to ask for triumph "against the devil, the world, and the flesh." The first collect is adapted to all circumstances, as far as the words "the ark of Christ's church" inclusive; but the remainder would sound incongruous in a case of imminent danger. Therefore the general liberty of using the second collect, according to time and exigence, can prove nothing as to the meaning of receiving "remission of sins by spiritual regeneration." It belongs to the officiating minister to consider whether it is suitable to the immediate occasion or not.

When a previously-baptized child is brought into the church, and when the prescribed inquiries have been satisfactorily answered, or his own act certified by the minister, then he is further to certify the congregation of all having been done, "according unto due order, concerning the baptizing of this child; who being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God, is now, by the laver of regeneration in baptism, received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life," &c. This form, and also that following the reception of the child, appear to have been prepared with great caution, and in exact conformity to that wise and scriptural gradation of phraseology before pointed out in the comparison of our baptismal formularies. We have no assertion of new birth having been already

accomplished, although there is very perfect accuracy* in saying—"by baptism regenerate;" nor is new birth implied in the reception of the child "into the number of the children of God;" for a child must be created and formed before its birth. But the natural birth of the child being "in original sin, and in the wrath of God," may seem, to some persons, as if incompatible with the idea of any possibility of incipient spiritual regeneration, through the mercy of God in Christ, antecedent to the actual administration of the rite of baptism. The removal of this difficulty is found in the scriptural examples of double aspects and relations, causing blessing and curse to meet in the same subject. The ground was cursed for the sake of Adam's transgression; but this did not exclude a blessing from the overflowings of JEHOVAH'S love. The Jews, as "concerning the Gospel, are enemies for our sake; but as touching the election,

* The accuracy here consists in an implied caution, not to attribute regeneration to the signing with the sign of the cross, or to any immediate effect of the sponsorial answers; for the child has been previously born of water, and incipiently regenerated by the Spirit; the reception is but a supplementary consequence. As to the effect of the sponsorial engagements, that is in abeyance, until the child can answer for itself. When the baptism and reception are performed at the same time, there is no need of the emphatic distinction—"by baptism regenerate," it is therefore omitted: and herein we may justly observe remarkable precision in the compilers.

they are beloved for the fathers' sakes."—Rom. xi. 28. *Apparently*, can any thing be more heterogeneous than the justification of the ungodly? Yet God has caused righteousness and peace to embrace each other, through Christ's obedience unto death! What hinders then that a child should be born in the wrath of God, in respect of original sin, and yet be a partaker of the free gift which is come upon all men unto justification of life?

Perhaps some may be disposed to argue, that the language used is tantamount to an affirmation of new birth. But to assert this is, at most, only begging the question; especially as we have the very marked contrast of the Form for the Baptism of Adults. To this we may now advance, as the remainder of the service which has been last under consideration is the same with that for the public baptism of infants, with the exception of the omission of the charge to bring the child to be confirmed by the bishop, which perhaps may have been accidental; but from whatever cause, it does not at all interfere with our argument. The four short prayers before the consecration, are omitted in the reception-office, as they have a special reference to the administration of baptism.

OFFICE FOR ADULT BAPTISM.

The opening exhortation is judiciously adapted to the occasion, but does not appear to present any matter for further illustration. The two following

collects are the same with those in the beginning of the formulary for the public baptism of infants, except the addition of the words "*the element of*" before "water." Whether the addition was designed or casual, it affords an example of phrases apparently signifying commencement, and yet not excluding a similar antecedent act or effect. The baptism of our Lord in the Jordan sanctified all pure water whatsoever—"the element of water, to the mystical washing away of sin;" yet we pray, "sanctify this water," as if no previous sanctification had been conferred. But there is no inconsistency. We pray for a special ratification of the general appointment. The phrase "didst sanctify water," is of the same meaning with the more emphatic words, so that the same remark would be just in either place; for water generally must be signified. But the prominence of the term "element," seems intended to put it beyond question, that the original sanctification was not limited to the river, or any portion of it, or of its tributary streams; and the striking emphasis awakened a seasonable idea of corroboration to the interpretation before given of "spiritual regeneration." It is admitted that in the office now under review, an immediate blessing must be sought in praying for this grace. But the believing adult does actually come to holy baptism, and comes in faith; to him the precious promise, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," is directly applicable; the consciousness of the application brings

a comfort, and a degree of the spirit of adoption, which there was hitherto no scriptural foundation for. Thus is the reconciled penitent brought nigh by the blood of Jesus, and prepared for an increase of filial love, while he humbly opens his heart to receive an answer to the church's prayer—"Give thy Holy Spirit to *this person*, that being now born again, and made an *heir* of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, he may continue thy servant, and attain thy promises," &c. Here is an express petition for the Holy Spirit to be given to one already regenerated by the same Spirit. There is therefore abundant, and even cumulative proof, that prayer for, or asserting a work of the Spirit in any stage of his progressive operations, and in language which may be mistaken for totality, does not imply a negation of antecedent grace from the same divine source. And it likewise follows, that the supposition of spiritual regeneration being prayed for prospectively in the case of infants, when in connection with the remission of sins, does not at all derogate from the spirituality and force of the thanksgiving at the close of the service—"that it hath pleased thee to regenerate *this infant* with thy Holy Spirit," &c. It is humbly urged upon the reader again and again, that much unnecessary perplexity has been involved in this important subject, by excluding the clear and intelligible idea of progression, which is also agreeable to the common, literal, and obvious meaning of the terms employed.

Let us recollect the manner in which our Lord speaks, under varying circumstances, of the kingdom of God, its nature, and its coming. Is it not already set up, even amongst men? And yet we pray continually, "Thy kingdom come." Our Lord said, "the kingdom of God is within you;" yet he also said, "there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God." Quotations of this sort might perhaps be multiplied respecting the kingdom; but it ought to be enough to remind the reader of them. They have an appearance of difficulty to those who do not understand our Saviour's parables; but let the progression which the holy Scriptures present be kept in view, and all perplexity will vanish. Such, it is hoped, may be the effect of applying a similar key to the difficulties of the doctrines of regeneration, new birth, and renovation or renewal. It may further serve the purpose of illustration to refer to the recorded opening of hearts and understandings, which cannot be supposed to have been altogether shut until then; as in the case of the disciples in the last chapter of St. Luke, and of Lydia, in the sixteenth chapter of Acts. But it is time to return to the formulary, in which even the relative position of the prayer last quoted, seems to give one other instance of very remarkable precision in the compilers. Let it be observed that it does not occur until the baptized person has been invited to join in addressing God as our Father in Christ. An-

tecedent to the actual baptism, the prayer for new birth is still only prospective, as in the case of infants—“Give thy Holy Spirit to *these persons* that *they* may be born again,” &c. The observation of precision is also borne out by a comparison of the rubrics; for in the first which follows the invitation, let us pray, all the congregation are directed to kneel; but in that which precedes the Lord’s Prayer we find “*all kneeling*,” without mentioning the congregation; and therefore, it is presumed, intending to include the newly-admitted member. “Behold he prayeth,” in the language of adoption; and, hoping his sincerity, we can no longer delay to infer decidedly, and to pronounce our conviction of the existence of the new birth.

We have, however, anticipated considerably, in point of order; by which we are recalled to the words of the Gospel written by St. John in the third chapter.

In this visit of Nicodemus we trust there was an incipient fruit of regenerating grace, for he made a good confession of faith; and we learn from the facts of the subsequent history, that he grew in grace. But it pleased the Lord, who saw his inmost heart, to impress him with a sense of the necessity of a greater change, and a more open confession. Nicodemus, no doubt, was one of those who were waiting for the kingdom of God, though in great ignorance of its nature. How suitable to such a state of mind

was that solemn declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!" And for *entrance* into it, something besides was requisite, which should make a real follower and good soldier of Jesus Christ; and indicate a victory over the fear and shame of man. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The similitude subjoined gives countenance to the doctrine of progressive regeneration; because the wind is air in motion; and it often increases from gentle beginnings to immense force. But, as the primary design appears to have been to exemplify a manifest effect, produced by a mode of operation unseen and inscrutable, we have perhaps no right to extend the application; nor is there any need of doubtful support. It may be useful, however, to show that there is nothing here to favour the interpretation of instantaneous change.

Upon this passage from the Gospel by St. John, the address which follows begins with an observation, "Whereby ye may perceive the great necessity of this sacrament, where it may be had." It then proceeds to show "the great benefit we reap thereby" from the promise connected with our Lord's commission to his disciples, to "preach the Gospel to every creature;" supported by a most edifying summary of the principal parts of holy Scripture pertaining to this subject. The next collect is exactly the same as

the corresponding one in the office for the public baptism of infants. The exhortation to the baptized is, of course, personal, and varied accordingly. The questions are the same, only omitting (as is necessary) "in the name of this child." The answers are the same, except the last, which is framed in such language, as an humble man would wish to use in his own person; but which may be considered superfluous in a representative admission of obligation. The short prayers are the same, except a little verbal variety which seems of no importance. The consecration-prayer is the same; and we have anticipated observations and inferences from the remainder of the service. One of them is strikingly enlarged and strengthened by the concluding exhortation to baptized adults. We are now prepared to pass on to the second general division of our survey.

SECOND DIVISION.

An examination of the three baptismal services in the Book of Common Prayer, primarily with regard to the mention or omission of "remission of sins."

The first phrase which occurs under this head is, "the mystical washing away of sin." This is found in the first collect of the office for the public baptism of infants, where the baptism of Christ is mentioned

as having sanctified water to "the mystical washing away of sin." And in other places, where such sanctification is expressed, whether of "the element of water," or in a prayer to "sanctify this water," the same term "mystical" is employed. The question is, in what sense are we to understand it? It cannot mean the same as if this term were omitted. Let us consult the service for the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and our authorized version of the holy Scriptures. In the introductory exhortation to those who intend to be communicants the officiating minister declares, that "our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ" . . . "hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort." The words "instituted and ordained" imply an outward sign and solemn act which the Lord hath commanded to be used and done "in remembrance" of his love in "dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by his precious blood-shedding he hath obtained to us." And the sign and act, or signs and acts, that is, the bread and wine, and the taking and eating and drinking of them, are called "holy mysteries," because of their significance of inward and spiritual things. Thus our Lord calls his parables "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xiii. 11); and in the first chapter of the Revelation the same Lord is recorded to have commanded his servant John—"Write the things which

thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter ; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches ; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” Thus it is evident that the stars and candlesticks were called “mysteries” in respect of their figurative meaning ; and that the import of the appellation is the same with that of “*symbol*.” Nothing more is requisite to enable us to understand “the mystical washing away of sin :” it is the same as the figurative or symbolical washing away of sin ; and no doubt intended to guard us against the error of supposing that the actual removal of sin is to be attributed to the outward rite ; which would contradict the doctrine of the apostle Peter, where, having mentioned the ark, “Wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water,” he adds, “The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”—1 Pet. iii. 21. In full accordance with this quotation is the address at the beginning of the consecration prayer—to Him, “Whose most dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of our sins, did shed out of his most precious side both water and blood ;” for the glory of the resurrection is the manifestation of the acceptance of

the sacrifice : He “ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”—Rom. iv. 25. Here we learn the only meritorious cause of our reconciliation and acceptance ; here we see an all-purifying fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Why then do we pray, that water may be sanctified “ to the mystical washing away of sin ?” Because it is the appointed sign, and one of the means of obtaining “ the everlasting benediction” of the “ heavenly washing.” The deliverance from wrath, as distinguished from the remission of actual sins, has been explained in a preceding part ; and it has been argued that such remission must be prospectively prayed for in the case of infants.

It is now time to point out a remarkable omission, which corroborates the reasoning from clauses of a positive nature. In the exhortation which is grounded on the extract from St. Mark’s gospel we read—“ Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will likewise favourably receive *this* present *infant* ; that he will embrace *him* with the arms of his mercy ; that he will give unto *him* the blessing of eternal life, and make *him partaker* of his everlasting kingdom.” And in the corresponding exhortation in the office for the public reception of those who have been privately baptized, we read—“ Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that he hath likewise favourably received *this* present *infant* ; that he hath embraced *him* with the arms

of his mercy ; and (as he hath promised in his holy word) will give unto *him* the blessing of eternal life, and make *him partaker* of his everlasting kingdom." The very highest blessings are indeed presented to the believing mind in these exhortations ; but it is perhaps the more striking that "*remission of sins*" is not mentioned. It might possibly be supposed that the omission is but casual, and that it is supplied by what is expressed, were it not for the contrast in the personal exhortation provided by the office for adult baptism. In that we read—"Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will favourably receive *these* present *persons*, truly repenting and coming unto him by faith ; that he will grant *them* remission of *their* sins, and bestow upon *them* the Holy Ghost ; that he will give *them* the blessing of eternal life, and make *them partakers* of his everlasting kingdom." It is plain that "*remission of sins*" stands out as a marked addition to the enumeration of privileges in the preceding quotations. And how is this to be accounted for ? According to the interpretation which this tract advocates the solution is easy. In the case of adults—"truly repenting and coming unto him by faith," the Lord has promised remission of sins, in immediate connexion with baptism ; for therein—after that, "with the heart the man believeth unto righteousness"—"with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."—Rom. x. 10.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark xvi. 16); and again—“Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”—Acts ii. 38. But, in the case of infants who “have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” remission of sins must be looked for as a future gift. Why not, as well as all the others which are enumerated, even to the final coming to the land of everlasting life? If it be thought that the omission is supplied in the second address to the sponsors, where they are reminded that they “have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive *him*, to release *him* of *his* sins,” &c. let it be observed, that this refers to the petition in the second collect connected with “spiritual regeneration,” and makes no difference whatever as to the remarkable contrast which has been already exhibited. Let us look also to what follows in this second address—“Ye have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised in his Gospel to grant all these things that you have prayed for. Which promise he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform. Wherefore, after this promise made by Christ, *this infant* must also faithfully for his part, promise by you that are his sureties, (until he come of age to take it upon *himself*,)” &c. Does not this signify that some of Christ’s promises are in abeyance, until the baptized shall be personally endued

with the indispensable requisites of repentance and faith? We do not say that all are in abeyance; for if so, the undertaking would be impossible; because without grace we can do nothing. That the Lord will vouchsafe to receive, the slightest doubt ought not to be entertained; that his merits abound to bless, even beyond the removal of the curse entailed by original sin, we have scriptural warrant to expect; but a release from personal sins must succeed both transgression and repentance. An *entrance* into the kingdom of heaven is granted at once; for "of such" it partly consists. But there is still ample room to pray for future participation in the glorious inheritance; and that the highly privileged infants, "being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally they may come to the land of everlasting life, there to reign with God world without end, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In this view, the baptismal services may be considered as exhibiting a beautiful and perfect embryo of the entire Christian life, even to its consummation in heaven. But it ought not to be mistaken for an immediate creation of the whole aggregate of parts, which in continuance are fashioned according to the wisdom of that eternal Spirit, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. He gives himself to us and to our children, so that we are

assured of "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue;" and neither parents, nor sponsors, nor "babes and sucklings" placed under their Christian culture, have any lack of grace for the effectual and happy discharge of the respective duties to which they are called as members of the church of Christ. The truth of this representation may, perhaps, be admitted as to those who survive the earliest stage of infancy, and are brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and yet it may be questioned with respect to those who die after having been baptized, and before they commit actual sin; but it is not right to disturb plain and practical conclusions concerning things that are before us because of some difficulties which may be inseparable from things unseen. We may be fully persuaded of the salvation of departed infants, and yet ignorant of the degree and mode of their salvation. The writer still wishes to suggest the idea of progression, without intruding into unrevealed mysteries of the invisible world. The suggestion has been repeated, possibly, even to the satiety of some readers; but it is from a sense of its reality and importance, as well as from having observed a frequent proneness to forget it. May we not affirm without presumption, that all the ways of God, which he has permitted us to behold, are in progression? And have we not reason to suppose progression, in cases quite beyond the

cognizance of our senses? Let us endeavour to recollect whether the holy Scriptures give any countenance to this inference from analogy. It is believed that some light is thrown upon it by our Lord's discourse in the sixth chapter of St. John. We read in the fifty-third verse, that the Lord declared to his audience, in the most solemn manner—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Now, whether we assume that this declaration has a reference to the Lord's supper, or whether (as the writer would prefer) we interpret the passage as signifying faith in the incarnation and atonement of Christ, and the benefits which we receive thereby, it must be granted to be, at least, probable, that some of his disciples must have departed this life, without explicitly understanding the propitiatory sacrifice of the Redeemer's blood, or partaking of the commemorative supper, which shows "the Lord's death until he come." How then can we reconcile our hope of their happiness in paradise, with this express assertion of him, from whom no secrets are hid? It requires a supposition of their learning there what they did not know on earth. The record of what passed on the Mount of Transfiguration may assist our conceptions in this matter: for Moses and Elijah had evidently clearer views than Peter, James, and John, when they spoke with the Lord "of his decease,

which he should accomplish at Jerusalem ; and there is reason to think they had acquired their superior knowledge in the invisible state, and derived effects from it, similar to those which the apostles themselves were conscious of after the day of pentecost. In like manner, it is presumed, that such persons as Simeon, Joseph, and Anna, might have departed in peace, without eating the flesh of the Son of Man, and drinking his blood, and yet have learned afterwards the dependance of their salvation and everlasting happiness upon the great facts signified by these expressions ; and so might have realized in the Jerusalem above that spiritual eating and drinking of which our Saviour spoke. If, then, it be possible for adults to attain essentially increased knowledge and experience of the way of salvation in a future world, much more is it possible for infants to pass through a spiritual progress there, without attributing to baptism a change so transcendent as, in the very effect of the administration, to make them *fully* “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” We may, therefore, be relieved (without any extravagant assumptions) from all tormenting fear concerning the salvation of infants—yea, we may be consoled by the promises and revealed mercies of God’s word, though some should die without baptism who were entitled to the privilege, provided that no wilful neglect has occurred, which would justly becloud the mind of any one,

who might be guilty in the matter. The infants themselves are not responsible for the omission: they are supposed to be in that state which the Scripture calls "*holy*;" and we trust that they do not suffer for a fault of this sort, which they have no power to prevent. Sentiments such as these may account for one wide difference between the office for adult baptism, and those formularies which precede it. In that office it is said, after the passage from the third chapter of Saint John—"Beloved, ye hear in this Gospel the express words of our Saviour Christ, That except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God : whereby ye may perceive the great necessity of this sacrament, where it may be had." No such emphatic notice of necessity is found before. The same part of the Gospel is indeed briefly referred to ; but the same inference is not deduced from it. The passage from St. Mark, and the hortatory address which follows, are full upon the privileges of infants, and the gracious readiness of the Lord to receive them, and to do them good ; but not a word is uttered upon the alarming subject of necessity. Happily, the feelings of most men are tender in respect of infants ; and (whatever may be the theological system which they consider themselves bound to embrace,) in the case of infants they bear testimony, not only in word, but in deed, to the precious truth, that God's "tender

mercies are over all his works." Some of the divines alluded to rejoice to find in the offspring of the unbelieving world (millions of whom are continually dying in infancy) a majority of mankind saved by redeeming love. The blessed hope deserves all praise, especially when it triumphs over uncongenial tenets. It is presumed that the venerable commentator Scott, and Dr. Dwight of America, may be mentioned with honour as examples of such triumph.* Yet Dr. Dwight held, "that infant baptism is in the Scriptures confined to the children of professing Christians."† He argues, "from the constitution of the Abrahamic covenant;" and adds, "It is evident, therefore, that since no children, beside the children of those who publicly professed the religion of the Scriptures, could lawfully receive the initiatory seal of the covenant under the Abrahamic dispensation, no children but such as these can lawfully receive this seal under the Christian dispensation, unless the covenant with respect to this subject can be shown to be altered." Upon the interesting narrative of the children brought

* He says in sermon clvi. of his Theology:—

"There is, I think, reason to hope well concerning other children dying in infancy. But there is certainly peculiar reason for Christian parents to entertain strong consolation with respect to *their* offspring."

