THE MOULD OF DOCTRINE.

A STUDY OF ROMANS VI.17.

JESSE B. THOMAS, D.D.

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ROMANS VI. 17,

AS BEARING ON THE MEANING AND VALUE OF THE SPECIFIC FORM OF BAPTISM, AS APPOINTED BY OUR LORD.

BY

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CHAPTER I.

THE BAPTISTS AND THE BIBLE.

IN the *Autobiography* of Dr. Lyman Beecher (vol. ii., p. 87), in a letter addressed by him to his son Edward, then preparing for the Congregational ministry, occurs this curious passage: "There is only one thing which you will have to watch and pray against; that is the morbid sensibility of what may be termed a nervous conscience; by which I mean a conscience made preternaturally sensitive and fearful. This I have reason to believe has worried many a man till he became a Baptist through excess of conscience." So wholesome a recoil did this paternal caution produce from "excess of conscience," that not only did the young student abandon his growing Baptist predilections, but no one of Dr. Beecher's household has ever since been driven thus by conscience into the Baptist ranks.

The notion here insinuated, that Baptist con-

scientiousness is at bottom only scrupulosity, highly flavored with obstinacy, is not unusual, and perhaps under all the circumstances not unnatural, in the casual observer. The skillful partisan knows how to seize an apt point of circumstance, to present an imposing front by marshalling his meagre facts into a battle-line long though thin, and so to win by impression rather than by measuring weapons. In the court of prejudice the brilliancy of the indictment is accepted as conclusive of the facts, and judicial inquiry is dispensed with.

Such an opportunity has been afforded, and abundantly improved, in the recent dealings between the Baptists and the American Bible Society. Consider how formidable a case may be made by the bare statement of a few facts, with plausible inferences therefrom, viz.:

1. The real question at issue is the translation of a single word, and that in a single sense—the Bible Society being willing to translate the Greek word by a "generic" term, or to transfer it untranslated.—Did ever "jot and tittle" breed so great a controversy before?

2. Because the Society will not concede this point, the Baptists alone of all the co-operating denominations withdraw. — What a wanton breach of the "Unity of Christendom," because

an unsectarian Society will not violate its organic and fundamental principle!

About these two main positions now deploy a skirmish line of supplementary suggestions, such as:

3. The Baptists cling tenaciously to immersion as the only baptism.—How absurd to obstruct the coming reign of "sweetness and light" by thus superstitiously exalting the "letter" above the "spirit" of the ordinance!

4. The Baptists stand almost alone "against the Western world" in this.—How presumptuous in them to condemn the ancient church by rejecting infant baptism! How arrogant to reflect upon the present church by their "close communion" doctrine!

5. The Baptists, as known in history, have somehow been pretty uniformly "in the opposition."—This seems to suggest some inherent waywardness of temper, or obliquity of doctrine, tending to the theory that the only way to "please God" is to be "contrary to all men."

Probably the above counts would be regarded by the most rancid anti-Baptist as sufficiently vigorous and comprehensive to present the case in its strongest features, (and perhaps in his judgment to close it in the opening.) But patient examination will often show how a statement

even of undeniable facts may, by an omission, a misconstruction, or the suggestion of a misleading inference, tend to a conclusion specious, but utterly false.

Let us begin then with the last of the charges, which being at that end of the case naturally carries the sting, is most venomous, and first felt.

FIDELITY OR STUBBORNNESS—WHICH?

Some recent New England monographs upon the early Baptists of that realm seem devoted to the establishment concerning them of Elihu's thesis against Job, "What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning as water?" Now if superior success in getting before magistrates, behind prison bars, into the pillory, or out of the commonwealth, fairly demonstrates a craving for misery and hate, then some of our forefathers seem to have had a really cavernous appetite for that kind of luxury, and no stinted supply. And by the same rule so did the early martyrs. But before concluding so uncharitably, in either case, it is well to consider the reasonableness of their own explanation; that the suffering was endured rather than coveted, as a logical necessity of fidelity to a doctrine precious above life to them, but sought to be exterminated by others.

But how can fidelity concerning a mere iso-

lated rite create any logical necessity in realms of conduct and controversy so wide and so distant? Because this necessity is not at once obvious, its existence has been too often ignored or denied, and loyalty to principle has been mocked as stubbornness of self-will.

"It is the singular and distinguished honor of the Baptists," says Herbert Skeats, in his *History of the Free Churches of England*[1] "to have repudiated, from their earliest history, all coercive power over the consciences and the actions of men with reference to religion. No sentence is to be found in all their writings inconsistent with those principles of Christian liberty and willinghood which are now equally dear to all the free Congregational Churches of England. *They were the proto-evangelists of the voluntary principle.*" Mr. Skeats adds in a note, that he is not himself a Baptist. This adds value to his testimony as impartial, but it suggests also a further and pertinent thought. One would suppose that so unique and persistent a coincidence, of peculiar doctrinal tenets and allegiance to a peculiar principle, would have hinted some possible causal relation between the two. But he appears to have no suspicion, even, that the alliance is more than accidental. In like manner

[1] London edition, 1869, p. 24.

Gervinus, in his *Introduction to the History of the Nineteenth Century*,[1] writing of the Anabaptists, couples together their "refusal to baptize infants" by State command, and their "return to the fundamental maxims of liberty and equality for which men were redeemed by Christ," "anticipating principles which could only be established in later times"—but he does not recognize any mutual dependence of the two ideas. Bogue and Bennett, in their *History of Dissenters*,[2] notice it as a "*singular fact* that Baptists have universally been independents, *when in the nature of things there might have been Episcopal or Presbyterian Baptists.*" Even within a few months the New York *Independent* asked editorially, in a puzzled way, why the rejection of infant baptism and of sprinkling should so uniformly have clung together.

Since men act from motives, and motives arise out of beliefs, it is but just and charitable first to seek an explanation of conduct in some cogency of conviction; and only when that resource fails to attribute it to caprice or some baser motive.

Reverting now to the suggestion that the great body of Christendom are united against the Bap-

[1] London, 1866, pp. 29, 30.

[2] London, 1808, vol. I., p. 142.

tists as to their peculiar views, it is enough to cite in response Bishop Jewell's words in his apology,[1] "Unity is not a sign of truth. There was perfect unity among the Israelites when they worshipped the golden calf." "The old Arians called themselves *Catholic*, and stigmatized the Orthodox as Ambrosians and Athanasians." If majorities alone establish "catholicity," then is Rome really more catholic than Protestantism, and Paganism more so than all of us together. If divergence from the majority, either in the past or the present, seems to savor of presumption or arrogance, it is still the inevitable penalty of trying to do right. Luther sometimes felt the seeming rashness of the attitude he and his comrades had assumed toward "the Pope and the Doctors, and the whole body of the Church," while, as he quaintly said, "there is not wit enough among us to cure a spavined horse." But he did not flinch, and the Reformation became secure. If an honest effort to improve upon the decayed or perverted habits of the community be a reflection upon one's neighbor, who can measure the arrogance of a man who buys a new hat before his neighbors are supplied. "Master, saying this, thou reproachest us also,"

[1] Cited in Hunt's *History of Religious Thought in England* (London, 1870), p. 44.

said the lawyer to our Lord, as though such a consequence must lead him to review or withdraw his words. But the words stand.

THE CHARGE OF RITUALISM.

Turning the wheel one notch further back, we come to the third charge against the Baptists as specified above—the familiar charge, (so "familiar" indeed as to have bred "contempt,") that they value form above essence, and so become mere ritualists. The freedom of dealing with the ordinance by others is applauded by way of contrast, as exalting the "spirit" above the "letter." Probably those who follow this line of suggestion do not see that they are advocating the entire abolition, and not the modification, of the external ordinances. Was the Apostle in contrasting the terms "letter" and "spirit" contending for literal circumcision on a reduced scale? Coleridge, criticizing Jeremy Taylor's discussion in this line, says[1] "his only plausible arguments apply equally to the Pedobaptists and the Baptists, and prove the Quakers right if anybody." But Neander[2] tells us that George Fox, the chief interpreter of the Quakers, went further, and argued the subordination

[1] *Works* (N. Y., 1853), vol., *Aids to Ref.*, p. 336.

[2] *History of Christian Dogmas* (Bohn, 1858), vol. II., p. 633.

of *all* the "letter" of Scripture to the "inward light," on the same grounds that the Catholics subject it to the authority of the "Church," and Meier and his followers to that of "reason." Socinus, too, the early herald of Unitarianism, denied the permanence of water baptism, regarding its early observance a concession to the carnalism of Jews and heathen. Along this same drift went Ralph Waldo Emerson, transcendentalizing the Scripture, and breaking finally from the Unitarians, because he would not participate in the superstitious prolongation of a "mere form" in the Lord's Supper.

A command to do a particular thing is not obeyed by doing some other thing, however similar. And as its issuance implies wisdom and authority, to attempt to improve upon it is to assume superior wisdom, and to release from it is to arrogate superior authority. The Baptists are simply guilty of refusing to do either.

THE SPECIFIC CASE CONSIDERED.

But to consider the more specific case in hand, as set forth in the second of the above complaints. Baptists, it is alleged, having entered with others into a "catholic" and "unsectarian" organization, sought to induce its managers to violate the original agreement between the par-

ties, and prostitute the institution to a sectarian end, and failing in this, they have broken up the unity of American Christians in Bible work. The managers of the Bible Society in the leading article of their official paper, *The Record* (for June 15, 1882), which was intended to be a kind of *irenicon* to the Baptists, have not been able by a most courteous and dexterous statement of the case to avoid the virtual renewal of this heavy charge. They say "the Society was formed in 1816 with one specific object," which the managers have since aimed to carry out "in a manner entirely free from sectarianism and partisanship." In illustration of this they add, that the Society "has never printed or circulated the Douay Bible or the Rhemish Testament, or appropriated funds for this purpose;" that "it *is a principle* of the Society to circulate no versions except those which are made from the original Greek and Hebrew, and *this rule excludes from its list certain versions in French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, translated from the Vulgate.*"

Referring to the request of the Missionary Union for funds to publish "two versions of the Bible *which have been long in use in Burmah*," one of them "*well known as Dr. Judson's version, the early editions of which had been printed at the Society's expense*," the other "Dr. Mason's Karen

Bible," they add that having been examined "in regard to *their catholicity and the fidelity of their translation*," they were found "*deficient in the quality of catholicity, and therefore could not be properly recommended for adoption.*" This lack of catholicity, they explain, is evidenced by the fact that some of those using Dr. Judson's version do so "under protest, being constrained, for conscience sake, in the public reading of Scripture to substitute other words for those selected by Dr. Judson to indicate the rite of baptism." They further remind the public, that "as long ago as 1836" they offered "$5,000 to those who were then interested in Dr. Judson's work, to promote the circulation of any versions which *all the denominations* represented in the Society *could consistently use and circulate* in their several schools and communities, and the offer was declined." The article in question is entitled "Limitations," and its whole aim is to show, as above indicated, that the Baptists have ignorantly or craftily attempted to betray the Managers into trangressing the Society's organic "limitations," and this being refused, have unreasonably, if not dishonorably, revolted.

But before accepting this as a new illustration that the Baptists are like porpoises, with their heads always instinctively to the wind, let us ask

whether, in this as in many other cases, it may not be the wind that has changed instead of the porpoises.

What, then, was the "specific object" for which the Bible Society was established? As stated in its own documents, it was the circulation[1] of "received versions where they exist," and the "most faithful translations" where there are no received versions. Under that original compact they recognize to this day their obligation to print only King James' English version, without inquiring into its "catholicity," or the superior "faithfulness" of later revisions. Their "limitations" as rigidly still bind them to spread that as to reject others. Under the plain letter of their mutual contract (to which the Roman Catholics were *not a party*, either), they published, at least up to 1840, Roman Catholic translations of the Vulgate. A report in their minutes of that year, referring to this fact, says: [2]"In foreign countries we were to publish 'in received versions where they exist, and in the most faithful translations where they do not.' These 'received versions' alluded to were no doubt the *French*, *Spanish*, *Portuguese*, German, *Italian*, Arabic, Syriac, Armenian, etc., as old or older

[1] *A. B. Society Report*, 1840.

[2] *Ib.*, pp. 33, 34.

than the English, and which the Society could not expect to alter." Now in this group are the very versions mentioned by the Managers in 1882 as excluded from their list by a "principle of the Society," to "circulate no versions" made "from the Vulgate," but only those "made from the original Greek and Hebrew." When and how this "principle" came in does not appear.

THE QUESTION OF "CATHOLICITY."

If their being "received versions" be denied or ignored, and the question turn on their being "faithful and catholic translations," it may well be answered: 1. That they fully meet the Society's standard of catholicity, their only test being the treatment of the word for baptism; 2. That if translations based on the Vulgate be presumably inferior—the stream being less pure than the fountain—those based on the *English* must be still worse, as coming from still lower in the stream—the *English itself* being derived chiefly *through the Vulgate* from the Greek.[1]

Whether under its obligation to print "received versions" or "faithful translations" does not appear, but under one head or the other the Society did print Dr. Judson's version at the

[1] See Eadie *History English Bible* (London, 1876), vol. I., p. 402; vol. II., pp. 70, 191, *et passim.*

first. If it was the "received version" then, it is now; for there is no other. If it was a "faithful translation" then, it is now; for it has not changed. If the original compact ever required its publication under either head, it does now; for it is a first principle of equity that no compact once entered upon can be changed, or new terms added, except by *common consent*. And four partners can no more do this as against one, than one as against four.

But the Managers of the Bible Society have not only violated the rights of their copartners by the forcible insertion of the words "and catholic" in the original compact, but have gone on to define that word in a sense most invidious and exclusive, and so most contradictory. If an unsectarian be a comprehensive and a sectarian a divisive spirit, then has the Bible Society chosen for itself a most sectarian attitude.

It was scarcely worthy of a scholar like Dean Trench, in his work on *Bible Revision*,[1] to suggest that the "so-called Baptists" could not be invited to co-operate, "seeing that they demand, not a translation of the Scripture, but an interpretation, and that in their own sense." It is no more worthy of a great Christian organization like the American Bible Society to brand as

[1] New York, 1858, p. 179.

non-catholic a version of the Scripture, which in its rendering of the particular word criticized follows exactly in the footsteps of "all the important ancient Oriental versions," made before our modern sects came into being. Was the ancient Syriac made by a Baptist for partisan ends? Was Ulfilas a sectarian, or Luther, or Henry Martyn, whose Persian Bible this Society has probably circulated? But in all these translations the word is "immerse," or its equivalent.[1]

But the question of catholicity, we are reminded, is in this case a practical one. The Society comprises various denominations, and it must circulate no versions save those which all alike can "consistently use and circulate." But what *can* they "*consistently*" use and circulate? Since all versions are still to be conformed "to the principles upon which the American Bible Society was *originally* founded," it is fair to interpret the word in the light of those principles as then announced and acted on. It appears, then, that in 1816 the Society thought it "consistent" for all parties to "use and circulate" versions rendering baptize "immerse"; for they promised to circulate and did circulate

[1] Cf. Bosworth, *Gothic and Anglo-Saxon Versions* (London, 1874).

such versions then and for a long time after.[1] By what rule do the Managers decide that it is inconsistent for a High Churchman or a Broad Churchman to use such a version, when these do not for a moment dispute the meaning of the word, but rest their divergent practice solely on the authority, the one of the Church, the other, with Dean Stanley, of the *Zeitgeist.* According to the scholarship of Bishop Titcomb's own Church, it is just as easy to prove that "immerse" means "sprinkle" as that "*Baptizo*" does, and he need not be more "embarrassed" by the one than by the other.

But he *is* embarrassed by the "public reading" of *one word* and the public doing of another and *different thing,* and "consistency" must be restored by *conforming the word translated to the thing done.* At this writing, therefore, translators must, in order to reach the "catholicity" required by the American Bible Society, subject their work to three successive processes of refinement: 1. Start with Greek and Hebrew text; 2. Correct by the English version; 3. Modify so as not to conflict with current customs. It was the Romanist, Albert Pighius, who said the Scriptures are like "a nose of wax which may be twisted every way." They are certainly never

[1] See Bible Society's *Record,* June 15, 1882.

more pliable than when fluent in the process of translation.

THE WAR ABOUT A WORD.

But as something more is hereafter to be said on this particular theme, it is well to pass on to the only remaining point—the supposed folly of war about a word. It is quite open to some of our good-natured critics to urge that the English title, "*Particular* Baptists" be now relinquished to the Americans in memory of this controversy. But it will be remembered that it was the Board and not the Baptists who first struck at the word. It had been left untranslated, or rendered by divers terms colorless or misleading, as the Baptists believed, without revolt by them. They asked for themselves only what they conceded to others, a charitable reciprocity of judgment and dealing. But this was decided not to be "catholic." And they "were made offenders for a word."

This event will have served a good purpose, however, if it compels renewed attention to some questions involved in or cognate to the matter of Scripture translation. Whether the Scripture shall be translated at all is no longer a question, at least among Protestants; but it was once hotly contested, and great epochs of religious history

grew out of the contest. Whether it shall all be translated, and if not, what and how many words shall still be kept in the original shadow—this, though seemingly a smaller question, has also had its not insignificant place among the problems of the past. The inevitable narrowing of the issue here and now to a single word may well set us inquiring also as to whether that word, and the rite it describes, have had their due consideration as formative and conservative forces in Christian history, and whether they are worth contending for.

A sentence of the apostle Paul is eminently suggestive in this connection, occurring in Romans 6: 17. In the New Revision it reads, "Ye became obedient from the heart to that form (margin "pattern") of teaching whereunto ye were delivered." It is noticeable that, in fidelity to the original, the *marginal* rendering in the common version is the *exclusive* form in the New. If the "*mould of doctrine*" here alluded to be, as will here be maintained, the *ordinance of baptism*, then the significance of the present issue will be manifest. For, in that case, he who *breaks the mould imperils the doctrine.*

CHAPTER II.

BAPTISM THE MOULD OF DOCTRINE.

TWO master sayings from great men will be found pertinent in current religious discussion. The one is from Lord Bacon's *Essay on Superstition*,[1] viz.: "There is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think to do best if they go farthest from the superstition formerly received; therefore care should be had that the good be not taken away with the bad." The other is from Bishop Butler in his *Analogy of Religion*,[2] viz.: "As it is one of the peculiar weaknesses of human nature when, upon a comparison of two things, one is found to be of greater importance than the other, to consider this other as of scarcely any importance at all; it is highly necessary that we remind ourselves how great presumption it is in us to make light of any institutions of divine appointment."

[1] Whately's *Annotated Bacon* (Boston, 1863), p. 176.

[2] (London, 1852), Pt. II., ch. 1, p. 209.

A TENDENCY TO GUARD AGAINST.

The reactionary tendency to an irrational extreme is perceptible in much that has lately been said in disparagement of "institutional religion." Luther found people in his day who thought the greater part of Protestantism consisted in showing their contempt for Rome by eating meat on Friday. There are some who measure their spirituality to-day by the magnificence of their contempt for all religious forms. Now it is to be hoped that the essence of neither Protestantism nor spirituality consists in stupidity; and if not, it will be worth while to notice that the really contemptible thing in Christian history has been, not the introduction of forms, which was divine; but their unauthorized multiplication, and perversion to base ends, which was wholly human. Let the parasites suffer, and not the tree they have infested. Because baptism, for instance, was once wrongly counted necessary to salvation, we need not now, as though "reverse of wrong were right," conclude that it is in every sense unnecessary. Because, like its Divine Originator, it has been disfigured and loaded with tawdry mockeries, we are not bound to crucify it between two thieves.

Bishop Butler's caution as to over-disparage-

ment by contrast reminds us likewise of the frequent suggestion that baptism, being *less* important than other things, is really *unimportant*. Here the illicit expansion of the partial into an universal conclusion seems to arise from a lurking fallacy in the statement of the case. For unless it be less important *in every sense* than *all* other things, it cannot be unimportant. To say, for instance, that baptism is of less consequence than faith, because it does not save, is like saying that brains are of less account than breath, because life does not come through them. Breath and brains are not rivals, but alike essential in their respective spheres—the one that life may exist, the other that it may report itself. Comparing baptism with Christ's only other ordinance, it is indeed "difficult," as Dean Stanley remarks, "to see what is the difference in principle in the Roman Church which has rendered the practice with regard to one sacrament so exceedingly lax, with regard to the other so exceedingly rigid"[1] and the observation need not be confined to Rome.

However superciliously treated by men, the New Testament unquestionably gives baptism a preëminent place. In the order of time it is

[1] Article on "*Baptism*," *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, VI., p. 704.

first. The two great transitional epochs of the early world, when Noah went through the flood, and Israel through the Red Sea, beginning the world's life anew, are specialized as the true prototypes of baptism.[1] Through it our Lord was "manifested" and found entrance to his public ministry.[2] Through it Christianity became visible on the day of Pentecost, and the external church began to be.[3]

Not less significant is its primary place in the order of symbolism; for according to Archbishop Whately it "denotes spiritual birth" as the Lord's Supper does "the continual support of the Christian life."[4]

But a still deeper primacy of significance is attributed to this sacred ordinance in the title given it by the apostle Paul, and which has suggested these articles. Bishop Wordsworth renders the verse in question (Rom. 6 : 17) as follows: "You readily obeyed the mould of Christian faith and practice into which *at your baptism* you were poured, as it were, like soft, ductile, and fluent metal, in order to be cast and

[1] 1 Peter 3: 21. 1 Cor. 10: 2.

[2] John 1 : 31.

[3] Acts 2 : 38.

[4] *Corruptions of Christianity* (N. Y., 1880), p. 109.

take its form."[1] Adding that the metaphor suggests itself to the apostle naturally in Corinth, where he was writing—a city famous for its castings in bronze. Conybeare and Howson[2] translate the closing words of the verse "literally" as "the mould of teaching into which you are transmitted." In a note they remark of the context:

> St. Paul's view of the Christian life, throughout the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters, is that it consists of a death and a resurrection; the new-made Christian dies to sin, to the world, to the flesh and to the law; this death he undergoes at his first entrance into communion with Christ, and it is *both typified and realized when he is buried beneath the baptismal waters.* But no sooner is he thus dead with Christ than he rises with him; he is made partaker of Christ's resurrection; he is united to Christ's body; he lives in Christ, and to Christ; he is no longer in the flesh, but in the spirit.

WHAT THE "MOULD" SIGNIFIES.

The authority of these leaders of the English Church, so eminent for learning and candor, will be assumed as sufficient to justify at least the preliminary assumption that the apostle in this verse refers to baptism as the "mould of

[1] *Commentary on New Testament* (London, 1877). p. 232.

[2] *Life and Epistles of Paul* (New York, 1869), vol. II., p. 170.

doctrine." The word here rendered mould (*tupos*) carries three shades of significance, as is recognized in our authorized version of the New Testament, viz.:

1. *Historic.* The mould has itself been cast, and records unerringly the features of the matrix that formed it. Thus the unbelieving disciple demanded to see not simply *marks* (*stigmata*) in the hands of the Crucified, but the unmistakable *print* (*tupos*) of the nails.

2. *Symbolic.* The mould bears a distinct outline which has a meaning; always the same outline, and hence always the same meaning. The correspondence here is not of fact and fact, but of fact and idea. In this sense Adam was the "*figure* (*tupos*) of him who is to come."

3. *Formative.* The mould fixes its characteristic outlines upon all its fabrics, so that their genuineness is proved by their being exact reproductions of itself. So Moses was to make all things "according to the *pattern* (*tupos*) shown him in the mount."

