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Remarks on baptismal  
regeneration









# REMARKS

ON

## BAPTISMAL REGENERATION:

BY THE LATE

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WE intend to offer to such of our readers as may be inclined to take up a grave question of Theology, with the seriousness it deserves, a few remarks upon the subject discussed in these several publications. To go into the detail of the publications themselves, with the accuracy of official criticism, is no part of our purpose, since that would be a work of intricate pursuit, more likely to hinder than assist the elucidation of the doctrine which we are desirous of presenting in the most plain and perspicuous form. In a case of common controversial learning, this conciseness and reserve might pass for a desertion of our trust, or a want of respect to the authors who had endeavoured to instruct us. But in the present instance, for reasons which press strongly upon our mind, we feel an extreme unwillingness to entertain any discussion,

not necessary to the material doctrine in question ; and wish to decline the irritation as well as the labour of every syllable which can be spared ; not without some doubt whether our more perfect wisdom might not be an entire silence upon it.

Under this forbearance, however, we wish openly to disavow the officious service of labouring for an accommodation in opinion, between persons who may have their reasons for avoiding all approaches to it. Because, first, we cannot pretend to the authority which ought to go along with the assumption of such an office ; and next, not being willing to concede any part of our own belief, we could adopt no principle of accommodation between others, except the firm and temperate statement of our opinions ; which could be conciliatory only just so far as the grounds of them are convincing ; and, lastly, we are well aware that nothing is less welcome to persons strongly engaged in a debate, than the neutrality of a peace-maker, who is likely with many to provoke the anger he would disarm, by his suspected censure of it. And therefore, as we have no special call, in our pages, to this offensive and ungracious moderation, we request that we may not incur the prejudice and evil report of it, with any description of men. In short, we address ourselves to the doctrine solely ; being as far from seeking to silence the argument of any man by the assumption of a character, as we should rejoice to persuade by our own fair and legitimate deductions. Our hopes,

however, do not look so high. We promise ourselves no converts to our scheme of exposition, plain and old as it is, from among those who may have previously taken a part against it. But we shall be contented with stating, what appears to us, the substance of serious truth, for the use of those who may wish to enjoy it in quiet, without engaging in a conflict for it.

Controversy, when it is carried on in the sound and manly spirit of investigation, is so favourable to the advancement, or the more firm establishment of our knowledge, that we shall never presume to check or decry it. While it is so conducted, religion is only more securely rooted, by its friendly violence. Indolent and implicit knowledge is roused by it, to a more honest discipline; and error flies before it. If some degree of animation, inspired perhaps more by the ardour of conflict in discussion, than by the exact unprejudiced concern for the subject, should insinuate itself, we still should regard that accident as a venial one, which may render the advocates, on either side, more alert, and quicken their research without perverting their principles of judgment. The more severe and jealous accuracy which we must be contented often to take from personal feelings may, in the end, produce that best of all results, a more certain and a better reasoned apprehension of the truth. In this light our infirmities may serve us better than our duties. They may give us a vigour of research, which those more

tardy motives might fail to supply : for we never hail the progress of truth so much as when we hope ourselves to share her triumph.

The tendency which controversy has, however, at the same time, to overstep these limits, and at once to destroy charity, and perplex the truth, is a topic which we do not mean now to enlarge upon. Without adverting to so great an evil, it must be confessed, that while even the more moderate warfare lasts, the truth itself is not unfrequently a sufferer : —we do not mean from the mistakes or injudiciousness of the parties, which is too palpable a thing to be noticed, but from the temper of the public mind, as affected by the existing controversy. The direction of thought, at such a moment, is all turned towards the field of warfare, and not to the valuable interest to be decided upon it. It is intent upon the proceedings of the debate more than the doctrine at issue. It becomes controversial by habit, a temper most adverse to the love and improvement of that very treasure of doctrine, for the sake of which all are so hotly engaged, as no ground is less cultivated than that which is the scene of present and active hostilities. Nor is it uncommon to see many, who, having ranged themselves on the one side or the other, with a very imperfect knowledge of the reasons and merits of the case, make up in feeling what they want in information, and studiously aggravate the state of suspicion and unfriendliness in order to meet the need

of being zealous opponents in a public and important cause.

We intend no allusion whatever to any supposed vehemence or strong language, in any single writer or person, who may have engaged in the present controversy; which vehemence, however, might be excusable in any one, under the apprehension that an important article of doctrine was in danger. But, penetrated by a sense of the inconveniencies which we have described, as attaching to all the most legitimate controversy, when it becomes earnest and general, we shall endeavour, as far as possible, to avoid the adding of one voice more to the debate. Without denying ourselves altogether the use of the argumentative form, we shall not be contentious, wishing to follow, as nearly as we can, that apostolic sentiment, *ἀληθεύειν ἐν ἀγάπῃ*.

Our proposed plan will be, first, to state precisely the doctrine of our Church, on the subject of Baptismal Regeneration; next to endeavour to ascertain the style and language proper to be used, in respect of that topic, in the course of popular and practical instruction. This order is the natural and obvious one; viz. that sound theological opinion should precede and direct the form of Christian piety.

Our position is, that according to the doctrine of our Church, Baptismal Regeneration is also Spiri-

tual Regeneration, to all who, in mature age, receive Baptism rightly: and in respect of infants, that Baptismal Regeneration is also Spiritual Regeneration, simply.

Now in order to obtain truly the sense in which our Church understands and teaches the efficacy of Baptism, at either age, it will be right to look, in the first place, to the office of Baptism itself, as to the most sure and positive rule of her doctrine on that head; because in administering the rite, the Church also professedly expounds it. The exposition given in such a place is direct and conclusive; the subject is fully in view; the judgment upon it is a solemn one, designed to express the value of the rite to the minds of those who receive it, if they be capable of understanding it, to those who minister in it, that they may be aware of the nature of their function, and to those who are present as witnesses of the sacrament. No occasion can be imagined more needful for the doctrine to be explained, than when the benefit of the sacrament is to be applied; and to the explanation afforded under such circumstances, we are bound therefore, as fair inquirers, to attend with peculiar respect.

With regard to adults, the service of Baptism framed by our Church shews, unequivocally, that in her sense, Baptism is neither on one hand a kind of charm, nor on the other a mere ineffectual or external rite, but a certain medium of the grace of

Regeneration to the worthy receiver. It is not a charm to convert, by a ceremonial power, human nature from a fallen to a restored state; to infuse grace by a material miracle; or to call down from heaven a supernatural blessing upon prevarication; or to adopt into the privileges of the Gospel, those in whom no sincerity of mind towards Christian faith and amendment is to be found. This part of our position is demonstrated by the fact that certain special interrogatories, to be put to the person who is to be baptized, make a part of the service. For that an actual and a real Faith and Repentance are pledged by the answers given to those interrogatories, must be obvious to any one who considers, that a Faith and Repentance not real are nothing at all. And the nullity of the Faith and Repentance, when they are professed, but exist not, having only the superadded virtue of an hypocritical profession to improve them, are not likely to be raised thereby to the standard of qualification required by a Church which has as honest and strong a meaning in asking who and what manner of person he is, who comes to be baptized, as in pronouncing him, after Baptism, Regenerate, a member of Christ, a child of God. The previous existence of his qualification, as connected with the efficacy of Baptism, is moreover expressed in these decisive words: "Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that He will favourably receive the present persons, TRULY REPENTING AND COMING UNTO HIM BY FAITH." The same exhortation in which these

words are contained had previously quoted the words of Christ, "He that *believeth* and is *baptized* " shall be saved:" and also the words of St. Peter, "*Repent* and be *baptized* every one of you for the " remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of " the Holy Ghost." The language of the Catechism is equally explicit: "What is *required* of persons " to be baptized? REPENTANCE, whereby they for- " sake sin, and FAITH, whereby they steadfastly " believe the promises of God made to them in " that sacrament." So explicitly does the Church connect the demand of qualification with the rite. —Nor less explicitly does she connect with the rite, so duly received, the gift of Regeneration.