See also Calvin's Inst. Book iv. c. 16, §. 26.

"Nondum baptizatum nullibi damnasse comperitur."

† Sermon clix. of his Theology.

to Christ for a blessing, he remarks, that those who brought them were Jews. This may be true. But the certainty of it may be questionable, when we recollect the Lord's testimony of the centurion concerning whom he declared—"I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel." The doctor also draws an inference from the definite article—"Suffer *the* little children"—that the words "cannot be pleaded as a warrant for bringing to Christ in baptism any other children, than such as are in the like circumstances with those mentioned in this passage." It was to be expected that the immediate reference would be to the children present. But if there be no enlargement, there is, on the other hand, no limitation.

However, he proceeds to assert, that "*the text directly declares the same doctrine*" (that is, Acts ii. 38, 39). "The promise," says St. Peter to the Jews, "is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Those who were "afar off" were gentiles, &c. . . "The terms, it is to be remembered, are the same; and the promise conveys no more, as well as no less, to the gentiles than to the Jews, unless the alteration is declared. Such children, then, among the gentiles, as are born of those who profess the religion of the Scriptures, are included in the covenant, and are to be baptized. But the warrant

extends to no others.”* He says, “the same doctrine is declared still more explicitly in 1 Cor. vii. 14— ‘For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.’ ” Without entering into the particulars of the several arguments, it seems a sufficient answer to all, to quote from the original institution of the seal of the Abrahamic covenant in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis—“He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.” This command expressly confers the privilege of the appointed seal upon others therein described, and specially noticed as not among the natural descendants of the patriarch. Granting then all the doctor’s premises concerning the identity of the Christian and Abrahamic covenants, we rejoice to have a recorded precedent (reasoning from that very principle of the one olive tree) which sanctions the baptism of any infants providentially brought within the

* Dr. Dwight does not expressly discuss (at least in this sermon) whether the infant children of believers, born before the conversion of their parents to the Christian faith, are entitled to baptism. But the tenor of his argument seems to imply the contrary; because such children were certainly “*unclean*” by birth.

embraces of the household of faith ; although, by the circumstances of their birth and parentage, they may have been “unclean.” That uncleanness implies the absence of all *right* to baptism ; and it would be inconsistent (if not impossible) while the infants should remain under the authority of unbelievers. But suppose the duty of education to devolve upon the church ; can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, whose new advantages cannot be applied to their spiritual welfare without the Holy Spirit ?

The sponsorial regulations of the united Church of England and Ireland appear to include the principle of extended privilege which has been here maintained ; and they render her most happily adapted to be a nursing-mother in various contingencies which may arise, and have in fact arisen, in these days of missionary exertion.* In the discharge of this important duty we trust that she is warranted by the terms of the Abrahamic covenant, by the spirit of the Gospel, and by the express words of the great commission for its universal proclamation, to say to the godfathers and godmothers of every bereaved orphan — “Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe that he will likewise favourably receive *this present infant* ;” and nothing doubting but that he favourably

* See previous quotations from Bishop Heber’s Journal, and from the “Missionary Register.”

alloweth this charitable work of ours in bringing *this infant* to his holy baptism, let us faithfully and devoutly give thanks unto him ;” for who can conceive that Christ commanded to “disciple all nations,” and left a barrier in the way of the infant part of them? While therefore, we cheerfully claim Dr. Dwight as an eminently able fellow-advocate in defence and maintenance of infant baptism, and the untrammelled administration of the rite, we trust that he was in error in restricting it “to the children of professing Christians.” Was Israel commanded to adopt the children of the stranger? And yet is the catholic church prohibited from exercising the antitype of such charity?

We would almost hope that this learned divine—although he denies that baptism proves regeneration—if he had not understood the term in too strong a sensé, would have been ready to join the Church of England in praising God, that it hath pleased him to regenerate infants with his Holy Spirit.

That Dr. Dwight, if not under the alleged mistake, would have joined in the thanksgiving alluded to, is inferred with much pleasure, from the strong language in which he states the advantages of baptism. In his 146th sermon, he says — “What is true of an adult in these circumstances, is true, probably, in a still more affecting and profitable manner, of parents dedicating their children to

God in this solemn ordinance. Perhaps there is not in the world a sight more interesting than that of an infant offered up by believing parents to God in baptism—the helpless circumstances of the child; the peculiar tenderness of the relation existing between it and the parents; the strong expression of their faith in God, in giving up their beloved offspring to him, devoting it to his service, and engaging to train it up for his glory; the exhibition of their reliance on the blood of Christ, and the agency of the Spirit of truth, to cleanse it from its original pollution; the affecting manifestation of the divine mercy and goodness, in permitting us thus to offer up our children to God,” &c. . . . “It is here to be remembered, that, as religious education is constituted in the Christian church a primary mean of salvation, so the ordinance of baptism is invested with a peculiar importance, from the intimate and acknowledged connection between the act of devoting a child to God in this manner, and the duty of educating him for the service of his Maker, and the attainment of eternal life. No two religious employments are, in this country at least, and probably in most others throughout Christendom, more universally understood to be inseparably connected, than the act of giving up a child to God, and the duty of educating him for his service. The most solemn sense of the obligations which we are under to train up our children for God, is probably

derived from the administration of this ordinance.”* All this is beautiful and true. But how did it escape the sagacity of this pious and learned divine, that it is incompatible with the absence of regeneration? He says most truly†—“the answer of a good conscience,” spoken of by St. Peter, “cannot be given by him who is not regenerated.” He might have added—“neither can any spiritual act, well pleasing to God, and profitable to the soul, be done by one in such a state of death!” Then what becomes of baptismal privileges without quickening grace? How can parents exercise “faith in God, in giving up their beloved offspring to him, devoting it to his service, and engaging to train it up for his glory,” while they believe that offspring to be so completely “*flesh*” that it cannot please God? Is not this engaging to train up “the carnal mind” for God’s glory, which “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be?”—Rom. viii. 7, 8. What is the meaning of the exhibition of their reliance on the blood of Christ, and the agency of the Spirit of truth, if the infant has received nothing corresponding to that exhibition? If the agency of the Spirit be indeed in operation, must it not be employed in a regenerating work? And is it not our duty to thank God for the

* Page 229 of vol. v. London edition of 1824.

† Ibid. Page 227.

blessing? These questions are intended to be put in candour; and in the hope that this has been done, without any misrepresentation of Dr. Dwight's words. For he goes on to state the duty of Christian education in as clear and strong terms as any man could use, notwithstanding the manifest inconsistency of such a statement with other tenets which he strenuously advocates. He affirms that "religious education is constituted in the Christian church a primary mean of salvation." To that position this pen most cordially subscribes. But religious education cannot be carried on, unless the Holy Spirit work with both learner and teacher, or at least with the learner; that is, it is an absolute impossibility without regenerating grace. It is as perfectly impracticable to learn one Christian lesson antecedent to that grace, as it is to give the "answer of a good conscience" of which St. Peter speaks.

That Doctor Dwight understood the term *regeneration* in too strong a sense, may be further evinced by his reply to the answer of an opponent, who is supposed to plead the possibility of "falling from grace." He says—"That no such apostacy is known in the Scriptures." It is happily certain that the "sheep" of Christ "shall never perish." But in that promise a very advanced degree of divine teaching is described—"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Is it allowable to apply the promise to every stage and effect of the

drawing of the Father? Those who assert the impossibility of falling from grace, seem to forget or deny progression and degrees in the origin of religion, and to take it for granted that the passage "from death unto life" is absolutely instantaneous. If that be true, what means the solemn warning in the sixth chapter of Hebrews, which describes very high privileges, yet ends with mentioning the possibility of falling from them, and the inefficacy of all means that can be now employed "to renew to repentance" those who "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame!" What means the admonition of the apostle Paul to beware of the awful guilt of being the cause of a "weak brother" perishing, "for whom Christ died?" or the charge of the apostle Peter against one who "hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins?" These, and such like passages, ought to impress a salutary caution against adopting systems which refuse to admit of any modification.

Other quotations might be made from Doctor Dwight's work, corroborating what has been suggested as to the state of his mind on the subject of regeneration, and one probable cause of it; but it may be better not to delay.

It is hoped that the principal difficulties have been removed, which might impede our expression of gratitude and praise, that it hath pleased Almighty God to regenerate infants with his Holy Spirit.

And while at this season of the year (March 29, 1842) we are more especially called upon to offer our fervent sacrifice of thanksgiving to that Great Being, whose never-failing providence "giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater," we may, at the same time, behold a beautiful similitude, teaching us a spiritual lesson in the matter of our contemplation. We can feel no hesitation in praising God, that it hath pleased him to regenerate the scattered seed, even before it has perceptibly begun to vegetate.* The vital influence is to us invisible; but it is, notwithstanding, effectually moved by him "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." So is the operation of the eternal Spirit "dividing to every man severally as he will." The fowls of the air may devour many grains, the frost may cast out others on the surface of the ground, and even after the tender blade has appeared, a worm at the root may cause it to wither and decay; but these are motives to excite the diligence, watchfulness, and skill of the husbandman, not to produce despondency or neglect. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease." The promise of the Lord is pledged—the token of the covenant appeareth in the cloud; the rain de-

* "Though all the soil a genial ferment spreads,
Regenerates the plants, and new adorns the meads."—
Blackmore, in Johnson's Dictionary, under the word
"regenerate."

scends—the unwearied sun shines forth—“there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” Let us lift up our hearts in gratitude: it is God’s good pleasure to renew the face of nature, and to give us fruits of increase, and to produce continually—first, the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” In like manner, let us trust in the Lord for all that is needful unto spiritual growth, and let us make it our concern not to frustrate his grace, or grieve his Holy Spirit, by our unbelief, or negligence, or disobedience. He has commanded us to bring up our children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” without any limitation of age or capacity. This command implies a promise of his Spirit, without which it could not be performed. It warrants Christian parents to pray for God’s Spirit to be poured* “upon their seed, and his blessing upon their offspring,” even in the very first elements of their existence—that they may “spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses.” It inspires the precious hope of all means being rendered efficacious by him, “in whom is life, and the life is the light of men;” who took little children in his arms, “put his hands upon them, and blessed them. With such encouragement every smile on a babe’s lips, responsive to a parent’s looks of love, may be regarded as a ray from the infinite source of all pure love; and every letter that is taught will

* Isaiah xliv.

be an ingredient in that knowledge which maketh "wise unto salvation." The excellent professor, so much referred to, draws happy inferences from the eighth psalm as to the future state of infants. But did not the Lord himself apply it to the children in the temple? There is no one who watches attentively and spiritually the opening of the mind, that may not be astonished and delighted, at observing how praise is perfected out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. The pride of man is disposed to wait for a large increase of intellectual power, in order to the perception of truth in the exercise of reason. A glorious gift indeed! But God anticipates it in various ways. Witness the mysteries of instinct—one of the heavenly guides and preservers of man, as well as of the other animals. Witness the school of imitation, and the acquisition of language. Witness that internal sense which we need not fear to call an inspiration of the Almighty, (Job. xxxii. 8,) which discerns, in various degrees, between good and evil; and pronounces an immediate sentence of approval or disapproval upon thoughts, and words, and actions. It is by this faculty, when sanctified in a competent degree, that the communications of revelation are embraced, not only as true but as good.* And the application and fruit of it may be perceived in children before they have been fully practised in their

* See Hooker, probably in his sermon "on the perpetuity of faith," &c.

native tongue. Hence it is that they are so soon capable of understanding and loving the inestimable book of God; hence it is, that by spiritual discernment “a little child may learn to know it answers to its name,” according (in proportional degree) to that most remarkable declaration of our Saviour himself—“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

Let us now advert again to that anticipation of repentance and faith, which is declared by the sponsorial answers in the name of the baptized. These are, or ought to be familiar to every reader; yet it may be useful to recollect them briefly. The first question is, “Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?” Answer—“I renounce them all.”

The second question asks, apparently in a more direct manner, “Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty?” and so proceeds through the creed, commonly called *the Apostles' creed*. Answer—“All this I steadfastly believe.”

Third question—“Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?” Answer—“That is my desire.”

Fourth question—“Wilt thou, then, obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk

in the same all the days of thy life?" Answer—
"I will."

Now what can be the intention of this peculiar form and supposition, which assimilates (as nearly as possible) the baptism of infants to that of adults? It seems to be for the purpose of intimating, that the way of salvation (revealed in the Gospel) is the same in all cases, namely, this:—"By grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." If the doctrine were true, that the whole effect of baptism is at once communicated to baptized infants, because they oppose no obstacle, what need could there be of the sponsorial questions and answers in the name of the child? They would be quite superfluous and unmeaning. But, according to what is maintained in this tract, they are most important and instructive; as, it is hoped, will be manifestly proved when we come to the consideration of the Church Catechism. And, in the meantime, be it observed, that the undeniable anticipation which occurs in the sponsorial part of the service, evinces, that there is no absurdity in asserting anticipated remission of actual sins by *spiritual regeneration* in the second collect for the public baptism of infants; for approximation to identity with adult baptism, is the very essence of the whole formula. And if it be certain, that there is an anticipation of faith in the answer, "*all this I steadfastly believe,*" what difficulty can there be in the

supposition of anticipated “*coming*” to holy baptism? The practice of a solemn anniversary commemoration of baptism, illustrates what is meant by this sort of coming: it is a coming in spirit; to seek all the privileges and blessings of which the washing of water is a seal and pledge, and to render thanks and praise to the Giver of them all. It is such a coming as is implied in “remembering always that baptism doth represent unto us our profession;” and, it is presumed to be very specially exemplified in the rite of confirmation. It is therefore believed, and here repeated, that the remarkable omission of *remission of sins* in the exhortation to sponsors which follows the gospel of St. Mark, was a designed omission; and that the whole of what is directly applicable to the infant state, is expressed in the solemn assurance—“I certify you, that in this case all is well done, and according unto due order, concerning the baptizing of this child, who being born in original sin, and in the wrath of God, is now, by the laver of regeneration in baptism, received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life.” There is wrath due to original sin, “which is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of *Adam* ;” according to the definition and assertion of our ninth article, and the doctrine of St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, where, in reference to “the children of disobedience,” he says, “among whom also we all had our conver-

sation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." But in this deserved wrath, mercy undeserved is remembered, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. For, "as by the offence of one, *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life." And in this dispensation of mercy "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."—2 Cor. v. 19.

In this universality of redeeming love and grace it cannot be doubted that infants are included. It is, therefore, very true, and agreeable to Scripture, to affirm, that they are justified ; not, however, by baptism, but (as all the world are justified) by the blood of Christ. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."—Rom. v. 6-10. Behold, then, an act of grace—of divine, of infinite

grace and mercy, in favour of all mankind, of every age, of every clime, of every degree, through the atonement which God himself has provided; and in virtue of which the great commission has been issued to “preach the Gospel to every creature.” “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Behold the justification of “the ungodly” by his blood. But for the actual enjoyment of peace, we must be justified by faith in him, “who was delivered for [or on account of] our offences, and was raised again for [or on account of] our justification.” Rom. iv. 25. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Rom. v. 1. There is no other propitiation for sin. The original guilt of infants is removed thereby; and when they are in circumstances to be educated in the faith of Christ, they are entitled to the encouraging, and precious, and spiritual privilege of “the mystical washing away of sin” in the laver of regeneration.

Thus also the whole congregation of Israel, old and young, were “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (see 1 Cor. x. Exod. and Psalm lxvii.); “and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” . . . Now these things happened

unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." One salutary means of support and preservation is found in a continual coming to the inward grace of baptism, which is signified by the outward washing. In this act (that is, in this coming) justification by faith is received, and its preciousness is felt. The justified drink refreshing streams, and "draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation." They trace the whole supply to their Christian privileges, of which baptism is a sign. They turn to it (as such) with grateful retrospection; but they rest not in the ordinance, nor in the church by which it is administered; their trust is in Christ; and walking "in the light, as he is in the light," they experience the efficacy of his blood to "cleanse from all sin." They "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and are not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." They taste the blessedness of those to whom "the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." They do not regard baptism as abating the hope of forgiveness for their actual sins; but rather as testifying—"if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Yet the tendency and fruit

of all is—holiness. For the apostle says—“These things write we unto you, that ye sin not.” There is nothing can “crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts,” but the knowledge of a crucified Redeemer. All other modes of pacifying conscience, must either lead to self-righteous presumption, or the most paralyzing despondency. In a hopeless conflict, without filial love, no acceptable obedience can be rendered; an overwhelming sense of guilt must accumulate more and more; no comfortable answer can be heard to the sad cry of the sinner—“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” until the grace of God shall enable him to say—“I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Romans vii. Then it becomes known, by faith, that there “is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” In this assurance the Christian goes on his way rejoicing; the joy of the Lord is his strength; and he finds the ways of wisdom “pleasantness and peace.” “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” Seeing then, that “it is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?”—Rom. viii.