The constant idea throughout is that of permanent and verifiable coincidence of outline between counterparts. But to break a single line of the mould is to destroy this coincidence. It no longer faithfully records its origin, its device is blurred, and all its products marred.

Precisely this significance the apostle here attributes to the baptismal mould.

1. *Historically.* It is the memorial of the *dominant fact of Christianity — Our Lord's Resurrection from the dead.* It bears the "print" of that event as unmistakably as his hands did the outline of the nails. "*Like as* Christ," says the apostle in verse 4, "so we."

2. *Symbolically.* It is the palpable "figure" of the *dominant idea of Christianity*—the *New Birth.* This indisputable emblematic force of baptism forms the crisis and justification of his whole argument. "Are ye ignorant" of this, asks the apostle, in verse 3, as though such obtuseness were incredible.

3. *Formatively.* It is the faithful exponent and enforcer of the *dominant principle of Christianity—the surrender of the whole man through faith.* "Ye became obedient from the heart," he says, therefore "your members" are all included. The "yielding up" in baptism is the "pattern" of the whole subsequent life.

The Epistle to the Romans is indisputably the great doctrinal Epistle of the New Testament. That Epistle is but an elaboration of these three elements of doctrine. They appear at once in the introduction (ch. 1 : 1–7), viz.: the resurrection of Christ, as the "declaration" of his Sonship;

saintship (*i. e.*, separatedness to a new life) as the characteristic of discipleship; and "obedience of faith" as the shaping force in Christian character. But all these again, in distinct though germinal outline, are enclosed in the single rite of baptism. If it seems absurd to us that so great issues can lie hid in so insignificant a thing as a "mere rite," let us remember that he who out of infinite possibilities selected that single form, is the same who has chosen the acorn to hold uncounted forests, and—a significant parallel—birth to hold all the marvels and still unexplored mysteries of life. Recent philosophic and historic discussions remind us how little danger of exaggeration there is in attributing so tremendous a force to symbolism. "Men are guided by type, and not by argument," says Dr. Newman. "Every idea *vividly before us*," says Bagehot, "soon appears to be true, unless we keep up our perceptions of the arguments which prove it untrue, and voluntarily coerce our minds to remember its falsehood."

HOW THEORIES SOMETIMES GROW.

The Puritans maintained, says Hardwick in his *History of the Thirty-Nine Articles*,[1] "with as much sagacity as malice," that "the right

[1] Bohn's Edition (London, 1876), p. 206.

government of the Church cannot be separated from the *doctrine.*" It is significant that their quarrel with the English Church, Luther's with Rome, and nearly all the controversies in the Church, have grown out of the questions pertaining to the external, which were seen to involve inevitably the internal also. Archbishop Whately's Essay on the *Corruptions of Rome Traced to their Origin in Human Nature* is a book well worthy of careful study, and bearing directly on the present theme. He there says,[1] "It is a mistake, and a very common and practically not unimportant one, to conclude that the *origin* of each tenet or practice is to be found in those arguments or texts which are urged in support of it; that they furnish the *cause,* on the removal of which the effects will cease of course; and that when once those reasonings are exploded, and those texts rightly explained, all danger is at an end of falling into similar errors. The fact is, that in a great number of instances, and by no means exclusively in questions connected with religion, the *erroneous belief or practice has arisen first, and the theory has been devised afterwards for its support.*" Dr. Newman's book on the *Development of the Doctrine in the Church*

[1] Cited in *Annotations on Bacon,* p. 183.

of Rome[1] is a precise illustration of this statement. He himself describes it as containing a "hypothesis to account for a difficulty;" the "difficulty" being that the "successor of the Apostles" has plainly repudiated the apostolic precedents by which he assumes to be bound. Many modern theories as to the nature and import of baptism, and the Scriptural terms describing it, may justly be described by the same title. Inherited practices as to mode and subject, and notions as to symbolism do not coincide with Scriptural language; hence "hypotheses" ever springing to account for the "difficulty." Two of these theories—the Romish and the Broad Church—distinctly admit that the "mould" Paul speaks of has been broken. Bossuet says, "We are able to make it appear by the acts of councils and by ancient ritual, that for thirteen hundred years baptism was administered by plunging." Wall in his *History of Infant Baptism* says further, that this has *never ceased* in any *except a Papal* nation.[2] Dean Stanley, who may stand for the Broad Church, says, "No existing ritual of any European Church *offers any likeness*" to the apostolic ordinance. "The change from immersion to sprink-

[1] London, 1845.

[2] Ed., Nashville, 1860, p. 728.

ling has *set aside the larger part of the apostolic language* regarding baptism, and has altered the very meaning of the word."[1] For this frankly admitted boldness in reconstructing the original rite, the Romanist offers as a justification the supremacy and infallibility of the Church. Dean Stanley proposes instead the sanction of "the spirit which lives and moves in human society, and can override even the most sacred ordinances."

A CURIOUS "HYPOTHESIS."

But there is still a third, and both curiously and unfortunately, a far more modern theory. Curiously, because if true, it is wonderful that it was never discovered by those who wrote the primitive Greek, as it has never yet occurred to those who inherit the language. Unfortunately, because of the acres of apology and casuistry it might have saved if broached before. This "hypothesis" removes the "difficulty" by a simple expedient. "The 'mould' never was broken," it mildly suggests, "for it was made of material so elastic and flexible as to be incapable of being broken." A word was sagaciously chosen, as it appears, to describe it, so plastic, that into whatever country the gospel should come, its messengers might inquire what particular form may be

[1] *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, VI., p. 698.

most congenial to the customs, convenience, or tastes of the people, and thereupon answer, "the word means that." We have heard of the Judge who left it to the prisoner to say "what day would be convenient for him to be hanged"—but never of a law ambiguously framed for the express purpose of leaving it to the prisoner's comfort or caprice how he should be hanged, or whether he should be hanged at all. Devotion to such a theory would soon produce for us a genuinely "limp-back" Bible—limp, not as to binding only, but all the way through.

These theories, so extraordinary and so perilous in their tendencies, have all grown out of a common exigency. First practically departing from the "pattern" Christ had given—then "willing to justify," rather than to rectify, that departure —men have successfully substituted for his supremacy that of the Infallible Pope, or the infallible nineteenth century; or reduced his sceptre to a mocking "reed" by the application of the "flexible-interpretation" to his words of command.

APPLYING THE "SURVIVAL" THEORY.

But if the original command was in fact explicit, and the original rite distinct and uniform, what rational explanation can be given of diver-

sities so early and so great? Here again we are reminded at once of Archbishop Whately's suggestion, and bidden to ask if there be any radical and constant "tendencies of human nature" likely to furnish a clew. Dean Stanley's[1] article (in the *Nineteenth Century Magazine*) on Baptism, begins with the remark that he intends to consider "what is the inner meaning which has more or less *survived* all the changes through which it has passed." Dr. G. A. Jacob (also of the English Church) remarks of the baptism of infants, that it is "not to be found in the New Testament," but that we find there "the fundamental idea from which it was afterwards *developed*."[2] These words "survival" and "development" are "half in the speech of Ashdod." To Ashdod let us go, therefore, for interpretation.

A "survival," in scientific parlance, is a custom or notion which has come over from a former state of society, but is no longer intelligible, because from gradual loss of its original form or otherwise, its original meaning has also been lost.[3] The habit, like a Fourth of

[1] *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, VI., p. 685.

[2] *Ecclesiastical Polity of New Testament* (New York, 1872), pp. 270, 271.

[3] Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (New York, 1874), vol. I., p. 70, *seq.*

July pin-wheel, goes on whirling after its fire is burnt out. The Tyrolese peasant crosses himself when he yawns, the Italian says *Felicita* when his neighbor sneezes, and wise people everywhere are troubled at overturning the salt-cellar. But if you ask why, all will answer with the stolid Mexican, "Who knows?" The modern soldier thinks the hair streaming from his helmet a mere ornamental device; but Mr. Ruskin says it is a reminiscence of the mane that once hung down the back of the savage, who donned the skin of the wild beast he had killed, to steal its courage.[1]

"Development" in the scientific sense is that process of change through which, whether by accretion or decretion, by improvement or degeneration, customs, and all things else, have come to their present form. Every existing fact is to be studied as a fossil, whose features, enlarged, confused, or worn down in petrifaction, assimilation, and wave-tossing, still may be dimly read; remembering that the forces that shaped it are constant and calculable. The history of words, for instance, may be traced with considerable certainty, according to Professor Sayce,[2] by the recognition of three universal tendencies, viz.: "1.

[1] *Eagle's Nest* (N. Y., 1873), p. 190. [2] *Introduction to Science of Language* (London, 1880), vol. I., p. 163, *seq.*

Imitation or *analogy*": *e.g.*, the Chinese trying to speak English falls into Pigeon-English; the Frenchman Gallicizes our words into *ros-bif* and *bif-teck;* and the temporary Parisian perpetually throws his small force of badly drilled French words into a hollow square, so as not to seem too exotic. "2. *A wish to be clear and emphatic.*" This taxes the inventive faculty. It invents new words, or new meanings for old words. The modern use of "evolution" is an illustration. Every political campaign produces new epithets and catch-words, which sometimes live. In John Wesley's time "sentimental" was new. He wrote of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, "*Sentimental* is not English." He might as well have said *Continental.* But one fool makes many. The word has become fashionable, though it means nothing." "3. *Laziness*," leading to "phonetic decay." This clips the ears and tail, and sometimes cuts through the body of words, as in the slovenly "gent" and "bus." It loses good words, or spills the meaning out of them. So "Magdalen" becomes "Maudlin"—and a "simple" man a fool. Through this unhappy mutilation and defacing of the coin of speech we are cut off from commerce with former ages, as with foreign countries, except through the intervention of the philological money-changer.

Unhappy it certainly is, for as Dean Trench once remarked, "Hardly any original thoughts on mental or social subjects ever make their way among mankind . . until aptly selected words or phrases have, as it were, *nailed them down* and *held them fast*."[1] Elsewhere he likens words to ships which "convey the mental treasures of one period to the generations that follow: and laden with this, their precious freight, they sail across gulfs of time in which empires have suffered shipwreck."[2] How harmful then to tear up the fixed symbol—to wreck the freighted ship.

Now all that is here said of words, which are forms of speech, is true of rites, which are forms of action, meant to serve a like end, and subject to peril from like causes. *To be like the heathen*, Jeroboam made a golden calf, through which to worship the true God. In like spirit Rome has since borrowed the mass from Buddhists, and holy water from Pagan temples. Israel "forgot his Maker," but *emphasized* his religiosity by "building temples." Rome "shortened the Decalogue, but lengthened the Creed;" she took the cup from the laity—but added the elevation and

[1] *On the Study of Words*, (New York, Twenty-fifth Ed.), p. 26.

[2] *Ib.*, p. 28.

adoration of the host, and multiplied idle ceremonies.

To satisfy the people's *love of ease* she has, in Dean Stanley's words, had the "boldness" to "substitute a few drops of water for the ancient bath." "Through the history of sacrifice," says Mr. Tylor, in his *Primitive Culture*, "it has occurred to many nations that cost may be economized without impairing efficiency." Accordingly, "in Madagascar the *head* of the sacrificed beast is set upon a pole, and the blood and fat are rubbed on the stones of the altar" (in lieu of the gift of the whole beast, as formerly); "and Scotchmen still living remember the corner of a field being left untilled for the Goodman's croft (*i. e.*, the devil's); but the principle of '*cheating the devil*' was already in vogue, and the piece of land allotted was *but a worthless scrap*." [1]

[1] Ed., New York, 1874, vol. II., pp. 370, 399–402.

CHAPTER III.

BAPTISM, THE RESURRECTION, AND HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY.

BAPTISM is defined by the Congregational Union of England and Wales in their deliverance of 1833, to be "the *application of water* to the subject" in the name of the Trinity.[1] The whole significance of the rite, according to this definition, is in the natural symbolism of water as a cleansing agent, "putting away the filth of of the flesh." The writer of *Ecce Homo* interprets the Lord's Supper by a similar rule. "The meal consisted of bread and wine, the simplest and in those countries most universal elements of of food." "A common meal is the most natural and universal way of expressing, maintaining, and as it were ratifying relations of friendship." The primary idea being therefore the expression of mutual friendship, "The Christian communion is a *club-dinner*."[2]

Accepting these suggestions as quite in their line,

[1] Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III., p. 732.

[2] *Ecce Homo* (Boston, 1868), pp. 187, 188.

the modern "evolution" school push them to their logical issue in the denial of any authoritative institution or historic significance in either ordinance. Mr. Herbert Spencer devotes his book on *Ceremonial Institutions* mainly to "reasons for rejecting the current hypothesis that ceremonies originate in *conscious* symbolization, and for entertaining the belief that *in every case they originate by evolution.*"[1] Mr. Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* concludes that according to the "ethnographic method in theology," "a vast proportion of doctrines and rites known among mankind are not to be judged as *direct products of the particular religious systems* which give them sanction; for they are in fact more or less modified results adopted from previous systems.[2] He instances baptism, assuming it to consist simply in the "application of water," as a mere prolongation of heathen lustration—water being in either case the natural and universal symbol of purifying agency.[3] By parity of reasoning the Lord's Supper would find its origin and sufficient explanation in the primitive custom of "eating salt" together as a pledge of mutual fidelity.

By this process all reminiscence of Christ or his work is boldly purged out of both ordinances, and the historic relations of Christianity are

[1] (New York, 1880.) [2] Vol. II., p. 451. [3] *Ib.*, pp. 430, 441.

practically treated as unreal or insignificant. If the characteristic symbols of our faith express only or mainly the present and isolated fact of our purification through water, and our fellowship through bread and wine, why busy ourselves with a past to which they do not point us? What to us, then, more than to Festus, are those "questions of their own superstition," especially "of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." The *Scotch Sermons* of 1880 plainly state that the great battle of the last century over the credibility of the miraculous was "an affair of outposts altogether," and touched "no vital point of revelation." Strauss flattered himself at first that his view was "more Christian than the old Christian one itself," for although he had sought to obliterate the historic Christ, it was only that he might substitute for the transient person an eternal idea. "Not by immersion;" says Canon Curteis, in considering what concessions the Church of England may make to win back Dissenters, "in that point the Church's freedom must be unflinchingly maintained in order *to teach the spirituality of the Lord's sacraments*, by using the drop of water and the fragment of bread to represent the regenerating bath and the eucharistic feast."[1] That is to say, the

[1] *Bamp. Lec.*, 1871. "*Dissent., etc.*" (London), p. 289.

idea is only truly to be propagated by effacing the formative fact, the "spirit" only by defacing the significant "letter."

THINGS TO BE EXPLAINED.

But facts are not destroyed by supercilious treatment, and it is unavailing to attempt the ideal reconstruction of a history which has not first been actually abolished. The primary question is one, not of theory, but of testimony. The assailant of Christianity from the side of historic criticism is therefore called to explain the following indisputable circumstances:

1. The continuous and uniform belief of the church, from the first century, that it had its origin in the facts narrated in the New Testament.

2. The existence, as acknowledged even by the most extravagant criticism, of at least four of Paul's letters (viz.: to the Galatians, the Romans, and the two to the Corinthians), within a short generation of the alleged occurrence of the facts therein cited.

3. The general observance to this day of a rite which, as the Apostle reminds the Corinthians, had been instituted by our Lord "on the night in which he was betrayed" as an enduring testimony of his crucifixion.

The value of this last link in the chain has been often urged by writers on the evidences of Christianity, and will not be underrated by those who are familiar with the principles of historic inquiry. For 1. It reaches back to the event itself, and is of the nature of contemporaneous testimony. 2. Being a concrete act participated in by many, its testimony was unequivocal. 3. It was not only the reminder of a fact, but a scenic rehearsal of its very form. It was not a feast, for it was established *at* a feast. The bread and wine were present, and were being shared in; but they told no story, until he put the *breaking* of the one and *pouring* of the other into emblematic association with the *breaking* of his body and the *shedding* of his blood, and so bade them "*show* the Lord's death till he come." This ceremonial is forever sundered from all heathen feasts, therefore, not by the *use* of bread and wine, which is common to both, but by the *form* of that use with which no heathen rite has anything in common.

But the question of the historic reality of our Lord's death is not, after all, the cardinal one in the battle with the skeptics. Serious critics have rarely doubted that, or cared much for it. For that death, in itself, involved no supernatural element, and could not, however devoutly

believed, fairly account for Christian history. The true crisis of faith is not at the cross, but at the sepulchre. Did Jesus really rise from the dead? "This," says Strauss, "is the centre of the centre—the real heart of Christianity;" "with it the truth of Christianity stands or falls."[1] "If I could believe the resurrection," says Spinoza, "I would become a Christian at once." Ewald says "It is the culmination of all the miraculous events which are conceivable from the beginning of history to its close."

To this respond affirmatively such defenders of the faith as Christlieb, "The resurrection is the proof of all other dogmas, the foundation of our Christian life and hope, the soul of the entire apostolic preaching, the corner-stone on which the church is built."[2] Westcott says: "We must place it in the very front of our confession, with all that it includes, or we must be prepared to lay aside the Christian name."[3] "To preach the fact of the resurrection was the first function of the Evangelists; to embody the doctrine of the resurrection is the great office of the church; to learn the meaning of the resurrection is the task, not of one age only, but of all." Fairbairn

[1] Christlieb, *Modern Doubt*, (New York, 1874), p. 455.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 448.
[3] *Gospel of the Resurrection* (London, 1881), p. 7.

says, "It created the church." "It is a *resumé* of historical yet supernatural Christianity."

There are, therefore, two great Christian facts: the death and resurrection of Christ. There are also two great Christian ordinances: the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Of these facts, the first would seem least to need historic witnessing, since it does not trench on the supernatural, and since its significance is mainly for the believer, revealing the inner secrets of salvation. Yet for its perennial confirmation, as well as illustration, provision is confessedly made in the Lord's Supper, the inward fronting rite of the church. The other fact, on the contrary, fronts the world, challenging its scrutiny as miraculous, and demanding its assent as verified by reliable testimony. To this fact, therefore, so pre-eminent and decisive, it might reasonably be expected that baptism, the only other Christian rite, and also the outward fronting one, would lend its needed and confirmatory testimony.

BAPTISM AND THE RESURRECTION.

The candid skeptic, however, will be surprised, on reading in the *Westminster Catechism* that "baptism is rightly administered by *pouring or sprinkling water* upon the person." To this he will find Dr. R. J. Breckenridge, of Kentucky,

naturally adding, "I find nothing in the Scriptures to warrant the assertion that there is *any sacramental commemoration* by the mode of baptism of the *burial of the body of Jesus.*"[1] Having further learned from Dr. John Eadie, of Glasgow, that believers "*even in immersion* do not go through a process having *any semblance to the burial and resurrection of Christ*";[2] and from Dr. Charles Hodge, of Princeton, that in Paul's words (Rom. 6:4)—"buried with him by baptism into death"—"it is *not necessary to assume* that there is *any reference to the immersion* of the body in baptism, as *though it were a burial;*"[3] he will probably be puzzled to account for the zeal and ingenuity put forth in disproving concerning one ordinance what is so eagerly claimed for the other, and is equally presumable of both—that they were meant to be commemorative as well as symbolic. This probative function may be lightly valued now, but "from the beginning it was not so."

The peculiar evidential value of Paul's statements concerning the facts and institutions of early Christianity has been more and more recognized of late. He was at the time of his

[1] *Knowledge of God Subjectively Considered*, p. 572.
[2] *Commentary on Colossians* (London, 1856), p. 154.
[3] *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia, 1864), p. 305.

conversion a mature man, of too high culture and too wide observation to be charged with superstition or shallowness. He had too much at stake to be risked on the unverified assumption of so stupendous a fact as the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He saw as clearly as nineteen centuries have proved to us, that on the reality of that fact all else hung—for without it he declared his "faith was vain." His letters are among the earliest, if not the very earliest, of the New Testament documents, and four of them stand, as before remarked, unchallenged to this day. In two of these (Romans and 1 Corinthians), written to be publicly read in metropolitan heathen cities within about twenty-five years of its alleged occurrence, he distinctly claims the reality of the resurrection as an established and commonly admitted fact. As justifying this, he refers implicitly to the testimony of "the greater part" of "more than five hundred brethren" still surviving the event; and explicitly to that of the abiding ordinance which, as he reminds the Romans, is the "*likeness* of Christ's resurrection," and which he assures the Corinthians is meaningless, if it do not mean that. For so, according to the uniform custom of the early interpreters, we are to interpret 1 Cor. 15: 29.[1]

[1] Stanley, *Commentary on Corinthians* (London, 1876), p. 304.

BAPTISM A HISTORIC WITNESS.

Baptism, bearing this legible "imprint," was in Paul's esteem a *historic monument*, 1. *Of the fact* that Christ had risen. 2. *Of the preëminence of the fact*, and its consequent primary place in Christian doctrine. 3. *Of the corporeality of the fact*, as against all mysticizing tendencies. It follows, therefore, that by the abandonment of its appointed form, baptism ceases to be a witness *to the reality of the resurrection*. Of Paul's allusion in Rom. 6: 4, 5, Conybeare and Howson say, "This passage *cannot be understood* unless it be borne in mind that the primitive baptism was *by immersion*." Dr. Schaff says, "*All commentators of note* (except Stuart and Hodge) expressly admit or take it for granted that in this verse .... the ancient prevailing mode of baptism by immersion is implied, as giving force to the idea of going down of the old and rising up of the new man."[1] The obviousness of the parallelism is implied in the continual coupling together of the two ideas in Scripture, and in the writings and emblematism of the early Christians. Christ's Messiahship was "manifested" by his baptism, his Sonship was "declared" by his resurrection.[2]

[1] Lange's *Commentary on Romans* (New York, 1869), Note, p. 202. [2] *John* 1: 31; *Rom.* 1: 4.

The apostles were ordained to be "witnesses of his resurrection," "beginning with the baptism of John." If, as Peter says, the "figure" of baptism "saves us," it is "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." So Cyril, of Jerusalem, says, "Thou going down into the water, and in a manner buried in the waters as he in the rock, art raised again, walking in newness of life." Chrysostom says, "For as his body, buried in the earth; bore for fruit the salvation of the world, so also ours buried in baptism bore for fruit righteousness . . . . and will bear also the final gift of the resurrection." Tertullian says "For by an image we die in baptism; but we truly rise in the flesh, as did also Christ." Many of the early baptisteries were in the shape of *sarcophagi*, or octagonal, in reference to the number 8, the symbol of resurrection. "Remove the resurrection," says Fairbairn substantially, "and the Lord's Day, the Supper, and Baptism would be inexplicable."[1]

Observe the force of these statements. The "application of water," as significant of cleansing, would have introduced no new idea, nor demanded any new fact to explain its origin. It was the familiar and immemorial symbol both of Jews and heathen. But it was far otherwise

[1] *Studies in Life of Christ* (N. Y., 1882), p. 359. Cf. also Westcott, *Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 128.

if the idea portrayed were one so novel and startling as that of a Messianic resurrection from the dead.