For, on the other hand, Baptism is not, in the sense of our Church, a mere ineffectual or ecclesiastical rite. It is not a rite of bare public admission unto communion; nor is it a simple declaration on the part of the Church, setting forth the hopes and duties of the new disciple. These uses of ecclesiastical incorporation, though included in the service, are subordinate to the other higher purpose of the sacrament, viz. the assurance of federal communion in the blessings of the Gospel, with the gift of Regeneration by the Holy Spirit, communicated in the sacrament, and sealed by it, through the instrumentality of the Church, acting in the name of God, and under the warrant of Scripture.

This part of our interpretation is equally appa-

rent from the very words of the service: "Seeing " that these persons *are regenerate.*" It is also apparent from the assertion of the Catechism, that in a sacrament there are two parts, the sign and the inward grace. If then the grace be a part of the sacrament, it must be communicated in the sacramental rite. The grace peculiar to Baptism is also asserted to be "a death unto sin, and a new " birth unto righteousness." A new birth unto righteousness, or Regeneration, then, is by Baptism.

We are not aware of any objection possible to be made to the construction which we have assigned to this office of our Liturgy, which relates to the Baptism of those who are of riper years; either as not being the direct and obvious construction in each of its parts, or even as not being exclusively the single and necessary construction of the meaning of the office: so that no other can either be true or have the semblance of truth.

We are not aware indeed that, in *any* protestant country where the doctrine of the *opus operatum* is estimated as it deserves, there is any doubt among thinking men of the necessity of some qualification in the person receiving Baptism in order to his spiritual benefit by it. Least of all do we suppose that any members of our Church are inclined to such an error. If words have escaped any one, importing a doubt of that kind, we take them as

a mere oversight of style, and nothing more serious. It has been therefore only with a view of making our statement complete in each branch of it, that we have gone through this part of the interpretation which we proposed.

Upon the whole, we affirm that the form of Baptismal service, comprehending the ritual of the words of institution, as appointed by our Saviour, and the use of the symbol of water also appointed by Him, combined together, though it possess not by nature any regenerating power, nor has received that power by an unconditional or irrespective promise, does yet, in the doctrine of our Church, constitute the appointed medium, through which the grace of Regeneration is conveyed; that grace coming from the fountain of all purity and holiness, from the Eternal Spirit, whose emanations, assured to us by special promise, are to be thought of, as attendant upon that promise, and as verifying it. The Church, therefore, as the minister of God, proclaims the value of Baptism, to all who are fit for it, and pronounces the efficacy of her ministration, for the beginning of their new and spiritual state. Did the Church profess the doctrine of universal Regeneration in those of riper age, without respect to their Faith and Repentance, those things would not be stated in the Catechism as *required*, nor would the strict demand of them be made in the service itself. Were the Church able to discern the secrets of men's hearts, she would actually, and in form, limit

the assurance of Regeneration in the same extent, as under the absence of such knowledge, she virtually and implicitly does now limit it. But that her ministration may neither be void, nor presumptuous, may neither bless those whom God hath not blessed, nor reject those whom He will not have rejected, combining the defect of her knowledge with the certainty of the Evangelical promise, she speaks to the supposed faithful and penitent, a language, to them who are such, universally true; which to the impenitent and unfaithful, must be, according to her doctrine, as universally not true.

We proceed to the second part of our position; viz. that infant Baptism is regarded by our Church as conferring Spiritual Regeneration, simply, and without reserve. Here, as before, our first reference must be made to the office itself. The introductory part of the office for infant Baptism deserves attention. It adverts to the discourse held by our Saviour with Nicodemus. The topic of that discourse is the necessity of a man's being born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, in order to his entering into the kingdom of God. *Spiritual Regeneration* then is the first thing which is presented to our thoughts in the preliminary part of this office. And as it begins, so it continues. The same is the subject of the beginning of the office, and of the middle, and of the end of it. The same subject of Spiritual Regeneration is exhibited in prayer, interceding for it; in references

to portions of scripture, which relate to it ; in positive affirmation of doctrine ; in thanksgiving to God for the gift as actually given. The sacrament from first to last, holds the doctrine of Regeneration by the Holy Spirit enclosed and embodied in it. Its phrase is formed upon that doctrine : its purport and efficacy are explained by it.

Nor may we believe that the Church intends to represent this sacrament as a type and symbol of Spiritual Regeneration, without possessing infused into it the very grace itself. Because the words employed on the occasion are not merely such as imply that the sacrament and the grace are combined together, but they are such as have been studiously selected to express that idea, and such as do most emphatically express it. They even shew an anxiety that nothing less may be supposed. “ *Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe that* “ He will likewise favourably receive this present “ infant ; that He will embrace him with the arms of “ His mercy ; that He will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of “ His everlasting kingdom.” Again, “ Seeing now, “ dearly beloved brethren, that this child *is regenerate*, and grafted into the body of Christ’s Church, “ let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these “ benefits.” Again, “ We yield Thee hearty thanks, “ most merciful Father, that it *hath* pleased Thee to “ *regenerate* this infant *with Thy Holy Spirit*, to receive him for Thine own child by adoption,” &c.

The words of the first passage are certainly remarkable as shewing an anxiety that we may receive the full doctrine on this head. The words of the passage corresponding with it in the office for those of riper years are as follow. “*Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that He will favourably receive these present persons, truly repenting and coming unto Him by faith.*” The same pointed and earnest wish is shewn in both. And this clause in the latter office, “truly repenting and coming unto Him by faith,” which is wanting in the former office, is equally significant in the place where it is inserted to shew what is required in the one instance, as in the other place where it is omitted, to shew that in the other instance the absence of actual moral qualification does not vacate the benefit of the sacrament.—The insertion and the omission are alike from design, and that design is in both places obvious to be understood.

The Office for the order of Confirmation comes next to be considered ; and we shall see that it supports and illustrates the exposition which we have given. As the rite of Confirmation is connected in design with the sacrament of infant Baptism, and is a supplement to it, we might expect to find that which actually we do find, a connection of doctrine in the two offices. The Spiritual Regeneration, as already communicated, and communicated in Baptism, is thus recognised in the prayer which precedes the solemn act of Confirmation. “Almighty

“and everliving God, who *hast vouchsafed to regenerate* these Thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins : strengthen them, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them Thy manifold gifts of grace.”