The universality of the justification of mankind by

the blood of Christ, has been already shown ; and that as he was delivered on account of our offences, so he was raised again, because the propitiation was made and accepted. This doctrine may, perhaps, appear to some as the same with Mr. Thomas Erskine's system of universal pardon. But the supposed identification is earnestly disclaimed. There are beautiful and good things in the work alluded to ; but it is believed that in all his attempts to improve our translation of the holy Scriptures, the author has signally failed ; and that, instead of elucidation, he has rather contributed to embarrass a plain subject. The universality of justification is simply the all-sufficiency of the atonement, and the precious revelation that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son ; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is hoped that Mr. Erskine intended no more ; but in his phraseology, he has not adhered with sufficient closeness to the Bible-modes of expression. Let us endeavour to avoid this error.

That there is a sense in which justification is spoken of as conferred upon the human race, can scarcely admit of doubt. In the text already quoted, at the end of the fourth chapter of Romans, the resurrection of our Lord is considered as a demonstration that the work of justification had been accomplished. And in the fifth chapter we read of Christ having died for us "*while we were yet sinners ;*" of being

“justified by his blood ;” and of being, while enemies, “reconciled to God by the death of his Son ;” and of the free gift “upon all men unto justification of life.” Now in all this accumulation and variety of expression, we have concurring and mutually illustrative evidence, that the apostle was speaking of an effect produced by the sacrifice of Christ, antecedent to all knowledge of it by those for whose benefit it was offered. By this antecedence it is decidedly distinguished from justification by faith. And may we not thus learn what is meant, in the fourth chapter, by justification of “the ungodly ?” This state of ungodliness exactly corresponds with the “sinners” and “enemies” of the fifth chapter, where we also meet the very term, “ungodly,” as descriptive of those for whom Christ, in due time, died. According to the whole context it appears, that in dying for them he procured the justification of the ungodly. And, as to the nature of the blessing, we are led to conclude, that it is the perfect provision made by the wisdom and grace of God, to cause “mercy and truth to meet together ;” to “magnify the law and make it honourable ;” “that he might be just and the justifier of those that believe in Jesus ;” and that it is not only sufficient, but intended for the redemption of all mankind. Of infants being included in this dispensation of mercy there can be no question. And *a fortiori* we infer the privilege of baptized infants ; and, in the *universal* meaning of the term,

there can be no objection to say that they are justified. But it will be necessary to resist the sliding in of any definition, which would make their future justification by faith to differ essentially from the justification of converted heathens. That of which they are unconsciously partakers, is a heavenly act of amnesty, a removal of the attainder, which sin brought upon Adam and his posterity. But they cannot be justified from the guilt of actual sins, before these have been committed ; neither can faith be imputed to them for righteousness before it exists.

It is also submitted to consideration, that there is no scriptural proof of an imputation of righteousness to the ungodly—remaining such ; and that the absence of that imputation constitutes a most material distinction between incipient justification—that is, the amnesty of grace, wherein “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them”—and justification by faith, wherein “we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” It may be argued, that “not imputing their trespasses unto them” amounts to the same thing as the imputation of righteousness. But there is a non-imputation, which averts the extremity of penal woe, without restoring to favour and paternal approbation. There is no reason to suppose that more was intended in this passage.

If any one be disposed to contend that private baptism invalidates the arguments which have been

drawn from the sponsorial form of public baptism, there is a ready answer in the provision made by the church for supplying the defect; by which we are taught that the full import of the rite of baptism is always the same, whether it be expressed or implied.

In confirmation of what has been said upon the prospectiveness of prayer, and the retrospectiveness of coming for "remission of sins," a quotation may be given from Archbishop Ussher's eighteen Oxford sermons, as cited in Budd on Baptism :*—"Baptism is not done only at the font, which is a thing that deceives many : for it runs through our whole life ; nor hath it consummation till our dying day, till we receive final grace : the force and efficacy of baptism is for the washing away of sin to-morrow, as well as the day past." The erroneous supposition, which is here censured as a frequent source of deception, is also a cause of some of the apparent difficulties with which this subject has been clouded. But the truth is, that *spiritual regeneration* is not a change instantaneously complete, but a growth which expands into perfect renewal. It ought not to be identified with the new birth ; nor is it so identified in our church formularies. On the other hand, it ought not to be separated from the progressive renewal of the heart and life, by representing it as communicated at once,

* See page 167. Second Edition. London : 1828.

in absolute totality, through the administration of the external rite.

If the language of the address which precedes, and the thanksgiving which follows, the Lord's Prayer, in the public baptism of infants, be objected to these assertions, the following explanation is offered, as being believed to contain a satisfactory answer. Our blessed Saviour speaks of being "born of water and of the spirit." The first is a visible and momentary sign; but it does not follow that the thing signified (which is an internal work of the spirit) is so inseparably connected with the sign, that it must necessarily be finished in the transient act of its application. And accordingly, the thanksgiving is not, that "*thou hast regenerated,*" but "that it hath pleased thee to regenerate." Now what is this, but to offer thanks for the revelation and assurance of God's good pleasure to carry on a work of regeneration by his Holy Spirit. Who could mistake the meaning of similar expressions in any other case?

It may, perhaps, subserve the purpose of illustration to adduce a few examples. Let us conceive, that, at the laying of the first stone of the new Royal Exchange in January last, (1842,) a clause had been introduced in the excellent prayer, by which it was sanctified, in the following words:—"We yield thee hearty thanks that, in great mercy, and in the arrangement of thy good providence, which we are

permitted to behold in part, it hath pleased thee to give us hope of the restoration of the national mansion of our commerce, and to rejoice that it is begun." Would there be any impropriety in drawing such an inference from the assemblage of that day—from the exhibition of prepared plans, and the means provided for the execution? Assuredly not. Why, then, should the common usage of language be departed from, in expounding the baptismal thanksgiving in question? Again, let us turn the eyes of our mind to the auspicious departure of the Bishop of New Zealand from the shores of Britain. May we not well imagine him presenting his thanksgivings for the hope, that it had pleased God to send him on such a service for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom; meaning no more than a reference to his appointment and consecration, together with the instrumentality in progress towards the accomplishment of its destination? Such a grateful ejaculation, we trust, would acceptably ascend; yet various contingencies might frustrate the expectation of the individual as to his own share in the glorious prospect. But we pray (April 12, 1842,)* that his lordship's life and health may be preserved, and that he may be brought in safety to the haven where

* What cause have we to rejoice, that our prayers may now (January 18, 1843,) be accompanied with thanksgivings, that they have been heard and answered!

he would be, and to a flock prepared for his episcopal rule and oversight.

In the anticipation of that happy event, let us again, in imagination, behold the Bishop of New Zealand on his knees, engaged in prayer and praise. What may we suppose, in such a case, to be part of the utterance of his heart? Would it be unsuitable to say—"We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to civilize and bless the inhabitants of these islands, by the establishment of a regular, a legitimate, and strong government, with all the accompanying privileges of British authority and friendship; but above all, by the introduction of Christianity, and of the light and ordinances of an apostolic church."

Here, for the purpose of argument and illustration, it is desired to fix attention upon the word *civilize* in this supposed thanksgiving, in full persuasion of the propriety of saying—"that it hath pleased thee to civilize;" whereas it would be false to say—"that thou hast civilized." It would be an easy and just transition to add—"that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this people with thy Holy Spirit;" seeing that adequate means for this end have been put in operation by God's good providence and grace, and already most signally and abundantly blessed. If this be admitted, it will suggest the adoption of a corresponding paraphrase of the disputed form in our baptismal service:—"we yield thee hearty thanks,

most merciful Father, that thou hast graciously manifested the good pleasure of thy will, to carry on the inward work of regeneration, in the heart and soul of this infant, by thy Holy Spirit; that thou hast begun this blessed work, and that it is in progress."

But it may be said, that even granting this paraphrase to be just, it only applies to the thanksgiving; while a positive assertion remains unexplained, "that *this child* is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's church." This objection gives an opportunity of observing, that here we have another instance of the very great accuracy and precision of the compilers of our liturgy, by which they have preserved its offices in conformity with the holy Scriptures, and drawn a strongly-marked line, which excludes erroneous interpretation. They teach that the child is *regenerate*; not, that it has been, or is *regenerated*. The verbal difference, it is true, is but a letter. Yet the signification of the adjective is very far distant from that of the participle. Let it not be deemed presumptuous to affirm that this is an observation of the highest importance. For one of the worst errors which prevail at this day, and one which is a fruitful parent of a corrupt offspring, has no better support than an overlooking of a plain distinction, and making such a confusion of terms, as to represent our baptismal service declaring, that every baptized infant has been regenerated

fully ; that their regeneration—their new birth—has been completed in the rite. Not so, our venerable reformers ; not so, the spirit by which their minds were enlightened—by which their pens were guided ; although we dare not say—infallibly. The word employed by them is *regenerate* ; which signifies a very high and spiritual blessing, but in an incipient degree, and suited to infancy. The analogy of nature, to which the inspired word refers, again assists our thoughts in discerning the path of truth. The child, which was born in sin, is grafted into the body of Christ's church. So some degenerate stock is planted in a rich and well-cultivated nursery ; all things are prepared for the change ; it is in progress even by operations which seem to be destructive. The stock is amputated ; its top is divided ; a fruitful scion is inserted ; it is swathed and inclosed in its new position ; the sun, the air, the moisture act upon it ; the sap from the root begins to circulate in it ; it is regenerate ; and its regeneration will advance (if not obstructed by injury) until the expansion of leaves announces a new birth, which is to be matured in precious fruit. Thus, as soon as the act of ingrafting is performed, the once degenerate stock may most truly be pronounced regenerate ; but the addition of a single letter would insinuate a falsehood in the place of truth. The similitude of the case of baptism is so obvious, as to supersede the necessity of explanation ; and the beautiful corres-

pondence of our formularies with the facts of the holy ordinance, which they apply to our comfort and blessing, removes every difficulty from offering up heartily the appointed thanksgiving. For the apparent difficulty, which has embarrassed the minds of many, arises only from misconception.

Perhaps an example, or examples, may be adduced, which some will suppose to prove that the phrase, "it hath pleased thee," is equivalent to the assertion of a finished work. It is admitted that it is so, where it refers to a single act; as in the burial service—"Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed." The single act is the transition of the soul's departure from the body. On this distinction the defence of the paraphrase is rested. Regeneration is a continued act; and in such cases, the phrase in question does not signify that the act is ended. It may have had a previous commencement, and be in progress; it may be only then begun.

The foregoing illustrations are only of a popular nature, and perhaps inadequate. But there are many afforded by the holy Scriptures, which amount to demonstration. Did not the first covenant of promise give full warrant to the parents of the human race, and to all believers in successive generations, to thank God that it hath pleased him to bruise the serpent's head, and to destroy the works of the devil;

although this great victory be but in progress to the present hour? In the twelfth chapter of Genesis we read, that God gave a promise to Abraham—“In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” This warrants a believer to render hearty thanks that “it hath pleased God to bless all the families of the earth.” But it does not warrant a thanksgiving for the actual accomplishment of the blessing, as a thing completed and past. Our Saviour said, at the time that certain Greeks desired to see him—“I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”—John xii. 32. Ought not his disciples to praise him, that it was his good pleasure, by his death upon the cross, to “draw all men unto him?” Yet the work of salvation is only in progress; it would not be according to truth to say—“thou hast drawn.” St. Peter assures us, that the Lord “is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Similar illustration might be drawn from this precious passage; or from the blessed truth contained in St. Paul’s charge against a despiser of the divine forbearance:—“not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. Did God so love the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?” Did that beloved Son “bear our sins in his own body on the tree;” and proclaim from the cross—“Look unto me, and be ye saved,

all ye ends of the earth?" Did he commission his apostles "to preach the Gospel to every creature?" Did he say—"all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations," (margin:—"make disciples or Christians of all nations,") "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?" And would it be wrong to say—"We thank thee, O Father, that it hath pleased thee to evangelize and save the world?" What though a "mystery of iniquity" has retarded the work? What though, as was predicted, there has been "a falling away first?" "What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." In like manner, ought not the rich provision which the Lord has made, and the good will he has manifested, constrain us to give thanks, "that it hath pleased him to regenerate our baptized infants with his Holy Spirit?" Not meaning that the work is entirely done in the rite; but rejoicing in hope of going forward according to the blessed beginning; in hope of bringing up sons and daughters to the Lord Almighty, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ—through the power of the Holy Ghost. What though some do not believe? It is to be deplored! "O Lord, increase our faith," and "help our unbelief!" It is enough for the comfort and encouragement of believers, that the Spirit declared

by Peter on the day of Pentecost — “the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Why then should we hesitate to thank God in the appointed manner, who has promised to pour his Spirit on our seed? He hath surely given manifold proofs that it is his good pleasure to do so. If we believe not, there may be failure. “Yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.” If you suppose your thanksgiving to apply exclusively to a thing past, you will be in danger, either of resting in the form, or of erecting a structure of superstition and self-righteousness. But if your heart, O Christian parent, overflows with gratitude for the bestowment of a present blessing, in such measure as it is possible for an infant to receive—and for the promise of continual supplies of grace, according to every season and degree of need, then you will “draw water with joy out of the wells of salvation;” you will cheerfully devote yourself to the delightful duty of Christian education; strengthened in “faith working by love;” “believing all things, hoping all things;” knowing that God hath “given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature.” It would be most unscriptural to limit such promises to adults, in the face of that gracious manifestation of good will which Christ vouchsafed to infants, when “he took them in his arms, put his hands upon

them, and blessed them ;” and of the act (Matt. xviii.) by which he answered that question of the disciples — “ Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ?” — “ Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.” It is true, that this child could not have been then a mere infant ; but, to suit the purpose of his being thus called, he must have been of very tender age. Yet he appears to have been a disciple of Christ ; the context implies that he believed on him. And such early faith in our Redeemer, we have reason to bless God, is often witnessed in the present day ; which could not be without an incipient spiritual regeneration by the Holy Spirit, enabling these young disciples to know and love their Lord and Saviour.

To recognise all this, and to co-operate with it, is to receive such little ones “ in his name,” and accordingly to “ receive himself.” But surely we should all take heed, lest by denying the possibility of infants being the subjects of such grace, we should be putting a stumbling-block in the way of children, and incur the awful judgment denounced against any “ who shall offend one of those little ones which believe.”

To return, however, to the interpretation of the thanksgiving—"That it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit;" it is so cardinal a part of the exposition of our baptismal formularies, that it is hoped indulgence may be extended, even to reiterated repetition on the subject. The idea seems to have taken a strong hold of many, that the phrase in question amounts to giving thanks for spiritual regeneration already completed. This is earnestly denied, for the reasons which have been assigned; and the maintainers of that opinion are respectfully called upon to produce proof, that regeneration is not a continued, but a single act. That such proof cannot be found in holy Scripture, or in the common use of language, the writer of this tract is firmly persuaded: and being also persuaded that the opinion alluded to is a source of confusion and of dangerous error, he takes the liberty of endeavouring to combat it, even in the shape which it assumes in an editor's article of "The Irish Ecclesiastical Journal," for January, 1842. In his description of a good churchman, which deserves great praise, and perhaps no objection, he says, "that a good churchman he conceives to be one," &c.; and again he says, that such a man believes "that the force and meaning of the formularies are to be learned, not from external sources of any sort, but from the words of the formularies themselves" (in their obvious meaning).

“ He believes, that the only sense which can be lawfully or honestly imposed on the words of these formularies, is the literal and grammatical sense : and that to attempt to impose on them any other, whether as more scriptural, or more catholic, is nothing short of tyranny over his brother’s conscience.” This is a very true and fair statement, according to the honest sense, in which the editor doubtless intended to lay down his rule. He could not have entertained a thought of excluding the ordinary and indispensable methods of ascertaining the “ literal and grammatical sense.” Such as the application of grammar rules ; consulting parallel and contrasted passages ; the usages of common parlance, necessary distinctions, &c. No ; he intended to exclude the authority of interpreters, private opinions, and such like. But it is wonderful how easily a man may slide into a transgression even of his own good rules. The editor has committed this fault, but assuredly without intention. He appeals for the sense of our baptismal services to the parties on both sides in the Savoy conference ; to the objections of the nonconformists, and the answers of the bishops. And he sums up thus—“ Such, in the judgment of both its enemies and its defenders, is the obvious and grammatical sense of the Common Prayer-book,” &c. Now, that is not to discuss fairly what the grammatical sense is, but to put authority in the place of examination.

Let us, however, take an example from the editor's quotations. "In the collect after baptism, 'We yield thee hearty thanks,' &c., the Puritans made this objection to the words, 'that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant by thy Holy Spirit'—'We cannot in faith say, that *every child that is baptized is regenerated* by God's Holy Spirit,' at least it is a disputable point, and therefore we desire that it may be otherwise expressed.'—*Hist. of Nonc.* p. 173. *Cardwell*, p. 325 The answer of the bishops is in the following words: 'seeing that GOD'S SACRAMENTS HAVE THEIR EFFECTS WHERE THE RECEIVER DOTH NOT *ponere obicem*, PUT ANY BAR AGAINST THEM, (WHICH CHILDREN CANNOT DO,) we may say in faith of *every child that is baptized, that it is regenerated* by God's Holy Spirit; and the denial of it tends to anabaptism, and the contempt of this holy sacrament, as nothing worthy nor material, whether it be administered to children or no.'"—*Hist. of Nonconf.* p. 305. *Cardwell*, p. 356.

It is admitted that this is strong as to the opinions of the parties in the Savoy conference; but it seems to the writer that Archbishops Cranmer and Ussher may be opposed to both. After all, neither authority is decisive; though all ought to be regarded with deference, and carefully considered. As to the bishops engaged in the conference, while we have great reason to be thankful for the

conclusion they came to in rejecting the proposed changes, we are not bound to assent to the validity of their argument.