The superior evidential value of a rite is not always recognized. It is an *acted* faith, conspicuous, unequivocal. It was vain, said Paul, for Peter to *preach* the equality of the Gentiles while he would not *eat* with them. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, having set forth the prophecy and the correspondent fact of Christ's resurrection, demanded not only a verbal assent, but a baptism in the "likeness" of that resurrection, as a visible avowal of their faith in it. "Belief expressed in action," says Canon Westcott, "is for the most part the strongest evidence one can have of any historic event." How tremendous therefore is the significance of the fact that on that day, less than two months after the alleged transaction, in the very city where it was said to have taken place and where the evidence could best be sifted, three thousand people by a public and unequivocal symbolic act "set to their seal" that the resurrection had really occurred; and thereby not only boldly challenged all skepticism, but irrevocably announced their separation from all the old ties of friendship and faith. If the value of testimony depend on its having been contemporaneous, contiguous, from many

witnesses, unequivocally expressed, and impartial, or against interest, then may that be more truly said of the resurrection as evidenced in baptism, which has been said of the crucifixion as confirmed by the Lord's Supper, viz.: "*Of no other event* in the history of man have we an equal guarantee of the historic truth of the facts." [1]

The immense damage done to Christianity by the obliteration of the original features of baptism is manifest in the fact that it has not only, where so changed, lost all present witnessing power, but that it has led men, as we have seen, to deny that it ever had such power; and so to seek to invalidate the earliest and most authoritative testimony to the most vital fact in Christian history. The conservative power of a carefully preserved rite is enormous. "It serves," in the language of Sir George Cornewall Lewis, "to stereotype an oral tradition, and preserve it from the license of imagination or the distortions of forgetfulness." Like the arrowhead inscriptions of Babylon, and the hieroglyphics of Egypt, its definite message is cut into the visible life of men, as theirs is cut in stone, and remains like them, changeless amid the changing.

It remains to speak of baptism as meant to bear witness, 2. *Of the primary and preëminent*

[1] Cf Westcott, *Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 133.

place of the resurrection in the Christian system. The Acts significantly precede the Epistles. The announcement of the *fact* of the resurrection, and the *possibility* of salvation, historically preceded the unfolding of the *theory* of the atonement and the *method* of salvation logically involved therein. Baptism, correspondingly, the first appointed act of the believer, was a joyful acceptance of the fact preached with all its yet unrevealed implications. The early catacombs had no crucifix or sorrowful inscriptions, but many-blended and cheerful symbols of baptism and the resurrection. To-day we find the Eucharist jealously guarded (having been by the Council of Trent declared "above all other sacraments," because while they may sanctify, "*in this is the Author himself of sanctity*") while baptism is made the toy of ecclesiasticism and "convenience." By a precise parallelism we find Rome occupying the whole horizon with her realistic and purposely painful visions of the suffering or dead Christ; and Protestantism giving fifty-one weeks in the year to *philosophizing about* the atonement, and Easter Sunday only to the definite and emphatic proclamation of *the atonement itself,* as a fact completed and made real to us by the resurrection of Christ. There is no room here for a detailed review

of the steps by which this result has been reached. Suffice it to say that the gradual ignoring of the primary function of baptism as a witness entailed a parallel subsidence from view of the fact to which it witnessed. Priestly incantations and scholastic subtleties crowded the foreground, and the risen Christ slowly faded into the distance, where he seems to the bewildered masses still to hang on the cross, sad, severe, and inaccessible.

Finally, and only by way of hint, we must consider a subject most momentous in our time: the value of the *definite and inflexible form* of baptism as a witness, 3. *Of the corporeal actuality* of Christ's resurrection. The idea of immortality was common to all men, but that of a bodily resurrection was mocked as absurd by the Athenians, or refined into a metaphor as in its literal form too gross by the Gnostics (*Knowers*). Curiously, the Gnostics of that day and the Agnostics of this are closely akin: and the spreading eaves of their roof shelter thousands between, who, through various degrees of real though perhaps unsuspected consanguinity, are bound up with them in a common thought. Among these are the Mystics, Quakers, Swedenborgians, Transcendentalists, and a large part of that school who worship the Aurora Borealis

under the name of Liberalism. To them the primal curse is subjection of the idea to formal expression. The formal church, the formal rite, the formal Scripture, formal knowledge, and even formal existence, are vulgar, and must be volatilized. Listen to Matthew Arnold's rendering of the plain Gospel narrative: "To the mind of Jesus, his own resurrection after a short sojourn in the grave was *the victory of his cause* after his death, and at the price of his death. His disciples materialized his resurrection, and their version of the matter falls day by day to ruin." He "lived in the eternal order, and the *eternal order never dies.*" This, he argues, is our only possible immortality.

Now the noticeable fact is that over against all theories falsely calling themselves "spiritual," because they rejected "form" in his day, the Apostle set the statement that Christianity is primarily and characteristically a historic religion —resting on the concrete manifestation of Christ "in the flesh," and his formal and sensible resurrection—and bodying forth in vivid and graphic outline, in the permanent rite he had ordained, the literalness of that resurrection. It is not surprising to find among most of the Gnostic sects, as among modern "Liberals," indifference to, or aversion for, the formal, alike in baptism and in

resurrection. Nor can it surprise us much more if the habitual blurring of the ordained outline of the one, to make it more "spiritual," should everywhere tend to melt the revealed outline of the other into a mere gauzy metaphor. But if it be a metaphor, says Paul, the dead "are perished" and "ye are yet in your sins."

CHAPTER IV.

BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH.—MODERN THEORIES.

NO department of religious literature would probably yield an anthology so rare in its variety, and so marvellously delicate in its shadings, as the discussion of the relations of Baptism and Regeneration. Its range is so wide, its relations so complex, its bulk so voluminous, that it would be impossible to compress into an essay like this a statement of it which should do justice to every local or individual phase of opinion. Nothing is aimed at but a compendious statement, which it is hoped may escape the suspicion of at least intentional unfairness either as to accuracy or proportion.

There are two great questions involved.

THE FIRST GREAT QUESTION.

1. *Does baptism itself regenerate?*

This question brings to the stand at once all advocates of infant baptism to explain a custom which, if it do not imply regeneration inde-

pendent of faith, very much needs explanation. Fairly representative of the divers responses are

(*a*) *The Theory of Rome.* This seems to be unequivocal. The Council of Trent declared that "in baptism, not only remission of original sin was given, but also all which properly has the nature of sin is cut off." It makes one "a Christian, a child of God, and an heir of heaven." As to faith, Cardinal Wiseman says, "The Church teaches that it is a virtue essentially infused of God in baptism; and such must be more or less the belief of every Church that adopts the practice of infant baptism."[1] The whole efficacy of baptism, however, is made to depend on the intent of the administrator. The doctrine of Rome, therefore, renders only one thing certain, viz.: the perdition of the unbaptized. It leaves the salvation of the baptized both uncertain and incomplete, for it depends for its validity on the secret "intent" of the administrator, and for its consummation, even in the holiest person, on mass and penance here and purgatory hereafter. Rome therefore teaches that cleansing grace, the counterpart of sanctification, is wrought in baptism, but not regeneration, the counterpart of justification;

[1] *Lectures on Doctrine and Practice of Roman Catholic Church* (Baltimore, 1862), p. 74.

neither of which latter ideas has a place in her theology.

(*b*) *Luther's Theory.* Luther launched the Reformation from the Roman stocks with a single lever; the doctrine of "justification by faith alone." "Faith," he says, "must appropriate the divine; all other things can be only signs for the operation and formation of faith."[1] The heavenly talisman was thus at once transferred from the covetous and despotic hand of the priest to the heart of the believer: for the sacraments, which had been reckoned the "Keys of Heaven," could no longer shut up that kingdom which Christ had set "open to all believers."

Protestantism, which repudiated the authority of tradition, and rested the validity of everything in the Christian life on faith, inherited therefore a Trojan horse in infant baptism. "The Zwickau enthusiasts," says Neander,[2] "who came to Wittenburg in A. D. 1522, were zealous opponents of infant baptism; they raised a controversy upon it, and placed the Wittenbergers in a state of embarrassment. Melancthon, in writing to the Elector, declared that "Satan had attacked them in a weak place,

[1] Neander, *History of Christian Dogmas* (Bohn, 1868), vol. II., p. 688.

[2] *Ib.*, vol. II., p. 692.

for he knew not how he should refute these enthusiasts."

But principles outrun practice, as the clouds fly swifter than the ships in the heavier sea below. There is scarcely a better illustration of the conservative power of established custom than in the tergiversations to which it brought a man so candid and strong as Luther, in his efforts to defend the retention of an old practice, directly contradictory of the very principle he was at the time trying to establish. Infant baptism is not taught in Scripture, he said, but neither can it be proved to be against Scripture. Baptism of course presupposes faith, he admitted, but "who can tell whether God does not implant faith in early childhood as in sleep?" Faith, he further urged, is negative; infants therefore do have faith, because they do not resist the truth. "He knew how to relieve himself," says Neander, "though he put down objections more by bold assertions than by arguments."[1]

The Augsburg Confession therefore distinctly reads, "concerning baptism, they teach that it is necessary to salvation . . . and condemn the Anabaptists who hold . . . that infants can be saved without it."[2] Luther himself wrote that

[1] Neander, *Hist. of Chris. Dogmas*, vol. II., p.

[2] *Ibid*, p. 693.

"baptism is the bath of regeneration, because in it we are born again." Practically, therefore, he only substituted sacramental for sacerdotal grace —transferring the shaping of eternal destiny from the inward whim of the priest to the outward whim of the parent or friend. For the sake of rescuing those little ones, whom Christ had appointed to the "kingdom of heaven," out of the "limbo deep and broad" which God had "prepared for the devil and his angels," but which "the Fathers" had appropriated to unbaptized children, he sacrificed the broad principle of the Reformation at the shrine of a narrow and cruel tradition.

(*c*) *Calvin's Theory.* "It is to be no means easy," says Bishop Browne,[1] "to define his doctrine of baptism. Inconsistency is very little his character; yet on baptism he seems to have been somewhat inconsistent with himself." To Calvin the one overwhelming and only creative fact in the universe was the definite, prevenient purpose of God. To conceive of the eternal fiat of that sovereign will as in any way dependent for its completion or change on the temporal accident of sacrament or personal intent, seemed to him as absurd as to expect the flame to be mastered by the moth that is shrivelled in it. Baptism

[1] *On the Thirty-nine Articles* (London, 1865), p. 651.

cannot, therefore, make one a Christian, but only declare the elect to be so (to whom alone the ordinance belongs). But since the purpose of God is secret, how are the truly elect to be ascertained? This is not so difficult in the case of adults, plain tests being supplied in Scripture (see 1 Thess. 1: 4, 5; 1 Peter 1: 2). But "elect infants" are not to be so discerned. To escape a dilemma, therefore, Calvin, revolting alike at Rome's sacerdotal and Luther's sacramental, fled to hereditary grace. He decided that the Christian church was not a "new birth" from, but a prolongation of, the Jewish. Differing from Paul, who thought the Abrahamic with the old covenants "pertained to his kinsmen according to the flesh," he concluded that the measure and margin of electing grace are still plainly traceable along the outline of genealogical descent. "The children,"[1] says Dr. John Hall, "are born into the church. . . It is a mediæval superstition that represents the child as 'christened,' or made a Christian in the rite." "Our Confession of Faith," says the *Presbyterian Assembly's Digest*, "recognizes the right of baptism of the infant children only of such parents as are members of the church."[2] To these were added, under

[1] *Questions of the Day*, (New York, 1873), p. 263.

[2] (Ed., Philadelphia, 1855), p. 106.

exigency, still after the Abrahamic idea, the "infant slaves of Christian Masters."[1]

But now again the "Trojan horse" disgorges discord within the Genevan ramparts. If election is already determined by birth, and the salvation of the elect assured by immutable decree, baptism cannot add to the certainty of the one or the security of the other. The "elect infant" will be saved without baptism: the non-elect cannot be helped by it. If baptism do not "convey" as well as affirm grace, it is nugatory, and its omission involves neither peril nor sin. Moreover, since the elect cannot apostatize, there is serious peril in positively and solemnly designating as "children of God" those who may afterward give every indication of being "children of the Devil" rather.[2]

Since Calvin thought with the other Reformers, however, that (in the language of the English Church) infant baptism was "in any wise to be retained," he boldly made a place for it by knocking out the corner-stone of his entire system. For in his *Catechism* for the Genevan children he taught it to be "certain that pardon of sins and newness of life is offered to us in

[1] *Presbyterian Assembly's Digest*, p. 107.

[2] Cf. Bossuet, *Variations* (Dublin, 1829), vol. 1. p. 360.

baptism." "We must take heed not to tie God's grace to the sacraments;" he writes again in his *Commentary on the Acts*, "for the administration of baptism profits nothing except where God thinks fit. "The efficacy of baptism," according to the *Westminster Confession*, "is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will in his appointed time."[1] The Presbyterian doctrine, as Dr. Charles Hodge, of Princeton, says, is midway between Rome and Zwingle in this: that baptism always, the other that it never, conveys grace. Presbyterians hold only that it "does not uniformly or always at the time do so." Since "regeneration" is expressly mentioned (in Ch. 28, Art. 1 of the *Confession*) as included in the "grace promised," and therefore "really exhibited and conferred" in baptism, it is plainly taught that baptism does regenerate, only not exclusively, always, nor instantly.[2]

How narrow a rim of hope is thus left even

[1] Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* (London), vol. III., p. 663. [2] *Ib.*, vol. III., p.——.

to Calvin's elect infant world, to say nothing of the awful shadow left on those who lie outside the circuit of the "birth covenant." For believers' children also, as it seems, may die unregenerate, being unbaptized; and the like may happen even after baptism, if grace be delayed or fail to be given therein. Now, since the unregenerate cannot "see the kingdom of God," it follows either that the elect may perish after all, or that believers' children do not certainly compose the elect, and ought not to monopolize the rite of baptism. Either of these propositions admitted is fatal to Calvin's theory of grace; either of them denied is fatal to his theory of baptism.

(*d*) *Zwingle's Theory.* Zwingle alone, of the three great leaders of the Reformation, consistently and at every point repudiated the saving efficacy of rites in themselves. "If the sacraments were the things they signified," he argued, "then they could not be signs. For the sign and the thing signified cannot be the same." "External baptism with water contributes nothing to the washing away of sin." "Original sin," he strangely added, however, "does not deserve damnation if a person has believing parents."[1] And still more strangely,

[1] *Browne on Thirty-Nine Articles*, p. 657.

maintaining that the "thing signified" in baptism was a pledge "to be a hearer and disciple of God, and to obey his laws," he held that such a pledge might be fitly administered to infants.

(*e*) *Current Theories.* Of these four theories, the Romish, or sacerdotal, lies at the foundation of the English Church, filtering down thence through the Methodist; the Lutheran, or sacramental, largely pervades the Continental churches; the Calvinistic, or hereditary, has shaped the Scotch and other Presbyterian churches; and the Zwinglian, or dedicatory, though not distinctly avowed, has deeply impressed the history of Congregationalism.

The English Articles of 1536 were undisguisedly Romish.[1] They endorsed penance, confession, purgatory, image-worship, and other superstitions. They plainly declared baptism "a thing necessary for the attaining of everlasting life," "insomuch as that infants and children dying in their infancy shall undoubtedly be saved thereby, and otherwise not." Subsequent revisions show the traces of Lutheran and Calvinistic pressure, the latter being especially anti-sacerdotal and democratic as embodied in Puritanism. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* as finally revised still describe the baptized as

[1] Hardwick, *History of Thirty-Nine Articles*, p. 50.

"christened," and baptism as "a sign of regeneration, or the new birth, whereby as by an instrument they that receive it rightly are grafted into the Church;" and the Catechism characterizes it as a proceeding whereby the baptized is "made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven"—words varied only trivially in form and not at all in sense from the Romish formula from which they came. The diversity of strata in her growing formularies and literature give pretext enough for the multiplication of theoretic conflicts in the English Church, and point enough to the not quite accurate quip of Lord Chatham that she has "Calvinistic Articles, a Papistical service, and an Arminian clergy."

The Methodist Articles were based on those of the English Church, since often revised in minor points. Concerning them John Wesley wrote, "It is certain our Church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again: and it is allowed that the whole office for the baptism of infants proceeds on this supposition."[1] Watson, a standard authority in Methodism, says of infant baptism, "It secures, too, the gifts of the Holy Spirit in those secret spiritual influences by which the actual

[1] *Sermons* (London, 1872), vol. II. (sermon 45), p. 74.

regeneration of those infants who die in infancy is effected." This, says the venerable Dr. Curry, in a recent article, more fully to be referred to a few pages farther on, was the doctrine of the earliest American Methodist ministers, to which, modified somewhat in expression (it may be fairly inferred from his language), he still holds.

Presbyterianism does not seem to recede from the Westminster platform. Dr. John Hall says, "the only reason why the baptized child does not sit at the Lord's Table, of course, is the counterpart of the restraint on the vote of the American youth."[1]

Congregationalism, notwithstanding the congenital affinity of the Savoy with the Westminster Articles, and its high-church developments in New England history, shows strong tendencies toward reaction against the Calvinistic interpretation of infant baptism, and even against the continuance of the practice itself. Dr. R. W. Dale, in a volume not long since published, protested that "no one can become a member of a Congregational church by birth," supplementing the statement by a vigorous and destructive criticism of the whole birthright theory.[2]

Nothing is more curious to observe, in review-

[1] *Questions of the Day*, p. 263.

[2] *Ecclesia* (Second Series, London, 1871), p. 371.

ing this subject, than the fertility of ingenuity displayed in saving the Scriptural doctrine of salvation by faith alone from the manifest affront put on it by the administration of baptism where faith is impossible. This is attempted in every case by an intruded fiction. The transaction does rest on faith, says Rome—the faith of the Church: not so, says the English Church, but on the faith of the sponsor: not so, says Calvin, but on the faith of the parents: not so, says Luther, but on the unconscious faith of the child itself. If these devices succeed in justifying the practice, it will be only because "faith is made void."

THE SECOND GREAT QUESTION.

2. *Does Baptism symbolize Regeneration?*

The British Conference of Wesleyan Methodists has, during the present year, after a seven years' controversy, so modified its formulary as (in the opinion of the *London Quarterly Review*,[1] the able organ of that body), to decide "that the Lord has not in the course of his ministry connected regeneration with baptism in any way." This event affords an apt illustration of the working of the very principle which these articles are designed to illustrate—viz.: the power of symbolic rites as moulds of doctrine: un-

[1] October Number, 1882, p. 146.

broken, they hold the outline of opinion secure; broken, they refashion plastic opinion to their own altered form, and silently but steadily seek to reduce to the same conformity the harder lines of formulated statement.

Baptism, administered without preliminary faith in the recipient, by its symbolic form compels some theory of regeneration without faith, and ultimately a reconstruction of the whole statement of the ground of salvation. Baptism, so altered in form as no longer to symbolize regeneration, but "purification" instead, tends rapidly to substitute the idea of "purification" for that of regeneration in the scheme of doctrine, and to revolutionize creed statements accordingly.

Students of doctrinal history will not have been unobservant of a steadily growing aversion for the term "baptismal regeneration," and the equally steady growth of emphasis on "baptismal grace" as a substitute therefor. Dr. Hodge in his *Theology*, devotes a long section to the battering down of the one and the exaltation of the other.[1] Episcopal writers betray a keen scent in the same direction.[2] Dr. Curry, in the

[1] Vol. III., p. 591, *seq.*

[2] See *American Quarterly Church Review*, vol. XXIV., p. 122, *seq.*

remarkable article before referred to (in *The Independent* of Nov. 2, 1882), repudiates the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, out of which he says infant baptism was "developed," but still insists that the "sacraments of the Church ordained by Christ" (by evolution, as it appears) "are not simply ceremonies: but rather that they are really effective through the spiritual grace that accompanies them." The able writer in the *London Quarterly* above cited, also insists that "no harm can come from a Scriptural and guarded maintenance of baptismal grace." The "question as to the specific grace baptism pledges and conveys to the children of the Christian covenant finds little direct solution in Scripture, but much indirect illustration." It is not, however, "regeneration," he is sure, for the "new birth" is the "full development of the germinal seed" planted in baptism.

Precisely parallel to the growth of the theory that baptism conveys grace only and not regeneration, is that of the theory that baptism means purification only and not regeneration; and preliminary to both was that change in the form of the ordinance which reduced it from a vivid memorial of Christ's historic resurrection and the symbol of the believer's correspondent spiritual passage "through death to life," to a mere "wash-

ing with water," laying sole emphasis on the "putting away the filth of the flesh" thereby.

Concerning all this, it is obvious to remark that as Christ once only rose from the dead and men once only are regenerated, so baptism, fitly complementing the analogy, is once only to be administered. But if grace is conferred only by baptism, and when so conferred is but incipient; if baptism symbolize "washing" only, which is from its very nature incomplete,—then either "grace" must forever stop short of "regeneration" and imperfect sanctification forever preclude perfect justification, or baptism must be often repeated until the measure of grace and holiness be full. They are the true Anabaptists who divide the one baptism into two, entailing a separate ritual and theory for each; or so mutilate the one baptism that, once administered, it teaches incompleteness, and suggests some further step to reach the actual new life.

CHAPTER V.

BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH.—THE APOSTOLIC IDEA.

IT is a noticeable circumstance that Paul's Epistle addressed to the Romans, busies itself chiefly with the Jews, and when it mentions the Gentile world invariably cites the Greek rather than the Roman as representative of it. Not less remarkable is its texture. Its material is borrowed mainly from the Jewish Scriptures; its method from the Greek dialecticians; while its vocabulary is derived from, and its whole spirit is redolent of, Roman law. We are reminded at once how, in the world's metropolis, Roman, Greek, and Jew were then dwelling together, equally arrogant and mutually disdainful, but together were hanging over the world their tri-color of prerogative, against the outer barbarian who was neither a citizen of the Empire, a disciple of the school, nor a child of Abraham.

Paul was himself a Roman freeman, a Greek scholar, and a Hebrew of pure blood. But he

had heard a voice, like the blast beside Jericho, before which the triple walls of his citadel of privilege had fallen flat. It was the same word that had startled Nicodemus, assuring him that he too, who of all men fancied himself peculiarly well-born, must equally with the Gentile "dog" "be born again." With peculiar authority, therefore, he assails the entrenchments which he himself has found insecure. To the Roman, he substantially says, "Your law cannot really 'justify;' and it is a small thing to be on the right side of Roman law, yet on the wrong side of God's law." To the Greek, "Your knowledge cannot save; a man may know, 'but how to perform that which is good, find not.'" To the Jew, "Your birth is of no avail; high birth is neither preventive nor cure of low life." Jew, Roman, and Greek stand, therefore, equally with the base-born, nomadic, and illiterate barbarian, shelterless before God's law: for "there is no difference."

There is a special significance in the addressing to the Roman of an argument from the Jewish standpoint, for it implies a certain community of ideas, without which it would be unintelligible. That such a community in fact existed is implied in the apparition of Judæo-Roman elements in subsequent church history. The Pope still wears

the imperial crown and the title of Pontifex Maximus borrowed from pagan Rome, but with these assumes the robes and functions of the Jewish High-Priest. Cardinal Newman, in his sermons, argues that the Church is an imperial power, prolonging also the Jewish *régime.* Luther found "new wine," indeed, but borrowed from Rome her "old bottles" to put it in, and so Judaized the Reformation. The Genevan system derived its inspiration, by way of Calvin through Augustine, from the Latin Theology of North Africa: and it culminated in an attempted reëstablishment of the Old Testament Theocracy in the New Testament era.