The most specific use of the Catechism is to qualify those who have been baptized in infancy to receive this rite of Confirmation, by instructing them in their Christian calling. It is their manual of instruction, and their knowledge of it is the testimonial whereupon they are admitted to be confirmed. The Catechism, then, informs them, that the inward and spiritual grace is a part in each sacrament, and that the grace of *Baptism* is a death unto sin, and a *new birth unto righteousness* : for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are *hereby* made the children of grace. (The word *hereby*, we suppose, must refer grammatically to the sacrament. If it be referred to the more remote antecedent, “a new birth unto righteousness,” logically the difference is nothing : for that new birth has previously been declared to be a part of the sacrament.) Moreover the answer dictated to the second question of the Catechism seems in itself equivalent to a volume. “Who gave you this name ? My godfathers and godmothers in my Baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” Such is the continued train of instruction provided in the three connected offices, of Baptism, the Catechism, and

Confirmation, holding one uniform and consistent language.

We have said that Confirmation is a supplement to Baptism. We mean, that it is a supplement to it, inasmuch as it adds to Baptism the actual attestation of the child, who had been baptized, to the covenant of the Gospel, with the seal of his own moral powers. But the Church does not regard it to be such a supplement as may draw down from God the grace of Regeneration: that grace is presupposed to exist, and is declared to have been bestowed "by water and the Holy Ghost," that is, in Baptism. Therefore, Confirmation is not an adult Baptism, but on the part of the child an adult recognition of the vicarious baptismal vow. It is a rational service, and its very name bears a meaning which implies a confirmation of that Christian state in which the child is found; a confirmation of good to him, as well as a confirmation made by him of his vows.

The plain and positive sense of these several offices ought not to give way to the refinement which a curious piety may contrive for them. Are they not offices for general use, addressed to the understanding of common men, who must understand by the ear, and be taught with simplicity? Are they not offices for young persons, (we speak of the Catechism and the office for Confirmation,) for young persons whose reason is just on the dawn, who know little and believe infinitely, and whose

error must be charged to the account of those who, under plain and direct terms, have a reserve of hypothesis behind; that error which the young mind cannot avoid, of believing that a distinct affirmation contains a definite meaning, that strong words mean something positive, and that the assertion of a past event does not express a change future and contingent? These considerations are to us of great force, and literally conclusive.

But as the *hypothetical* meaning is urged by some whose sincerity in the search of truth we do not suspect, and whose error, as we suppose it to be, gives us no small pain, combined as it is with zeal, and ability, and learning; we shall not decline following this point a little further, and separating the cases, in which, as it appears to us, an hypothetical sense may be admitted, from those in which it cannot be admitted.

An hypothetical sense, then, seems admissible only when the Liturgy is speaking *first* of individuals, as indeed is the case here, and when also, secondly, their individual state is impossible to be known in those respects wherein it bears upon the tenor of the special service relating to them; and when also there can be no ambiguity whether it be an hypothetical sense or not. Under these three conditions we do not object to the fitness of it. In the Office of Visiting the Sick, the case of an individual is in view, and the absolution in that

office is hypothetical, that is to say, upon the assumption of the sincere faith and penitence of the sick person, previously demanded, and previously declared, the Absolution is positive and valid; upon the supposed absence of them, the Absolution is neither valid, nor possible to be so understood: for the Church could not mean to affirm that which is contrary to her own known belief: and we know her belief, absolute, universal and undisguised, that to remission of sins, faith and penitence are so needful in all persons capable of them, that without them there is neither hope nor promise of it. Secondly, in the Office for the Burial of the Dead, the case of the individual is spoken of in a language which is so far *hypothetical* in sense as it expresses no more than a *hope* of his present happy state. Such phrase, however, really falls short of an hypothetical proposition: it is manifestly and in terms no more than the *hope of Christian charity*: It is impossible to be mistaken for firm belief. Thirdly, the service of Baptism for those who are of maturer age, we have granted to be framed in part upon an hypothetical sense, and in such a structure there can be no ambiguity; inasmuch as the intention of the Liturgy is broadly and fully declared to the person coming for Baptism, by specific citations of Scripture, which join faith and repentance with Baptism, and by the demands of personal qualification actually pressed upon him. His insincerity and prevarication therefore, if they exist, being in himself, and after having warning

given, must naturally be understood to intercept the moral and spiritual benefit of the rite.

But all these circumstances, which account to our easy comprehension for the conditional tenor of the services to which we have just now adverted, do, in our judgment, entirely lose their application to the Baptism of infants. The Church is in this instance fully aware of the present state and condition of the subject to whom the rite is to be applied. The infant is born in a state of sin, and it is incapable of believing and repenting. It is confessedly incapable of any moral act whereby to seek its recovery; not merely incapable in that sense whereby human nature is generally incapable of doing any thing to its restoration, without the aid of grace from above, but by a stronger degree of incapacity, incapable of even seeing its own wants, and feeling its weakness, or knowing how they may be removed. Its cries are full of weakness, but they are not expressive of any moral desire: its whole imbecility is uninformed by any purpose of heart or determination of thought. This state, which we suppose no one denies, is not unknown to the Church, nor, since it pertains at the same time to the application of the office to be administered, can it be disregarded by the Church in that office. The possible reasons of exception, therefore, which might exist in the other cases, can have no place here: and since the actual subject is so definitely and universally known, the language

of the service cannot have a concealed reserve in regard to any such reasons of exception. Tacit reserve, without a hint of condition, or without a known ground of possible exception, as against the party to whom any promise of benefit is assured, seems to us unintelligible in reason, and intolerable in good faith. We suspect no such dealing in the offices of our Church: we rest therefore in this conclusion, that, since the Church, with an entire knowledge of the present state of the individual, and with a strict attention to it, receives an infant into communion, by Baptism, and declares the infant to receive a Regeneration to life in that Baptism, her sense is as simple as her language, and that all honest subterfuge of supposition by which that which is in terms absolute should be made precarious, and that which is universal in the obvious meaning should be made limited in the true meaning, is, in this present question, necessarily excluded. Moreover, we apprehend that to depart from this direct admission of the obvious meaning of words which carry in them a kind of importunate perspicuity, is to introduce a principle of universal and incurable scepticism into the interpretation of doctrines; insomuch that if it were admitted, we should despair for our own part of ever being able to say that any words could ever express a certain and fixed doctrine, or that any doctrine could ever be expressed in intelligible words.

Hitherto we have endeavoured simply to state

the doctrine of the Church on the question of Baptismal Regeneration, as interpreters of it, and to draw our interpretation from the public formularies of our Liturgy, pertaining to the rite of Baptism itself. The persons whose works have occasioned these remarks are all members of our Church, who profess to hold no new opinions of their own, nor any not conformable, as they think, to the public national creed. It seems therefore that the question between them either resolves itself into the strict interpretation of our public doctrine ; or at least, if that interpretation could be well made out, that the question, in its present shape, between them, would virtually be ended. We have intended, therefore, to offer our opinion in a way conformable to the need of the occasion, and to confine it closely to the actual range of inquiry. And further, since we think the public formularies of our Liturgy give the most authentic account of those solemn rites which are to be administered in our service, the sacraments are best explained by the offices appointed for them ; and since plain and explicit and reiterated words do not need to be made plainer by any comment from without, we shall think that we have now satisfied, in scope at least, the first end which we proposed, in extracting from the offices of Baptism the doctrine of the Church as to its value.