After these and other quotations from the conference, the editor states his own view as follows:—
“In the private baptism of infants no sponsors are required,” &c. . . . and the Gospel is then read and commented on, to prove that the child has already in its private baptism received the grace and blessing of which (according to the doctrine of the church) baptism is the “pledge” and the “means.” Here is not a violation of the rule before quoted, but an actual misquotation of most material importance, although it may appear trivial to inaccurate readers, because it is only putting the definite for the indefinite article. But this substitution involves inferences of very great magnitude, and deeply affecting our present inquiry.

Our excellent Church Catechism (among other things) describes a sacrament as “a means whereby we receive,” and “a pledge to assure;” so that the definition does not exclude other means or pledges, as the definite article does. The catechism is not expressly mentioned; perhaps it may not be right to impute misquotation. But in either way, the doctrinal error remains the same. As to the argument drawn from the omission of sponsors in private baptism, proof has been already offered that the usual sponsors are implied. The editor also

asserts, that "the doctrine of the church is, that the regeneration of the infant does not depend either on the faith of the minister, or of any one else, but on Christ's institution and promise, by which alone the sacraments are effectual." Surely it may be asked, Did he recollect the possible case of all the adult parties being infidels and hypocrites?

It is conceded, that occasion had been given for some strictures; but it is believed, that those applied by "The Ecclesiastical Journal" (although with exemplary mildness and moderation) are themselves also erroneous.

In one observation, at least, the writer of these pages agrees fully with the editor of the journal, that we are discussing "a matter becoming every hour more painfully momentous." Under this solemn impression, let us now proceed to inquire, whether the interpretation maintained in the first and second divisions of this tract, is corroborated by the further appeal proposed to be made in the remaining part.

THIRD DIVISION.

A comparison of the preceding review, with the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England; and also with the office for Confirmation, and the Church-Catechism.

In adopting the rule of interpretation proposed by the editor of "The Ecclesiastical Journal," it is evidently

reasonable to understand it as admitting a comparison of all our formularies and standard-documents. It is not, however, intended to insinuate that our baptismal services are in actual need of such assistance, in order to ascertain their meaning. They are in themselves sufficiently clear and explicit. But it is to be presumed from their common origin and authority, that they mutually harmonize; and it may therefore be expected that they reflect light upon each other; besides, independently of any such advantage, it is necessary to show their consistency; and, without establishing this, the doctrine of the church could not be fully stated.

Among the formularies to be compared, the last mentioned in the heading of this division seems to claim the first place in natural order; as it is appointed for the earliest instruction of the baptized, and opens with an enumeration of the privileges of baptism; "wherein" (says the catechumen) "I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Here a sort of difficulty occurs in the first step; because '*a member of Christ*' is figurative language: how then shall we adhere to the rule of literal interpretation? But it is plain, where a figure really exists, and is so intended, a construction rigidly literal would be a departure from the obvious meaning, and contrary to another branch of the rule. It is therefore, perhaps, almost superfluous to mention

such a case as a difficulty, except from abundant caution. And having thus briefly noticed it, will be sufficient to prevent any one from stumbling, for a moment, at an inquiry into the figurative, that is, the real meaning of the first baptismal privilege; namely, being "made a member of Christ."

But a more serious question immediately presents itself, as to the mode of ascertaining the import of the figure. Does the prohibition of resorting to external sources impose an absolute imprisonment within the limits of the catechism? That is manifestly not the intention of the rule, except to the extent of excluding human authorities and imaginations. For a good churchman is described to be one "who believes that the constitution and doctrine of the Church of England—developed in the Book of Common Prayer—taking the words of that book in their plain, common, obvious, and grammatical sense and construction—are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures and the doctrine of the primitive church." Now without entering into any discussion of the degree of deference, which is due or not due to the primitive church, the necessity of agreement with the holy Scriptures is here distinctly maintained. Consequently it is granted that an appeal to that inspired and perfect standard is open to a good churchman, and that it is his right and duty to make the appeal. Indeed it would avail but little to know the meaning of the church in her

formularies, if it could not be proved to be in conformity with the word of God. And as to that meaning itself, since the style and language of the Prayer-book, are formed upon the study of the holy Scriptures and a familiar acquaintance with them, it would be as preposterous to attempt to fix the interpretation of the Prayer-book, without reference to the Bible, as it would be to boast of understanding an idiom or dialect, without either conversing with the people, to whom they are vernacular, or reading the books, which are the mirror of their thoughts and oral language. Without this inspired guide, the figurative appellation "a member of Christ" would be hard to be understood; and that a *person* should, in any sense, be denominated "a member of a person," might seem harsh and perplexing. But when we learn from Him who "takes of the things of Christ and shows them" to his disciples, that the Lord vouchsafes to regard his church as his body, and that he sustains the relation of its head, then all difficulty vanishes, and it is easily conceivable, that admission to the fellowship and privileges of the church of Christ, is to be made a member of his body, a member of himself.

Among these privileges, the two which are specified, adoption and inheritance, are inseparably connected with membership. But high and inestimable as all the privileges of the body of Christ unquestionably are, it is of the utmost practical

importance to remember that they admit of degrees : and as the elect of God are exhorted to “ make their calling and election sure,” so ought the disciples of Christ to examine themselves in all points, whether there be a correspondence, in their dispositions and lives, between profession and reality.

That there may be a union with Christ, which instead of being permanent, is condemned to dis-severance and burning, is most awfully manifest from the PARABLE OF THE TRUE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES. Some of these are represented by the Lord himself as unfruitful, and therefore sentenced to excision. Yet he calls them branches in him—a certain degree of union subsisted—these branches were not dead—they were only unfruitful—and it must therefore be inferred, that sap from the root circulated through them, and even furnished them with leaves, though not with grapes. A similar distinction must be made as to the privilege of adoption, and in speaking of the church of Christ, under the figure of a body, of which he is the living head ; and accordingly we have that distinction clearly marked in the homilies of our church. In the third part of the sermon of faith, St. John’s first epistle is quoted thus : “ And moreover he saith, Hereby we manifestly know the children of God from the children of the devil. He that doeth not righteously is not the child of God, nor he that

hateth his brother.” The first part of the sermon of charity, near the end, says: “Every man may without error know himself, what state, and condition he standeth in, whether he be in charity (and so the child of the Father in heaven) or not.” And at the end of the same, another like quotation from St. John; near the beginning of the third part of the sermon against adultery, we read: “Through cleanness of life we are made members of Christ.” And in the second part of the sermon against contention: “What crackest thou of thy head, if thou labour not to be in the body? Thou canst be no member of Christ, if thou follow not the steps of Christ.”

The same distinction which the parable of “the vine” so clearly teaches, and which runs through these quotations from the homilies, appears also in our Prayer-book, in the very address with which the public baptism of infants commences. It exhorts to pray that the child “may be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ’s holy church, and be made a *lively member* of the same.” Now if all infants, who are members of the church by baptism, were necessarily living members, it would be sufficient to use the substantive term only. But the adjective distinguishes the entire class into two sorts, that is, into real and apparent members. The chief practical use of the distinction is to lead to self-examination. An affectionate catechising in-

structor, by whom it is duly recognised, will avail himself of it without discouraging the catechumen. The very fact of the instruction may be impressed upon the child, as a precious fruit of its baptismal privilege; and as one proof of the great value of that privilege. But if instruction be neglected by all whose duty it is to afford it, could it be possible to regard a baptism so profaned, as equally blessed with a case, where the power of godliness accompanies the form? Yet it is not for man to draw an exact line in personal application—at least not always—in discharging the duty of teaching; but rather to follow the example of other modes of address and exhortation in the apostolic epistles. There we find the whole church of Corinth addressed collectively, as “sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints;” and yet it is evident that many of them were not individually worthy of such a character (strictly speaking) in the high sense that belongs to living members of the Lord of glory.

It appears from many parts of the epistles to the Corinthians, that we have no reason to think more favourably of them than of the average standard of our congregations in the present day. There were divisions among them, from which the apostle infers that they were “carnal and walked as men.” This charge he states as very general in its application to the church of Corinth. He even adds an assertion of “envying and strife” existing among them. In

the same chapter we read of “wood, hay, and stubble,” as either probably or actually built upon the one foundation he had laid. In the fifth chapter an individual transgressor is mentioned, whose case is well known. But in the sixth chapter there is another grievous charge, in which we know not how many were involved — “Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.” The profanation of the Lord’s supper may also be deplored as a matter of notoriety, and it appears by the fifteenth chapter, that there were some among the Corinthian Christians who had not the knowledge of God, and some who even denied the resurrection of the dead. It is unnecessary to dwell upon these melancholy facts ; because the object is not to estimate the magnitude or extent of the alleged evil, either actual or comparative, but to show that we have scriptural precedent for speaking of the visible church, or visible churches of Christ, according to what they ought to be, and sometimes to describe them, and their professed members, in terms which can only belong in full reality to that body which is commonly called the invisible church ; namely, ‘all who are decidedly and spiritually partakers of “the communion of saints” in heaven and in earth. It may be reasonable, however, to recollect the evidence contained in the seventh chapter of first Corinthians, that the children of believers are “holy,” and therefore to be received as members into the “congregation of

Christ's flock ;" and that it is consequently right to address them in language, which instructs in the privileges they possess by being "under grace," together with the duties and responsibilities which arise out of the same.

The manner in which the Church of England acts upon this principle, in catechising the young and ignorant, as well as in all its worship and ministrations, no more precludes subsequent discrimination and appropriate exhortations and warnings, than the opening of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, in anywise precluded him from writing in another part : "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup ;" and again, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." "And though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." And in the thirteenth chapter of his second epistle he thus most solemnly and awfully exhorts, and admonishes, the same baptized and incorporated professors : "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates."

These observations might be corroborated from other epistles, but it seems superfluous. It is only necessary to ask : If such modes of collective address be scripturally applicable to the adult members of a

professing Christian church, what is there to exclude infants; who are "holy" by their birth-right, from the same recognition? What is there objectionable in impressing upon such, when capable of catechetical instruction, that they are partakers of the precious privilege of membership in Christ? And that their baptism was a means of solemnly conferring it, and of entitling them to be received "into the congregation of Christ's flock," and to be treated as lambs embraced in the arms of the good Shepherd?

The tendency of being conscious of such grace bestowed, is to inspire them with desires to think, and feel, and walk, in a manner suitable to their heavenly calling, and, at the same time, with a reverential godly fear of forfeiting their blessings. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do thereafter." The very act of thus catechising is part of the obedience we owe to that fundamental precept—"Train up a child in the way he should go." This one command implies the truth of all that has been said concerning baptismal privileges; and it is hoped that it will bear us out in all that is to follow. For how could such training be possible without the Holy Spirit? We know that it is utterly impossible to renew "the carnal mind;" or to teach one who is destitute of any other nature than the flesh which is born of flesh, to walk in the footsteps of Christ. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God:

for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be ; so then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”—Rom. viii. 7, 8. Does it not clearly follow, that the command in Proverbs to “train” children in the right way, and, in the New Testament, to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”—must necessarily presuppose a capacity for such education, which capacity could not exist if it were not the good pleasure of the Lord to “regenerate” children “with his Holy Spirit?” And what is there to limit the commencement or the continuance of this spiritual operation of the Lord’s sanctifying grace? We know of nothing that can do so, until its consummation in glory.

The reasons for expecting regenerating grace, antecedent to the baptism of infants, have been already set forth ; and also the efficacy of the rite, as one of the means which our God has appointed, and employs, and blesses. We may now add what seems to be overlooked by the advocates of an inseparable connexion (where there is no obstacle in the subject) between the sign and “the thing signified”—namely, that “the outward part” is also “a pledge to assure us” of the “inward;” and therefore, by the very meaning and force of the term “*pledge*,” we are taught, not only to expect immediate blessing from God, as far as possible, but also to look *forward* to the constant and complete fulfilment of promises “which he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform.”

On these the Christian parent, sponsor, and pastor, rest, in carrying on the delightful work of Christian education.

That there is no absurdity in asserting the continuance of spiritual regeneration after baptism, and even throughout our whole lives, (if they be consistent,) we may perhaps have an opportunity of seeing more distinctly, when we come, in regular course, to consider the last part of the church catechism, and the homily for Whit-Sunday. In the hope of having sufficiently elucidated, for the present, the first in order of the baptismal privileges which our church maintains and teaches, let us now proceed to the second—which is, “wherein I was made **THE CHILD OF GOD.**”

In endeavouring to explain and prove this privilege it may be of some use to inquire, whether any reason can be assigned for prefixing the definite article in this case? Why do we teach our catechumens to say “*the* child,” not *a* child? It must be granted, that the indefinite article appears to accord better with the first and third privileges, and would produce at least verbal uniformity. But when we recollect that holy Scripture pronounces the whole human race to be the “offspring of God,” (Acts xvii. 28,) it will be evident that there is a sort of comparative feebleness in the expression, “*a* child of God,” because it is applicable (from our common divine origin) to every individual of mankind.—

Creation gives a universal title to it—hence arises the necessity of a form of speech, suited to distinguish the corresponding privilege of sanctification. This purpose is effected by the definite article, because it raises the general denomination “*child*” to a degree of eminence. It may be objected, that this distinctive elevation is obtained at the expense of truth; but ought it not rather to be indulgently described as a momentary and figurative illusion, so far as an individual application is concerned; at the same time that it conveys a most precious reality, by emphatically pointing to the glorious adoption that is in Christ? The numbers which partake of this inestimable privilege, transform the figure into substance; and the idea is resolved into the unity of God’s people, which he has vouchsafed to write and proclaim in these golden characters of revelation—“ISRAEL IS MY SON, *even* MY FIRST-BORN.”—Exod. iv. 22; Hosea xi. 1. If then, to ancient Israel “pertained the adoption,” does it not at least equally belong to the church of the New Testament, which is the nation to which the kingdom of God has been transferred, according to the words of our Lord himself, when he denounced the removal of it from the Jews? That kingdom is compared to a “net cast into the sea;” but, notwithstanding its present mixed state, the subjects of it are collectively the “first-born” of God, and every one of them, of every age, adult or infant, is “the child of God, and an inheri-

tor of the kingdom of heaven." This privilege of adoption is a necessary consequence of the first—"If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. iii. 29.

Perhaps some may be disposed to argue, that the context shows the membership in Christ to arise out of faith in him. We grant that it does. But, from the apostle's reference to Abraham, we reply, that the children of Christian parents are of that patriarch's seed, by virtue of their parent's faith. They may, alas! and too often do, sell their birth-right. But this does not annihilate the filial relation, although the relation aggravates the sin. "I have nourished and brought up children, (saith the Lord,) and they have rebelled against me."—Isaiah i. 2. Now, if that were the state of God's church before the birth of our Saviour, the continuance of the Abrahamic covenant, which is written as with a sunbeam in the New Testament, proves that the dignity of sonship belongs, by covenant, by regeneration and adoption, to the visible church of Christ, notwithstanding that many of those who are named his disciples, have only a name to live, while they are dead.

It is fully admitted, that this inconsistency of professing Christians produces an ambiguity of language, in speaking of Christian privileges, which is liable to abuse. But what is not liable to abuse? It is an ambiguity which we find in the holy Scriptures;

which we are, therefore, not afraid to copy to the scriptural extent, while we follow the example of the same word, in exhorting all our brethren to "prove themselves whether they be in faith," and to apply to their own lives, and hearts, and consciences, that great and searching test—"if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." It is an ambiguity which constitutes Christendom, separated from the rest of the world (among other means) by baptism, "a city set on a hill which cannot be hid." It is an ambiguity which forms an immense school, in which thousands of the heirs of heaven are educated, while we confess and deplore the fact, that now, as of old, "all are not Israel, who are of Israel." It is an ambiguity which embraces a much larger proportion of "the election of grace," than all exclusive systems put together. It is an ambiguity which arises out of the incapacity of man to search the heart, and which all must experience, in one shape or other, to be absolutely unavoidable. It is an ambiguity which enables us to obey the apostolic precept, "judge nothing before the time." It is an ambiguity which obliges genuine Christians to avoid intimate social intercourse with many who have a right, at the same time, to be ecclesiastically acknowledged as brethren, according to that remarkable passage in St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians—"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators; yet not

altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." It is an ambiguity which enables us to understand the apostle's references in the tenth chapter of the same epistle to the Old Testament history, concluded with instruction most apposite to our purpose:—"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." It is an ambiguity strongly exemplified in the epistles to the angels of the Seven Churches of Asia, which the apostle John was commanded to write.

Let the reader examine and consider all these topics, for it would detain us too long to discuss them at large in this place. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;" and, it is hoped, he will see that the mode of answering in the beginning of our church Catechism, is perfectly conformable to the style, and manner, and doctrines of the holy Scriptures.

Having dwelt so much upon the different grades of Christian membership and affiliation, and the consequent ambiguity of terms, until proper occasions arise for discrimination and sub-division, it will not

be necessary to do the same upon the third baptismal privilege. Illustrations already offered will throw sufficient light upon that without repetition, and it will be easy to understand what is meant by being "AN INHERITOR OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." That kingdom has been very properly distinguished as containing two parts—the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory. It is not the kingdom of glory that is primarily intended in the answer under consideration: for the term "inheritor" does not carry the mind forward to futurity, but implies possession, or at least present right; the term "heir," is of the same import. There is an old law-maxim that "no one is heir of a living person;" popular usage, and even some passages of Scripture, may seem to forbid this strictness; but the well-known distinctions of "heir-apparent" and "heir-presumptive," as to the inheritance of the crown, are applicable to all cases; and one or other of these adjectives ought to be understood, when we speak or read of an heir to one yet alive: it, therefore, only remains to prove the present existence of the kingdom of heaven. And, in addition to the recollection of many parts of the gospels, this may be done briefly by two quotations from St. Paul:—"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—Rom. xiv. 17. And again, "who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son." Col. i. 13.

We come now to consider objections which are sometimes very strongly stated against the assertion, "wherein I was made," &c. These objections are easily removed by a little candid attention to the usage of language. For example—in the tenth chapter of the first book of Samuel we read that Saul was anointed by the prophet; that he was afterwards chosen of the Lord by the miraculous process of the lot; that "all the people shouted, and said, God save the king. Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord." And yet, near the end of the next chapter we read, that "Samuel said to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. And all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal." Now, we see here that Saul had been already king by divine appointment; and yet the inspired writer feels no inconsistency in recording the subsequent information, that "they *made* Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal." In like manner, Christian infants are "holy" by the Lord's appointment; and for that very reason, on the ground of that title, they are made members of Christ by baptism; expressly recognised and received as such, and invested also by Christ's instituted rite with the other privileges, as inseparably connected with the first. Surely this *baptismal making* of the privileges does not claim to be the origin of them, any more than the making of Saul king before the Lord in

Gilgal, can be considered as derogating from his previous anointing by the prophet, and election by the Lord himself.