The historic consilience of these two lines of influence in the systems named, and the uniformly coincident occurrence of one of the theories of privilege above mentioned (the sacerdotal or corporate, the hereditary, or the sacramental), suggest something deeper than a mere casual connection. Perhaps the battering-ram, ostensibly aimed by the Apostle at the distinctly-named Jewish bastions of prerogative, but meant really for the scarcely-named Roman, may, if given full swing, prove equally destructive to the work of unnamed theorists who have more lately built, of the same material, on the same foundations.

ANALOGY OF ROMAN TO JEWISH BELIEFS.

It should be remembered that those "ruling ideas in early ages" which Canon Mozley has so admirably delineated, still survived in Paul's time, and in fact, have only slowly receded before the advancing pressure of the gospel. Chief among these was the notion of right, as the creature exclusively of birth, of ceremonial, or of law. The individual had indeed not emerged into view, as a possessor of rights, or even as a subject of thought apart from the corporate life of which he was a fractional element. Of this wide field, however, there is opportunity only hastily to glance at the limited section which embraces the question immediately in hand.

In the Jewish household of Patriarchal times lay, yet unseparated, the Family, the Church, and the State. The household was itself incorporate in the personality of the Patriarch, of which wife, house, son, servant, ox, and ass were regarded as in the strict sense the property, indissolubly sharing his rights and destiny. The punishment of Achan would have been incomplete, had it not extended to all his belongings, which were truly parts of him. Subsequently the household grew through the tribe to the nation, and through the Mosaic Institute was

merged into the State, which thereupon absorbed all priestly, social, and civic functions. Still, however, the individual had no recognition, religious or political, except through the high-priest, or as incorporated in the "congregation." The rite of circumcision had been from the beginning the seal of ancestral rights, and still remained the badge and guaranty of membership in the commonwealth. By its magical power even an alien could be "adopted" into citizenship, and through a legal fiction counted as a home-born child. How completely the Jewish conception of prerogative was bounded by political, hereditary, and ceremonial lines, is manifest from Paul's words to the Ephesians (2 : 12). The uncircumcised Gentile, whatever his personal attainments or character, being an "alien from the commonwealth of Israel," and from defect of birth a "stranger from the covenants of promise," is accounted as necessarily "having no hope, and without God in the world." To be "cut off from the congregation" was to the Jew equivalent to being cut off from life itself.

Not one of these conceptions could have been unfamiliar to the Roman. While stronger emphasis in his scheme lay on the imperial than on the hereditary element, yet so complete an analogy existed between the Roman and Jewish

exaltation of political, ancestral, and ceremonial right, that the Roman might fairly be called a secular Jew. The *Patria Potestas* was in full force—extending even to the power of life and death over the son, whose independent existence, even, was not recognized by the law. The loss of citizenship, as Ortolan tells us,[1] was the loss of liberty, and, as the slave was not accounted a person, but a thing, amounted to civil extinction. "Adoption" was analogous to circumcision, investing the stranger with a fictitious kinship, through pontifical ceremony.[2] Paul knew how to make the chief captain "afraid," who had "bound him with thongs."[3] After the true Roman spirit he appealed, not to his personal innocence, but to his political and ancestral claims, for he was "a Roman," and that not artificially, for he was "free-born."

PAUL AGAINST THESE BELIEFS.

Now it was inevitable that in the mind of both Jew and Roman the new idea which Paul brought should at first tend to fall into, and take form from, the "mould" of their preconception. They would identify the Church with the State, whereupon membership in the one would follow

[1] *History of Roman Law*, (London, 1871), p. 607.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 581. [3] *Acts* 22: 29.

citizenship in the other. Or they would allot its privileges according to hereditary right, reckoning the father's adhesion to the new order as necessarily involving his posterity and investing them also with his new relations. The new initiatory rite they would be likely to regard as a mere outward *sacramentum* by which the individual, not born a citizen of the new State or an heir of the new race, might be formally incorporated therein after the analogy of the Jewish circumcision or the Roman adoption. It is evident, therefore, why the Apostle lays so much emphasis on that rite itself as supplying a new "mould" of conception, and why he devotes the preceding chapter of the Epistle to a preparatory dislodgement of the misapprehensions above referred to.

He attacks first the idea of salvation by corporate relation. Let the Roman boast of his share in the majesty of the Empire, and the righteousness of his Twelve Tables. These corporate splendors had not saved individual men form the Gehenna of shame and misery depicted in that livid first chapter of the Epistle. Let the Jew glory in the "election" of Israel, and the possession of the divine "Ten Words." But "they are not all Israel which are of Israel": and though the law be "holy, just, and good,"

not the "hearer" thereof but the "doer" alone is justified. God "will render to every man," not according to his corporate claims whether he be Jew or Gentile, but "according to his deeds," and by those deeds, his own law being witness, "shall no flesh be justified."

He turns next to the notion of salvation by ceremonial. "Our Rabbins have said," writes Rabbi Menachem, "that no circumcised man will see hell." Augustine, who made baptism the counterpart of circumcision, taught that both were saving rites.[1] But Paul declares that Abraham was saved before he was circumcised, and that circumcision was but the palpable "sign" and "seal" of an accomplished fact.[2] The outward form, therefore, he argues, creates nothing, and even as a symbol means nothing except there be first a "circumcision of the heart." It is plain, therefore, that the overweening confidence of Jew and Roman in the thaumaturgic power of rites has no tolerance in the Apostle's thought.

Closely connected with this idea is the further notion of hereditary grace through lineal descent. This inveterate conceit of the Jews, so diametrically opposed to the whole genius of Christianity,

[1] See *Ecclesia.*, 2 : 57.

[2] *Romans* 4 : 11.

and so strangely given a posthumous life in modern systems, is assaulted in the New Testament from end to end. It is worth noticing that the very first mention of the Abrahamic covenant in the New Testament is in connection with the ordinance of baptism, and involves a distinct repudiation of the modern birth-right theory. "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father," says John the Baptist to the Pharisees who came to be baptized, "for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

Paul here declares the whole theory which interprets the Abrahamic covenant "as pertaining to the flesh" unsound. Abraham himself was justified, not by circumcision "in the flesh," as we have seen, nor by incorporation in the Jewish commonwealth "according to the flesh," for that did not exist in his day. The covenant did not run with descent "according to the flesh," for "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" while Ishmael is rejected. It could not be limited to Israel alone "according to the flesh," for the very name Abraham is "father of *many* nations." He concludes, therefore, that as Abraham himself was saved by faith alone, the covenant inures to all "them who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father of Abraham, which he had being yet

uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised." If these apostolic propositions be not seen at once clearly to obliterate the foundations of the national, the hereditary, and the sacramental theories of the church, it would be vain to seek further to elaborate or emphasize them.

THE CENTRAL TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

The Apostle now approaches the very heart of the Epistle and of Christianity—the doctrine which he terms the "justification of life" (ch. 5: 18). There is a law anterior to and far deeper than the Roman or the Mosaic code, of which indeed they are but feeble and fragmentary excerpts. Our corporate relation to the universe is one of more consequence than to microcosmic Rome or Israel, and it depends on our attitude toward that law. The true ancestral question, also, reaches back, not to Abraham only, but to Adam, in whom the trend of race destiny was established. On the one side of law are sin and death—root and fruit; on the other side, in like relation, righteousness and life. Justification is that rightening with law which effects transition from sin to righteousness, and so from death to life. Death coming into the world by Adam and "passing through to all men" since, is proof

conclusive of condemnation, and disjointing of our relations with the universe. Life in the risen Christ is equally conclusive of justification and a restored citizenship in the commonwealth of God. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more: death no more hath dominion over him." For Christ's is that "*better* resurrection," now for the first time manifest, by which he became the "*first-born* from the dead" —a birth "new," not in time only, but as the Greek words commonly used imply, "new" in kind.[1]

It is evident, therefore, that in Christ's death and resurrection we find the analogue of that spiritual process through which we too are "justified," being "born anew." We are "justified by faith," but "he that hath died is justified from sin."[2] "If any man come unto me . . . and hate not his own life also," said our Lord, "he cannot be my disciple." As, therefore, our Lord "of himself" "laid down his life that he might take it again," "being raised again for our justification," so faith, not "counting life dear unto itself," willingly "surrenders it for Christ's sake," that it may "find it" anew in him. Fitly, therefore, our Lord's death and

[1] See Trench, *Synonyms*, Part II., (New York, 1868), p 42. [2] *Romans* 6 : 7 (*Canterbury Revision*).

resurrection and our analogous spiritual new birth are jointly symbolized in that act of faith in which the believer voluntarily "lays down his life" also, that he may resume it again, not by his own act, but through another hand in Christ's name, as his avowed servant, henceforth "to walk in newness of life."

For it cannot be too often reiterated that the central idea of baptism is not a meagre and imperfect "purification," but that complete and marvellous "new birth" which alone made Paul's message "a gospel," "the *power* of God unto salvation to every one that *believeth:* to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The symbolic essence of baptism is therefore, according to the Apostle's arguments, not the cleansing "application of water," but the "burial" of that "breath which is in man's nostrils" into an element in which breath and thereby life is cut off, and its being raised thence by exterior power. Dean Goulburn, of the English Church, tersely puts it thus: "Animation having been for one moment suspended beneath the waters, a type this of the interruption of man's energies by death, the body is lifted up again into the air by way of expressing emblematically the new birth of resurrection."[1] We can but join in his expressed

[1] *Bampton Lectures* (1850), Oxford Edition, p. 18.

"regret" that "the form of administration unavoidably (if it be unavoidably) adopted in cold climates should utterly obscure the emblematic significance of the rite, and render unintelligible to all but the educated the Apostle's association of burial and resurrection with the ordinance." "Were immersion universally practiced," he adds, "this association of two at present heterogeneous ideas would become intelligible to the humblest."

How "obedience from the heart" to this "mould of doctrine" may give outline to the whole of the Christian life, Archbishop Cranmer tell us after his vigorous manner: "The dipping into the water doth betoken that the old Adam with all his sin and evil lusts ought to be drowned and killed by daily contrition and repentance." "The Apostle here teaches," adds Bishop Wordsworth, "that the doctrine of our new birth in baptism is a practical doctrine, and is indeed the root of all Christian practice."[1]

BAPTISM NOT A PURIFICATION.

The idea of purification is never in the New Testament explicitly associated with baptism, and the term "wash" but once. In that sole instance it was Ananias' word with reference to the baptism of Paul himself. It may be re-

[1] *Commentary on New Testament*, p. 230.

marked incidentally that in that case immersion was necessarily implied: for the Greek *louo*, Dr. Robinson's *New Testament Lexicon* being witness, is never used except the whole person be involved. But it is more significant to notice that the emphasis is laid, not on *washing* the man, but washing *away* sin; that is to say, in Cranmer's (and also Luther's) phrase, "drowning the old Adam," as the old world was flooded and "washed away" from Noah. Alluding to Noah's case (one of the two typical events of the Old Testament to which the term baptism is applied in the New) Peter distinctly anticipates and repels that false interpretation of the ordinance which makes it a mere "putting away of the filth of the flesh." Noah was not cleansed by the "application of water," nor has that "figure" any conceivable "likeness" to, or connection with, the "resurrection of Christ." He lays emphasis instead on that loyal "answer of a good conscience toward God" by which Noah became, as the Epistle to the Hebrews phrases it, "the heir of righteousness by faith." His loyalty was manifested in the unhesitating surrender of his life into God's hand, to be shut up into an unprecedented structure, without rudder, chart, or compass; whereupon he sailed through the flood of death

to the shores of a new life, and became, like Christ, in a manner the "first-born of the dead." "The like figure (literally "the antitype") whereunto," adds the Apostle, "baptism doth now save us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Turning to the other Old Testament type adduced by Paul, we are told that the redeemed people were "all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Much childish hilarity has been indulged by those who think baptism consists in the cleansing "application of water," over the seeming incongruity of an "immersion," while going over the sea "dry shod." It is not difficult to see that such triflers indulge in a bad joke at their own expense. For if the Israelites were untouched by water, as is implied in the narrative, and still were baptized, it is plain that baptism cannot be "washing." On the other hand, remember that the Children of Israel were commanded by Moses in God's name to "go forward" into the as yet unparted sea, and that they boldly surrendered their lives to his word; and so "by faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." "By that act," says Bunsen, "history was born;" for by it Israel "passed over" from continent to continent, from slavery

to freedom, from the kingdom of Pharoah to the kingdom of God. How thoroughly does all this harmonize with the figurative language of the Epistle to the Romans. They had been "buried" as Egyptian slaves: they had been "raised" as God's freemen to "newness of life." They were "justified"—that is, completely changed in relation, but not yet "sanctified"—that is, progressively changed in character. "Sin" had "no more" *rightful* "dominion over them," for they had "died" to it; but they were yet so to "yield their members unto righteousness" that it should have no *real* dominion. They were got clean out of Egypt, but Egypt was yet by slow and painful discipline to be got out of them. They were "perfect" as "new-born" babes, but not perfect, nor by any further "birth" to become so, as full-grown men.

Thus it is manifest that into an unbroken "mould" Old Testament type, New Testament resurrection, and perennial new birth and justification alike fit with an exactness that reveals their affinity one with another, and links them all to an antecedent faith, whose "obedience" is expressed therein. Symbolically the believer thus pictures forth to men the transaction by which he has spiritually "passed over" from "the law of sin and death" to the "law of the

Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," wherein, and not wherefrom, he has been "made free." He has died "*to* sin" that he might not die "*in* his sins."

CHAPTER VI.

BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH—PERVERSIONS AND THEIR SOURCES.

"WHAT mean ye by this service?" This was the question which, as Moses declared, the Passover ordinance was expected and intended to provoke from successive generations. We may gather from the terms employed a significant hint of the essential nature and functions of an ordinance. It was a "service," that is to say, something done *because* commanded, and since the "servant is not above his master," done *as* commanded. It had a "meaning," specific and intelligible. It was God's chosen symbol to body forth his chosen thought. To have substituted some supposed higher service for exact obedience would have been disobedience. King Saul tried that, and found a quick passage into history, branded with the stinging legend, "to obey is better than sacrifice." To have modified the symbol as if to express some wiser thought, or to express the appointed thought in some wiser way, would have been to insinuate indiscretion

in the Omniscient One in not taking earlier counsel of the assumed reviser. "He that reproveth God, let him answer it."

"What mean *ye?*" said the children to the fathers, and this could be easily told and easily understood. For so vividly did the appointed rite reproduce the salient features of that memorable time, in which God "passed-over" sheltered Israel, and Israel "passed-over" the sea—that even the child must recognize the likeness of the one in the other. But *all* that God meant thereby neither fathers nor children could as yet tell. No—nor can we to whom the "mystery hid from the ages" has been revealed: for it is a mystery that forever "passeth knowledge," into which still even "angels desire to look."

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE ORDINANCES.

This is the common mark of the Divine, in ordinance and prophecy, that while simple and obvious in their primary import, they hint far more than they disclose. So do they in their deep-lying principles tap the roots of things—so do they continually freshen and deepen themselves in meaning, aptly interpreting new phases of fact and feeling, and finding "springing and germinant fulfilment" in growing history—so do they by subtle allusion touch secret doors opening

into byways of discovery, as to remind us that he who framed the ordinances of the church is the same God who also established the "ordinances of heaven." Reverently we watch the trial of the perfectness of those heavenly ordinances, as the planet lays its pulse-beat open on the sun, and brings the chronometry of centuries to the test of seconds; and lo! a spider's film is not delicate enough to find a margin of variance. How more devoutly ought we to study, and reverently to deal with, those earthly ordinances meant to steady a sublimer pulse-beat and measure the arc of a longer flight, even that of a soul, whose fulfilment of its course is one day to be laid open and measured against the sun.

The prophets could not comprehend the full meaning of the sayings given them to utter; all the less could they safely dwarf or alter them, but they could "speak God's word faithfully." Israel could read the historic, but not the deeper prophetic, meaning of the Passover. So far it was to them a message sealed. But all the more reverently did they guard the sacred mystery, and bring it to later ages safe under the unviolated seal; thus "not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister" a blessing greater than they knew. Surely the ordinances of the New Testament are not narrower in range, nor do they

enshrine a mystery less profound, than those of the Old. Accordingly our Lord did not lay, even upon his Apostles, the delicate and perilous task of readjusting as if ill-devised, or "developing" as if incomplete, appointments omnisciently prepared; nor did he demand even a perfect comprehension of the depth and ultimate bearing of his commands: he asked only a possible and far humbler service, viz., that they would "keep" his "words." The "faithful" servant in the parable is reckoned also "wise." For though the "servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth," he may still borrow of his Lord's wisdom and further his Lord's end by obeying unquestioningly his Lord's command.

"What mean ye by this service?" let us ask of Paul, concerning either of Christ's ordinances. His answer is unequivocal. Its authority rests wholly on Christ's word. He has "received from the Lord Jesus" what he has "delivered unto" us; and delivered as he received it. The ordinances, like the gospel, were given him "in trust," and not even "an angel from heaven" might authorize the violation of that trust, nor could he alter without destroying. The primary meaning of each ordinance is likewise in Paul's teaching palpable. In baptism, to which we here especially turn, the historic resurrection of

the Lord is reenacted in outline, as we have seen, and the analogous spiritual new birth thereby symbolized. It emphasizes the fact of the resurrection, and the reality of the new birth. But beyond this it fastens attention on the old question of the disciples, "what the rising from the dead should mean": and sets men asking again with Nicodemus concerning the new birth "how can these things be?"

If the sole aim of baptism were to impale thoughtless men on these questions, it would be no unworthy consummation, nor foreign to the central issues of to-day.

WHAT DOES INFANT BAPTISM MEAN?

But again we ask those who are sprinkling water upon a babe in the name of the Trinity, "What mean ye by this service?" The most noticeable feature of the somewhat multitudinous and chaotic reply will be that no one ventures to turn for authority, as Paul turns concerning primitive baptism, to the explicit command of Christ. For no one is mad enough to claim that our Lord ever by any specific word commanded men to be sprinkled, or babes to be in any way baptized. The utmost that is claimed is that the word used by him was so generically comprehensive, and so vague, that by a liberal construction

these ideas may be sheltered inclusively under the outer edges of its meaning: that baptism is not *necessarily confined* by Scripture to immersion, nor to adults—only that. The *XXXIX. Articles of the Church of England* say, "The baptism of young children is in anywise to be retained in the Church as most agreeable with the institution of Christ." The *Methodist Articles* more curtly say, "The baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church."[1] While the most recent utterance of all, that of the Reformed Episcopal Church, proposes as justifying the retention of the form, the cautious statement that it is "*not contrary* to Scripture," and is conformable to "ancient usage."[2] It will be observed that all these recognize the institution as existing and to be "retained," but there is, in all, significant silence as to its origin and credentials; unless the tracing it to "ancient usage" be meant as a return with Rome to the sufficiency of tradition. The Council of Trent did, indeed, claim that the baptism of infants was "instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ"; but this was asserted equally of all the seven sacraments, and on the authority, not of Scripture, but of an alleged Apostolic Tradition. Cardinal Bellarmine places among the

[1] Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. III.

[2] *Ib.*, vol. III., p. 820.

things depending wholly on tradition, because not found in Scripture—with the perpetual virginity of Mary, the perpetual recurrence of Easter on Sunday, and Purgatory (which Luther believed, yet admitted it could not be found in Scripture) —"infant baptism, which is necessary to be believed, but neither Romanists nor Protestants can prove it from Scripture."[1] The Romanist Möhler adds, that the retention of the custom is "utterly incomprehensible, according to the Protestant view." The Anabaptists, he says, drew the natural conclusion from Luther's premises, and he was powerless to answer them.[2]

The impression made by this difficulty upon, and the share it had in shaping the history of, two men alike so splendid in endowment, so acute in criticism, so candid and lovable in character, as John H. and Francis W. Newman, yet ultimately driven wide as the Poles asunder in faith, ought not to be overlooked. The discovery of the spuriousness of the "decretals" and other alleged early documents upon which Rome had rested the authority of her traditions, had left her without even this *quasi*-apostolic basis of support. All her novelties, their base

[1] Browne, on *The Thirty-nine Articles* (London, 1865), p. 137.

[2] *Symbolism* (New York, Third Edition), p. 208.

being cut away, hung like a mirage in the air, ready to vanish. To meet this "difficulty," John H. Newman broached the "hypothesis," since so prominent in all discussions of the theme, of the "DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE."[1] Protestant writers have been ready to borrow, as the sole possible resource in the authentication of infant baptism, this theory, which its inventor himself regarded as worthless, if it did not vindicate all the peculiarities of the Romish Church. Commenting on that one of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of his own Church which bears on this subject, Principal G. A. Jacob says: Infant baptism "is not mentioned in the New Testament —no instance of it is recorded there—no allusion is made to its effects—no directions are given for its administration—it is not an Apostolic ordinance;" but he adds: "We find in the New Testament the fundamental idea from which it was afterwards developed."[2]

Not so easily did Francis W. Newman dispose of this stumbling-block in the way: one of the first, as he tells us (in the pathetic history of his soul struggles recorded in his *Phases of Faith*),[3] to escape which he turned aside from the beaten

[1] *Development of Christian Doctrine*, (London, 1845).
[2] *Ecclesiastical Polity of New Testament*, p. 270
[3] (London, 1870), pp 6, 9, 10.

path. Being a candidate for orders in the Church, he was shocked, on approaching this subject, to find baptismal regeneration plainly taught in the Articles, and as plainly evaded by clergymen, as it seemed to him, through "shifts invented to avoid the disagreeable necessity of resigning their functions." All the defences of infant baptism he found to partake of the same Jesuitical spirit: involving the attempt to fasten upon the Scriptures by insinuation the responsibility of a custom which could not be directly derived from them. "Even if they can be made to confirm, they could not have suggested or established, it." The sharp recoil against discovered disingenuousness in sacred things intensified itself into a suspicious temper, grew to cynicism, and so he went out into a realm "lonely as the desert behind Algiers," where he still wanders solitary and uncomforted, while the night comes on.

HOW SPRINKLING IS DEFENDED.

The practice of sprinkling is equally devoid of Scriptural warrant, and carries with it the marks of human and—in its extended application—comparatively modern intrusion. Ceremonial corruptions, says Archbishop Whately, are "first overlooked, then tolerated, then sanc-

tioned, and finally embodied in a system; of which they are rather to be regarded as the cause than the effect."[1] When the African Bishop Cyprian uttered the hesitating, but amiable suggestion, that the drenching of the bed-ridden convert in water might graciously be accepted as confessedly imperfect, but in such case the only possible approach to the divine immersion[2]—probably he little thought an exception based upon so timid and casual a venture of opinion would one day assume to be the rule, to the practical exclusion of the divine order itself. Yet through that insignificant breach, the deep waters of baptism have shallowed down until they are at length reduced to tiny drops trickling on an infant's forehead. The watermarks of this decline are plainly visible, as will hereafter be shown, in the history of the modification of ecclesiastical formularies: the juxtaposition of the new and the surviving old producing in some cases a sense of incongruity as striking as the sight of the baker's loaves and pans set in the niches and mixed with the sculptured relics of Vesta's temple at Rome. The Methodist *Discipline,* for instance, still solemnly cites the traditional warrant for infant baptism, "Except

[1] *Errors of Rome*, p. 16.

[2] "Not unlawful." See Cave, *Primitive Christianity*, (Oxford, 1840), p. 150.

a man be born of water," etc.," and then as solemnly provides a teaspoonful of water out of which the child is to be "born." The Anglican *Catechism of 1862* asks the ancient question, "What is the outward and visible *sign* or *form* in baptism?" and returns the answer novel, in more senses than one, "*Water:* wherein the person is baptized."[1] According to this, water itself is a "mere *form*," and that being non-essential, may be dispensed with.