We are aware that authorities are much sought for ; that the judgments of divines are collected,

and precedents of interpretation arranged, with more or less skill, on one side and the other. The force of such authorities cannot be denied. But we wish earnestly to insist upon the prudence of consulting *the original record* itself. If it speak a plain sense of its own, its own authority is the most competent to deliver that sense, and its perspicuity is the best pledge to us that we understand it. Other writings can hardly be said either to confirm or to explain it. The habitual reverence, however, which we feel towards great names, will always draw us to a leaning upon their authority; so that, without their concurrence, we shall scarcely trust the most sound and necessary conclusions of our own understanding. The divines of the Church of England, we apprehend, claim this kind of deference to them as justly as any leading men ever had a right to claim it of their profession, their Church, or their Country. In research, in ability, in luminous communication by their writings, they have set themselves as high among the learned of every age, as we believe they have set the standard of sound protestant doctrine in their country among the other churches of the Christian world. To such highly gifted men, we do not refuse any fair appeal; it being premised, however, that in the subject before us, the appeal to them is made only for gratuitous inquiry. For we repeat it, that our principles of judgment would be turned adrift, if we thought the point was one still reserved to be decided by their comment upon it.

Our divines are a library in themselves, various in kind, in learning, and in subject. It would be idle to consult them either very largely or at a venture. For, besides the anomalies of style, or the different characters and occasions of their works, we must be aware that the very liberty of the Protestant spirit has the effect of giving more fulness than uniformity to their writings, and that under such freedom, variously used, and according to the discretion of the writer, with a general agreement of doctrine there may be, there must be, a great diversity in the complexion of their works, and, in the detail of them, great latitude in the way of putting particular clauses and portions of doctrine. To proceed properly towards our object, we must make some selection among them.

The writers most worthy to be selected as witnesses to the doctrine of our Church are those who combine these two recommendations; viz. who have been themselves most distinguished by the confidence and veneration shewn to them by their inferior brethren, and who have also written professedly upon the subject in question. The first qualification gives weight to their evidence, the second gives it what may be called authenticity. For no man's *casual* observation is to be put on a par with his distinct proposition; nor is one man's proposition as good as another's.

Had all the serious and learned divines of our

Church to give their voice in favour of the one man whom they would hold forth as the greatest light of the Reformation—as the person whose mind had most fully comprehended and laboured upon the whole compass of Reformed Truth, and whose writings do still preserve the most highly sanctioned memorial of it;—we know not whether they would name any other than him, who, having received from the great fathers of the Reformation the office of unfolding, complete in all its parts, that truth which they with their faithful voice had proclaimed among us, first reduced and recorded our whole national creed with its illustration and evidence—Bishop Jewel. He, with a more leisurely survey of the bearing of every doctrine than could be taken even by the leading reformers themselves, who, in the first effort and agony of their work, with rude and noble simplicity, threw down the fabric of error, and hewed the granite from the quarry, and brought it for the building, he, coming in the close of their labours, united and perfected all that they had prepared or done, as much as any one man can be said to have done it. To the theological inquirer, he is a master builder of the system of our doctrine. His formal and deliberate judgment, therefore, is of the greatest value.

The doctrine of the sacraments, as our readers know, was one which the reformers found among the most corrupted. The gross notions of the

Romanists respecting them, disguised under the name of mystery, had compounded an ostentatious ceremonial and a faith in the power of the Church, into a superstition which had nearly devoured the very soul of that religion which should teach the worship of God in spirit and in truth. The refutation of error so gross was easy; but at the same time it was hazardous, as not unlikely, by the provocation of the extreme folly to be set aside, to have driven the reform into the opposite extreme, that of stripping the two sacraments, that really were such, too much of their spiritual nature. In some churches, if we are rightly informed, the change of doctrine has been so carried to excess, that the temptation to it was strong. But we may admire, in this respect, the temper of argument wherewith our own patrons treated their subject. To make up their creed, they canvassed, compared, and adjusted. Under the leading infallible testimonies of Scripture, they took reason and antiquity to their aid; and made good their ground by a progressive analysis in their inquiries, instead of plunging into the fallacy which would persuade them that the flat reverse of error is the truth. They reasoned as they proceeded for that which they assumed, as well as against that which they rejected. This is eminently the method of Bishop Jewel; and the method was favoured in no small degree both in him and others, by the steady and leisurely march of the actual course of events, in our Reformation, which, under Providence, seems to

have added to the fulness no less than to the moderation of our entire scheme of doctrine.

Individually he wrote much against the Romanists, on the sacramental question. And if such a service was likely to have made him think too low rather than too high of the sacraments, there is a force on the safe side, in his assertion of their value. The following are extracts from his works :—

“We confess and evermore have taught that in the sacrament of Baptism, by the death and blood of Christ, is given remission of all manner of sinnes; and that not in half or in part, or by way of imagination, or by fansie, but full, whole, and perfect of all together; so that now, as Saint Paul saith, there is no damnation unto them that be in Christ Jesus.”—*Defense of the Apologie of the Church of England*, p. 219<sup>a</sup>.

“It is granted of all, without contradiction, that one end of all sacraments is to join us unto God, as Dionysius saith here of the Holy Communion, and Paul likewise of the sacrament of Baptisme: ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as are Baptised in Christ, have put on Christ.”—p. 20 of *Private Masse*.

“When in Baptism our bodies are washed with water, we are taught that our souls are washed in the blood of Christ. The outward washing or sprinkling doth represent the washing and sprinkling which is wrought within us: the water doth signifie the blood of Christ. If we were nothing else but soule, He would give us His grace barely and alone, without joining it to any creature, as He doth to

<sup>a</sup> In the edition of his works, folio, London. 1609.

His angels; but seeing our spirit is drowned in our body, and our flesh doth make our understanding dull, *therefore we receive His grace by sensible things.*”—p. 262, *Treatise of the Sacraments.*—“What? are they nothing else but bare and naked signs? God forbid! They are the seales of God, heavenly tokens, and signs of the grace, and righteousness, and mercie given and imputed to us.—*They are not bare signs; it were blasphemie so to say. The grace of God doth alway work with His sacraments.*”

“Chrysostom saith,—in nobis non simplex aqua operatur: sed cum accepit gratiam Spiritus, abluit omnia peccata.—So saith Ambrose also,—Spiritus Sanctus descendit, et consecrat aquam.—So saith Cyril.—So said Leo, sometime a bishop of Rome,—Dedit aquæ quod dedit Matri. Virtus enim Altissimi et obumbratio Spiritus Sancti quæ fecit ut Maria pareret Salvatorem, eadem fecit ut regeneret unda credentem.”—p. 263, *ibid.*

“I will now speake briefly of the sacraments in severall, and leave all idle and vain questions, and only lay open so much as is needful and profitable for you to know. *Baptism, therefore, is our regeneration or new birth,* whereby we are born anew in Christ, and are made the sons of God, and heires of the kingdom of heaven,” &c.