The history of David corroborates this illustration; but as he was anointed in Hebron, over the house of Judah only, let us pass on to the enthronement of Solomon.

In the first chapter of the first book of Kings, in consequence of the attempt of Adonijah, we read of Solomon being anointed and set upon the throne by the command of his father David; but we, notwithstanding, read in the last chapter of the first book of Chronicles, twenty-second verse—"And they made Solomon, the son of David, king the second time." It will be enough to request the reader's attention to the repetition of the solemnity, and to the language in which it is recorded, without arguing any further on a case so plain and so exactly in point.

It may be right, however, to take notice of an objection, sometimes offered to the beginning of the same answer, in which the baptismal privileges are enumerated. Be it observed, at the same time, that this objection arises out of the neglect of the public reception of children who have been privately baptized, which is a blameable omission that ought to be corrected as much as possible. Such children have had no special sponsors. In the minds of some persons there is hence an apparent falsehood, in putting into their mouths the answer—"my godfathers and

godmothers in my baptism." For the solution of this difficulty let it be recollected, that the sponsorial professions and engagements are always implied and understood in baptism, whether they be expressed or not; because they depend upon the divine will, and not upon the option or contract of the human parties, they cannot be dispensed with or modified in the smallest degree. Whosoever does not renounce the devil and all his works, believe in God's word, and desire to keep his commandments, has no claim by promise to the baptismal privileges. Let it be further recollected, that implied obligations are equally binding with those which are expressed. The common transactions of life and the law of the land prove this. If any one direct a tradesman to perform a work, without more said on either side, the employer is bound to pay the value of the work, as much as if he had made an express contract. Again, it is plain that the duties which God requires of us, devolve immediately upon us from his sovereign authority, and do not await our consent for their existence. The second of his great commandments, on which "hang all the law and the prophets," is this—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:" and one principal clause of this universal law is found in that well-known apostolic precept—"While we have time let us do good unto all men; especially unto them who are of the household of faith." These laws oblige all believers to do all in their power

(mediately or immediately) to promote the Christian education, at least of all who are of the household of faith, and to introduce all others into the same blessed fellowship. By this duty the whole Christian church is constituted a universal parent and sponsor; and those who bring children to baptism, either publicly or privately, besides their own personal obligations, are also representatives of the mystical body of Christ. From these plain principles it follows, that no catechumens can be without godfathers and godmothers; and that none of them need fear a shadow of untruth in the second answer of our church catechism—"my godfathers and my godmothers in my baptism." And at the same time we may learn, that the compilers were not men who stuck in the letter (*qui hæret in literà, hæret in cortice*); for the general rule of the rubric is, not to *require* more than three sponsors in any case.

As the ground of the obligation acknowledged in the fourth answer has been already stated, our next step in this survey is, to consider that fervent expression of gratitude—"I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." The manifold and abundant causes which we have for such thanksgiving, need not here be proved or enumerated. It is sufficient for our present purpose to observe, that "*this state of salvation*" cannot mean an absolutely secure or perfect state; but it must be under-

stood in a comparative and incipient sense. If St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans could say—"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed"—it is evident that there are degrees of salvation, and that the consummation of it is future, not only to baptized catechumens, but to all believers, even as long as we remain in this world. We must, therefore, never forget the exhortation—"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure," and to pray in the spirit and language with which the answer now before us concludes.

This brings us to the answer that follows the creed, and so fully sums the faith into which we are baptized, the faith of the ever-blessed TRINITY IN UNITY. It also declares the universality of redemption, as clearly as that of creation, while it ascribes the blessing of sanctification only to "all the elect people of God."

As every catechumen is taught to say, "thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me," &c., it seems evident, that the collective election of the visible church is to be understood in this answer, even as the whole congregation of ancient Israel were God's chosen people; and his Spirit was with them in the wilderness, and of course throughout their subsequent history, perhaps to the rejection of Christ; for it is expressly said, after the Babylonish captivity, "My Spirit remaineth among you."—Haggai ii. 5. Nothing less then can be the privilege of the nation

to whom the kingdom of God is transferred ; and the very circumstance of Christian training, in the simple learning of the Catechism, does of itself warrant the assertion, "who sanctifieth me ;" so that, although it may be repeated ignorantly or thoughtlessly, or even inconsistently, it never can be said falsely ; for this catechetical instruction is one of the gracious works of the Holy Spirit, and the present tense of the word "*sanctifieth*" most happily expresses his incessant energy, whether in patient long-suffering, or in the growth of grace. It is therefore conceived that there is no just ground, even for the gentle and friendly imputation which occurs in a recent and interesting volume of autobiography. It were to be wished that the excellent lady, who has introduced the anecdote alluded to with the best intentions and most Christian feeling, might be led to reconsider her objections. It is true, they are comparatively so few and slight, that they do not disturb her affectionate veneration for the formularies of our church. But a stumbling-block in the way of others ought to be removed if possible. The truth of the answer, properly explained, would apply a most awakening reflection to the conscience of the unhappy lad who so unworthily uttered it. And all of us have need to be taught that, if we belong to "the election of grace," we must be "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."—1 Pet. i. 2. It would be

unseasonable to enter into any abstruse discussion ; but perhaps the writer may be permitted to refer to a lecture on the seventeenth article, (which appears in the Church of England Magazine,*) for the view he endeavours to present of its “literal and grammatical sense.” Upon the whole, may the Lord enable and dispose us, whether children, or young men, or fathers, to consider solemnly, and with self-examination, the apostolic declarations—that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” ; and again — “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”—Rom. viii. 9 and 14.

After the rehearsal of the ten commandments and the summaries of duty to God and our neighbour, a most important instruction follows, that we are not able to do these things of ourselves, and how strength is to be obtained ; and next, the Lord’s prayer is repeated and expounded. The remainder of the Catechism is more appropriate to our subject ; for it is on the sacraments. It states their number in this answer : “Two only, as generally necessary to salvation, that is to say, baptism and the supper of the Lord.” It then gives a definition of the word “sacrament :” it answers the question, “How many parts are there in a sacrament ?” and it severally describes the outward and inward part of baptism, and “what is required of persons to be baptized,”

* See No. 4 of the part for March, 1843.

and why infants are baptized, although they cannot perform these requirements.

As to the answer concerning the number of the sacraments; perhaps there may be in it some allusion to a more vague use of the term in ancient ecclesiastical writers. There are only two made necessary to be observed by all Christ's disciples (generally speaking), according to his institution, for their spiritual welfare individually, and in order to promote his kingdom and righteousness. Some may choose to call matrimony a sacrament. Be it so: but it is not "generally necessary to salvation;" although it ought to be "honourable in all." But that our church does not intend to assert (even in a modified form) an impossibility of enjoying "the inward part or thing signified" by a sacrament, without an actual application of the outward sign, is clearly evinced by a rubric annexed to the offices for the visitation and communion of the sick. Wilful neglect of either sacrament is highly sinful and presumptuous. It is in its own nature a guilty and destructive omission of what Christ's command had made necessary to his disciples. And this incontrovertibly proves what is their duty; and as such, and in connexion with the promises, essential to the nourishment and health of their souls.

In the definition of a sacrament, it would seem to do violence to grammar and obvious intention, to refer "*given*" to the sign, instead of the word imme-

diately preceding. The “visible sign” is “ordained,” the “spiritual grace” is “given.” If “given” and “ordained” were both meant to have the same reference, they ought to have been united by a conjunction. It may be also useful to observe again, that the sign is ordained, not as *the* means, but as “*a* means,” &c. that is, as one means among others. And the aspect of the word “pledge,” looking to futurity, admonishes us to beware of the error, which appears to have been so strongly and justly censured by Archbishop Ussher, of supposing the entire effect of baptism to be completed in the administration.

The reader may find this passage quoted, in the sixth letter of Budd on infant baptism, from which the following extract is copied :—

“Baptism is not done only at the font, which is a thing that deceives many, for it runs through our whole life ; nor hath it consummation till our dying day, till we receive final grace : the force and efficacy of baptism is for the washing away of sin to-morrow as well as the day past ; the death of sin is not till the death of the body,* and therefore it’s said—‘ We must be buried with him by baptism into his death.’ Now after death we receive final grace, till when this washing and the virtue thereof hath not its consummation.”—See eighteen sermons preached in Oxford, 1640.

* This must mean, in a sense of complete finality.

Since then baptism is “a sign of regeneration,” and since (according to Archbishop Ussher) “baptism is not done only at the font for it runs through our whole life,” does it not appear to have been the opinion of Ussher, that regeneration—far from being a single act—runs through our whole life? Indeed it is perfectly clear, that the author of the homily for Whitsunday most distinctly believed in a regeneration by the Holy Spirit, which could not possibly take place except in adult persons. For in the first part of that homily, after having quoted the dark question of Nicodemus, it observes, that “he had little or no intelligence of the Holy Ghost;” “whereas, otherwise if he had known the great power of the Holy Ghost in this behalf, that it is he which inwardly worketh the regeneration and new birth of mankind, he would never have marvelled at Christ’s words, but would rather take occasion thereby to praise and glorify God. For as there are three several and sundry persons in the Deity, so have they three several and sundry offices proper unto each of them—the Father to create; the Son to redeem; the Holy Ghost to sanctify and regenerate. Whereof the last, the more it is hid from our understanding, the more it ought to move all men to wonder at the secret and mighty working of God’s Holy Spirit, which is within us. For it is the Holy Ghost, and no other thing, that doth quicken the minds of men, stirring up good and godly motions in their hearts, which are agreeable to the will and

commandment of God, such as otherwise of their own crooked and perverse nature they should never have."

It is plain, that in specifying the office of the Holy Ghost, "*To sanctify and regenerate*" (if not identified) are at least so united, and placed in such order, that, as sanctification is confessedly a progressive operation, regeneration must be understood to be progressive also; and the act of "stirring up good and godly motions" is not a single, but a continued operation. A little after these questions are put—"Did not God's Holy Spirit miraculously work in the child David, when of a poor shepherd he became a princely prophet? Did not God's Holy Spirit miraculously work in Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, when of a proud publican he became an humble and lowly evangelist? And who can choose but marvel, to consider, that Peter should become of a simple fisher a chief and mighty apostle? Paul of a cruel and bloody persecutor, a faithful disciple of Christ, to teach the gentiles?" It then exclaims—"Such is the power of the Holy Ghost to regenerate men, and as it were to bring them forth anew, so that they shall be nothing like the men that they were before." The great and happy spiritual change here spoken of is not a *sudden* change, nor is it a change merely wrought in secret, but outwardly and increasingly manifested in the fruit of the spirit.

It may be somewhat digressive, but it would be unpardonable to overlook the proof which the pre-

ceding quotations furnish, that our church does not restrict regeneration to the Christian dispensation since the time in which the Lord instituted baptism, and commanded the Gospel to be preached “to every creature.” It is taken for granted, as an admitted and unquestionable truth, that David’s state, in this respect, was just the same with that of Matthew, Peter, and Paul. And in the first part of the homily for Rogation Week, we read—“Let them all come together that be now glorified in heaven. . . . David would make answer for them all, and say, Know ye for surety, even the Lord is God, he hath made us, and not we ourselves. If they were asked again, who should be thanked for their regeneration? for their justification? and for their salvation? Whether their deserts, or God’s goodness only? Although in this point, every one confess sufficiently the truth of this matter in his own person, yet let David answer by the mouth of them all at this time, who cannot choose but say, Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give all the thank, for thy loving mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.”

But let us return to the doctrine intended to be maintained and illustrated, namely, that of *progressive regeneration*, throughout our whole lives, by quoting the concluding passage of the first part of the homily for Whitsunday:—“In the mean season, let us (as we are most bound) give hearty thanks to God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, for sending down

his Comforter into the world; humbly beseeching him so to work in our hearts by the power of his Holy Spirit, that we being regenerate and newly born again in all goodness, righteousness, sobriety, and truth, may in the end be made partakers of everlasting life in his heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.”

It cannot easily be denied or doubted that progressive regeneration is the doctrine of this passage, since it exhorts adult Christians to pray that the Holy Spirit may so work upon our hearts, “that we being regenerate and newly born again” in graces and virtues, which evidently pertain to mature age, and are of a growing nature, we may attain to everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Indeed the exhortation to sponsors at the close of the baptismal service, which has been already introduced in a former division, inculcates the same view; and the office for confirmation is at least in full accordance with it, especially the prayer which accompanies the laying on of hands—“Defend, O Lord,” &c.; “that *he* may continue thine for ever; and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until *he* come unto thy everlasting kingdom.”

The collect for Christmas* teaches the regenerate children of God to pray for the daily renewal of the Holy Spirit: and what is daily renewal, but daily re-

* See also the collect for Easter evening.

generation? “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”—(Titus.) There is no proof that “regeneration” and “renewing” are applied to different things. It is quite agreeable to the manner of the parallelism so familiar in the holy Scriptures, not only in the Psalms and other poetical portions, but also in prosaic parts, to understand them as very nearly synonymous expressions, although very beautifully presenting varied aspects of the same object. “Regeneration” brings before us the idea of our Heavenly Father; “renewal” reminds us of the decay and corruption which sin has produced, and that we must pray for “the true circumcision of the spirit,” and that if our conscience accuse us of not being indeed rescued from the dominion of sin, we must pray to him “who hateth nothing that he hath made,” to “create and make in us new and contrite hearts.” Such is the regeneration which is specially prayed for at the beginning of *Lent*: such was the regeneration which David sought in Psalm li., when he prayed—“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”* He confesses his guilt by nature and by practice; and, to speak in the language of our baptismal services, he supplicates

* This is an example of the parallelism alluded to; but examples are innumerable.

for the remission of his sins “*by spiritual regeneration;*” he implores a returning sense of the divine favour, and renewed enjoyment of the filial spirit:—
“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.”

In the scarcity of examples of the actual use of the term “*regeneration*” in the Bible, which, if numerous, would enable us more directly to employ the mode of “*concordance*” to assist interpretation, it is surely reasonable to expect the frequent occurrence of equivalent terms; and we are persuaded that the word “*create*” is one of these. There are other words which perhaps cannot be considered as strictly equivalent; and yet they convey distinct ideas of certain important parts of the same great work of the Holy Spirit, only under various aspects; such are the words *repentance* and *conversion*. The language of St. Paul, repeatedly and habitually in his epistles,

impresses this conviction deeply upon the mind of an attentive reader. In the twelfth chapter of Romans he exhorts—"And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," &c.; and in 2 Cor. v. 20—"We pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Thus we see that he feels no difficulty in persuading the regenerate to be "transformed" or increasingly regenerate; nor those already reconciled by incorporation in the true vine—"be ye reconciled to God." In the fourth chapter of Galatians he writes—"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Yet we read further on in the same chapter—"my little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you." To the regenerate Ephesians, who were saved by grace, and brought nigh by the blood of Jesus, he writes—"that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The regeneration of the Colossians is described in very strong and copious language—"Ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the

body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ : buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”—Chap. ii. 10–12. And in the third chapter he says :—“ Ye have put off the old man with his deeds ; and have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him :” these passages appear fully to justify the exhortation of the Homily for Whitsunday already quoted.

But we cannot pass on without special observation, that those who were buried with Christ in baptism, are also risen with him “ *through the faith of the operation of God.*” And yet regenerate children, still in subjection to their parents in the Lord, are addressed in this epistle, and therefore included in the spiritual resurrection through faith, at the same time that the effect is also connected with baptism by the word “ *wherein.*” Here, then, is a scriptural proof of the truth of a position before maintained—that, in unconscious infants, the *full* effect of the thing signified is not in immediate connexion with the sign, but partly in abeyance until the exercise of faith. Perhaps this observation may be strengthened by the fact that the article occurs in the Greek of the quoted passage—“ buried with him in *the* baptism, wherein,” &c. But it is not necessary to rest the argument upon the presence or absence of an article. And that repentance and faith are required of per-

sons to be baptized according to the doctrine of our church, it would be almost superfluous to prove, if it were not for the bias which system produces on the mind. However, it is obvious that our church assigns no other reason for the apparent difference which exists in the case of infants, than "because they promise them both by their sureties; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform."

We have thus been led to anticipate a little. But we must not forget that the preceding question and answer in the Catechism are most materially connected with this discussion concerning baptism:—

"Q. What is the inward and spiritual grace?

"A. A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace."

The exposition of this answer evidently depends, in a great degree, upon the reference of the word "*hereby*." Does it lead us to the spiritual grace alone, or to baptism as a whole, including also the outward sign, and the administration of the rite? By syntax rules it may seem to be more nearly connected with what immediately precedes the reason assigned for what the answer asserts: but without any force it may relate to that which is understood in the question, namely—baptism. What then is to decide our choice between these two constructions,

each of which is verbally admissible? We must appeal to the truth of the doctrine according to the word of God; and, as to the sense of the compilers, we must be guided by what they have taught us to say more explicitly in another place.