As to the positive symbolic import of the sprinkling of water upon infants under the name of baptism, enough has been already said of the multiplicity and incompatibility of modern theories, to show that no majority vote could probably be obtained in favor of any verdict more definite than that which the Pharisees rendered concerning the origin of John's baptism, "We cannot tell." Nearly all the Churches — to quote substantially the language of Dr. John Hall, used in another connection, but most *apropos* here — appeal first to the New Testament: if that fails, to the Old Testament: then to antiquity: and finally conclude that no inspired rule is given. "So," he says, "loose practice, like loose thinking, always seeks to represent the standard as indefinite."[2]

[1] Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, p. 521.
[2] *Questions of the Day*, p. 273, vol. III.

It is probable, however, that on the negative side far greater definiteness and unanimity might be reached, in the avowal that baptism does *not* symbolize regeneration by faith. This is logically inevitable, whether or not it take the form of definite avowal. For literally the sprinkling of water in no wise touches the life, or even remotely shadows forth emergence from death into life. Theoretically, as applied to infants, it cannot imply regeneration by faith, for faith is there impossible. It must therefore, in such case, either be held to effect regeneration, or to make no allusion to it. We reach, therefore, this remarkable result:

AN ENORMOUS CONTRADICTION.

That baptism, which was in Paul's time immersion, the visible "likeness of Christ's resurrection," and the symbol of the believer's passage through death to life, may in the nineteenth century equally well be pouring or sprinkling, which are alike devoid of every trace of such likeness, or of such symbolism; that that era-making idea of the new birth—with which our Lord startled Nicodemus; with which the Apostles "turned the world upside down"; and which has been the inner force of every great religious revolution since; which our Lord

"writ large" in a symbol chosen by himself and set at the forefront of his advancing church—may with perfect safety be pushed from its place, and the notion of "purification, consecration" or what not, thrust in instead.

Clearly a baptism which carefully excludes from its purport the central thought which Christ included, and so refashions the outline of the rite as to efface all traces of his design, and adapt it to the utterance of the new thought so alien to his own, can no longer be Christ's baptism. And his word returns again: "Ye have made the word of God of none effect by your tradition."

The enormity of the contradiction reached through these perversions, and still maintained by those who declare the Bible their "only and sufficient rule of faith and practice," is startling. The most specious if not the only apology, which Protestantism can be said to have produced, is the citation of that perilous principle which Luther himself suggested—for the protection, however, not only of infant baptism, but of auricular confession, penance, and the bulk of the Romish innovations;[1] and to which, as we have seen, the Reformed Episcopal Church has just recurred, viz.: that nothing can be pernicious that is sanctified by antiquity and not

[1] Hardwick, *History of Thirty-Nine Articles*, p. 14.

explicitly forbidden by Scripture. A moment's consideration will show that this is a revision, which amounts to rescission, of the Protestant Canon. For it absurdly proposes *two* "only" rules, Scripture and ancient usage, which, however, must not conflict. But conflict is in fact inevitable; for "the restless spirit of man," says Canon Liddon, "cannot but at last press a principle to the real limit of its application, even although centuries should intervene between the premises and the conclusion."[1]

Infant baptism, for instance, even if not fairly included under the authority of Christ's commission, seems at worst only a harmless superfluous form, and is often defended on that plea. But the very foundation principle of the theory which introduces infant baptism compels inevitably the claiming of the whole field for it, leaving adult baptism, save in heathen nations, exceptional only. For if baptism can be of any spiritual service, independent of intelligence or volition, it would be criminal to neglect or postpone it. That fierce old Christian militant who made his motto "baptism or death" was an evangelist after his way: and equally so that enthusiastic Churchman who covertly sought to save the Algerian Moslems not

[1] *Bampton Lectures* (1866) *on the Divinity of Our Lord* (New York, 1868), p. 484.

long since. Standing at his window with prayer-book and watering-pot in hand, he diligently read the baptismal service from the one, and from the other simultaneously sprinkled the passers-by.[1] But baptism in unresisting infancy would, according to their theory, have been equally efficacious, and would have been the normal course: for it would have saved the resort to force in the one case and to craft in the other.[2] It is evident, then, that infant baptism and believers' baptism cannot permanently dwell together. The parasite, once fairly lodged, will, if it be not torn away, drink the life and usurp the place of the trunk to which it clings. The church, no more than the individual, can "serve two masters." Scripture or tradition alone must be supreme.

HOW INFANT BAPTISM AROSE.

As to the antiquity of the rite of infant lustration there can be no doubt. Indeed, it might be hard to resist for it the claim which one of the Romish Fathers has triumphantly brought in vindication of the practice of prayers for dead: that it was "more ancient than Christianity

[1] *Westminster Review*, 114 (October, 1880), p. 549.

[2] Curteis, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 214.

itself."[1] It was almost the universal custom of heathen nations, as Mr. Tylor tells us, to couple a religious meaning with the washing and naming of the child after birth. The Greeks and Romans practised, not only infant baptism, but the sprinkling of holy water upon worshippers, as a purifying symbol.[2]

But when or how the baptism of infants as a Christian rite began it is not so easy to say. Evil did not first come into the world in the manifest garb or with the honest tramp of an open foe, but with the gliding of the serpent, "more subtle than any beast of the field." "No one," says Archbishop Whately, "can point out any precise period when the Romish corruptions began—they crept in one by one—the natural offspring of human passions unchecked."[3] They "all grew out of natural and generally praiseworthy impulses, as in the case of prayers for the dead, supposed to be in purgatory," according to Canon Mozley. But these worthy impulses were manipulated constantly to an unworthy end, and cannot hallow the rites they confided in. In the days when the Roman Republic had superseded the Kingdom, but the old kingly

[1] Müller: cited in Barrows' *Purgatory* (American Tract Society, 1882), p. 107.
[2] *Primitive Culture*, 2: 430, 439, 441.
[3] *Errors of Rome*, p. 11.

reverence still lingered, "eight ancient kingly statues stood in the Capitol. A statue of Julius Cæsar was placed near these, two years before his death, with the covert object of giving him kingly honors."[1] The statue dumb and motionless seemed innocent, but in fact the snow-white marble was dyed deep with an iniquitious intent, and the candid sculptor's art suborned to the basest of treacheries.

So, one by one in the second century A. D., there crept to the side of the simple rite Christ had appointed new "symbolic elements in accordance with the taste of the time and the poetic genius of the East, especially of the Egyptian Church;"[2] beautiful, tender, seemingly harmless and even helpful. A little later and these new features have multiplied, got into the foreground, taken on a deep and awful significance. The brotherly minister has become a thaumaturgic priest; the simple bread and wine under his incantations become the literal body and blood of the Lord, exclusion from the taste of which, for child or man, is death; the baptismal water must, equally with the bread and wine, be "trans-elemented" by the pouring in

[1] G. C. Lewis, *Credibility of Early Roman History*, (London, 1855), p. 107.

[2] Pressensé, *Early Years of Christianity* (London, 1879), p. 4: 24.

of oil in the form of a cross, the letting down a lighted taper until the melted wax had flowed in and the light was extinguished, with divers other subsidiary rites and multiplied forms of words.[1] The water thus made "holy" of itself regenerated all who were plunged therein, and nothing else could. Considering the strength of parental love and piety, and the preconceived unity of parent and child in the popular mind, as heretofore explained; considering also the new rod of power thereby lodged in priestly hands—it is not wonderful that the baptism of infants entered and grew apace.

When sprinkling and pouring had been first introduced as "not unlawful," says Cave in his *Primitive Christianity*, it "quickly succeeded in the room of immersion, because the tender bodies of most infants (the only persons now baptized) could not be put under water in these cold climates without prejudice to health, if not to their lives."[2] Wall puts it a little more carefully, thus: "It being allowed to weak children to be baptized by affusion, many fond ladies and gentlemen first, and then by degrees the common people, would obtain the favor of the priest to have their children pass for weak," and so escape

[1] Cf. Cowles in *Bib. Sac.*, vol. XXXIII., p. 426.

[2] *Primitive Christianity*, p. 156.

dipping.[1] It is noticeable that immersion did not at once sink into sprinkling. "In 1645," says Wall, "when dipping ceased, there was no sprinkling, but pouring only." He quotes Vasquez as saying that "sprinkling (as compared with pouring) cannot be practised without sin."[2] How sprinkling itself first got a footing as baptism is not clear. Exorcism, which always accompanied baptism in the early church, involved the sprinkling of holy water. It is quite possible, as has been maintained by some,[3] that this was afterwards confounded with baptism; and that the custom of sprinkling to-day is the "survival" of a superstitious charm to drive away the Devil: which it were to be devoutly wished, though quite unlikely, that it may do.

The conclusion is obvious. No antiquity, however hoary, can change earthly things to heavenly. No silence of Scripture, however profound, can be taken as a license for the intrusion of human device into rites that are divine: and such intrusion can bring only evil. Man, powerless to create, is mighty to destroy. Even in the Apostles' time the "mystery of lawlessness" had begun to work, and the sanction of

[1] *History of Infant Baptism*, p. 717.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 719.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 723.

the Fathers is weaker still. There is "but one lawgiver"—not Wesley, nor Calvin, nor Augustine, nor Cyprian, nor even Paul, but Christ the Lord. "What he saith unto you, do it."

CHAPTER VII.

BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH—RESULTS OF PERVERSION.

RESULTS, in history and nature, are often remote from, disproportionate to, and in themselves unlike, their causes. The links that bind them are likewise frequently delicate and obscure. It may easily happen, therefore, that the suggestion of such intimacy of relation will at first awaken a sense of surprise, or even of incredulity—the connection, though real, not being at once obvious. Nothing could perhaps seem more incongruous than the attributing the local persistence of red clover, by Mr. Darwin, to the presence of cats.[1] But the absurdity disappears when we are reminded that the prolonged life of the clover depends on its fertilization by the humble bee; that the bee cannot survive the destruction of its comb and nest, and that these, which the mice would destroy, the cats, by exterminating the mice, protect. Thus often a most delicate thread of connected circumstance

[1] *Origin of Species* (New York, 1883), p. 57.

once grasped will lead us to the centre of the labyrinth, and change our embarrassment to surprise.

Doubtless the connection of cats with clover will seem to the casual observer quite as demonstrable as that, for instance, of a perverted baptism with the current evolution philosophy. Nevertheless, a patient fumbling among the adjacent facts may touch a clew leading to the revelation of a real kinship.

THE TESTIMONY OF THOLUCK.

Nowhere has the grosser Evolutionism found a more congenial air or a better prepared soil than in the field that Luther ploughed. Indeed, so rampant has been the growth of thorns and so abundant the crop of tares in that region since his day, as to suggest that the "enemy" may insidiously have broken off the point of his plough, so that it did not go deep enough, or thrust some tares into the seed-bag while he was still sowing. According to Dr. Charles Hodge,[1] "in the common Protestant theory, no judgment is expressed or implied by the church, in receiving any one, as to the fact of his regeneration," for it is "not the purpose of God that the visible church on earth should consist exclusively of the regenerate."

[1] *Systematic Theology*, vol. III., p. 545.

In proof of this he cites the parable of the "wheat and tares." But if, as he maintains, the "field" in that parable be the church, and the "tares" the unregenerate, the scope of the Master's directions to his servants is somewhat enlarged by implication. For they were only forbidden to usurp the "angels'" functions by "pulling up" the tares, but it seems they may without hinderance take on them the "enemy's" work of planting them. How thoroughly this has been done in Lutheran Germany let the venerable Professor Tholuck tell. "I regret nothing so much," said he to Joseph Cook,[1] "as that the line of demarcation between the church and the world which Jonathan Edwards and Whitefield drew so deeply in the mind of New-England is almost unknown, not to the theological doctrines, but to the ecclesiastical forms of Germany. With us confirmation is compulsory. Children of unbelieving as well as of believing families must at an early age be baptized and profess faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Without a certificate of confirmation in some Church, employment cannot be lawfully obtained. After confirmation, the religious standing is assumed to be Christian: after that, we are all church members. Thus it happens that in our State Church

[1] *Bib. Sac.*, vol. XXXII., p. 740.

the converted and unconverted are mixed pell-mell together." In a note Mr. Cook adds that "in a few cities of North Germany infamous licenses were granted women for an infamous purpose, but only on exhibition of a *certificate of confirmation*." Of the analogous evil results of infant baptism in New-England, Mr. Joseph Cook, who is himself a Congregationalist, has borne the most courageous and trenchant testimony. It led, (he says in substance, in his lectures on "*Orthodoxy*,")[1] to the "half-way covenant," and that to skepticism. He affirms, on the authority of Tracy, that all the churches not following Edwards and Whitefield in their revolt against unregenerate church-membership became Unitarian.[2] Infant baptism, imported from the Old World, laid the foundation of a State Church in New-England. Roger Williams, he adds, protested that it would lead to the secularization of church-membership; which it in fact did, and out of this secularization grew the weakness of New-England against French infidelity.[3]

UNITARIANISM AND ITS ORIGIN.

The history of New England Unitarianism is doubtless familiar, but it is perhaps not so well known that infant baptism was responsible for

[1] p. 280. [2] p. 281. [3] pp. 271, 272, 281.

its origination, as well as its modern revival. The name itself, according to Bodd, one of their early historians, was not derived from antipathy to the doctrine of the Trinity as their characteristic tenet, but from the union of all parties (including the Orthodox) at their instance, in a bond of religious toleration, under the name of *uniti or unitarii.* When the rest receded from this, the name attached to them alone.[1] The first propounder of Unitarianism, says Rees, was Cellarius. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, he was appointed by the Reformers to defend infant baptism against the Anabaptist leaders. Being overpowered by their arguments, he repudiated infant baptism not only, but went further and denied the Trinity. That this was no legitimate outgrowth of Anabaptism itself, however, is historically certain; for in 1546 Adam Pastor was excluded from their body for holding Unitarian views.[2] But the intensity of the revulsion, which led to the supreme exaltation of reason, and the consequent rejection of the mystery of the Trinity, is not inexplicable when we remember to what stultiloquence the Reformers had descended in justifying infant

[1] Rees, *Racovian Catechism* (London, 1818), Preface IV.

[2] *Ib.*, VII.

baptism. Luther said, for instance, as follows: "The Anabaptists pretend that children, not as yet having reason, ought not to receive baptism. I answer that reason in no way contributes to faith. Nay, in that children are destitute of reason, they are all the more fit and proper recipients of baptism. For reason is the greatest enemy that faith hath. . . Faith comes of the word of God, when this is heard: little children hear that word when they receive baptism, and therewith they receive faith."[1] Baptism having been thus reduced to magic, and faith, for its sake, identified with unreason, the Unitarians rejected both. Their *Racovian Catechism* is largely devoted to an arraignment of infant baptism and sprinkling as unscriptural—one of the most complete anywhere to be found.[2]

LUTHER'S GREAT INCONSISTENCY.

It is the more remarkable that Luther did not revolt against infant baptism, when we remember his sharp antipathy to Papal usurpation, and also that the immediate occasion of the Reformation was the sale of indulgences. For infant baptism was manifestly, as Dean Milman terms it, one of the "strong foundations of sacerdotal

[1] *Luther's Table Talk* (Philadelphia, 1868), p. 202.

[2] Rees, *Racovian Catechism*, p. 253, *seq.*

power;"[1] and the sale of indulgences was its direct outgrowth. For the very notion of indulgence, with that of penance and purgatory, depends on the assumed loss of baptismal grace by after-lapse into sin, the effects of which were thus to be averted. But the idea of regenerating virtue in baptism, again, arose, as we have seen, in connection with infant baptism, inferentially interpreted as made efficacious by "transelementation" of the water (an idea still surviving in the ritual of the English and the Methodist Churches in the prayer that "this water may be sanctified," etc.) "Because the taint of our birth is purified by baptism," says Origen, "therefore infants are baptized." It is obvious that the damnation of infants not so purified, logically follows, even were it not distinctly asserted by the Fathers, as it was. Even good Dr. Emmons, in a later day, only softened this inevitable corollary by hopefully surmising, with Dr. Watts, that they might be annihilated.[2] They are still ominously excluded by the English Church from burial in consecrated ground. Infant communion was also early practised: it being consistently held, with Augustine, that mystic food

[1] *History of Latin Christianity*, (London, 1857), vol. III., p. 277.

[2] *Works*, vol. II., p. 651.

was as essential to the maintenance as mystic birth to the inception of spiritual life.[1]

Thus through the misinterpretation and misapplication of baptism had faith been changed to superstition, and the shadow of priestly power been projected over the whole range of life from the cradle to the grave, and even into the invisible beyond. Claiming to hold the "keys of heaven" through the sacraments, the priesthood had tyrannically gone on to "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders," which they themselves would not "move with one of their fingers."

Out of this region of tradition, with its hidden reefs, disordered compasses, and baffling winds, Luther set sail into the open sea of God's word, laying a straight course along the line of "justification by faith alone." But unhappily, reaching the subject of baptism, he at length fell "into a place where two seas met"—and from that shipwreck, only "on boards and broken pieces of the ship" have men since "escaped safe to land." To drop the figure, Luther left his people a priceless legacy in an honestly-translated Scripture, in the assertion of its sole authority, and in the doctrine that faith alone justifies. But to this last and vital doctrine he unhappily ap-

[1] *Ecclesia.*, Second Series, p. 59.

pended, as the only recourse for the defence of infant baptism, the neutralizing qualification, "but baptism alone regenerates." Thus divorcing baptism from faith, and regeneration from justification, he submitted to his critical and sagacious countrymen a conception of Christian doctrine hopelessly paradoxical. We must obey the Bible against tradition, he said: and yet he endorsed sprinkling as substituted by tradition, for immersion as commanded (according to his own translation) in the Bible. He insisted that the people must read the Bible for themselves, because intelligence is the basis of faith: yet contended that the faith of infants is superior because unintelligent. He argued that salvation is inward and not outward, and therefore beyond priestly control: yet by hanging regeneration upon baptism made the inward the creature of the outward, and still dependent on another's whim. The moulding power of a visible act upon thought and its expression is manifest in the fact that the uniform connection of Luther's word *taufen*, to dip, with the practice of sprinkling, has in fact gradually subverted the meaning of the word itself. So that the American Bible Society maintains its consistency in publishing Luther's translation including that word, because it has now come to mean "sprinkle." If now

the Rationalist claims Luther's authority for the proposition that Christianity demands the renunciation of reason as the condition of faith, it will not be easy to answer him. If, finally, the Naturalistic Evolutionist suggest that the "theory of the potency of every form of life in matter" ought not to seem novel or incredible to one who already accepts the idea of spiritual birth as the product of material baptism, it may at least freshen our curiosity concerning the whole matter, and suggest a more careful revision of the words of Christ and the significance of his ordinance in this connection.

SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH.

That ordinance, as we have seen, in Paul's conception symbolically and visibly reënacts the spiritual transaction which Christ calls the new birth. The Scriptural primacy and fertility of that idea have been already insisted on. "It is," says Professor Austin Phelps, "one of the *constructive* ideas of inspiration, which are not so much here or there as everywhere. It is pervasive, like the life blood in the body. It is like caloric in the globe."[1] The Old Testament begins with "the book of births"—speaking significantly of the "generations of the heavens and the earth,"

[1] *The New Birth* (Boston, 1867), p. 21.

and "of man"—and of the "bringing forth" by the earth and the waters, of grass, herb, and living creature. The New Testament begins with the "generation of Jesus Christ," which although "from David according to the flesh" and so in the old order, was likewise a "new birth"—a birth "from above"—a birth of "the Spirit." His discourse with Nicodemus pivots itself on the same idea, on which also the whole New Testament henceforth turns.

It is a notable instance of the perverse industry with which Christ's words have been twisted from their aim, that one verse (John iii. 5,) of this most prescient discourse, has not only been robbed of its deep suggestiveness, but actually so inverted as to seem to defend the very idea it was meant to destroy. For, as Wall says, all the ancient Christians understand it to refer to baptism, Calvin being the first to deny it. By which denial, adds Wall, he has done "ten times more prejudice" to infant baptism (involving, as it must, baptismal regeneration) than by "all his new hypotheses and arguments;" the Baptists having already seized upon it as confirming their views.[1]

But that regeneration is, in any case, independent of baptism, is distinctly taught in the

[1] *History of Infant Baptism*, pp. 551, 552.

same chapter (verse 36). Surely he that "hath everlasting life" is regenerate, and this is affirmed of him "that believeth." As to the verse itself it may be incidentally remarked that, the article being absent, it is doubtful whether the Holy Spirit is here referred to. In the Armenian and many earlier versions, the passage reads literally, "of water and of spirit"[1]—the preposition becoming thus generic, and perhaps alluding to certain most significant facts in the physical order, and not to baptism at all. But there is no room to enlarge upon or even to explain this hint.

What is unmistakably to the purpose is the fact that our Lord's whole discourse is manifestly aimed, not to encourage, but to beat down the too gross and mechanical notions of Nicodemus. His first word was anti-materialistic. It insisted on a birth "from above," impliedly as against one from beneath. In answer to Nicodemus' obtuse suggestion of a possible allusion to earthly rebirth he makes the antithesis still more distinct, uttering a protest which cannot be too deeply pondered in our day against the possible evolution of the spiritual out of the mate-

[1] So in Syriac, Slavonic, Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, Persian, etc. See Malan, on *Gospel of John* (London, 1865), Note, p. 42.

rial. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." To suppose that the intervening verse was meant to teach precisely the opposite, and to press upon Nicodemus a formalism which was already a snare to him, would be absurd. It does not identify, but distinguishes, water-birth and spirit-birth; and makes the latter not dependent on, but independent of, the former, and urges it as the one newly revealed and essential necessity.

EVOLUTION FALLACIES ANTICIPATED.

This sharply defined parting off of the material from the spiritual realm, and the assertion of the powerlessness of the lower to transcend its limits, are suggestive in many directions. They point back to that signal break in the order of creation when it reaches man, as recorded in Genesis. Though "formed," like the rest of the animal creation, "from the dust of the ground," that is, from beneath, he alone received from above the breath of God, and became thereby a "new creature." Of whom Professor Huxley says, "Whether *from* them (that is, the animal creation) or not, he is not assuredly *of* them," "being the only consciously intelligent denizen of the world.'[1] We remem-

[1] *Evidence of Man's Place in Nature*, p. 110.

ber likewise that unique element in the Incarnation which severed it from all anterior human births: by virtue of which Jesus said to the Jews, "Ye are from beneath, I am from above." It is not accidental, therefore, but by logical consequence, that a rejection of the doctrine of regeneration is usually accompanied by a denial of the Incarnation and the Deity of Christ. Not less significant is Paul's claim of authority for his words as emanating, not from a superior human, but from a superhuman source—a difference of kind, and not of degree only: for he declared himself "an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." Thus carefully are the discrete lines between the "flesh" and the "spirit," and their respective possibilities emphasized in Scripture. The barriers are thus set against the intrusion of any "Monistic" theory in the interpretation of Christianity or life, by which the boundaries of Genius and Inspiration, Natural and Supernatural, Matter and Force, Body and Spirit, and the like, may tend to be effaced; the lines of the symmetric universe melting thus into the chaotic haze of Agnosticism.