“For this cause are *infants* baptized, *because* they are born in sin and cannot become spiritual, but by *this new birth of water and the Spirit.*—They are the heires of the promise; the covenant of God’s favour is made with them.”

“Infants are a part of the Church of God: they are the sheep of Christ, and belong to His flock. Why should they not beare the marke of Christ? They have the promise of salvation: why should they not receive the seale whereby it is confirmed unto them? They are of the fellowship of

the faithful; Augustine saith,—*ubi ponis parvulos non baptizatos? profecto in numero credentium.* Why then should not they be partakers of the sacrament, together with the faithful?"—p. 265.

“Christ, saith the Apostle, loved the church, and gave himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the *washing of water through the word.* Again, according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of the new birth, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. For this cause is baptism called salvation, life, regeneration, the forgiveness of sins, the power of God to resurrection, the weed of immortality. And yet are not these things wrought by the water; for then what need had we of Christ? what good did His Passion? what doth the Holy Ghost work in our hearts? what power or force is left to the word of God?”—p. 266.

Not different in kind or in force from the explanations of Bishop Jewel are those of Hooker, another divine of the same family and order among us. Did we know any more highly esteemed, we should apply to them first; since we do not, we shall take these writers for our guides, till greater can be found. Hooker too has written professedly on the sacraments, in his memorable work, the Ecclesiastical Polity;—that work which having been composed to defend the fabric of our Church, both without and within, its doctrine as well as its order, may now instruct us what it is that we have to defend. Our extracts from this author shall be shorter, as his work is more generally known and read. Those who may wish to see the whole of his very copious dissertation on the subject will find it

in the fifth book of the Eccles. Polit. cap. 57 to 66. —After specifying some other kinds of use in the sacraments, he adds :

“But their chiefest force and virtue consisteth not herein, so much as in that they are heavenly ceremonies which God hath sanctified and ordained to be administered in His Church. First, as marks whereby *to know when God doth impart the vital and saving grace of Christ to all that are capable thereof*; and secondly, as means conditional which God requireth in them unto whom He imparteth grace.”

“It may be hereby both understood that sacraments are necessary, and that the manner of their necessity to life supernatural is not in all respects as food unto natural life, because they contain in themselves no vital force or efficacy —they are not physical but moral instruments of sàlvation; duties of service and worship; which unless we perform, as the Author of grace requireth, they are unprofitable. For all receive not the grace of God, which receive the sacraments of His grace. Neither is it ordinarily His will to bestow the grace of sacraments on any, but by the sacraments, which grace also they that receive by sacraments, or with sacraments, receive it from Him, and not from them.

“Yet then doth Baptism challenge to itself but the *inchoation of those* graces, the consummation whereof dependeth upon mysteries ensuing ?”—p. 273.

“We answer, that the fruit of Baptism dependeth only upon the covenant which God hath made; that *God by covenant requireth in the elder sort Faith and Baptism; in children, the sacrament of Baptism alone*, whereunto He hath also given them right by special privilege of birth, within the bosom of the Holy Church;—that infants, therefore, which have received Baptism complete, as *touching the mystical perfection thereof, are, by virtue of His own*

*covenant and promise, cleansed from all sin*—p. 285.—*Baptism*, wherein the mysterie of our *Regeneration is wrought*—p. 287. And till we come [from infancy] to actual belief, the very sacrament of faith is a shield as strong as after this, the faith of the sacrament, against all contrary infernal powers; which whosoever doth think impossible, is undoubtedly further off from Christian belief, though he be baptized, than are these innocents, which, at their Baptism, although they have no conceit or cogitation of faith, are notwithstanding pure, and free from all opposite cogitations; whereas the other is not free. If therefore, without any fear or scruple, we may account them and term them believers only for their outward professions' sake, which inwardly are further from faith than infants, why not infants much more at the time of their solemn initiation by Baptism, the sacrament of faith, whereunto they not only conceive nothing opposite, *but have also that grace given them, which is the first and most effectual cause out of which our belief groweth?*—p. 292.—For when we know how Christ in general hath said, that of such is the kingdom of heaven, which kingdom is the inheritance of God's elect, and do withal behold how His providence hath called them unto the first beginnings of eternal life, and presented them *at the well-spring of new birth, wherein original sin is purged*; besides which sin, there is no hinderance of their salvation known unto us, as themselves will grant; hard it were, &c. p. 293.—The ancient custom of the Church was, after they had baptized, to add thereunto imposition of hands, with effectual prayer for the illumination of God's most Holy Spirit, *to confirm and perfect that which the grace of the same Spirit had already begun in Baptism.*"—p. 302.

Hammond has written in form upon the subject of infant Baptism. Speaking of the reasons of it, he says;

“One sort of those reasons I suppose myself to know,

viz. that by the promises of God, signed to them in that sacrament, they may be more *solemnly secured of a right in the inward assistance of the Spirit of Christ*, &c. To these I may further add, that as Baptism is to infants an institution of Christ, so it gives a virtue to the external act and words pronounced of the minister, so far as to make them *members of Christ*, and *children of God*, and *heirs of His kingdom*; and *this hath been the doctrine of the Church of God.*”—p. 618. vol. i. of his works, ed. 1684.

The admirable Bishop Taylor has given a full and precise treatise upon it in his *Life of Christ*.

“Infants receive many benefits by the susception of Baptism. 1. The first effect of Baptism is, that in it we are *admitted to the kingdom of Christ*, offered, and presented to Him. 2. Children may be adopted into the covenant of the gospel, that is, *made partakers of the communion of Saints*. 3. In Baptism we are *born again*. 4. Baptism takes off the evil of original sin. 5. The Baptism of infants does to them the greatest part of that benefit which belongs to remission of sins. 6. The next great effect of Baptism which children can have is the Spirit of sanctification: and if they can be baptized with water and the Holy Spirit, it will be sacrilege to rob them of so holy treasures. 7. That Baptism, which doth consign men and women to an holy resurrection doth also equally consign infants, hath nothing, that I know of, pretended against it. 8. And after all this, if Baptism be that means which God hath appointed to save us, it would be well if we would do our parts towards infants’ final interest.”

This author has enlarged on each of these heads with his usual exuberance of thought and matter. Let us recollect that he is the author, who, above all others, has made theology practical: every doc-

trine with him is a homily, every speculation with him ends in piety, and prayer, and the personal interests of a holy life. Let us recollect on the other hand that he is the author of "The Liberty of Prophecy," a work which shews what were his high principles of theological inquiry. A man so intent upon practical holiness, and the energy of a right faith in every action of life, and, at the same time, who had so absolute and independent a grasp of protestant principles, is not soon to be suspected of laying more stress upon the virtue of any rite, than his Church, or the reason of the thing required.

Barrow's testimony to the general consent of the Catholic Church, in believing that every Christian is a partaker of grace, as a consequent of Baptism, is as follows :

"In fine, whatever some few persons, or some petty sects, (as the *Pelagians* of old, the *Socinians* now,) may have deemed, it hath been the doctrine constantly, and with very general consent, delivered in the Catholic Church, that to all persons by the holy mystery of *Baptism* duly initiated to Christianity, or admitted into the Communion of Christ's body, the grace of God's Holy Spirit certainly is bestowed, enabling them to perform the conditions then undertaken by them."—*Sermon 45*, vol. iii. p. 526.