In the beginning of the Catechism where baptism is first mentioned, it is immediately added—"Wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Now, in whatever sense we have been invested with these privileges in baptism, there can be no doubt that we are likewise invested with the privilege under consideration; that is, according to the view of those who believe the answer to be true. It is hoped that the language of it has been justified in the opening of this third division, as agreeable to holy Scripture. Consistency, therefore, requires us to believe that by baptism (as a sign and seal of God's covenant mercy in Christ) we are "made the children of grace;" and that must be the doctrine intended to be taught. And is it not a most scriptural and precious doctrine? To deny it, is in effect to give up infant baptism; but we are here supposed to be discussing this subject with those who practise infant baptism as an institution of the Lord. There can be no other source of "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness," but the knowledge of antecedent grace. Let us weigh attentively the consequence of regarding this death and birth as the cause, instead

of the effect of the privilege. In that case, that is, if the baptized are not children of grace, they must be children of wrath still; and then how are they to be reconciled? How are they to emerge from the gulph of condemnation? How are they to obtain “a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness?” Imagine a Christian parent endeavouring to instruct such an unhappy child; to “train up” such a mere fleshly offspring “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!” Surely the truth must be told, or not a single step can be taken in the work! And what is the miserable child to think or do? Without encouragement, without promises, without the light of a heavenly Father’s countenance. Its state must be *death in sin*, instead of “*death unto sin.*” What lesson can even a Christian mother’s love impress on such a one? The direct tendency of the circumstances in which she supposes herself to be placed is, to lead her to relinquish education altogether, or to confine it to that which is exclusively secular; to let nature run wild, and bring forth thorns and briars—perhaps with some distant and uncertain hope of future conversion. It is to be feared that the theory we deprecate has been too often realized. But it may be asked—Is there no Christian education to be found among antipædo-baptists? We hope and believe that there is; but we maintain that in such cases it forces its way through a happy inconsistency. It is consoling to know that practical principles very frequently

rise above the barriers of erroneous systems. But how much more happy is the condition of a parent who can speak in faith and hope to a child about a Saviour's love, who commanded children to be brought unto him, and took them in his arms, and laid his hands upon them, and blessed them. He is the good shepherd, who "shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom."—Isaiah xl. 11. How sweetly he draws them by the attractions of his love! It is an animating, it is a regenerating liberty, to feel warranted to say to our offspring—"Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."—Rom. vi.

Upon this basis of divine mercy our church Catechism is formed; and it encourages those who have been already made recipients of grace, and brought nigh through the blood of Jesus, and assured of the gift of his Holy Spirit, to embrace the promises, to be thankful for the sacramental sign, to use it in spirit as a constantly efficient means, whereby to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Thus shall the inward part be more and more perfected from day to day; the old man shall be crucified with Christ; and "as many as receive him, to them he gives power to become the sons of God"—"a new birth unto righteousness"—"*even* to them that believe in his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Behold a brief description of the manner in which even the lambs of Christ's flock are sanctified and cleansed "with the washing of water by the word." Let us never forget that "baptism saves us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."—Heb. x. 22. The Scriptures are like what is said in the sixth chapter of St. John's gospel—"They are spirit and they are life." They forbid us to limit the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit to the moment of the administration of the rite of baptism; they teach us to conceive its efficacy, extended and active, through all Christian experience; and the spiritual significance of it as always operative upon the conscience, and upon the whole man—body and spirit, even as the water which Christ gives, is "a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

Our Catechism thus purely and gently leads "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." It does not teach a physical and inseparable connexion between sacramental signs and the inward parts or things signified; but that we are to use the signs, and continually to resort to them in spirit, as means of grace and pledges to assure us thereof. The thing signified in baptism is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness:" and these are set before

the young catechumen, not as fully accomplished already, but to impress a conviction of their necessity, to excite to self-examination, and to prayer for further degrees of the privileges and blessings of "the children of grace." This filial relation, made known as begun, cheers the young soul, and quickens progress. But the doctrine which, instead of the glad tidings of salvation through the blood of Christ, calls for obedience and holiness, under the terrible announcement that we have no second baptism, no justification by faith after falling into sin, no peace with God in this world—conducts to self-righteousness with one hand, and with the other—to despair! or to "unclean living, no less perilous than desperation." Let any Christian who walks in the light, and experiences that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, read one of Mr. Newman's sermons, in which he destroys the consolation of Christ (as far as in him lies) from the contrite heart, by asserting that although there may be joy in heaven over a repenting sinner, there is no echo of it upon earth; let him read that astounding assertion with others of a kindred spirit, and say, whether the preceding imputation against *tractarian* tenets be unjust.

With respect to the light to be derived, in this discussion, from an examination of our church Catechism, it only remains to call to the reader's recollection the pre-requisites which are so much insisted on both in the baptismal services, and in the explanation

of the sacraments. These pre-requisites are, repentance and faith. To inculcate the necessity of them in the most decided manner, a special method is employed in the public baptism of infants, by explicit questions addressed to the sponsors, which they are required to answer in the name of the child. Then in the Catechism the reason assigned for the baptism of infants—notwithstanding the incapacity of their tender age—is this and this only: “Because they promise them both” (repentance and faith) by their sureties; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform.” The reason of *putting no obstacle*, which some divines consider of so much importance, is never once alluded to. The inference is inevitable, that it was rejected as unsound. And the incorporation of repentance and faith in the baptismal office, even in the case of infants, proves that the compilers of our formularies, must have regarded baptism as incomplete, until the actual development of those graces. The manner in which the fulfilment of God’s promises is mentioned, confirms this observation: “Which promises he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform.” Following up the suggestion implied in this assurance, the instruction communicated to the baptized inculcates the obligation of performing, in the strength of the Lord, all the sponsorial promises as to faith and practice. Then comes the explanation already quoted, from the last part of the Catechism; and proceeding, in

the next place, to *the Order of Confirmation*, we shall see distinctly that it harmonized with all that went before, and takes for granted the same view which has been here presented.

THE ORDER OF CONFIRMATION.

In the commencement of this office the bishop puts an important question to the baptized who come to be confirmed: "Do ye here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptism?" &c. To which every one of them is required to answer audibly—"I DO." Taking for granted that this answer is made in sincerity and truth, there can be no doubt of the regeneration and justification of those who make it: and, on this ground, the bishop prays as follows:—

"Almighty and everliving God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants, by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them the forgiveness of all their sins, strengthen them, we beseech, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace," &c.

Here are somewhat retrospective terms used in respect of regeneration, which do not occur before in the formularies under consideration. And yet it is well worthy of observation, that it is not said: *Who hast regenerated*. This is the more remarkable, as

the word "*regenerated*" had been used in administering the unction prescribed by the first Common Prayer-book of King Edward the Sixth. The form may be found in Wheatley, sixth subdivision of the third section of the seventh chapter.

After mentioning the white vesture formerly put on the baptized, &c. he says :

"For, by the same book of King Edward, as soon as the priest had pronounced the foregoing form, he was to *anoint the infant upon the head, saying :*

"Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath regenerated thee by water and the Holy Ghost ; and hath given unto thee the remission of all thy sins ; He vouchsafe to anoint thee with the unction of his holy Spirit, and bring thee to the inheritance of everlasting life. Amen."

It is not intended to be maintained that, in these circumstances, the clause "*who hath regenerated,*" &c. would be untrue. But there can be no doubt, that the formularies of King Edward's time were before the eyes, or fully in the recollection of the compilers of our Prayer-book in its present state. And yet they have given a remarkable preference to the word "*regenerate,*" not only in the baptismal services, but here in confirmation, where the stronger word would have been less objectionable, than in the earlier stages of the Christian life. If the alteration was not deliberately intentional (which is a supposition scarcely admissible as to men of such accuracy,

such pious care, and so much reverence for precedents), it cannot be wrong to believe that the change was providentially overruled to render our forms more perfectly consonant to truth. The language actually used is evidently more suited to the petitions which follow for increase of grace, than if regeneration had been spoken of as a thing already passed and completed. On the other hand, *the forgiveness of all sins* is a blessing most justly acknowledged as already given, because God has promised it to "all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." In this, the case of persons prepared to be confirmed, coincides with that of persons baptized in adult age, and strengthens the contrast which was pointed out, in the second division of this tract, between a similar part of the service for that occasion, and the remarkable omissions by which the other baptismal services are distinguished. How cautiously does the Order for Confirmation avoid every thing that might look like a limitation of the effect of baptism to the font, or the time of administration! What ample room does it afford to those who hold the doctrine of progressive regeneration, and agree with Archbishop Ussher, that the inward and spiritual grace of baptism extends through the whole of a Christian life, "Nor hath it consummation till our dying day!" Nay, this beautifully spiritual office teaches us to pray, most fully and fervently, for such a growth as progressive regeneration signifies.

We may further observe how justly the bishop refers to the example of the apostles, notwithstanding the great difference in our present state, from the absence of miraculous gifts. For St. Paul speaks in the sixth chapter of Hebrews, of “laying on of hands,” in close connexion with baptism, as among “the principles of the doctrine of Christ.” “Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection ; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” The whole tenor of this passage leads us to infer that what we mean by the term “confirmation” is to be identified here with “laying on of hands ;” and, at the same time, that it was not intended to cease with the cessation of miraculous gifts. Such gifts are not mentioned ; but some of the very elements of Christianity, which are as necessary to be believed and practised at one period as another. The same truth is implied, if not expressed, in St. Peter’s address on the day of Pentecost, where he says—“the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.” And it is not to be forgotten that the spiritual gifts, in which the apostles themselves were endued with the promised power from on high, were not miraculous only, but “also boldness with fervent zeal,” which our Prayer-

book unites, in its thanksgiving, with the gift of tongues. Is it not reasonable to conclude, that afterwards, when the Holy Ghost was given by the laying on of the apostles' hands, the same union was experienced of ordinary and extraordinary gifts?

We are naturally led to the recollection of the first recorded instance of this apostolic act, although we may be certain that many others had previously occurred. There cannot be two opinions about the absence of the spiritual grace of baptism in the case of that unhappy man to whom Peter so awfully pronounced that he had "neither part nor lot in this matter." But suppose a person baptized in infancy, to manifest with equal certainty the "gall of bitterness" and "the bond of iniquity." Can we conceive the same apostle to regard or address such a one as a child of God, a partaker of "spiritual regeneration," and born of the Holy Ghost? Impossible! Every Christian principle revolts against the thought; and it is directly and expressly at variance with the doctrine of the apostle John—"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."—1 John iii. 9, 10. And does the Church of England teach an opposite doctrine to this? God forbid! We thank God, indeed, that it

hath pleased him to regenerate our offspring with his Holy Spirit ; we have clear warrants for such gratitude, and it is our duty and our privilege to express it. The Holy Spirit of God remaineth among us, and is with the administration of his ordinances. He embraces and moves upon the soul and body of every baptized infant, even as he “ moved upon the face of the waters,” when “ the earth was without form, and void ; and darkness was upon the face of the deep ;” and before “ God said, Let there be light :” but the world was formed progressively, and so is the new creation. If any man be truly in Christ and abiding in him, “ he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new.” But is this the operation of a moment ? The universal answer (perhaps with some differences of sound) may safely be stated to be—No.*

How, then, is regeneration excluded from a participation in this gradual process ? By a distinction which is not to be found in the holy Scriptures, nor in our Book of Common Prayer—a distinction which draws an unauthorized line between regeneration and “ the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” They are, however, the same thing (as before described) in different aspects ; so that either may be defined :—“ *The com-*

* In John xiv. 23, there is a coming and abiding of the Father and the Son, mentioned by our Lord himself, and consequently an indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which must be preceded by love and obedience.

mencement and growth of a new and spiritual life, through Christ our Saviour, and the operation of his Spirit ; liable, in some stages, to blight and decay."

Where there is a beginning made by the grace and providence of God, according to the covenant of mercy which he has revealed in his word, and where a visible seal of that covenant has been applied in his appointed way, the appellation "regenerate" is rightfully given to the subject of that grace ; and the Holy Spirit is given in such measure, that there need not be a shadow of doubt of the presence and activity of his vital influences in every act of Christian nurture which must follow "according to this beginning." Let the baptized be continual objects of believing prayer and blessing ; let the first looks which they can return with their infant smiles, be looks of Christian love ; let them be catechised from their tenderest years, as lambs gathered in the arms of the good shepherd, and carried in his bosom ; let them be nourished with "the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby ;" so shall that precious saying be realized—"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise : " fruits will delight and reward the faithful instructor, which cannot be produced by the flesh or natural man. And instead of hesitation or objection being felt, in calling a baptized infant "*regenerate,*" in every successive introduction of a young member to the church, we shall, with increasing faith, and hope, and joy, look

up to our God, and say—"We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit."

Such is the inestimable love of God in the redemption of the world. But we may neglect this great salvation; and then comes the awful question of the apostle—"How shall we escape?" Alas! it is possible to "grieve the Spirit," to "quench the Spirit;" so that (although baptized) our works may deny "the Lord that bought us," and prove us to be "sensual, having not the Spirit," or under the denunciation of Rom. viii. 9—"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." To consider such persons, whether baptized in infancy, or in maturer age, as having experienced *fully* "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness," and as having a holy seed remaining in them, which cannot be lost in this life, would be self-contradictory, as well as repugnant to the plain words of Scripture and of our Prayer-book. St. John says:—"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith."—1 John v. 4.

As to our Liturgy and devotional offices, we ought not to expect to find expressions in our forms of worship, which could only suit persons without the pale of the Lord's household, because these forms are necessarily and avowedly drawn up in language suited to the exercises of living faith. Social Chris-

tian worship must endeavour to bring up those who profess to join in it, to a holy standard, instead of letting itself down to the level of the flesh. Yet those truths of holy Scripture (exemplified in the last quotation from St. John) are every where implied; and all our professed members are incessantly called to self-examination. The declaration on God's behalf, at the commencement of our worship, that "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel," manifestly implies and admonishes that there may be persons present, whose repentance is not true, whose faith is not unfeigned; because the net of the kingdom of heaven gathers in both good and bad. Hence, "in the visible church, the evil be ever mingled with the good" (Article xxvi.); and assembled congregations are duly reminded of this mixture, and warned of the coming judgment. Let us recollect the communion exhortations, and the commination at the beginning of Lent. In this commination there is a call, which must suppose those to whom it is addressed to be unregenerate in heart, just as impenitent Jews are addressed by the prophets as "uncircumcised in heart." It is in the following words—"Make you new hearts, and a new spirit: wherefore will ye die, O ye house of Israel, seeing that I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God?"

However, (for the reasons already assigned) it is

in our systematic Confession of Faith, together with our Catechism, that we are naturally to look for the clearest exposition of the doctrine of our church on this, and every other subject. We are thus conducted, in the next place, to—

AN EXAMINATION OF PART OF THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES.

The doctrine of the sacraments is very fully drawn up, both positively and negatively, in the twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth of these Articles. The twenty-fifth treats generally of both the sacraments. Its title implies this:—namely, “*Of the Sacraments.*” The first word is, in like manner, plural; and the second paragraph mentions by their separate names —“Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.” Then five, “commonly called sacraments,” are enumerated; and it is shown that they “are not to be counted for sacraments of the Gospel.” The last paragraph teaches us that “the sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them.” The words “*carried about*” may be admitted to point especially to those processions in which what is called the Host is carried. But what follows, “that we should duly use *them*,” proves that baptism is included in the view of this paragraph, as well as the plural form

in which it begins, and also the whole tenor of the twenty-fifth article and its title. To candid and attentive readers of this article it may seem superfluous to enter so minutely into the foregoing demonstration; but as the plainest things have been found liable to be tortured by learned ingenuity, the writer hopes he shall be excused for taking the strongest and safest ground of interpretation.

Let us now proceed to interpret the first paragraph of the twenty-fifth article, which describes the sacraments as follows:—"Sacraments ordained of Christ, be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him."

What, then, are "sacraments ordained of Christ," according to the doctrine of our church? For an exact definition, we must recollect our Catechism, which has been treated of already. Here, it is only necessary to answer:—"They are, baptism and the Lord's supper. We need not dwell upon their use as "badges or tokens of profession." But it is very material to our chief object, that we should carefully consider what follows:—"Sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us." How are they "sure witnesses?" By the appointment of the Lord. In his name, they address

us in the most impressive and intelligible language. They are "pledges to assure us" of that which they signify. They condescend to our weakness, just as God vouchsafed to ratify his promise to Abraham by an oath: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."—Heb. vi. 18. The perpetual continuance of these sacramental rites in the church of Christ, is also a strong and faithful testimony to the truth of revelation; and every administration of them ought to imprint more deeply upon our minds and hearts a lively and grateful sense of "the grace of God that bringeth salvation," and of "God's good will towards us;" both with respect to the immediate recipients of the sign or signs, and also, with respect to others, as taking a retrospective view of their own inestimable privilege on the occasion of their original admission to visible membership in the church of Christ, which furnished a guide to the knowledge of the covenant-love of God, the inexhaustible fountain, whence all the streams flow which make glad the city of our God.

In the next place, let us inquire into the force of the word "effectual," for the sacraments are asserted to be "certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace." It is simply this, that by the Lord's appointment they are suitable, wise, and powerful instruments of effecting the ends which it is his merciful

design to accomplish by them. It is not said that their operation is confined to the time of administration. Nay, it is more than implied that it is continuous. For surely it is not in the sacramental acts only that the sacraments are signs of "God's good will towards us;" nor is it then only that God "doth work invisibly in us," and "not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him." This is very plainly taught as to the Lord's supper in one of the rubrics of the office for the Communion of the Sick; and it is no less true in respect of baptism. It is one of the motives assigned for administering baptism "upon Sundays, and other holidays, when the most number of people come together;" "because in the baptism of infants, every one present may be put in remembrance of his own profession made to God in his baptism." And does not the past "mystical washing," as well as that immediately looked upon, thus operate through such remembrance, as an effectual sign of God's good will, and tend to increase the faith of a believing adult? It seems evident that this is one of the modes by which Christ carries on his saving work, who "loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."—Eph. v. 25-27.

This explanation of “effectual signs of grace” is abundantly confirmed by what is declared of the design, “that we should duly use them.” To which also is added that most solemn and awakening exclusive assertion—“And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation.” To some, perhaps, it may seem that this exclusion points only to the case of adults. But the doctrine is stated generally and abstractedly without any exception. And if the framers of these Articles had intended to countenance the distinctions concerning those who put no obstacle in the way of God’s grace, here was a most favourable opportunity for introducing that tenet. But, instead of being inculcated, it is completely and (as it would appear) carefully shut out from the full and accurate exposition of the doctrine of the sacraments, contained in six articles upon the subject. Is not this a manifest proof that (whatever opinions might be privately entertained by some individuals) our common confession of faith knows nothing of the *ponere obicem*, or of the exception of such as put no obstacle, &c.

The case of infants, however, has not been forgotten here by the writer; either of such as survive or such as die in infancy. In the former case, if repentance be wanting in more mature age, “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness are wanting;” that is, there is an absence of “the inward and spiritual grace” of baptism. And unhappy persons thus desti-

tute and dead in sin, ought to be warned not to trust delusively in their early privilege, and admonished that the sacraments were ordained, "that we should duly use them;" and that "in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation."