Again, great emphasis is laid in Scripture on the transitional element in birth. "Flesh" can-

not be developed, or disciplined, or reconstructed into "spirit." For birth is not to be confounded with growth: the latter is a process, protracted, continuous, uniform, incomplete: the former is a transaction, sudden, interruptive, spasmodic, complete. The "old man" must die that the "new man" may be born. But death is not annihilation, nor birth creation, of the mechanism of life. The babe dies as to the foetal, that it may enter the atmospheric, life: this necessitates no modification of structure, but only a transfer of the dynamic centre of vitality. The "new creature" in Christ is simply one the gravitative centre of whose life has been changed from the "flesh" to the "spirit."

The great truth which feeds the mills of philosophy to-day with much grain and more chaff, and from which most heterogeneous grists are being ground, lies close by. It is that the secret of the universal order is vital, not mechanical; and that a "new thing" can arrive upon the earth only through the gateway of birth.

"We are apt to speak vaguely sometimes," says Thoreau, "as if a divine life were to be grafted onto or built over this present as a suitable foundation. This might do if we could so build our own old life as to exclude from it all the warmth of our affection, and addle it, as

the thrush builds over the cuckoo's egg and lays her own atop, and hatches only that; but the fact is—so there is the partition—we hatch them both, and the cuckoo's always by a day first, and that young bird crowds the young thrushes out of the nest. No! destroy the cuckoo's egg or build a new nest."[1]

There is still another significant element in this connection, vividly illustrated, as are those already noticed, in the resurrection and equally in baptism, to which Paul refers as its analogue. It is that the new birth is not self-wrought. Christ's resurrection power did not issue from his dead body, much less from the grave—he "was raised" by power from above. The immersed believer does not resume life of himself; he too "is raised" by a lifting hand. The old schoolmen were not wholly ignorant of or indifferent to that series of phenomena which underlie the modern theory of evolution. They preferred, however, the more expressive term *eduction*, as indicating a power *leading* from before, rather than *pushing* from behind. The word "evolution" is logically colorless in itself. It becomes theistic or atheistic according as it recognizes the "hand reaching through nature moulding man," or reverts to the old Lucretian

[1] *Letters*, (Boston, 1865), p. 42

thesis that "Nature is able to produce all things of herself, without the intervention of the gods."

Thus, in the nineteenth century of research and speculation, the world finds itself sitting opposite the same central idea with which our Lord taught men to begin in the first. That primary ordinance, which Christ provided as the corner-stone of organization in his church, into which the true doctrine of the new birth was visibly cut, has been marred, defaced, and thrust aside by the builders, until the idea itself has been perverted, obscured, or lost. In its stead therefore comes the specious counterfeit: a religion whose Bible is "evolved" out of human literature; its Christ out of social progress or a mythic tendency; and its inner life out of culture, inheritance, or good nature; and a science with the legend, "That which is born of the flesh is spirit." "Ye must be born from below."

CHAPTER VIII.

BAPTISM AND LOYALTY—THE HISTORIC IDEA.

"THERE is a great future for you Baptists," once said Neander. The prophecy will in many quarters be met only with a shrug of surprised incredulity. Perhaps it may kindle a gentle smile of derision even upon the features of one whose

> "Arched brow pulled o'er his eyes
> With solemn proof proclaims him wise"[1]

—a mute and modest confession of his own consciously superior profundity as contrasted with the superficiality of the simple-minded old German. For he has penetration enough to assure himself that the Baptist function is (as has been conspicuously published not very long ago) the "prolonging a conscientious and useless controversy" over "not even an ordinance, but the external method of its administration"[2]—(what the *internal* method might be does not appear)—

[1] Churchill.

[2] H. W. Beecher, *Life of the Christ* vol. I., p. 226.

thus fighting for "an externality of an externality," and becoming the elect apostle of formalism, stupidity, and self-will. He is further confident that this eccentric "externality" constitutes, as the very name Baptist implies, his whole theological stock in trade: that it is his *shibboleth* for the gate of heaven, his sermonic "harp of a thousand strings," his compendious religion. Is he not, therefore, rather an anachronism—a belated mediæval ghost who must soon retire before the sun?

It may be deferentially suggested to such a critic, in passing, that as a criterion of character or doctrine no "externality of an externality" is more likely to be deluding than a name. Judged solely by that standard, the "Reformed" people ought once to have been dissolute, the "Methodists" ought to be characteristically prim and cold-blooded, and the "Congregationalists" and "Sabbatarians" ought to be recognized as having a peculiar purchase on the better land, because there alone "*congregations* ne'er break up and *Sabbaths* have no end."

The profundity of the logic which gauges the breadth of the issue by the size of its occasion—as if the value and dimensions of an estate were dependent on the acreage of the parchment conveying it—is also worthy of a moment's gaze.

The question of baptism, it is said, is only one of mensuration—a little more water, or a little less—and pertinacity about such a trifle reduces Christianity itself to a trifle. By the same rule, American liberty is "reduced" to the right to use unstamped paper, about which "trifle" our fathers were somewhat perverse; Mohammedanism was by the Sepoy rebellion revealed to be only an aversion for greased cartridges; and Paul's religion was summed up in an obstinate and somewhat paradoxical refusal to circumcise Titus, while consenting to circumcise Timothy.

In fact, great doors usually swing on small hinges. The pass of Thermopylae may be narrow, but it cradled and kept the life of Greece. The great battles of the world have grown out of circumstances often grotesquely diminutive and commonplace, such as the refusal to doff a cap, or the belching out of an impetuous word; but the results and the principles involved have not been therefore insignificant. These battles, moreover, however large the territory involved, have been fought, not over broad areas chiefly, but along narrow border lines. The engineer does not much dread a locomotive leap to the track ten feet away, but he is cautious of the switch points.

THE GROUND OF NEANDER'S SAYING.

But we climb again to Neander. He was not a Baptist. He was not a novice, nor an enthusiast, but a ripened and sedate student and observer. He saw things, not under the dazzling glare of the passing noon, but in the calm light of the centuries. His utterances were not those of the flippant paragrapher, but of the cautious and philosophic historian, and are entitled therefore to a respectful hearing and pondering. Neander dwelt in a time and place of peculiar political and intellectual effervescence and transition. The ancient despotism in Church and State had drifted (to borrow a striking figure from Froude) like icebergs into a warmer sea, where, steadily melting away beneath, they must soon topple headlong and be dissolved. The "signs of the times" augured the speedy mastery of that principle which his countryman Gervinus summarized[1] as "*freedom*, or the right to pay submission to nothing but law: and *equality*, the duty of all alike to obey one and the same law." In all this Neander could but recognize a divine pressure on the individual soul, causing it to break out of its cerements: he could but

[1] *Introduction to History of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 67.

hear a divine voice saying to men, "Loose him and let him go."

Equally portentous were the phenomena on the intellectual side. Enlarged area, multiplied material, improved apparatus, sharpened methods, had made the critical school exigent and audacious. Nothing was too recondite, too fixed, too ancient, too sacred, for their prying and ransacking spirit. On every side the iconoclastic hammer was ringing, the hungry white-hot furnace was bellowing, and eager pincers feeding it with institutions, customs, traditions, documents, to be tested and refined or consumed. Nor was this inexplicable. No sooner was the daughter of Jairus aroused than it was commanded that "something should be given her to eat." The awakened soul is always hungry. He who is set free to act must also be set free to inquire, that he may know how to act. One of the most stirring trumpet-calls of the Reformation was that sentence of Luther's, in a letter prefixed to his *Treatise on Christian Liberty*, wherein he repudiated restraint in interpreting the word of God, which, inculcating liberty, must be itself free. This sentence, says Roscoe,[1] exploded Leo's Bull of Excommunication against him. Doubtless it did much more. It caused that

[1] *Life of Leo X.* (Bohn, 1847), vol. II., p. 214.

spark to be dropped in the ready tinder, and the cyclopean furnace to be kindled into which the Pope himself, with his bull, his tiara, and all his belongings must go beside the word of God, to be "tried by fire." Neander believed with David that already "the words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." He could not doubt, therefore, that while human incrustations must crumble and waste away in the refining flame, the divine word itself would come forth clean and lustrous.

LUTHER'S PROPHECY HISTORICALLY REALIZED.

Out of the conjoint tendencies of his time, therefore, he saw a principle emerging and soon to be dominant, viz.: *The unfettered word for the unfettered soul.* But this, the *prophetic* idea for the coming era, he found to be the identical *historic* idea at the roots of that movement then and still contemptuously stigmatized in his own country as Anabaptist. "The origin of this sect," says Professor Butler, of the Episcopal Church,[1] "is very obscure. The name was extended to persons of very different origin and of various opinions." "Some came," he adds, "from the Waldenses and Petrobrusians,"

[1] *Ecclesiastical History* (Philadelphia, 1872), p. 232.

"some" were "the secret disciples of Wiclif, Huss, and others." "The general views in which they agreed were, that the visible church should consist only of holy persons; that nothing of human device should be admitted into its order or worship: and that infants were not proper subjects of baptism." It is deeply significant to find the names of the Waldenses, Wiclif, and Huss, coupled by an impartial hand with the origin of this movement and these ideas. For of Peter Waldo, says Mrs. Ranyard,[1] "It is certain that the Christian world is indebted to him for the *first* translation of parts of the Scriptures into a modern tongue, after the Latin ceased to be a living language. . . . The preparation of their (the Waldensian) pastors for the ministry consisted in learning by heart the Gospels of Matthew and John, all the Epistles, and most of the writings of David, Solomon, and the prophets." They were "Biblical Anti-Sacerdotalists," says Milman,[2] whose "great strength was in the vernacular Scripture," who denied "all sacraments, except Baptism and the Eucharist," and whose martyrdom was for "preaching without authority." To this "voice crying in the wilderness" more than three hundred years

[1] *The Book and its Story* (Phila., 1854), pp. 124, 126.
[2] *Latin Christianity* (London, 1857), vol. IV., p. 98.

before Luther, Bishop Newton attributes these words: "In articles of faith, the authority of the Holy Scripture is the highest: and for that reason it is the rule of judging: so that whatsoever agreeth not with the word of God is deservedly to be rejected and avoided. The reading and knowledge of the Scripture is free and necessary for all men, the laity as well as the clergy. Ceremonies manifestly hindering the teaching and learning of the word are diabolical inventions." As to Wiclif, it is scarcely necessary to be reminded that he was for the fourteenth century in England what Waldo had been for the twelfth on the Continent. "He gave the whole Bible to the people, he gave it without note or comment, and he was the first man that did so."[1] Upon him the friars vented their maledictions, because by his translation "the gospel pearl was cast abroad and trodden under foot of swine, and the gospel which Christ had given to be kept by the clergy was now made forever common to the laity."[2] John Huss again in the fifteenth century, and in Bohemia, was the champion and martyr of Wiclif's doctrines; among them, as specified and condemned by Pope Pius II. pre-eminently this:

[1] *The Book and Its Story*, p. 134.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 133.

that "every one hath free liberty to preach the word of God.' Thus was the torch of an unfettered word passed on from darkened century to century, until the morning dawn of the Reformation.

FREEDOM, CIVIL AND INTELLECTUAL, DEMANDED.

The historic connection of freedom of action with the uncovering of the word of God is no less manifest than that of freedom of inquiry. "If the foundations of freedom (that is, civil freedom) were laid in religion," says Gervinus,[1] there would be no fear concerning its progress. Machiavelli was aware of this truth when he looked for a fundamental regeneration of the times and of States only in a reform of the Church." "In Luther's time," he adds,[2] "when the first foundations of liberty were only in the act of being laid, the scheme for the whole future edifice was sketched by some few who had already determined on its immediate completion. . . . . Among the religious enthusiasts, a few, under the name of Inspirati or Anabaptists, had conceived the idea of a purification of Christianity and its forms, according to the dictates of reason; an

[1] *Introduction to History of Nineteenth Century*, p. 26.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 28.

idea which was only realized in the days of their great-grandchildren, whose expatriated missionaries found a home in America." He further instances as especially remarkable their "appeal to a divine right (the natural rights of man, as they were afterwards called); the foundation of Church and State on an idea, on a universal and natural right, which was urged in opposition to the vexatious privileges of the few, and of castes."[1] Voltaire, who had few soft words to bestow on religionists of any sort, and who knew of the Anabaptists chiefly from their executioners, who "showed them about in cages as wild beasts are shown, and caused their flesh to be torn off with red-hot pincers," declares that the "manifesto published by these savages in the name of the men who till the earth might have been signed by Lycurgus," and that "their demands as delivered in writing were extremely just."[2] It is they, he said, who "laid open that dangerous truth which is implanted in every heart, that mankind are all born equal; saying that if Popes had treated princes like their subjects, princes had treated the common people like beasts."[3]

The "manifesto" above referred to is given in full by Gieseler in his *Ecclesiastical History*,[4]

[1] *Introduction to History of Nineteenth Century*, p. 30.
[2] *Works* (London, 1701), vol. IV., p. 70. [3] *Ib.*, p. 73.
[4] (Edinburgh, 1855), vol. V., p. 347–9.

and is worth referring to, alike as an eloquent statement of their notion of liberty, and a proof of their avouching of the word of God as the sole source of that notion and guaranty of their claim. The third article reads as follows: "Hitherto it has been the custom for men to hold us as their own property, which is a pitiable case, considering that Christ has delivered and redeemed us with his precious blood shed for us, the peasant as much as the prince. Accordingly, it is consistent with Scripture that we should be free, and wish to be so. Not that we wish to be absolutely free, and under no authority; but we take it for granted that you will either willingly release us from serfage, or prove to us from the gospel that we are serfs." As a "conclusion and final resolution" of the whole twelve articles they say, "If one or more of the articles, herein set forth, is not in agreement with the word of God, we will recede therefrom, if it be made plain to us on Scriptural grounds . . . Likewise if more articles of complaint be truly discovered from Scripture, we will also reserve the right of resolving upon these." Here is unmistakably set forth the claim that in the word of God is to be found that intelligible, infallible, supreme, and exclusive revelation of fundamental law, which every man has a right for himself to read

and comprehend, and to which every man must at his peril implicitly submit. And here is doubtless that radical idea in which the penetrating eye of Neander saw, beneath a rough husk of crudity and fanaticism in the early Anabaptists, the "mustard seed" of a near future.

Crudity and fanaticism enough there clearly was, registered in that company; filling the foreground of history with violence, monstrosity, and noisy incoherencies. But we must remember that almost all vital forces are awkward in their first forms. The swiftest bird first props itself on ungainly legs, and climbs with trembling and unsteady wing to reach its arrow flight. The very criterion of beginning life in the bioplasmic mass, according to Dr. Beale, is the shapelessness of its uneasy heavings.[1] Nor is it to be forgotten that the times were themselves chaotic. The old was broken, or breaking, the new was not yet fashioned. The Reformation flood was sweeping on with impetuous majesty, and ran into a gulf as yet unmeasured. Up against the cataract rose a spray of enthusiasm, formless, Protean, tempestuous. Nevertheless, looking steadily upon the confused scene, we may discern, hanging within, distinct, symmetri-

[1] *Life, Force, and Matter* (London, 1870), p. 38.

cal, abiding, a "bow in the cloud." The very harbinger that Neander saw of the coming time, when every man should be free for himself to know and for himself to obey the one law—when the unfettered soul should be entrusted fully with the unfettered word.

THE ANABAPTISTS AND THIS DEMAND.

It remains to inquire how directly the Anabaptist movement was itself associated with this idea; whether such association was logical, or merely incidental; and if logical, whether as cause or effect. For this two or three preliminary suggestions may prepare the way.

First. It will be noticed that the question of immersion was not as yet involved. The reason is obvious. The practice of pouring and sprinkling, though prevalent in some quarters and to some extent, had a place by sufferance only, and not by positive injunction. The formulary drawn up by Calvin at Geneva was, says the learned Dr. Wall, "the first in the world that prescribes affusion absolutely."[1]

Second. The real point of controversy was not the alleged rebaptizing itself, as the taunting name transmitted to history would seem to imply; but the repudiation of infant baptism, commonly

[1] *History of Infant Baptism*, p. 718.

expressed in that overt form. It was primarily a revolt against an existing order, rather than the fashioning of a new one. Dr. Wall more accurately terms them Antipedobaptists.

Third. Properly there was no specific Anabaptist sect as such. Groups most widely separated and discordant in doctrine and spirit were miscellaneously covered by that epithet. The communistic anarchist, the rationalistic Socinian, the mystic Illuminist, and the sober Mennonite, though differing at almost every other point, agreed in their contempt for this institution, and were bound together under a common name thereby. Indeed, so wide was the sweep of the stream spanned by that comprehensive title, and so impetuous was the current, that it may fairly be said to have drawn in the great body of those who sought further to reform the Reformation. Even some of its original leaders, including Melancthon, Œcolampadius, and Zwingle, barely escaped its tremendous power, as they distinctly confess.[1]

Now, it is scarcely conceivable that mere accident should have rallied so many and so discordant groups of combatants to a single and so narrow a point of resistance. Nor does it

[1] Cf. *Neander's History of Dogmas*, vol. II., p. 688. Planck, *History of Protestant Theology* vol. II., p. 47.

seem credible that these heterogeneous multitudes should, through mere caprice or self-will, have contested even to the gallows and the block so trivial a concession as the harmless submission of their children to the priest's hands for baptism. It is manifest that they saw, or thought they saw, some more tremendous weight of consequence hanging on that pivot.

Inevitably thus the great issues of church history in doctrine and life have grouped about and hidden in this marvellous symbolic ordinance. As in the time of John, the great reformer, so now, it is the "axe laid unto the" very "root of the trees." "The Reformation had scarcely boasted an existence of five years," says Möhler (beginning his account of the "fundamental principle of the Anabaptists" in his work on *Symbolism*), "when from the midst of its adherents men arose who declared it to be insufficient." He proceeds to urge their consistency in that claim, since as a necessary result of "Luther's maxims and writings," "nothing is easier than to account for their rejection of infant baptism."

REFORMERS OF THE REFORMATION.

The pregnant idea of Luther's career was embodied in his famous ultimatum at the Diet

of Worms, refusing to retract anything but what could be shown "from reason and Scripture, and not from authority, to be erroneous."[1]

For many centuries the Bishops of Rome had claimed infallibility, and to doubt their dogmatic utterances or disobey their edicts was not only to be a heretic but a rebel. Under that usurped authority they had gagged reason, subordinated the Scripture to tradition, and substituted the mailed hand for the winning voice of the gospel. All this was embodied in infant baptism, in which reason was insulted by the dogma of baptismal regeneration and vicarious faith, Scripture perverted or ignored in behalf of tradition, and voluntary consent of the baptized made impossible.

In his revolt, therefore, against force, tradition, and unreason, Luther was bound in consistency to sweep away this final bulwark behind which they were all entrenched. But magnificent as was his onset, he halted too soon, and began to "build again the things he had destroyed." "As the founder of a new Church," says Roscoe,[2] "he appears in a very different light." "In one instance he effected his purpose by strenuously insisting on the right of private judgment in

[1] Roscoe, *Leo X.*, vol. II., pp. 105, 226.

[2] *Ib.*, vol. II., pp. 235, 236.

matters of faith, whilst in the other he succeeded by laying down new doctrines to which he expected that all those who espoused his cause should submit." When arguments from Scripture failed, he resorted to more violent measures.

When Carlstadt refused to accept his fantastic theory of consubstantiation, Luther saw in that, "as well as in the denial of infant baptism," to use Gieseler's words,[1] "the sole result of the pride of reason advancing beyond Scripture; and he resisted both doctrines as entirely analogous fanaticisms," and banished him accordingly. Insulted reason thereupon, being denied anything, seized everything, lifted the banner of revolt, and marched away under Socinus into the Unitarian apostasy.

Luther had staked all upon the supreme authority of the written word, and the universal "liberty of prophesying." But he forthwith assumed, not only the arbitrary interpretation of that word, but the right to impose an observance confessedly unwarranted by it; and he forbade the intrusion of all other interpreters except they could "work miracles" or show "priestly orders"[2] in the apostolic succession as their credentials. Naturally enough he found many as

[1] *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. V., p. 340.

[2] Möhler's *Symbolism*, p. 369.

sensitive to the claim of monkish, as he had been of Papal, infallibility; and some, vaunting excess of liberty, renounced together the mastery of Pope, monk, and Scripture alike; trusting to the divine sanction of that "inner light" which they left to the Quakers as their chief heritage, and which has cast some warm gleams along the line of Moravian and Methodist descent.

Again, Luther having summoned mankind to a revolt against all depotism, temporal or spiritual, had ended, as Gervinus says, in simply transferring "the divine right of investiture from the Pope to the secular magistrate":[1] thus making the struggle to be, "not for the liberty of conscience of the simple individual of tne middle class, but for the right of princes to make reforms in their own lands, and to effect improvements in the Church as a benefit conferred by them on the people." "Luther had been successful," says Voltaire,[2] "in stirring up the princes against the Pope and Bishops; Münzer stirred up the peasants against them all." No wonder, therefore, when they were summoned by the civil magistrate, under penalty of death, to renounce reason and abandon Scripture, in

[1] *Intro. to Hist. of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 32.
[2] *Works*, vol. IV., p. 73.

behalf of an ordinance for which they found no sanction in either, that they retorted that "infant baptism is of the Pope and the devil." Nor that one group of peasantry raised their grotesque and savage war-cry, "Forge Pin-kepank on Nimrod's anvil," and like the defrauded Samson, blind and crazed, bowed themselves between the pillars to bring down the whole civil structure—the lawful progenitors of all communistic enthusiasts thenceforth.

But these volcanic outbursts, though so conspicuous, were but sporadic hints of a compact and steady flame blazing deeper down. There were "yet seven thousand" who would not bow down the knee either to the Papal, the Lutheran, or the Libertine Baal. They saw in the unintelligent, unconsenting babe, thrust by magisterial force into the priest's hand, the very image of man himself under the terrible hand of Rome: coming thence spiritually—as was fitly symbolized physically in the inquisition torture of the "iron virgin"—with pierced eye-balls, mangled flesh, and crushed bones. But they saw also that reason and faith are harmonious and trustworthy only when yoked indissolubly to Scripture. For liberty is but perfect obedience to perfect law—and only "the law of the Lord is perfect." Resisting alike the intrusion of all forms of human

authority—civil, ecclesiastical, or social—into that realm where "Christ alone is King and Lawgiver," they insisted that baptism, which he has made the outer badge of discipleship, belongs to faith alone—that faith rests on freedom—freedom on intelligence—and that God's word, read and comprehended, alone is the "truth that makes free." Thus—though successively accounted rebels, heretics, and obstructives, as the sceptre of usurped authority has passed from State to Church, and from Church to nineteenth century "Catholicity,"—they "continue unto this day witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than" our Lord himself taught them when he said, "If a man love me, he will keep my *words*."

CHAPTER IX.

BAPTISM AND LOYALTY—DEBASING THE STANDARDS.