There can be no doubt, we suppose, that, in ascribing this doctrine to the Catholic Church, he meant strongly to affirm, that it is also the doctrine of our own.

We believe also that, generally, the most learned of our divines, for a century after the Reformation, in treating either of Regeneration or Baptism, considered internal and Spiritual Regeneration to be so connected with Baptism, so to spring from it, and to be communicated in it, as well as be signified by it, that, unhesitatingly, and without any argument, when they are simply stating their creed, they assume this connexion as a principle of their divinity, and proceed to justify it only when they are writing to meet the objections of persons without the Church. Within the pale of their communion, it is, as far as we are acquainted with the best writers of our Church, an acknowledged article. As the great body of Christians to whom they wrote, and of whom they wrote, were such as had been baptized in infancy, it follows that their theology did not leave infants who had been brought to Baptism in an unregenerate state. The rite is spoken of by them as the fountain of Christian life, not partially, but in unrestricted terms. Its value was both comprehensive and spiritual: it was the beginning of a new life, that new life a Christian one, and the beginning of that new life to *all*. As an example of this prompt and immediate reference of Regeneration to Baptism, without any question or suspicion, as if the point needed to be made out, we shall quote a passage, among many others, which might be taken from other eminent writers, from the learned and accurate Joseph Mede. In a discourse upon these words, *διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας καὶ ἀνακαινώσεως Πνεύ-*

ματος Ἁγίου, Titus iii. 5, he begins, “*These words, as it is easy to conceive upon the first hearing, are spoken of Baptism.*”—*Works, folio, p. 62.*<sup>b</sup>

The writers whom we have hitherto quoted are all subsequent to the Reformation. Since they wrote *after* the time when the Liturgy and Articles were published, they are the most fair expositors of the sense of what was published. In this view, they are to be preferred to the first reformers themselves: for it is not every thing which those reformers wrote, or maintained, that passed into the formularies of the Church. They made some changes in their separate opinions; and it is not to be believed that ultimately they were in absolute agreement, on every single point, with each other. But that which, with joint consent, and by authority, they framed and published as the standard of our national faith, that is the thing we have to examine. And since a text must be written and fixed, before it can be expounded, we consider the most severe and exact of the divines, who wrote with the text of the Church doctrine before them, immediately after the final promulgation of the Liturgy and Articles, and who were entirely in the confidence of the cause, (such were Jewel and Hooker, the one the defender of it against those whom we had left, the other those who left us), as the most distinct and best informed

<sup>b</sup> The object of the discourse is to shew that the ἀντίστοιχον, or thing signified by water in Baptism, is the Holy Spirit and not the Blood of Christ.

Expositors of that which had previously been promulgated.

The promulgation to which we refer was that made at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign by the Act of Uniformity, when the Book of Common Prayer was set forth, revised, and improved, including the Office of Infant Baptism, and the Catechism, as they now stand, excepting that, in the Catechism, the part which treats separately of the Sacraments was not then compiled, but was added after the Conference at Hampton Court, in the reign of James I.<sup>c</sup> The Common Prayer was set forth in the first year of Elizabeth's reign, anno 1559. Jewel's Apologie was published in 1562<sup>d</sup>, in Latin; in 1564, in English, (by a translator worthy to be classed with the excellent Lady Jane Grey.) It was a work originally undertaken at the request of Archbishop Parker and his colleagues;

<sup>c</sup> The Office of Baptism for those of Riper Years was added after the Restoration, in 1661.

<sup>d</sup> The Articles were agreed upon by the Synod of 1562, and published in the following year. Jewel's Apologie was written therefore and published just *before* them. But his Defence of the Apologie, which is a more extended commentary upon his former work, and a vindication of it, came out a few years *after* the Articles. His first work is concurrent in time with the Articles, and approved by those persons who digested the Articles, his second is a commentary upon both.

Burnet in his History of the Reformation places the publication of this work in the year 1560. See his account of that year, vol. iii. p. 211. But this is an oversight, as may be seen by consulting Jewel's own letter in the records, and Strype's *Life of Archbishop Parker*, p. 99.

was reviewed by them, and came out, as Strype says, "to the abundant establishment of this reformed Church upon antiquity—fathers and councils, and the word of God." The "Defence" of it, from which we have quoted, was published within a few years after, and this Defence may be reckoned, perhaps, the most accurately digested system of reformed doctrine, as far as it goes, the most scrupulously and deliberately worded, which our Church produced in its debate with the Church of Rome. His treatise on the Sacraments was gathered out of sermons delivered by him from the year 1559, in his Cathedral. The exactness of Hooker, as a competent witness to the meaning of our Church, needs not to be insisted on. With these two may be joined another writer, contemporary with each of them, and equally worthy of our confidence as an explainer of our authorized doctrine, Alexander Nowel. His Catechism, published in 1570, had the express sanction of Convocation<sup>e</sup>.

<sup>e</sup> Strype says of it, "But now in June, in this year, (viz. 1570,) by the diligence of the archbishop, such a Catechism (a Latin one) came forth, dedicated, for the more countenance of it, to the archbishops and bishops of the realm. The author was a very learned man, viz. Alexander Nowel, Dean of St. Paul's, London. It had passed through the review and correction of that synod, and had their full approbation. The Dean sent the copy at first to secretary Cecil, to whom he had dedicated it; and in his hands it lay till it was offered into the bishops, assembled in the said convocation, as men most meet to judge and allow, or disallow of such matters. They allowed it, and so did the lower House, who subscribed it, as Nowell himself writ, in a letter to the said secretary, when he sent him the Catechism printed."—*Life of Archbishop Parker*, p. 301.

What were the sentiments of this divine may be seen by these extracts.

“Aqua—Effigies quidem est, sed minime inanis, aut fallax, ut cui rerum ipsarum veritas adjuncta sit atque annexa. Nam sicuti Deus peccatorum condonationem et vitæ novitatem nobis vere in baptismo offert, ita a nobis certo recipiuntur. Absit enim ut Deum vanis nos imaginibus ludere atque frustrari putemus.

“M. An gratiam hanc omnes commuiter et promiscue consequuntur?

“A. *Soli fideles* hunc fructum percipiunt.

“M. Quum infantes hæc, quæ commemoras præstare non possunt, qui fit ut illi baptizentur?

“A. *Ut fides et pœnitentia baptismum præcedant, tantum in adultis*, qui per ætatem sunt utriusque capaces, *exigitur*, infantibus vero promissio ecclesiæ facta per Christum, in cuius fide baptizantur, in præsens satis erit, &c. &c.

“M. Perge adhuc.

“A. Cum infantes nostros vim et quasi *substantiam baptismi communem nobiscum habere certum sit*, illis injuria fieret, si signum quod veritate est inferius ipsis negaretur, &c. Itaque æquissimum est ut parvulis nostris *divinæ gratiæ atque salutis fidelium semini promissæ, hæredes se esse*, baptismo, impresso quasi sigillo, testatum fiat.”—p. 142—145. ed. 1570. p. 214—218. ed. Oxon. in *Enchirid. Theol.* 12mo.