Our reformers have shown, by this admonition, that they did not confine baptism to the font; but held, on the contrary, that its blessings are to be worthily received in the exercise of faith, and that all impenitent professors ought to be exhorted to such remission of their sins by *spiritual regeneration*, and to consider the rite of baptism as calling them to repentance, and at the same time as preaching the Gospel to them, through the blood of Christ. As to the case of infants who die before they have committed actual sin, some conjectural thoughts have been before suggested. It is true that we have no right to intrude into those things which we have not seen; but such presumption is very different from reasonings humbly arising out of revealed truth. And it is equally true that we cannot assume the absence of all analogy between the progress of children growing up in this world, and the state of those whom it pleases God to remove to another of his "many mansions."

On the whole review of the twenty-fifth article, it is very remarkable that, in all its ample and exact explanation of what sacraments are, and what they

are not, there is nothing said of a character impressed upon the soul in baptism, or of grace perfectly communicated, once for all, in the administration of the rite; nothing like what is called the "*opus operatum*" of scholastic theology, or, in plain English, the "*work worked.*" Such an omission must have been intended to put a negative upon these antisciptural doctrines. If they had been regarded as truth, it would have been impossible to omit them in definition and enumeration so precise as we have here before us. This, it is hoped, will be confirmed as we proceed.

The twenty-sixth article does not contain much connected with our present argument, but its witness is concurrent with what has been said. After mentioning the mingled condition of the visible church, and that "sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the word and sacraments," &c., it denies "that the effect of Christ's ordinance [is] taken away by their wickedness, [or] the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the sacraments ministered unto them, which be effectual because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men." Here, we have an implied admission, that the grace of the sacraments may be diminished by deficiency of faith, at the same time that they are asserted to be "*effectual*, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men." It follows that the effectual working is

not completed in consequence of the validity of the commission, under which it is possible that evil ministers may act ; but, on the contrary, that the effect may be injured by the fault of the recipient.

The twenty-seventh article defines baptism separately from the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and gives a copious description of its operation and effects. It does not require any lengthened discussion to prove that it defines and describes in perfect harmony with the twenty-fifth article. The obvious comparison which may be made in reading them continuously, will be sufficient to show their coincidence in doctrine. The definition of baptism is—"a sign of regeneration or new birth," which may seem to be a weaker position than that taken in the abstract article. But it would not be sound and honest interpretation to dilute the stronger passage by a subsequent one *apparently* weaker ; because it is impossible it could have been intended to retract or diminish what had been so recently asserted, namely, that both sacraments are "effectual signs of grace." In fact, the antithesis in the twenty-seventh article is confined to itself, and subsists exclusively between "profession" and "the inward and spiritual grace." In stating the doctrine of our church upon this subject, we have therefore no colour of argument to warrant us in omitting what is elsewhere expressed ; and that, not only in the Articles, but also in our Catechism and baptismal services.

But, before we pass on to the description of the effects of baptism, it may be necessary to make some observations upon the use of both appellations, "regeneration or new birth."

In the writer's Latin copy of the Articles, prefixed to Bishop Burnet's Exposition, we read only "*Signum regenerationis.*" A question arises, why our English Article, which is of equal authority, adds the appellation of "new birth?" We cannot infer from the mere addition, that it is given as a mere synonyme, any more than where the third part of the Homily of Good Works speaks of abuses, which "were made most high and most holy things, whereby to attain to everlasting life or remission of sin;" we should be warranted in considering "*remission of sin*" synonymous with "everlasting life."

We have seen abundant evidence in reviewing our baptismal services, that they do not represent "regeneration" as synonymous with "new birth." It follows that the clause in question ought to be understood disjunctively. In this way, the import of the exposition is, that baptism is "a sign of regeneration," and it is also a sign of "new birth." "*The inward part or thing signified*" is explained in our Catechism to be "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." According to this answer, therefore, we are authorized to teach that baptism is a sign of "a death unto sin;" and also that it is a sign of "a new birth unto righteousness." It is a

sign of either, and it is a sign of both. And such is the double power of the same sign in the clause of the twenty-seventh article, now under examination. It would be correct to assert that baptism is “*a sign of a death unto sin, or of a new birth unto righteousness;*” but it would not follow that these are synonymous appellations or descriptions. But there is a safeguard and completeness in our English Article; because, without the express words, some might suppose the new birth not to be included in the significance of baptism.

It is not intended, however, to make any thing like a separation between regeneration and new birth. The latter is a distinguished part of the progress of the former. And as such, it might be called “regeneration,” just as the sealed commencement of new life in baptism is called by the same term in an incipient sense. But (strictly speaking) regeneration precedes, pervades, and follows new birth. And in this there is an analogy which we are warranted to expect, by the comparison with natural generation, which is suggested by our Lord’s conversation with Nicodemus. David says, “My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret. . . . and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was none of them.*”—Psalm cxxxix. Here is an inspired description of generation before birth. When the infant is born, the Lord reminds us that the mother

“remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.” — John xvi. 21. A human creature is born, complete in all its parts; yet not in every sense a perfect man, though truly called “*a man.*” This is an important grade in the generation of a perfect man; maturity could never be attained without it. But growth must advance; generation must continue, both in magnitude and strength. Bony matter must be generated; new blood must be generated from day to day; and the blood is the life; the process must go on while life remains. So regeneration may precede baptism; in the case of adults, it must. Repentance and faith are parts of the regenerating process, without which there can be no new birth. To believers in Christ a right is given to become the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. The right is claimed and recognised in the baptism of persons of riper years; and it comes into the possession of those baptized in infancy, when they have been brought to such a state as is equivalent to adult baptism, by uniting, *in effect*, the appointed sign with a competent maturity of the thing signified. These observations may assist in giving a true explanation of a supposed proof that the framers of our Articles identified new birth with baptism, because the Latin copy of the ninth article has *renatis et credentibus*, [the newly-born and believing,] where the English has “them that believe and are baptized.” But it is obvious, at the first

glance, that faith is contained in both descriptions ; and therefore they cannot be mutually equivalent in any part without having this essential ingredient united to the rest. It does not at all prove infant baptism to amount to new birth before the existence of those principles which constitute the inward part of baptism, and which are declared in our Catechism to be “required of persons to be baptized.”

A passing remark upon the word “*regenerated*” in the ninth article may not be without its use. The preceding context describes wherein “original sin” consists ; and then the article most truly and scripturally asserts, that “this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated.” Here, in order to declare the whole truth, it was necessary to use the strongest form of the term ; because the most advanced grade of regeneration that can be attained in this present life, is not exempt from the burden of sin as a disease, though sin has not dominion over those who are crucified with Christ.

To return to the twenty-seventh article. After contrasting the feeble idea of a mere “sign of profession” with the spiritual importance of baptism, as “a sign of regeneration or new birth,” it is added : “whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church ; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are

visibly signed and sealed ; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.”

The first thing to be inquired into concerning this passage is, the import of “receiving baptism *rightly*.” From the Latin *rectè* in this place, and from the Latin word *ritè* corresponding to “rightly” in three other places, the meaning appears to be, “*according to the manner requisite by Christ’s institution.*” The preparatory questions put to the sponsors in publicly receiving into the congregation children which had been privately baptized, may assist in supporting this explanation. But it is not necessary to seek beyond the Articles themselves ; for the twenty-sixth joins “*faith*” with “rightly,” in stating how “the grace of God’s gifts” is not “diminished” by the unworthiness of ministers ; and the twenty-eighth article describes the blessed effect of the Lord’s supper “to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same.” Therefore, where the word “rightly” alone is used, it seems to follow, that we are to understand only a conformity with the appointed manner of the institution, by the washing of water, and the dedication “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ;” but not requiring the actual exercise of faith in all cases, that is, not in infant baptism. And certainly this is all that is externally necessary in baptized infants themselves, for ingrafting them into the church. But, besides this, the promises of forgiveness and adoption “are visibly

signed and sealed ; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.”

The next inquiry is : If the requirement of faith be not understood in the word “*rightly*,” how is it consistent to state, as part of the effect of baptism, that faith is confirmed ?” This proves it to be the doctrine of our church (as has been repeatedly maintained,) that the operation of baptism is not confined to the administration of the rite. Our Catechism teaches, that repentance and faith are required of baptized infants “*when they come to age.*” And when these principles are in actual exercise as fruits of the Spirit, it is their nature to grow in strength : and the reflection of a believing mind upon the precious privileges of “a seal of the righteousness of faith,” is one of the means of strengthening faith ; and, under the blessing of the Lord, it abidingly operates in grateful praise to him for calling us “to this state of salvation,” and in prayer for grace, that we “may continue in the same unto our lives’ end.” It is also obvious, that this doctrine of baptism, being an instrument whereby “faith is confirmed and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God,” is at least perfectly consistent with what has been asserted in this tract—that spiritual regeneration may, in a measure, precede the baptism of infants as well as adults ; and that Christian parents who believe the promises of God, and pray without ceasing in dependence upon them, have scriptural ground for ex-

pecting their offspring to be sanctified from the womb, and in the womb.

The third topic of inquiry arising out of the twenty-seventh article is its concluding clause, which is in the following words :—

“The baptism of young children is in anywise to be retained in the church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.”

It may perhaps appear to some, that this short sentence, as it were cursorily annexed to the article, does not indicate as high an estimation of infant-baptism as ought to be expected. But if there be any, even seeming, ground for such a suspicion, it is hoped that there can be no difficulty in removing it. Let it be recollected, that, *after* the earliest age of Christianity, (when* no doubt an immense multitude, perhaps a great majority of Christians, were adult converts from heathenism,) the term “baptism” would at once suggest the idea of infant-baptism. That would occur according to the usual habit of mind and practice ; and adult-baptism would appear under the aspect of an extraordinary exception. It is true that, after the Reformation in the sixteenth century, when the sect of the anabaptists arose, the case must have been somewhat altered. But the change was not so considerable, as to prevent “*baptism*” from signifying the sacramental mode of admission to the church of Christ, without any special distinction in respect of

* That is, *in* the earliest age.

the age of recipients. As to the sentiments of the Church of England there can be no stronger proof, than the absence of a formulary from her Prayer-book, for the "baptism of those of riper years," until after the Restoration. It is to be feared, indeed, that this remarkable deficiency is a symptom of the want of a missionary spirit. But, however the fact is to be accounted for, it makes no difference in the present discussion. The fact was just as has been stated. Therefore there was no form for adult-baptism in the Church of England at the time the Articles were agreed upon, nor up to the period when they received their final adjustment and ratification in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Does it not follow then, clearly and decidedly, that the twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, and twenty-seventh articles must have been drawn abstractedly? and that it is a great and injurious mistake, to suppose that we are not to think of infant-baptism until we come to the conclusion of the twenty-seventh article? How could the compilers have intended to exclude it from their definitions and descriptions, when it was the only form of the rite with which they were actually conversant in their church's practice at the time?

It remains only to give a reason for the concluding sentence, which makes this explanation necessary. There was a sufficient cause for such an explicit addition to the general doctrine, in the existence of an antipædo-baptist sect. This demanded a rejection of their tenets, and an assertion of the opposite truth.

The rejection is implied, and the assertion is made in terms which are perfectly adequate, and suited to the purpose in view. The words "*in anywise*" are of the most decisive import, and the reason derived from full and admirable congruity "with the institution of Christ," is the most satisfactory which, in such a case, can be presented to a Christian mind.

The relation of the Christian church to the patriarchal, which was continued even under the Mosaic dispensation, did not leave room for the requirement of a *special* command, in order to make infant-baptism an institution of Christ. The portion of the Christian church which was taken out of the gentile world, was composed of wild olive-branches ingrafted into the stock of that holy and ancient olive-tree which was rooted in the covenant of promise. According to the tenor of that covenant, the first appointed sign and seal of "the righteousness of faith" was circumcision. This seal was, by divine command, applied to infants; and (if we may so speak) it was a matter of course, that the substituted seal should be equally comprehensive. So that when our blessed Lord gave his great commission to "baptize all nations," there could not be a doubt in the minds of those to whom it was given, that all ages were included. If those who were converted by the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and who heard him exhort every one of them to "repent and be baptized," with the precious promise of "the gift

of the Holy Ghost ;” and adding, “for the promise is unto you and to *your children*, and to all that are afar off,” &c.—if these converts had been refused the privilege of having their children admitted into the church by baptism with themselves, what must they have thought of the consistency of the apostle with his own inspired declaration, and with the holy Scriptures? But the supposition is impossible! And that the same privilege was extended to the children of believing gentiles—at least to those born after the conversion of one or both of their parents—is clear from St. Paul’s reasoning in the seventh chapter of 1 Corinthians—“else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.” The same arguments may account for the familiar manner in which the baptism of households is mentioned in the Acts and by St. Paul, for though it cannot prove, as matter of fact, the existence of young children in these houses—it illustrates the ease with which our Saviour’s gracious declaration—“of such is the kingdom of God”—was held to infer the consequence of sacramental privileges being no less ample “to all the families of the earth,” than to him who received the gospel-promise, that in his seed they should be blessed.

Thus we find most satisfactory ground for the confidence with which the articles on baptism are finished by an assertion, that “the baptism of young children is in anywise to be retained in the church.” And it is not at all weakened by the added clause, “as most

agreeable with the institution of Christ." The Latin *optime congruat* affords confirmation that it was not intended to express or imply any degrees of comparison, but to show the scriptural authority on which the church relies for its practice, namely, the perfect conformity of it with the design of our blessed Lord in this initiatory ordinance. How delightful it is to contemplate therein one bright manifestation of the harmony of the divine dispensations from the beginning of the world!

At the same time let it be remembered, when we study these articles, that the exposition applies to baptism as one invariable ordinance, notwithstanding some variety of circumstances and of order. It is not divisible into distinct species, but strictly accordant with that emphatic clause near the end of the NICENE CREED, "*I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.*"

Upon this principle the services in our Prayer-book have been composed. The sponsorial answers are required to identify infant and adult baptism by the necessity, in all cases, of repentance and faith. And what is thus most fully and clearly announced, is inculcated in our catechetical instruction, together with an answer to an objection which is very naturally suggested and simply explained. It has been already observed how effectually this explanation excludes a very favourite tenet of some divines about those who put no obstacle in the way of the operation of the sacraments.

Having this identity in view, we shall better understand how God “doth work invisibly in us” by outward signs and pledges, and how a reference to the sacramental manifestation of his “good will towards us,” both by teachers and learners, operates to the progressive formation of “the thing signified.” What is said of quickening, strengthening, and confirming faith, will no longer be a paradox as applied to children, when we know that “baptism is not done only at the font.” And it will be easy to make it a part of Christian education, to impress upon the opening mind and conscience that “the sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, . . . but that we should duly use them;” and also that “in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation.” The truth is, that baptism is to be received, not only as a transient rite, but as a perpetual pledge of love and means of grace; so that, although the sign is not to be repeated, there is no limit to the reception of the grace. And in the continued retrospective use of the sign according to the Lord’s will, and under the vital influence of the eternal Spirit, “faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.” Observe particularly what is here affirmed—“*Grace is increased.*” The previous existence of grace is therefore manifestly implied; and it is taken for granted, that it has been in operation before the administration of baptism. This is true, both as to infants and

adults. Oh! how plenteous are the overflowings of “the wells of salvation!” Let us “draw water out of them with joy!”

But there is something further to be observed concerning the unity of baptism, and it is of the utmost importance. “I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.” Is this acknowledgment to be interpreted so as to deny the remission which the Gospel promises? Does it teach us to say to a returning prodigal, “We have no second baptism; you must seek forgiveness by mortifications and penances; but though there may be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, *there is no echo of it upon earth?*” No; by no means. The baptism which we acknowledge for the remission of sins, is a baptism into the death of Christ, into the sacrifice of “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” It is a baptism whose “inward grace” can never lose its efficacy. It is a baptism which addresses the baptized, as the apostle John does in the second chapter of his first epistle—“These privileges are conferred upon you ‘that ye sin not.’” Yet it proclaims as he did (without fearing any injury to holiness)—“And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins* of the whole world.” Such is our one baptism. It needs no repetition of the sign, because it is a pledge from that God “who cannot

lie," a seal of "the righteousness of faith." It never can lose its efficacious significance, for it always points to the Lamb of God. The sacramental supper does the same—"This is my body which is broken for you ; this is my blood which is shed for you."

If this reference to a propitiatory sacrifice, finished upon the cross, even that "one offering" which was "once offered," to be "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world"—if this *retrospective* view of the believing mind were duly considered, it might prevent much perplexing discussion about the real presence, as being a question not necessary to the explanation of the Lord's supper. We have, indeed, a great High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, who is always spiritually present with us, and especially (according to his own promise) "where two or three are met together in his name." To his throne of grace we are exhorted to come *continually*, and in the confidence of faith and love, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Heb. iv. 16. But the *immediate* design of the holy institution we are now contemplating, is not to lead us to look to our Saviour's *glorified* body, or to seek any nourishment from it, whether as near us or in heaven ; but by faith to behold Christ crucified, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and spiritually to drink, to the refreshment of our souls, that precious shed blood which did not return to his body any more,

and cannot possibly be received otherwise than in the heart.

Let us dismiss, then, all discussion about real presence: it is quite foreign from the subject, although the same persons who limit regeneration to the font, seem very desirous to make it all in all.

In this manner we may perceive that it is no digression to appeal to the twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth articles, when we are treating of "the doctrine of baptisms;" for the two sacraments throw mutual light upon each other; and, on the other hand, the misinterpretation of either is generally found in close connexion with a false or obscure view of the other. By the way, it may perhaps not be superfluous to observe that the plural word "baptisms," quoted from the sixth chapter of Hebrews, is not inconsistent with the singleness of the ordinance which is asserted in the *Nicene Creed*. It may be used plurally, as is done in our parish registers, in respect of the individuals to whom baptism is administered, without any dividing of the institution itself.