IN a volume of *Theological Essays*, published a few years since, Mr. R. H. Hutton offers these suggestive comments upon the history and policy of the Romish Church. "Rome alone has presented her theology to the world in a thoroughly institutional form. . . . . Romanism was a vast organization almost before it was a distinct faith. Rome did not so much incarnate her dogmas in her ritual as distill her dogmas out of her ritual."[1] Again, "Rome in general acted first and thought afterwards. She distilled her Christian theory out of her Christian institutions. And what is the rule by which she has tested her institutions, and therefore, in the last result, her dogmas? It is by their adaptation to the mind of the universal church. Neither ancient nor modern Rome has had any strong love for truth *as truth*. . . . The definition of divine truth coming nearest to the conception

[1] (Philadelphia, 1876), p. 336.

which seems to be formed of it by the Romish Church would be "that body of theoretic assumptions which would be needed completely to justify, on intellectual grounds, all those institutions, special and general, by which practically she has been enabled to win hearts and guide nations."[1] That is to say, she recognized the necessity of positive institutions as the embodiment of authority and basis of a visible organism, and that such institutions will inevitably "distill" doctrine and mould faith. She thus saw that she must build upon a rock, and that the outline of the rock would shape the outline of the building. But instead of taking "Christ" for "that rock," or even Peter, as she claimed to do, laying her walls along the line of the divine ordinances as devised by the one, and set in place by the other, she took *herself* for a foundation; and reshaping the ordinances to the measure of human credulity, passion, and self-interest, built thereon a temple of superstition and self-will, wherein Christ may speak only in an unknown tongue or the dumb show of the mass, and appear only dead on the crucifix, or superfluous in the niche, or in the picture on the wall.

Recognizing even to an extreme the value of

[1] *Theological Essays*, pp. 345, 346.

"catholicity" as a test of truth, Mr. Hutton insists that "in order that the social power and influence of an institution may be any sign of its divine origin, the common cry must go up spontaneously, and without ulterior aim, out of the popular heart": not so "if it be only the result of combination, instead of its cause. If you can explain it in the vulgar method by merely pointing to a common and visible self-interest, or even to a clearly recognized class of common aims and purposes, then there is no sacred mystery in this uplifting of a common voice. . . . 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians' was no *vox populi*, but merely a *vox argentariorum*—a voice of silversmiths. It was an official cry, the clamor of consentient self-interests, issuing from the artificial mouth-pieces of *esprit de corps*."[1] Tried by this canon the "catholicity" of Romanism breaks up into a partisanship, none the less real, because of the length of its antiquity and the strength of its majority.

And what other alleged "catholicity" will fare better, when offered as a criterion of truth? For where is the man that does not belong to some "craft" that is, or at times seems to be, "in danger," and to whom is not some *vox argentariorum* a vernacular? The acme of

[1] *Theological Essays*, p. 347.

achievement in vital mechanics is balanced perpendicularity in man, and even he cannot get forward without leaning. So long as "winds of doctrine" blow, we shall be likely to bend before them or against them. Even without their disturbing pressure, a sudden mental apocalypse might surprise many of us by showing that we are reeling heavily under the fumes of prejudice, or lolling against the pillars of custom. The determining of truth by the averaging of opinions, therefore, would be a process as unreliable as the sifting out a vertical line by computing the net direction of a wilderness of slanting ones. And even more fatuous would it be to submit a standard once found to revision by such a process. Woe to the man who attempts to improve the perpendicularity of the plumb-line by taking counsel of "the blowing clover and the falling rain." Such a plumb-line is the revealed word of the Divine Christ, and such an improvement upon its perfectness Rome has essayed by the consent of tradition, the vote of Councils, and the decree of Popes. Infallibility having been successively assumed for these, fallibility by obvious inference fell upon all else; and the practice of Rome became the mould by which worship, duty, and doctrine must be shaped, and into conformity with which the

meaning and even the words of Scripture must be refashioned.

A REMNANT OF ROME.

Can the Romish spirit have been so subtle and so tenacious as imperceptibly to have penetrated in any degree into and lingered in the atmosphere of Protestantism? The spectroscopists have amazed us by finding the three-millionth of a milligramme of sodium in a dust speck, where the most delicate chemical tests had failed to reveal its presence.[1] Perhaps we may err in fancying we have a spiritual spectroscope so fine, or at least that we know equally well how to use it. But wherever we find an ecclesiastical practice or dogma virtually erected into a standard, to the pattern of which formularies are progressively readjusted, (such readjustment gravitating toward the gradual extrusion of associated Scriptural language or idea as incongruous), and to the exigencies of which the canons of interpretation and translation must be made to bend, we may fairly suspect a residual element from Rome. That the practice of sprinkling, in lieu of immersion, under the name of baptism, applied to infants as the rule and to adults only exception-

[1] Schellen's *Spectrum Analysis* (New York, 1872), p. 5.

ally, has been made such a standard, and with such results, it is sought here to show.

The testimony of the late Dean Stanley, in his before-mentioned *Nineteenth Century* article on Baptism (afterward substantially embodied in his book on *Christian Institutions*), is worthy of citation in this connection. *The primitive baptism he distinctly affirms was immersion.* "On philological grounds it is quite correct to translate John the Baptist by John the Immerser."[1] "Baptism by sprinkling was rejected by the whole ancient Church (except in the rare case of deathbeds or extreme necessity) as no baptism at all."[2] *It was of adults.* "The liturgical service of baptism was framed entirely for full-grown converts, and is only by considerable adaptation applied to the case of infants."[3] *It was intelligent and voluntary,* for it was "of their own deliberate choice"—it was "*the* special sacrament," "the pledge," the "oath of allegiance."[4] Of this primitive normal type he sets out to find what he significantly calls the "residue." Instead of a baptism which is the immersion of an adult believer, he finds a baptism which is *not* immersion, *not* of an adult, and *not* of a believer. Suppose that on an apothecary's shelf is a jar

[1] *Nineteenth Century Magazine,* vol. VI., p. 698.
[2] *Ib.* [3] *Ib.*, p. 699. [4] *Ib.*, p. 692.

labeled "pure water." Now pure water is "colorless, transparent, and without taste or smell." But in the jar he finds only a viscid drop which is not colorless, not transparent, and not without taste or smell. He will surely conclude that the only "residue" is the label, which to avoid confusion might better be removed. At least he will take it as an odd suggestion that the muddy globule be made the standard of "pure water," and Webster's definition re-adjusted thereto. But Dean Stanley says the primitive ordinance was one "to which no existing ritual of any European Church offers any likeness"—"the change from immersion to sprinkling has set aside the larger part of the apostolic language, and has altered the very meaning of the word."[1] By way of testing the trustworthiness of these conclusions, it may be profitable to study some of the reflex influences of the present practice on—

FIRST—THE REVISION OF FORMULARIES.

The successive changes made by the English Church, and by the American Methodist Church advancing thereon, will afford a convenient field of inquiry. For impartial authority Wall's well-known *History of Infant Baptism* and

[1] *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, vol. VI., p. 698.

Sherman's *History of the Methodist Discipline*, will be relied upon.[1]

Up to 1530, according to Wall, the formularies for public baptism universally enjoined dipping, without mentioning pouring or sprinkling. The *Sarum Manual* of that year prescribed dipping alone. In the *Common Prayer Book* printed in 1549, it is added, "if the child be weak, it shall suffice to pour water upon it," etc.[2] Subsequently, he says, "the inclination of the people, backed with these authorities (that of Dr. Whitaker, Calvin, and others), carried the practice against the rubric, which still required dipping, except in cases of weakness."[3] In revising the *Prayer Book* at the Restoration (the *Puritan Directory* which had displaced it in 1644 having declared it "not only lawful, but most expedient" to use pouring or sprinkling), the Church "did not think fit to forego their maxim in favor of dipping": but being equally unwilling to ignore the drift of custom and popular taste, they so modified the rubric as to concede in fact what they refused in word. For by requiring the child to be dipped only when the godfather shall certify that it "may well endure it," they removed the presumption of

[1] Wall, before cited. (See p. 34.) Sherman (N. Y., '74).
[2] Wall, pp. 715, 716. [3] *Ib.*, p. 718.

robustness by which alone dipping had been preserved as the rule. Thenceforth, as Wall regretfully remarks, "they never do certify the priests," and "the priests seldom ask the question," and dipping has wholly wasted away in the English Church.[1]

The American Methodist Episcopal Church, formally organized in 1784, in its original *Discipline* provides for "the choice either of immersion or sprinkling" (to which is added in 1786 "or pouring.")[2] Persons baptized in infancy and having now scruples are, if they persist after argument, to be baptized "by immersion or sprinkling," as they desire.[3] This "Anabaptist" heresy lingered in the *Discipline* until 1868. The ritual order of baptism, abridged from that of the English Church, originally required the minister, taking the child into his hands, "to dip it in water or sprinkle it therewith"—in the midst of which was inserted in 1786 "or pour water upon it" —and finally in 1792 the whole clause was erased, and in its stead inserted "sprinkle or pour water upon it, or if desired, immerse it in water."[4] In the original formulary are retained, from the English, allusions to the case

[1] Wall, pp. 750, 721. [2] Sherman, p. 120. [3] *Ib.*
[4] *Ib.*, p. 306.

of Noah and of Israel led through the sea, as "figuring this holy baptism"—to the baptism of Jesus "in the river Jordan"—to the burial of the "old Adam" and the raising up of the "new man in him"—to "spiritual regeneration" and the "resurrection from the dead"—all which have successively, but with singular uniformity, been singled out for expurgation.[1] Substantially, therefore, the ritual, by purging itself of all *malapropos* Scripture, has so far refashioned itself to the "broken mould," that regeneration and resurrection are effectively excluded from its symbolism; a result which, as before mentioned, has been reached by the British Wesleyans in a still more categorical form. And this notwithstanding John Wesley's comment on Rom. 6 : 4, viz.: "Buried with him—alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion," and the entry in his *Journal* of "Feb. 21, 1736, Mary Welch, aged eleven days, was baptized according to the custom of the first church, and the rule of the Church of England, by immersion."[2]

It may be added, that while Calvin was unequivocal in admitting that "the word baptize means immerse,"[3] and the *Westminster Confession*

[1] Sherman, p. 300, *seq.*
[2] *Journal* (London, 1872), vol. I., p. 25.
[3] *Commentary on Acts*, 8 : 38.

declared only that "dipping" was "not necessary," the Presbyterian Church of to-day in its "*Directory for Worship*" has gone on actually to forbid immersion, for it enjoins "pouring or sprinkling," "without adding any other ceremony."[1] The unique attitude thus assumed by Presbyterianism in practice and ritual may suggest one element at least for the explanation of another phenomenon equally unique. Any student of the later Commentaries will be struck with the fact, that while nearly all scholars of the English and Continental Churches have recognized frankly and without reserve the conclusiveness of the verdict of philology, exegesis, and history, in favor of immersion as the primitive baptism, there has been a conspicuous sensitiveness and reluctance in that direction on the part of the Scotch writers, followed and intensified along the same lines on this side of the sea. Among the Episcopalians and Lutherans, where the union of Church and State and the continuance of prelatic functions make extreme notions of ecclesiastical authority still tolerable; or where, on the other side, rationalism has supplanted the supremacy of Scripture, there is no sense of discomfort in confessing the distinct-

[1] *Appendix to Psalms and Hymns*, Presbyterian Board, Philadelphia, p. 42.

ness of the command, avoiding its present claims by pleading release through subsequent authority. But in non-prelatic Churches, and where latitudinarianism is not yet dominant, this resource fails. It will be in vain there to forbid what the Scripture is acknowledged to prescribe. To have reconstructed the ritual so as to coincide with the practice will be in vain, except the Scripture can also be reconstructed so as to harmonize with both. Hence the emergency that issues in—

SECOND—THE WARPING OF INTERPRETATION.

"The Scriptures," says Bungener, "were written by common men to be understood by common men."[1] "The more any interpretation bears the mark of simplicity, and it appears as if it ought to have struck the reader before, the more likely is it to be true," says Ernesti. "It is better to run all lengths with Scripture truth in a natural and open manner," Bengel[2] adds, "than to shift and twist and accommodate." "The sense of Scripture is one, certain and simple," breaks in Melancthon,[3] and is everywhere to be ascertained in accordance with the principles of grammar

[1] *History of Council of Trent* (N. Y., 1855), p. 96.
[2] *Life by Burck*, p. 257.
[3] *Elements of Rhetoric*, II.

and human discourse." And finally Luther: "We must not make God's word mean what we wish; we must not bend *it*, but allow it to bend *us;* and give it the honor of being better than we could make it; so that we must let it stand." But the fatal facility of exegesis when under stress is proverbial, and has been often justly satirized. Mohammed, it was said, prohibited the eating of a certain part of the swine. But the Mussulman, having first assumed uncertainty as to the part forbidden, argued against the probability of the intended application of the prohibition to each part successively, until he had gone over the whole. The result Cowper sums up:

> Thus, conscience freed from every clog,
> Mohammedans eat up the hog.[1]

Dean Swift's famous study of the dexterously interpreted will scarifies the same foible. The retention of the demise was made dependent among other things on the heir's refraining from the wearing of "silver fringe." But that style of decoration having come in fashion, it was opportunely found that the term "silver" was "allegorical," and that "fringe" (being perhaps a "generic" word) might mean "broomstick."

[1] Jacox, *Secular Annot.* (London, 1871), vol. II. p. 49.

The objection that a prohibition to wear an "allegorical broomstick" was unmeaning, was overruled as "irreverent and hypercritical."[1] This sarcasm is not lower than the strange abuses of Scripture which provoked it. Of such a character was the sermon justifying the persecution of heretics, from the words "Rise, Peter, slay and eat." The defence of seven as the number of the sacraments on the ground that *mysterion* is the Greek word for sacrament, and that seven is the mystic number; and the proof that the mass is a true oblation because Paul speaks of the "table of the Lord," while "table" means "altar," and an "altar" implies "sacrifice," are of like character.[2] Dumoulin justly says, that to depend on such proof-texts is "like warming oneself at the moon." Even the great Augustine, to save unbroken the doctrine that baptism is essential to salvation, maintains that the dying thief was baptized with blood from the Saviour's wounded side, or else had been baptized before his conviction.

SOME ILLUSTRATIVE INSTANCES.

Matthew (3: 6) describes the people as baptized "in Jordan." Dr. Whedon[3] (*in loco*) says:

[1] *Tale of a Tub*, Works, (Edin., 1814) vol. II., p. 88.
[2] Bungener, *Council of Trent*, pp, 152, 337, 338.
[3] *Commentary on Matthew* (New York, 1870), p. 47.

"The Jordan had several banks within banks, so that a person could be in the Jordan on dry ground." This curious geographical information, fortified by a citation from Dr. Thomson, is conveyed for the purpose of adding a *caveat* against what, it seems to be implied, would be a a natural inference from the language itself. "This expression, 'in Jordan,' only indicates, therefore, *where* the rite was performed: it in *no way indicates the mode.*" This adroit effort at the evisceration of the Evangelist's meaning—suggested long before, by the way, by Ewing, an antagonist of Dr. Carson—[1] has been since treated somewhat harshly by the Revisers, who make the text now read "in the *river* Jordan," as the parallel passage in Mark already did. But waiving that, consider how fantastic a theory is here put forth in the name of interpretation, to divest the words of their natural meaning, obvious, but inconvenient for the interpreter. By the same process, having moved 1800 years forward, try the statement that a man was "drowned in the Mississippi." "Mississippi" may readily mean Mississippi Valley, especially as that is often called the Mississippi "bottom" —the word "drowned" means "strangled," and "strangled" is a "generic" word including

[1] See *Baptism* (Philadelphia, 1860), p. 125.

"hanged;" and since no man would go into the water to be hanged, the legitimate rendering of the passage would be that he was "hanged in the Mississippi Valley." One of the pioneers and among the ablest exponents of this school of exegesis was Dr. Paulus, who sought to prove by the same process, also with an ulterior though different motive, that when our Lord is said to have walked on the Sea of Galilee, he only walked in fact along its shores.[1]

One of the expressions cited most widely and confidently by theologians and liturgies as describing baptism, and with special emphasis by some as justifying infant baptism, and excluding immersion, is that used by Paul in Titus 3: 5, "the washing of regeneration." But those who thus apply it must maintain: 1. *Immersion.* For the Greek word (*loutron*) takes in the whole body, not a part.[2] 2. *Baptismal regeneration.* Since this is, in such a case, the literal force of the terms used. On the other hand, that this was not the natural interpretation of the words, but reflected upon them by a perverted ordinance, and a false doctrine craving justification, is manifest: 1. From the grammatic parallelism—

[1] Christlieb, *Modern Doubt*, p. 346

[2] "*Louo*," to bathe, to wash, but only a person or the *whole body*."—Robinson, *Gr. Lex. of New Testament.*

"washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"—as the Holy Ghost renews, so regeneration washes. One-half cannot be inverted without inverting both, which would shatter the sense. 2. From the force of the figure. Regeneration may wash, for life cleanses; death only is pollution. "Being born again by the word of God," says Peter,—"that he might cleanse it (the church) with the washing of water by the word," says Paul—"Now are ye clean through the word," says our Lord. On the other hand, washing can never bring life. No washing can change the "leopard's spots" and the "sow's" filth into the purity of a "new creature."[1]

Another passage strangely distorted and even reversed in emphasis by enforced subjection to a theory, is Paul's joint reference to baptism and circumcision in Col. 2: 11, 12. Here, true to the instinct above mentioned, the Scotch Presbyterian, Dr. Eadie, says, "We are not prepared to admit of any allusion to that form (immersion) in the clause before us." "The apostle looks on baptism and circumcision as being closely connected, the spiritual blessing symbolized by both being of a similar nature."[2] Baptism having been assumed to be a drop applied at a single

[1] Cf. Jacox, *Secular Annotations*, vol. II., p. 48.
[2] *Commentary on Colossians* (London, 1856), p. 153.

point of the body, and to be the exact counterpart of circumcision, how natural and how comfortable is it to read the apostle as here confirming both ideas. But this is wholly to dislocate his meaning. The comparison is one of contrast, not of resemblance. It is, says Lightfoot,[1] the "contrast of literal circumcision of *part* of the flesh, with putting off the *whole* in baptism." The word used to describe the contrasted wholeness of baptism is a double compound to that end: "a word," he adds, "as strong as it is rare to express the idea of completeness, both in energy of action and extent of operation."[2] "The eye, the ear, the hands, the feet, all have been baptized with the divine baptism," says Perowne.[3] Hence follows the exhortation in ch. 3: 5, to realize what has been symbolized, "Deaden therefore your members," etc. The same emphasis on symbolized entireness occurs in Gal. 3: 27; for as Baur remarks on that passage,[4] "he who puts on a garment goes altogether inside it," and so there is an "end of the exterior identity of the believer." This, he

[1] *Commentary on Colossians* (London, 1880), p. 184.

[2] *Ib.*, pp. 184, 189.

[3] *Hulsean Lectures*, 1868, on *Immortality* (New York, 1870), p. 119.

[4] F. C. Baur, *Life of Paul* (London, 1875), vol. II., p. 177.

says, "graphically represents" burial into Christ's death in "immersion."

Finally, the "baptism of fire," referred to by John in Matt. 3: 11, has been most grotesquely put under the bellows to forge a shaft against immersion. "This text," Dr. Whedon says,[1] "is the fundamental passage for showing from the very nature of the rite what is the true method of performing baptism. . . . . The baptism of the Holy Spirit was not by immersion, but affusion. . . . the tongues of fire sat on them." He adds the grim Bœotian hint, for those "whom it may concern," that "baptismal fire is affusion; the fire of Hell is immersion." Dr. James Strong, of the same Church, on the other hand, insists that the "baptismal fire" here alluded to *is* the "fire of Hell," being an "overwhelming" with "consuming vengeance."[2]

That the Pentecostal allusion is imposed upon and not suggested by the expression in question is manifest. The contextual use of "fire" not only does not hint but really forbids it, as has been often pointed out. Nor is there anything in the Pentecostal scene to suggest the idea of pouring or sprinkling, more than of immersion, in the "appearing" of "tongues parting asunder" that

[1] *Commentary on Matthew.*
[2] *Harmony of the Gospels* (New York, 1854), p. 30.

"sat on each of them." In fact, the attempt to determine the "true mode of performing baptism" from the single features of that occasion will land the inventors of that scheme at an undesired port. To identify the baptism of the Spirit with the "rushing of a mighty wind," the "being filled with the Holy Spirit," and the "speaking" with "tongues," would teach re-baptism, which all Christendom repudiates: for these were repeated upon the same subjects.[1] One solitary circumstance remains that never recurred to them: "it filled all the house where they were sitting." They were, in the words of Professor Plumptre, of King's College, "plunged as it were in the creative and informing Spirit which was the source of life and holiness and wisdom."[2]

The confusion introduced into this whole subject by a back-handed exegesis might be greatly relieved by remembering that the "baptism of the Spirit" and the "gifts of the Spirit" are distinct. The priest was anointed after he was washed: the Spirit came on our Lord after baptism, and Andrew thereupon spoke of him as "the Christ": and the *charisms*, whether of tongues or other, are nowhere confused with baptism in the New Testament.

[1] *Acts* 4: 31.

[2] "*Handy Commentary*" (London, 1879), edited by Bp. Ellicott, on Matt. 3: 11; cf. Acts 1: 5.

These examples may suffice to show how imperious, how insidious, and how pernicious is the power of a mutilated ordinance. There was once a "shekel of the sanctuary," the standard and test of all others. How certainly would the holder of a coin clipped or wasted, but which he claimed to be the true shekel, desire to bring the sanctuary standard to conformity with his own. Speaking of the good and learned men who persist that *en hudati* must be rendered *with water*, Dr. Campbell,[1] of Aberdeen, an extraordinary Presbyterian, says, "The true partisan always inclines to *correct the diction of the Spirit by that of the party.*" "I am sorry to observe," he adds (p. 23) "that the Popish translators from the Vulgate have shown greater reverence for the style of that version than the generality of Protestant translators have shown for that of the Original. For in this the Latin is not more explicit than the Greek."

[1] *Four Gospels*, on Matthew 3 : 11.

CHAPTER X.

BAPTISM AND LOYALTY—THE ULTIMATE ISSUE.

FARRAR begins his *History of Free Thought* by describing it as "the struggle of the human mind to free itself from the *authority* of the Christian faith."[1] As if responding to confirm this view Strauss writes in his *New Life of Jesus:* "In the person of Jesus no supernaturalism shall be allowed to remain: nothing which shall press upon the souls of men with the *leaden weight of arbitrary, inscrutable authority.*"[2] The chief priests and elders had challenged our Lord himself long before with the words "By what *authority* doest thou these things?"[3]

It becomes us earnestly to ask—What is this "authority" which seems to provoke to instinctive and perhaps unconscious revolt?—lest we ourselves may have come in contact with it, and "haply be found even to fight against God." If there be any embodiment of it, we may fairly

[1] *Bampton Lectures*, 1862 (New York, 1863), p. 1.
[2] Cited in Farrar's *Witness of History to Christ* (London, 1871), p. 51.
[3] *Matt.* 21 : 23.

regard as such that last consummate expression of his kingly will, which the risen Redeemer gave to his disciples as the organic statute of his kingdom. As rendered in the Revised Version the passage reads thus: "All *authority* is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." The first and last of these injunctions, viz.: to "make disciples," and to "teach them to observe" all "things commanded," have been universally regarded as of literal obligation. But the mid-lying clause, although it embodies one of those very "things commanded," and the only one thus exalted into isolated eminence, is not only treated as belonging to an inferior category, but the proposition to "observe" it as of positive significance like the rest, is in many quarters treated with an impatience verging toward indignation or contempt.