It has been with the wish of taking such testimony only as is most in point, and most precise, that we have selected writers who *came immediately after* the Reformation was established; and we have selected for that purpose the three who are confessedly the most distinguished and the best accredited writers of that age.

The appeal to writers preceding that era would not give us an evidence quite so conclusive. The great earlier fathers of the English Church do, however, agree very much, as far as we have examined the detail of their works, in speaking the same sentiments as those we have already adduced. They say the same thing, only with more strength of language, which is their manner.

Cranmer in his Catechism of 1548 :

“The first of the sacraments is Baptism by which we *be born again to a new and heavenly life*, and be received into God’s Church and congregation, which is the foundation and pillar of truth.

“2nd. Without the word of God water is water and not Baptism. But when the word of the living God is added and joined to the water, then *it is the bath of regeneration* and Baptism water, and the living spring of eternal salvation, and a bath that washes our souls by the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul calleth it, saying, God hath saved us through His mercy by the bath of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, &c.

“1st. And *the second birth is by the water of baptism*, which Paul calleth the bath of regeneration, because our sins be forgiven us in Baptism, and the Holy Ghost is poured into us as into God’s beloved children, so that by the power and working of the Holy Ghost we be born again spiritually and be made new creatures. And so by Baptism we enter into the kingdom of God, and shall be saved for ever, if we continue to our lives’ end in the faith of Christ.”—*Sermon on Baptism in the Catechism*, p. 291. Octavo. London. 1809.

Lancelot Ridley, in his Commentary on the Ephe-

sians, is equally strong and explicit, (chap. v. 25—27.)

Bradford, although some of his opinions may sound another way, yet says, “ Now to the question : a man “ regenerate, (which we ought to believe of ourselves, “ I mean that *we are so by our Baptism,*) *the sacrament thereof requiring no less faith,*” &c.

We are aware at the same time that among the earliest Protestant teachers in our country, there are some who do not treat of this subject in the same manner ; but their separate opinions are not binding upon us, and so far as those opinions differ from other doctrines actually incorporated into the Liturgy, and Articles, they are not only null in authority, but must be considered, in our present inquiry, as erroneous.

We shall conclude this part of our statement, respecting the belief expressed by our Church of the spiritual value of Baptism, by a brief notice of those words subjoined to the baptismal office : “ *It is certain by God’s word* that children who are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved.” Now if they are *undoubtedly* saved, it should seem, *prima facie*, that they are *undoubtedly* regenerate. For although it be possible that some shall be saved who are not regenerate, (as infants not brought to Baptism, or within the covenant,) yet to affirm as an *undoubted* truth,

that baptized infants will be saved presupposes a certainty of their *present* state being *essentially* different from that of infants in general. If they are unbaptized they *may* be saved ; if they are baptized, and freed from the evil of original sin, they *may* be saved. But to make it impossible that they should not be saved, all our divinity would lead us to suppose they have the entire gift of that renovated being, which is not only absolved from sin, but quickened to eternal life.

The rigorous certainty of this inference may be questioned : and we wish not to rely upon subtilities of explanation. We put it therefore only as a fair and probable one, to be accepted or not as any one may choose.

By way of corollary to this part, we shall add a few extracts from the Confessions of some of the foreign reformed churches. It is unnecessary for us to say that we do this neither to shew what the doctrine of our Church is, nor to place it upon a stronger ground of authority. We do not require any foreign aid either to ascertain or uphold our own belief. It may be natural to ask how other churches have thought, or determined, on any given point ; but the inquiry is one of a reasonable curiosity, and nothing more. The communication of our own reformers with foreign divines might have a great influence in making up their mind on many questions. We know also that some parts

of our earliest books of public reformed instruction were copied from works adopted abroad. Still, it is the actual decision, put into form, and established by authority among us, that is the one exclusive standard of our uniformity. Who would venture to judge of the meaning of any man's distinct affirmation, by collecting what other persons had said to him before he made it? And we speak of the creeds of foreign churches under this reserve, not because of any great discrepancy between theirs and ours on the subject now before us, but simply to assign to them their proper place, which is a very retired one, when we are inquiring into the sense of our own tenets. They are members of the universal Church, and they have the substance of reformed truth among them. On that account they deserve to be held in esteem among us. Many of them were in the truth of Christ before us: on that account, too, they must always be mentioned with honour. They instructed our infant Church, and they gave a home to its dispersed members, in persecution and exile. This is another claim to them upon our grateful memory. Far from wishing to undervalue them, we have cause to thank the Giver of all truth for those exertions which they made to restore the purity of the Gospel among themselves, and for the services of support, counsel, instruction, and encouragement which they afforded to us while labouring in the same cause. But this kind of regard does not lead us to accept them as arbiters or witnesses in our own doctrine.

One of the most venerable of the foreign creeds is that which was presented by the Protestant German princes and states to the Emperor Charles V. in the year 1530, at Augsburg, drawn up by Melancthon, in their joint name ; and commonly called the Confession of Augsburg. One article of it is this : *Ecclesiæ magno consensu apud nos* (which is the common formula prefixed to all the articles) ix. *De Baptismo* docent, quod necessarius sit ad salutem, tanquam ceremonia a Christo instituta. Et quod per baptismum offeratur gratia Dei : et quod infantes sint baptizandi : et quod *infantes per baptismum Deo commendati, recipiantur in gratiam Dei, et fiant filii Dei*, sicut Christus testatur, loquens de parvulis in Ecclesia, Matt. xviii. *Non est voluntas Patris vestri qui in cœlis est, ut pereat unus ex parvulis istis.*

Damnant Anabaptistas qui improbant Baptismum infantum, et affirmant infantes sine Baptismo et extra Ecclesiam Christi salvos fieri.

In the Saxon Confession, the Article XIV. de Baptismo is long : the last clause of it is as follows.

Retinemus et infantum baptismum : quia *certissimum est, promissionem gratiæ etiam ad infantes pertinere* et ad eos tantum qui Ecclesiæ inseruntur. Quia de his dictum est ; *Sinite parvulos ad me venire, quia talium est regnum cœlorum.* Et Origines scribit in 6 cap. ad Rom. Ecclesiam ab Apostolis accepisse morem baptizandi infantes. Nec judicamus hunc

morem tantùm otiosam cæremoniam esse, sed *vere tunc a Deo recipi et sanctificari* infantes : quia tunc inseruntur Ecclesiæ, et ad tales promissio pertinet. Extant autem de hac re multa scripta in nostris Ecclesiis edita, quibus refutantur Anabaptistæ. This Confession was presented in the name of the Saxon Churches, at the Council of Trent, in the year 1552.

The Heidelberg Catechism : art. 73. Cur ergo Spiritus Sanctus *Baptismum* appellat *lavacrum regenerationis*, et ablutionem peccatorum ?

Deus non sine gravi causa sic loquitur : videlicet, non solum ut nos doceat, quemadmodum sordes corporis aqua purgantur, sic peccata nostra, sanguine et Spiritu Christi expiari : verum multo magis, ut nobis hoc divino symbolo ac pignore certum faciat, nos non minus vere a peccatis nostris interna lotionem ablui, quam externa et visibili aqua ablutimus.