And now, having arrived at the end of the last topic of the third division of our subject, the writer hopes that, under the guidance and blessing of the Lord, he may have contributed something to a right understanding of the doctrine of our church concerning baptism and regeneration, and to placing it in the light of divine truth, so as to encourage some of his reverend brethren, who may not already have made

up their minds, and some among all his fellow-Christians, to search our Prayer-book and the holy Scriptures in a spirit of prayer, whether these things be so; and that it only remains to submit to the reader a brief condensation of the substance of the whole tract, which may be arranged under the additional head of

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

Regeneration is “the commencement and growth of a new and spiritual life, through Christ our Saviour and the operation of his Spirit; liable, in some stages, to blight and decay.”— *See def. in third division of this tract.*

FROM reviewing this exposition, preparatory to a recapitulation of its principal contents, a sense of deficiency and fallibility is among the first results. Yet it is hoped that some things may be worthy of being collected and submitted to the reader's consideration in an abridged and more connected form. In the first division of the subject it has been proved from simple inspection and comparison, that **NEW BIRTH IS NOT ATTRIBUTED TO INFANTS** in our offices, although a baptized infant is pronounced “*regenerate* ;” and we also thank God “that it hath pleased him to regenerate this infant with his Holy Spirit.” If it had been otherwise, it would be difficult to reconcile our Prayer-book with the assertions of St. John in his first epistle. But we have abun-

dant reason to rejoice in the manifestation of wisdom from above, by which the compilers of our formularies were enabled to express all the richness of baptismal privileges, without overpassing the limits of the word of God.

In the beginning of the office of public baptism we are conducted to the porch of our Lord's spiritual temple, and reminded of the necessity of regeneration and new birth, "forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin." We are presented with a glorious prospect of the kingdom of heaven and a description of the dispositions by which its inhabitants are characterized. All these things are prayed for; but, of course, prospectively as to many of them, and according to the order of succession and gradation in which it is the will of God to bestow them.

Among the blessings sought, the new birth is a most essential one; but there is nothing to show that it is asked as an immediate concomitant of the rite. The petition offered is—"Give thy Holy Spirit to this infant, that he may be born again." Let the words "*may be*," expressive of possibility and futurity, be specially remarked. Let every line of the remainder of the service be carefully examined. Not one can be found, nor a single word, conveying an idea of a present answer, beyond incipiency, to that prayer. Happy ought we to be that it is so. For how could we defend an opposite condition of the formulary, and compare the actual state of the visible church, with

those decided declarations of St. John—(1 John iii. 9,) “Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

This difficulty was evidently felt by the anonymous author of a catechetical tract lately published in Belfast. And how does he endeavour to remove the difficulty? By assuming a distinction between “born again” and “born of God,” as if it were possible to be born again without being born of God. But the holy Scriptures give no countenance to such a distinction. The marginal translation, “born from above,” in the third chapter of St. John’s gospel, ought to have furnished sufficient evidence of the identity of all the phrases, especially as it is manifest that the new birth our Saviour spoke of to Nicodemus, is a fruit of the Spirit, and consequently a work of God.

What then is the true solution? It is a plain matter of fact: even the total absence from the public baptism of infants, of any assertion, that new birth, in any sense, is instantaneously effected by the administration. The necessary inference from this fact is rendered unquestionable by the gradation which has been amply exhibited in two other baptismal formularies: the reception service having the intermediate phrase “*being born again,*” and the baptism of adults, the decisive adverb of present time, “being now born again.” But are we therefore obliged to maintain the total absence of all spiritual life from the

baptized infant? God forbid! The infant is "*re-generate,*" and we thank God that it hath pleased him to begin and carry on the blessed work "with his Holy Spirit." The work is progressive: and in this respect it resembles vegetable growth; and this progression accounts for the careful avoidance of thanksgiving in terms of the past tense. We are not taught to say—" *Thou hast regenerated.*"

Illustrations have been given of the justice of this distinction from the analogy of vegetation, and from the language which might have been suitably used on two or three recent events. The last of these illustrations is a supposed thanksgiving, that it hath pleased God to *civilize* New Zealand. But the illustrations principally relied on are from references to the holy Scriptures; as from the first promise of mercy, the promises to Abraham, and the gracious assurance of our Lord and Saviour:—"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Here then a question may be repeated, which has been put before in the part of this tract, which contains at large the illustrations now abridged—ought not our Lord's disciples to praise him, that it was his good pleasure, by his death upon the cross, to "draw all men unto him?" yet the work of salvation is only in progress; it would not be according to truth to say—"thou hast drawn." Strong as this is, it seems right to add another quotation from the same part of this tract:—

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations,” (margin—“make disciples or Christians of all nations,”) “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” And would it be wrong to say—“We thank thee, O Father, that it hath pleased thee to evangelize and save the world?” What though a “mystery of iniquity” has retarded the work? What though (as was predicted) there has been “a falling away first?” “What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? “God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.” In like manner, ought not the rich provision which the Lord has made, and the good will he has manifested, constrain us to give thanks “that it hath pleased him to regenerate our baptized infants with his Holy Spirit?” Not meaning that the work is entirely done in the rite; but rejoicing in hope of going forward according to the blessed beginning; in hope of bringing up sons and daughters to the Lord Almighty, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The writer desires to avail himself of the opportunity thus presented to him, most earnestly and affectionately to protest against an interpretation of the “HOLY SPIRIT” in the thanksgiving in question, which he has seen in the correspondence of the *Christian Examiner*, and—if his supposition has not been

misled by *initials*—from a brother for whom he entertains the highest respect and Christian regard.

That reverend correspondent explains the name of the third person of the ever-blessed Trinity as meaning, in that passage, the baptismal water. He does so on the ground of signs, often receiving appellations which are strictly applicable only to the things signified; as the paschal lamb received the name of *the Passover*; and the bread and wine were called by Christ himself, in the institution of the Lord's supper, his *body and blood*. But it is believed that due consideration will show the cases compared to be widely different, and the expository inference drawn from these examples not to be justified.

In the first place, the element of water was sanctified "to the mystical washing away of sin," and, when applied in baptism, to be "a sign of regeneration or new birth;" not of the divine agent in these saving operations. The Lord never said of water, "This is my spirit," as he did of bread and wine, "This is my body," "This is my blood." Thus the foundation of the exposition objected to altogether fails. But it is worthy (notwithstanding) of further examination. It may be thought that, as an *emblem* of the Holy Spirit, water may be properly called by his name. If this answer to the objection be valid, then any pure water may be called **THE HOLY SPIRIT**, or, addressing God in thanksgiving, "**THY HOLY SPIRIT**;" for the water of the font has no pre-

eminence in this respect; because water is not an appointed sign of the Holy Spirit; and, as an emblem, it is not exclusively used in holy Scripture. Oil, air, and fire are also emblems of the same Divine person, or of his influences.

But let the necessary supposition of water, being an instituted sign of the Holy Spirit, be conceded for argument sake, and for clearing up the subject as fully as possible, still it must be humbly maintained, that the proposed substitution of ideas is not admissible. Perhaps even the feelings of the proposer might be appealed to. Perhaps he may permit a question—Does not the spiritual discernment of your heart revolt against your intellectual effort? The question is suggested by the consciousness of such a feeling, connected with the proverb:—“As in water face answereth to face,” &c. But though that feeling be as strong as possible, it is readily admitted that it does not amount to proof. Let us then return to reasoning.

There is another weighty matter to be taken into account from the difference of idiom between the Hebrew and English language. The former has no word for “*signify*,” except in the idiomatic use of the verb substantive. Hence, in Hebrew and its dialects, “This is my body” means the same as “this signifies my body.” Substitution of ideas must have been more natural and easy in the speakers of that language than of ours. But what is much more

material to our present purpose, is found in the scriptural mode of using figurative language, which does not countenance the substitution proposed in our baptismal service. The scriptural usage is, to signify a spiritual idea by a sensible object, not a sensible object by the name of something invisible, or at least not seen at the time in which the figure is employed. Thus our Saviour said to the woman of Samaria—“Thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water,” (John iv.) meaning the Holy Spirit. Further illustration might be given from the same discourse, but it is enough to refer to it. Another example may be seen in the same chapter, in the Lord’s answer to his disciples—“I have meat to eat, that ye know not of;” and another in his invitation—“Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.” The sixth chapter abounds with figures of speech employed in a similar manner; and even the language used “on the same night in which he was betrayed” does not furnish an exception. “This is my body which is broken for you,” (1 Cor. xi. 24,) in the Lord’s own mind, and in the after taught mind of his disciples, had respect to what was not then seen, namely, his crucifixion. So also as to the cup, signifying the New Testament or covenant, in his blood to be shed.

Let us now transfer our thoughts to the administration of the Lord’s supper, according to the Liturgy of our church. When the minister gives the bread

to a communicant, and prays in the prescribed form, does he mean by these words, "The body of our Lord," the bread presented in his hand? Evidently not. Nor can he mean the baptismal water by the words "THY HOLY SPIRIT." This would be reversing the scriptural and ordinary use of figurative language, which proceeds from sensible to invisible things, not *vice versâ*. It would be superfluous to repeat a similar argument from the prayer that we offer at the giving of the cup. For the same reason, a deduction from one of the prayers, which follow the communion, is omitted.

Having thus, he trusts, successfully removed two extremes from the interpretation of the thanksgiving in our Prayer-book, after the baptism of an infant—one tending to injure the perpetual energy of the inward grace, by teaching that it is perfected at the font; the other, to reduce the institution to a significant ceremony, with language of such spiritual richness, as to be scarcely consistent with sincerity, on that supposition—the writer conceives that the cardinal part of his undertaking has been set in order, and that he may now resume his abstract with some good degree of clearness and of hope.

The absence of an assertion of new birth from the offices for the baptism of infants, and the progressive nature of regeneration, have been amply and (may we be permitted to hope?) truly exhibited. The absence is an obvious fact, of which any reader may

satisfy himself in a few minutes. The progression is supported by analogy, by the common use of language, and by the only instances in which the term "regeneration" occurs in the holy Scriptures. And why should it be imagined to be exempt from the same law by which the terms "SALVATION, and ADOPTION, and SANCTIFICATION, and REDEMPTION" are evidently governed. Even the word "CREATION" does not refuse to stand in this class. "Create in me a clean heart, O God;"—Psalm li. "Create and make in us new and contrite hearts."—(Collect for Ash Wednesday.*) Neither is there an absolute simpleness even in the term JUSTIFICATION. Not that it is, in any degree, to be attributed to baptism: infants partake (in common with the whole world) of that justification of the ungodly which the propitiation of Christ's blood at once procured; and in consequence of which, "the free gift is come upon all men unto justification of life."—Rom. v. But there can be no *imputation of righteousness* without the actual exercise of faith. Baptism, like circumcision, is a seal of the righteousness of faith, and pre-supposes faith. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." But it is necessary that faith should be sufficiently strong to overcome fear and shame, so as "with the mouth to make confession

* The collect for Christmas Day, and that for Easter evening, (though not exactly applicable to the present point, may also be profitably read.

unto salvation." Such confession must be that "answer of a good conscience" in baptism, of which St. Peter speaks, and which saves us "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Without it there can be no claim to the promise of our Saviour:—"He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." Still it is faith which is "imputed for righteousness;" and the doctrine of justification by faith must ever be maintained as the *articulus* of a standing or falling church: not because Luther had the sagacity to describe it so; but because its indispensable importance is imprinted in St. Paul's Epistles, as distinctly as if Luther's propositions were written in them in so many words.

Out of this character of progressiveness arises another which is nearly allied to it, namely, that of *prospectiveness*. It is very conspicuous in our baptismal services. In many parts of them it cannot possibly be overlooked. But the prayer for *remission of sins by spiritual regeneration*, requires more attention. An incipient degree of this spiritual effect is not incompatible with the infantine state; and it may, and ought to be, prayed for. But, in connexion with remission of sins, such a prayer must be prospective; because an infant (though under the guilt and consequent corruption of original sin) has not committed sins, and can only be made a partaker of those promises in Christ, which our heavenly Father will, "for his part, most surely keep and perform." This

argument is corroborated by the mention of the act of *coming*, of which an infant is not capable. It is established, by the remarkable omission in the exhortation which follows the Gospel in the baptism of infants, contrasted with the parallel exhortation in the baptism of adults. In the former we read—"Doubt ye not, &c., that he will embrace *him* with the arms of his mercy; that he will give unto *him* the blessing of eternal life," &c.; in the latter we read—"that he will favourably receive *these* present *persons*, truly repenting, and coming unto him by faith; that he will grant *them* remission of their sins," &c. The prayer for the gift of the Holy Ghost, that the infant *may be* born again, and the thanksgiving which has been repeatedly discussed and explained, are of a similar nature. Nor need any readers apprehend that there is the smallest force exercised upon the language of the passages referred to, when it is considered that the sponsorial answers are made in the name of the child to be baptized. For example, to the question—"Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?" The answer is—"That is my desire." Besides, our Church Catechism teaches that repentance and faith are required of persons to be baptized; and that infants are baptized, because they promise them both by their sureties; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform." It follows that repentance and faith are indispensable pre-requisites, without which the thing signified by baptism

cannot have its consummation. There cannot be a death unto sin or a new birth unto righteousness, except (if we may so speak) in embryo. The new life, connected with the spiritual ingrafting by baptism, is properly a conception by the Holy Ghost—not a new birth. If it were a new birth, and especially if produced invariably by the administration of an instituted rite, it would not agree with our Saviour's comparison to the wind, addressed to Nicodemus—“Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

A due consideration of these principles, with the assistance of our Saviour's *parable of the vine and its branches*—together with the illustration in the beginning of the third division, from the mode of speech by which Saul is said to have been made king a second time, and Solomon likewise—will be sufficient to explain the nature of the baptismal privileges enumerated in the second answer of our Catechism; and the quotations from our *Homilies*, in the same part, will teach us how to exhort the members of the visible church to examine themselves, without at all derogating from the reality and importance of those privileges.

There has been sometimes, no doubt, an error committed, by addressing a Christian congregation as unbelievers, or as having many among them of that description. But it is equally objectionable, to neglect

discrimination according to the scriptural pattern. St. Paul exhorted to purge out leaven, while he recognised in the same moment the unleavened character of those whom he exhorted. Our Saviour, speaking as a Jew to the woman of Samaria, said :—“ We know what we worship.” Yet he charged many of the Jews with ignorance of God. He conceded their claim of being Abraham’s seed, and yet immediately afterwards, he said :—“ If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.” Nay, it appears that those whom he addressed (though probably mixed with others in the audience and in the address) were, in a certain sense and degree—believers. For the narrative begins thus :—“ Then, said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed.”—John viii. 31.

Let us therefore, in instructing both old and young who have been baptized into the death of Christ, avail ourselves fully of the consequent principles, but with wise and tender, yet faithful discrimination. Let us teach and persuade our catechumens to realize the new birth, on the very ground that they have been “ made the children of grace ;” for, without this mercy, our addresses would have no infusion of love to give them efficacy. We may bring this message of peace, in most encouraging measure, even to the heathen ; but how much more, to every subject of the kingdom of heaven, where our gracious Lord pro-

claims: My Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not."—Haggai, ii. 5.* "By one spirit are we all baptized into one body."—1 Cor. xii. 13.

It is not indeed equally possible to ascertain the time of new birth, as it is of natural birth. But we may have the cheering observation of most hopeful signs of the work of spiritual regeneration being in progress: and we ought diligently to drop the seeds of scriptural truth into the opening soil of the young heart, as it may be able to receive them. This Christian husbandry may be so accompanied with references to baptismal privileges, as to sanctify children "with the washing of water by the word." Through the gift of the Holy Spirit assured in baptism, they are capable, at a very early age, of joining in the thanksgiving of St. James, (i. 18,) "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." St. Peter speaks in similar terms of the instrumentality by which new birth is produced—"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Pet. i. 23.

Now the testimony of sacramental signs to the good will of our heavenly Father, concurs with his word; and thus they co-operate in quickening, as well as increasing our faith, according to the doctrine

* For proof that such promises are the inheritance of the Christian church, compare Deut. xxxi. 6, 8, and Joshua, i. 5, with Gal. iii. 29, and Heb. xiii. 5.

of our twenty-fifth article. But the capacity of believing is bestowed through the operation of the Holy Ghost—"By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."—Eph. ii. 8. Hence it is very often manifested in childhood. And the cause of the thanksgiving of our Lord, recorded in the eleventh chapter of Matthew, is often almost literally verified: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Encouraged by such assurances, let parents, sponsors, and pastors, administer "the sincere milk of the word," and duly prepare the young for the rite of confirmation, that they may make a good confession before many witnesses, and daily increase in God's Holy Spirit more and more. So shall their teachers recognise the growth of unfeigned faith, held in a pure conscience, as Paul did that of Timothy; "which dwelt," said he, "first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also."

What a blessed foundation whereon to ground the exhortation—"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to made thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—2 Tim. iii. 14, 15. Such

shall bring forth more fruit in their age, if they pray without ceasing to our heavenly Father, "that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit;" and "humbly beseeching him, so to work in our hearts by the power of his Holy Spirit, that we being regenerate and newly born again in all goodness, righteousness, sobriety, and truth, may in the end be made partakers of everlasting life in his heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour."—*See collect for Christmas, and the end of the first part of the homily for Whitsunday.*

It is hoped that these quotations and comments may illustrate the substantial identification in spirit (under some variety of externals) of infant and adult baptism, by our baptismal services, by the order for confirmation, and by our Articles; and that we may be prepared to say, not in a spirit of bondage, but in the glorious liberty of the children of God—"I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins." This is our baptism into the death of Christ. But "if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."—Rom. v. 10. We must remember that there is a baptism by fire. John said, (Matt. iii. 11,) "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but . . . he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and *with* fire."

Our blessed and heaven-taught reformers under-

stood the nature of this baptism well. The Lord grant, that he who writes, and he who reads, may be prepared through grace to join in the hymn—

VENI, CREATOR SPIRITUS,

which is found in the second ordination service, and in that for the consecration of bishops, so that our proof may be experimental. The *rubric* directs it to be sung or said by the bishop, priests, and congregation *responsively* :—

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire.
 Thou the anointing spirit art
Who dost thy seven-fold gifts impart.

Thy blessed unction from above,
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.
 Enable with perpetual light,
The dulness of our blinded sight.

Anoint and cheer our soiled face
With the abundance of thy grace :
 Keep far our foes, give peace at home ;
Where thou art guide, no ill can come.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And thee, of both, to be but one ;
 That, through the ages all along,
This may be our endless song—
 Praise to thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

THE END.

DUBLIN

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MEMOIR

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BY

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Rector of Kilcoleman, Diocese of Tuam.

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