It is totally immaterial, we hear continually, whether "baptize" means "immerse" or not, since precise conformity is in any case unnecessary. And this because,

1. Christianity, being a spiritual, not a formal religion, looks to the intent, and lays no emphasis

on the outward act. Insistence on immersion, says Dr. Schaff in his *Church History*, is a "pedantic Jewish literalism."[1]

2. The verdict of Christendom has settled the question. "The overwhelming majority of Protestant Christians, to say nothing of Roman Catholics, are unbaptized," if immersion only is baptism. Such is the broadside poured into the Baptist stronghold by Dr. Rice.[2]

3. Our more refined civilization revolts at so coarse a form. It is, to cite Dean Stanley, "peculiarly unsuitable to the tastes, the convenience and the feelings of the countries of the North and West." The substitution of sprinkling he regards as "a striking example of the triumph of common sense and convenience over the bondage of form and custom."[3]

In the Gospel of Matthew (chapters 21 and 22) are recorded in immediate succession three of of our Lord's parables, apparently uttered on a single occasion, which precisely anticipate these modern suggestions, one by one. They are full of profound significance in this connection, of which only a hint can here be given. They are:

[1] (New York, 1860), vol. I., p. 123.

[2] *Mode of Baptism*, p. 36.

[3] *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, vol. VI., p. 698.

FIRST, THE PARABLE OF THE DISOBEDIENT SON.

A father commanded his two sons to work in the vineyard. The first said "I will not," but afterwards went. The second said "I will," but never went. The bystanders, being appealed to, decided instantly that the first alone "did the will of his father." Now the "doing the Father's will" is the one thing on which our Lord lays most stress as essential in the Christian life.[1] He here plainly teaches that when that will is embodied in an explicit command, there is no obedience, whatever the intent, short of doing the specific thing commanded, in a "pedantically literal" way. Had the father given the son a parable to be puzzled over, a doctrine to be meditated on, or even a statement of fact to be received, these addressing themselves to the intellect might have demanded delay, and involved embarrassment in apprehension and mental adjustment. But a command is addressed to the will alone: and no response is possible but surrender or refusal, and these take form in outward act or omission to act. All law is specifically a rule of conduct. Only where, as in the old common law, that rule must be traced through a tangle of bewildering

[1] *Matt.* 7 : 21 ; 12 : 50 ; *Mark* 3 : 35 ; *John* 4 : 34 ; 5 : 30.

precedents and general maxims, can imperfect conformity be in any degree atoned for by good intent. The explicit statute cuts off such a plea. Failure to keep that has no excuse, except it can show the statute itself ambiguous or impracticable. There is no trouble in distinguishing the common law realm of the parabolic, doctrinal, and ethical in Scripture—which are given to stimulate research, reflection, and inference—from the explicit statutes of the Lord, which need only to be obeyed. Concerning these he says, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

That so palpable a principle as is here emphasized should ever be overlooked is due in part, perhaps, to a latent and dangerous ambiguity of thought lying in the word "authority" itself. Thiers and the first Napoleon were both "authors": the one of the *History of the Empire,* the other of the Empire itself. The "authority" of the one was doctrinal—in the realm of opinion only; of the other magisterial —in the realm of law.[1]

It is quite possible to pass insidiously from the one sphere to the other, and under the garb of an interpreter to assume the functions of a

[1] Cf. Gladstone's *Gleanings,* (Scribner, New York), vol. III., p. 139.

lawgiver. John Calvin, in his *Institutes*, spoke with the authority of a logician; in his comments on the Romans with that of an exegete; in his translation of *baptizo*[1] with that of a linguist, appealing to reason and the Scripture itself for his vindication; but when, having admitted the command to immerse to be distinct and unqualified, he proceeded to offer dispensation from literal obedience by decreeing that "dipping is not necessary,"[2] he assumed the functions of a Pope, and spoke with no authority at all, for he appealed to nothing. Dr. Hodge, of Princeton, decided that baptism with sand, mud, wine, oil, or milk, though in the name of the Trinity, and with perfect intent, is invalid: because "water is essential to baptism, and as far as 'the matter' is concerned nothing else is."[3] It is as though where the law required an official signature for the authentication of a particular document, a judge should hold that a blotch from an overturned inkpot would be sufficient; since "ink is essential to a signature, and as far as 'the matter' is concerned nothing else is." Our Lord commanded a specific act to be performed—whatever

[1] *Commentary on Acts* (Edinburgh, 1846), (on ch. 8: 38), vol. I., p. 364.

[2] *Ib.*, cf. *Institutes*, Book IV., cap. 15, p. 19.

[3] *On Church Polity* (New York, 1878), p. 198.

is conditional to that act is of course implied; but to teach that the thing implied is essential, and the thing commanded non-essential, is not to interpret, but to legislate.

It is curious, indeed, that those who are so averse to literalness in form should be so painfully precise as to literalness in element. Is water in itself more "spiritual" than milk or wine? And is it really venial, in a religion which "regards only the intent," to change the form through caprice, but mortal to change the elements through necessity, as in the case of the desert-bound disciple, whose sand baptism was pronounced invalid? In this specific case it was Rome who first taught us to appeal from Christ to the Pope to learn what is really essential in the divine word.[1]

"Go work," said the father. The words are verbs, and describe acts. They are not figurative or paradoxical. The son who refused literal obedience disobeyed. "Go baptize," said our Lord. The word "baptize," says the learned preacher, means "immerse"—"I baptize thee," he repeats, moistening the forehead with a drop. "They say, and do not," said our Lord of the Pharisees.

[1] *On Church Polity* (New York, 1878), p. 198.

SECOND, THE PARABLE OF THE REBELLIOUS TENANTS.

Never was there a more "catholic consent" than that of the husbandmen who had hired the vineyard. The verdict that they need not pay for it, but on the contrary might usurp the inheritance itself, was unanimous, and vigorously acted on against all claimant messengers. But it is plainly hinted that there are some questions not determinable by a majority vote. Obligation arises out of a state of facts, and cannot be extinguished by any process short of payment, or abolition of these facts. It may be very true that if the debtor "owes ten thousand talents and has not to pay," he may "be sold, etc., that payment may be made":[1] but that unhappy consequence would be quite irrelevant as disproving the existence of the debt. It is painful enough to think of the "overwhelming majority of Protestant Christians" as "unbaptized," and so it is to think of the overwhelming majority of the people in Christian lands as not Christians at all: either statement would bring offence, but neither pain nor indignation settles a question of fact. The toothache does not extinguish itself by agonizing us. The obligation to be baptized arises, not

[1] *Matthew* 18 : 25.

out of the consent of Christendom, but out of the command of Christ. Whether any man has obeyed the command is to be determined, not by asking what conclusion would be most comfortable for him or most flattering to the majority, but rather what was the exact thing required, and has that thing been done. The debt due to the landlord was neither disproved nor paid by resentment against the messengers.

THIRD, THE PARABLE OF THE CONTEMPTUOUS SUBJECTS.

The citizens who had tacitly accepted the invitation to the king's feast did not generally find it "convenient" to come when summoned. One went, but in a garment of his own devising, seeing the "wedding garment" was unsuited to his "tastes." There is a significant inverse gradation in these parables. On the one side they ascend—the father, the landlord, the king: on the other they descend—an arbitrary command, an equitable claim, a courteous invitation. But while no specific punishment is attributed to the sluggish son, the presumptuous guest meets the bitterest fate of all. The lesson is obvious. Evil as is the neglect of the father's authority, still worse is an insult to the king's majesty. And that insult they offer who "make light of"

his message, or prefer their own patterns as more decorous than his.

Notwithstanding Dean Stanley's statement,[1] it is very difficult to believe that the change from immersion to sprinkling was due at all to change in climate, custom, or taste. Palestine itself was not strictly tropical. Our Lord speaks of a "cloak" as well as a "coat."[2] Ritter says, "the cold north winds of winter make furs very comfortable in Jerusalem."[3] "The waters of the Jordan are then (in winter and early spring) so cold, as they flow from the snows of Lebanon, that even Arabs will not bathe." So writes Geikie,[4] citing Sepp and others. Frozen Russia has clung to immersion. Subtropical Italy has abandoned it. The change since the days of Queen Elizabeth, who was immersed,[5] has not coincided with a roughening English climate, or a gradual abandonment of "bathing" (if that has any bearing). They plainly delude themselves, therefore, who imagine that so flimsy a pretext could ever have been the original and

[1] *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, vol. VI., p. 698.

[2] *Matthew*, 5 : 40.

[3] *Geography of Palestine*, (New York, 1866), vol. IV., p. 182.

[4] *Life of Christ*, (New York, Appleton, 1880), vol. I., p. 577.

[5] Wall, *History of Inf. Bap.*, pp. 712, 717.

avowed basis of so serious a departure, however it may be urged in defence of an established custom. The case of Italy, as contrasted with that of Russia, shows that the alleged "triumph of common sense and convenience" is in fact the triumph of Papal assumption. The devout Presbyterian does not in fact refer to his arbitrary "taste" as the ultimate criterion, in deciding what is valid baptism, but to the Church formulary—and that rests on the "authority" of John Calvin.

It is nevertheless a serious matter to "make light of" any feature of our Lord's regulations, even by a frivolous or disparaging word. The beggars were welcome at the king's feast, for they were not too "refined" to wear the garments which the king himself had chosen: but the man who sought to air his "Christian liberty" in a garment of newer and superior cut, got himself and the rebuke that met him pinned fast on the enduring page, for the leisurely study of all subsequent adventurers who incline to exalt æsthetics above revelation.

Immediately succeeding these parables in Matthew's narrative is an incident which crowns their teaching; reminding us that events were as fluent as parables to the Divine Teacher's will.[1]

[1] *Matthew* 22 : 15—22.

The "entangling" question—the coin from Cæsar's "mould"—the pungent answer, "Render therefore to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's"—all these are familiar. They teach us to recognize discriminate spheres, and to render "tribute to whom tribute is due" in each. Tacitus speaks of soldiers who preferred "to discuss, rather than to obey, their leader's commands," thus virtually assuming leadership themselves. Cæsar's coin bore the impress of his majesty in his "image and superscription:" to alter that, to clip the coin itself, or to withhold it when claimed as tribute, would be treason against the empire. But if unquestioning loyalty in the slenderest trifle was due to a human ruler, how much more to the Divine. Cæsar might utter laws superfluous, ephemeral, or otherwise needing to be repaired or to be adjusted: this is only to say that he was human.[1] Not so of him who "knows the end from the beginning," and whose command is to last unchanged and unrepealed to the end of the world. To attempt remodeling that to meet changes impliedly unforeseen or neglected, is to revise the judgment of Omniscience and "charge God with folly."

[1] Cf. G. C. Lewis, on *Methods of Observation, etc., in Politics* (London, 1852), vol. I., pp. 470, 472.

BAPTISM THE TEST OF LOYALTY.

And now, lest this discussion should seem to be a mere grouping of accidental coincidences and their perversion to an alien end, it may be well to call attention to the circumstance that occasioned the parables cited, and furnished their theme. The transition will be easy, from the contrasted claims of God and Cæsar, just mentioned, to the contrasted authority of baptism, regarded respectively as "from heaven or of men." (Ch. 21 : 25.)

The chief priests and elders had questioned our Lord's authority. He flashed their lantern-light back into their own faces, and down into their hearts, with a question which, though seemingly remote, was all too close for them.[1] He picketed them in fact between the two horns of a dilemma, from one of which they must dangle, unless they could slip out between. "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or of men?" They had superciliously treated it as human, "being not baptized of him":[2] but they had not dared to deny that it was divine, "for they feared the people." They vaulted therefore through a ready loophole, saying, "We

[1] See Dr. Parker's admirable chapter on *Christ as an Interlocutor*, *Ecce Deus*, (Boston, 1868), p. 207, *seq.*

[2] *Luke* 7 : 30.

cannot tell": and were pursued by the athletic parables in question.

It is noticeable that our Lord here makes baptism the test, as it is in itself the expression, of wholeness of loyalty. "His (John's) idea of repentance exceeded the outward requirements of the Mosaic law," writes Dr. Lange, "as much as his rite of immersion that of sprinkling."[1] It was "to fulfil all righteousness," "laying down his life of himself"[2] symbolically, as he afterwards did literally, that Christ was baptized in Jordan. "Ye became obedient *from the heart* to that form (or pattern) of teaching whereunto ye were delivered":[3] so Paul sums up the wholeness and absoluteness of the life-surrender embodied in the sacramental type.

The Pharisee's answer may imply contempt for the question as trivial, or real uncertainty. If the latter, it was, as shown by our Lord's further words, only a convenient and inexcusable uncertainity. "None deny there is a God, but those for whom it maketh that there were no God," Lord Bacon pithily remarks.[4] Having repudiated John's baptism, it was needful somehow to discredit it. The plea of impracticability

[1] Lange, *Matthew* (Ed. Schaff, 1869,) p. 69.
[2] *Matthew* 3 : 15; *John* 10 : 18.
[3] *Romans* 6 : 17. (*Canterbury Revision*).
[4] Whately's *Bacon*, p, 155.

being obviously unavailable, that of uncertainty alone remained possible. But they were flourishing a deadlier weapon than they knew.

A recent periodical contained a stirring sermon from a Methodist preacher on this question to the Pharisees, concerning the origin of John's baptism.[1] The theme deduced from it was, "The Inspiration of Moses." Its relation to the text will not at once blaze on the reader, but its statement reveals a true homiletic instinct. The baptism of John and the message of Moses proceed from the same source, appeal to like credentials and demand like reverent submission. Wilful or disingenuous dealing with the one will inevitably entail like treatment of the other. Therefore, Christ will not "commit himself to them;" for, as he intimates in his parable, they who have not dealt fairly with the "servants" will not "reverence the Son."[2]

A LINGUISTIC AGNOSTICISM.

If the validity of baptism be really independent of mode, so that proving the word to mean "immerse" would be entirely irrelevant and immaterial, as is constantly affirmed, it is plain that so translating the word would be

[1] *Chautauqua Assembly Herald*, Aug., 1882.

[2] *Matthew* 21: 38, 39.

equally harmless. In that case it is singular that Bishop Titcomb should have been so "embarrassed" by such translation, and that the Bible Society should have decided it impossible "consistently to use and circulate" a Bible infected by it.[1] The sensitiveness thus manifested reveals the conscious untrustworthiness of the theory advanced. "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it." The meaning of the word *is* of consequence. It *must* be "embarrassing" to explain even to the stupidest Burman that Christ has commanded his followers to be "*immersed*," that he has said, "if a man love me he will keep my *words*," and that therefore it is his duty to be—*sprinkled*. There is a more convenient way—it is, when he asks what Christ means by being baptized, to say, "We cannot tell." This linguistic agnosticism is the inevitably adjacent burrow into which the argument vanishes if hotly pressed. The meaning of the word is only immaterial when men do not insist on knowing it, but impossible when they do. Indeed, it is argued that the meaning is uncertain because it is immaterial, and also immaterial because it is uncertain.

It is possible here only by fragmentary illustration to show how the exigency thus arising

[1] *Bible Society Record*, June 15, 1882.

presses scholarship awry, and "blinds the eyes of the wise." The mention of a name so distinguished and revered as that of Dr. Schaff, in this connection, affords occasion to say, what it is hoped might in any case be charitably believed, that the citations made in these papers have been made purposely from men in various denominations high in attainments and in the esteem of the Christian world. It would be absurd to suppose that the inconsistent or erroneous teachings attributed to them are meant to impugn their abilities or motives; on the contrary, the more clear-sighted and unimpeachably conscientious they are reckoned, the stronger is the case here sought to be made against the witchery of a perverted ordinance.

The difference in the ecclesiastic atmosphere of German Lutheranism and Presbyterianism has been already alluded to. Dr. Schaff (then in the Lutheran Seminary at Mercersburg), published in 1858 his *History of the Christian Church*. In 1882, (then being in the Presbyterian Seminary in the city of New York), he published a revised edition of the first volume. In this revision among many changes occur these significant ones. The statement of 1858, that "the usual form of baptism was immersion, is *plain*,"[1] from divers circumstances, becomes

[1] Vol. I., p. 122.

now only that it is "inferred."[1] The old reference to "*later* Hellenistic usage"[2] as allowing to baptism "sometimes the wider sense of washing and cleansing," now becomes an avowal that "Hellenistic usage"[3] at large did the like. A serious change: for while the former statement could not affect the question in hand, the latter clearly might. It would be interesting to know what secret archives have recently disgorged testimony to reverse the overwhelming verdict of scholarship since Schneckenburger's day,[4] to which Dr. Schaff assented in 1858, that proselyte baptism was unknown in Christ's day. Again, in 1869, Dr. Schaff published Lange's *Commentary on Matthew*, annotated by himself. It is there stated without note of qualification or dissent, as to John's baptism, that "This baptism was administered by immersion, and not by sprinkling."[5] Ten years later, in 1879, Dr. Schaff published another *Commentary on Matthew*, prepared by himself with the help of Dr. Riddell. Speaking of the same baptism, he now

[1] Vol. I., p. 468. [2] p. 125. [3] p. 469.

[4] The whole matter is thus summed up by Fairbairn: "So far as the direct evidence goes, the very *utmost that can be said* is, that indications appear of Jewish proselyte-baptism as an existing practice during the *fourth century* of the Christian era."—*Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia, 1859), p. 305.

[5] Lange, *Matthew*, p. 68.

says, "The subjects went into the river, and were either immersed by John, or water was *poured on* them. The Greek verb *baptize* is a *technical term* for a symbolical washing."[1] If this means that it has *now become* a technical term, it is irrelevant. If it means that it was so when our Lord used it, the world waits for proof. Most extraordinary tasks have been attempted in that direction. Dr. Krauth has even undertaken to prove that the *modern technical* sense of *taufen* is in fact its ancient sense, and that Luther never used it as meaning to dip, although Luther himself says he did.[2]

One of the most extraordinary books on the "technical sense" is that of Dr. Armstrong, whose whole argument is distinctly "limited to *baptizo* used as a *religious or sacred term.*"[3] It is, he says, "always a generic term, having no reference to mode: and hence to translate it by

[1] Scribner's *Popular Commentary*, 1879, vol. I., p. 42. Cf. also, on use of Greek preposition *en*, Lange *on Matthew* 3: 11, with Schaff and Riddell on same verses, and also on Mark 1: 8.

[2] Krauth, *Conservative Reformation in Theology* (Philadelphia, 1871), p. 536. Cf. Schaff-Herzog, *Encyclopœdia of Religious Knowledge* (New York, 1882). "Luther sided with the immersionists, and described the baptismal act as an immersion, and derived *taufe* (German for baptism), from *tief* (deep), because what one baptized, he sank *tief* in the water."—p. 210.

[3] *Sacraments of the New Testament*, (New York, 1880), p. 12.

dip, immerse, sprinkle, or pour, will be to *mistranslate the word of God.*"[1] His main authority for asserting the occurrence of such terms in the New Testament is Dr. Campbell, from whom he quotes *in extenso*—substantially to the effect that "classical use is not only sometimes unavailing, but may even mislead."[2] Dr. Campbell is correctly cited thus far: but he supplies further information on this subject, which is, very abstemiously, refused, viz.: "The word *baptizein*, both in *sacred authors and in classical*, signifies *to dip, to plunge, to immerse*, and was rendered by Tertullian, the oldest of the Latin Fathers, *tingere*, the term used for dyeing cloth, which was by *immersion.*"[3] The same Dr. Campbell reminds those who insist that it is impossible definitely to translate a word because it has secondary meanings, that by the same rule all language would become hopelessly indefinite. "The explanation of a simple sentence will appear like the solution of a riddle." "The verb to *make* in our language has, according to Johnson, sixty-six meanings, to *put* eighty, and to *take* one hundred and thirty-four."[4] Every institution ought to be suspected, which for its own self-justifica-

[1] *Sacraments of the New Testament* (New York. 1880), p. 1. [2] *Ib.*, p. 5.

[3] *The Four Gospels* (Aberdeen, 1854), vol. IV., p. 24 (on Matthew 3: 11). [4] *Ib.*, vol. I., p. 97.

tion begets an effort to weaken confidence in the certainty of the word of God. Milman in his *Essays* says, "The first to impugn the authenticity of Scripture, leading Astruc, Eichhorn, Paulus, and Strauss, was the Jesuit father Simon; who did it to assert the authority of the Church."[1] To reach that end Simon contended that "the greater part of the Hebrew words are equivocal, and that their signification is entirely uncertain," and that the "Hebrew lexicons commonly contain nothing but uncertain conjecture."[2] "Modern neology deals with Christ's words just as Rome does," says Archer Butler, "treating them as imperfect; showing that the philosophy of Romanism and that of Rationalism are fundamentally one."[3]

THE WITNESSING WORD.

Akin to the exigency which tempts to obscure, is that which tempts to alter, the written word. The liberties which Rome has taken in this direction are familiar to all. In the *Index* of Pope Clement VIII. it is declared proper "to expunge even the words of sacred Scripture which may be impiously turned to a profane

[1] (London, 1870), p. 302; *cf.* p. 305.
[2] Campbell, *The Four Gospels*, vol. I. pp. 81–3.
[3] *Letters on Romanism* (Cambridge, 1858), p. 28.

use."[1] In Cardinal Wiseman's *Essays* we are informed that "the prenomen 'Jesus,' of Barabbas, has from motives of reverence been dropped from the text."

Dr. Jenner, physician to Edward VI., published a Drama in which he represents the mass as praying thus:

> "Because in the Bible I cannot be found
> The heretics would bury me under ground.
> I pray you heartily, if it be possible,
> To get me a place in the great Bible."

The Council of Trent exalted the Vulgate above the original Greek and Hebrew, as the "authentic" Scripture.[2] Eadie says, the British and Foreign Bible Society did the same thing for the Elzevir text of 1624, (and by keeping verses in it now known to be spurious, "circulated a forgery in the divine name."[3]) The American Bible Society has erected the common English Version into a like canon; requiring all its issues to be "conformed in the principles of their translation" to it.[4] It has gone further; it has declared that version authentic only as the word "baptism" is taken in a particular sense: it being impossible "consistently to use and circu-

[1] Cited in *Letters on Romanism*, p. 27.
[2] Bungener, *Council of Trent*, p. 90.
[3] *History English Bible*, vol. II., p. 347, note.
[4] See *Rules of Translation.*

late" any translation in which the equivalent for "baptize" is understood among the people as meaning "immerse."[1] It follows logically that if the autograph manuscripts of the Evangelists should be discovered to-day, they must be declared "deficient in catholicity," and could not be "consistently used and circulated" among the Greeks (where the word *baptizo* is universally understood to mean "immerse")[2] until revised by inserting *rantizo* or *cheo*, in order to conform them to the "principles" of the English version.

It is a good omen that there is so much anxiety to explain away the definite meaning of this critical word. It reveals an increasing popular anxiety and determination to *know* its meaning. Prelacy is an anachronism—indifferentism does not quiet the conscience—the issue narrows to the word itself. "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" The "mould" has been broken, but the witnessing word—kept by the providence

[1] *Bible Society Record*, June 15, 1882.

[2] Cf. Stanley, *Eastern Church* (London, 1861), p. 17. "The humblest peasant who reads his Septuagint or Greek Testament in his own mother tongue, on the hills of Bœotia, may proudly feel that he has an access to the original words of divine truth which the Pope and Cardinal reach by a barbarous and imperfect translation." "There can be no question that the original form of baptism—the very meaning of the word—was complete immersion in the deep baptismal waters. . . To this form the Eastern Church rigidly still adheres."—p. 34.

and grace of God through superstitious jealousy of the letter, fossilization of language and palimpsest—remains intact. To it the final appeal must be had. In it the true outlines of the "mould" are traceable, and by it they may be restored. "It is not he that hath good gold that is afraid to bring it to the touchstone," said King James's translators. He only will be justified in the end who shall be found in simplicity and integrity, "HOLDING FAST THE FAITHFUL WORD."

THE END.