74. Sunt ne etiam infantes baptizandi ?

Omnino. Nam cum æque atque adulti ad fœdus et ecclesiam Dei pertineant, cumque eis per sanguinem Christi, *remissio peccatorum, et Spiritus Sanctus fidei effector*, non minus quam adultis promittatur, per baptismum discernendi, itidem ut in veteri fœdere per circumcisionem fiebat, cui in novo fœdere substitutus est baptismus.

The † Helvetic Confession, published in 1556, concludes its article *De Sancto Baptismo*, thus: *Damnamus Anabaptistas, qui negant baptizandos esse infantulos recens natos a fidelibus. Nam juxta doctrinam Evangelicam, horum est regnum Dei et sunt in fœdere Dei: cur itaque non daretur eis signum fœderis Dei? Cur non per sanctum baptismum initiarentur, qui sunt peculium et in Ecclesia Dei?*

These several Confessions present to us a very general agreement with our own. The preface to the last of them adverts to this agreement<sup>‡</sup>.

Last of all, we ought perhaps, in this train of secondary illustration, to add some part of the evidence of agreement between our Church and the primitive fathers on the same head. But this we shall decline: we have been too prolix already. The theological reader, (if any such should look at these pages,) who may desire to see that evidence, will have no great trouble in finding it—it is both abundant and clear. Perhaps he may think their language rather too strong. He certainly will have

† It expressed the consent of the ministers of the following Churches: Zurich, Berne, Schaffhausen, St. Gall, the Grisons, Milhausen, and Bienne; to which was added, that of Geneva.

‡ *Colligent itaque et illud (sc. æqui lectores) nos a sanctis Christi Ecclesiis, Germaniæ, Galliæ, Angliæ, aliarumque in orbe Christiano nationum, nefario schismate, non sejungere, atque abrumpere: sed cum ipsis omnibus et singulis in hac confessa veritate Christiana, probe consentire, ipsasque charitate sincera complecti.*

no cause to think that the Church of England, in asserting Spiritual Regeneration by Baptism, has said more than they have done.

We have hitherto not entered into any consideration of the scriptural grounds upon which this doctrine is maintained by our Church, and we shall not now do it, because we have no desire on this occasion to do more than ascertain and state the doctrine itself. The debate upon it has been between members of our communion; and unless a question be raised of the truth and soundness of the baptismal service, the argument does not require that those grounds should now be considered and defended: and if it did, it were a service worthy of a more dignified vindication than could be given to it in our fugitive journal. Some light, however, on this distinct subject also, may be had in those stores of theological learning to which we have already referred—the works of Jewel, Hooker, and Taylor; or in the older works of Cranmer, Philpott, and L. Ridley, reformers. To a fair and candid person, who wishes for the simplest and not least satisfactory information, without creating controversy either to himself or others, we should beg to recommend a perusal of the Baptismal Office. Without presuming to say that he must see in that Office a sound scriptural character, or ought to see it, we yet shall hope that such may be his conviction.

We have observed that in the course of the agita-

tion of this question, two or three causes of doubt have occurred to some who perhaps would never have doubted what was the sense of the service, had they considered it by itself, and not adverted to those surmises of objection from without. We profess not to attempt the regular investigation of them ; yet a most sincere desire to contribute, if by our hasty remarks we could contribute any thing to the satisfaction of any single person's mind on such a subject, induces us to bestow a few words upon them : addressing ourselves not to the distinguished writers, whom if we wished to convince or assist with materials of thought, we ought to be furnished with more elaborate matter ; but to more ordinary persons, who may catch a doubt from the speculations of others, and may also not be disinclined to take a fair suggestion along with them.

It is said, if such be the benefits of Baptism, if infants be regenerated in it, how happens it that in many of them when they are grown up, the signs of such a change are not more visible ? A question keenly put, and which seems to reduce us to a necessity of giving up our first persuasion, unless we can give such a particular proof of it. The case, however, does not reduce itself to that dilemma. We hold it to be most dangerous to our own charity and humility, to be inclined to take up the cognizance of the state of others under a very precise rule, by signs of their Regeneration ; and that which is adverse to those duties in ourselves, cannot be

sound in divinity. Let us be severe in examining our own state, and demand the proofs of it: but to presume against others, because we do not see the marks of their Christian character written in language which we can understand, that therefore they are lost, is to judge where we are not required, and by an insufficient criterion. And further, since those who believe that infants are regenerated in Baptism, may not think that if they live to years of moral agency, they will, by a necessary consequence, also lead a Christian life; since they are not required to conceive of the first regeneration as either inducing a present habit of moral holiness, or as determining the formation of it, afterwards—it must appear that the benefit of Baptism may to their conception be entire, even when actual holiness afterwards is not merely not visible, but where it absolutely does not exist. For unless they state it to be a part of their belief that sanctification once communicated in any degree is not only indelible but also progressive, and progressive into the habits of a good life in every instance, they may believe most consistently in the regenerating influence of Baptism, and yet neither see the permanent and outward effects of it, nor expect to see them expressed in a Christian life. They do not commit a great error in reasoning who say, we see no signs to-day of any given event, and yet we think it happened yesterday. There is indeed a certain system of theology which makes the gift of grace once bestowed, necessarily efficacious to a good life. We

are not now contending either for or against that system of theology, but we think we may assume it as a certain and very obvious position, that to argue backward from the absence not only of the real effect, but of the visible signs of grace, to the proposition that therefore grace has not been bestowed, is a part of that system; and is a mode of argument absolutely untenable in any other system; and therefore that to press other men with the obligation of so reasoning, is, indirectly, to constrain them to the acceptance of that system. And to represent them as inconsistent if they do not so argue, is to make out their inconsistency by one principle taken from their own creed, and another principle which possibly is neither theirs, nor true in itself. We are wishing not to argue against that system, much less to inveigh against it, or those who hold it. Our knowledge of many eminent divines who have taught it, and of excellent men who have lived in it, forbids the thought, even if we had the disposition so to do. But in canvassing this point of Baptismal Regeneration, when we see that in order to obviate the force of those simple words put by our Church into the mouth of every child that has been baptized, "Wherein I was made "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," it is attempted either to reduce them to a sense below that of a real spiritual change, or to do away the plain affirmative tenor of that proposition, by making it conditional and dependent upon the future life, it seems to us,

that we see in this proceeding a mistake of the following nature:—either a determination of the sense of a proposition in some way distinct from a perception of the force of the terms of which it consists, or a determination of its sense through the medium of a questionable hypothesis, and an hypothesis which we cannot assume to have entered into the framing of the proposition. In the first instance, we should separate the terms of the proposition from its sense; in the second, we should be arguing through a system to the meaning of a proposition: which is itself most unsound, much more when the system is our own, the proposition another's. And therefore it should seem to us that the most correct view of the subject is to say, that since the obvious and incontrovertible meaning of the words (for that meaning is incontrovertible which can be evaded only by the process we have described) is a meaning inconsistent with a certain hypothesis; and since the meaning of each proposition must stand good for itself, and make against that which is inconsistent with it; therefore the words of the Baptismal Service which we have quoted do oppose and contradict the hypothesis, and that therefore when the object is to enforce their meaning, the hypothesis must be silent and retire.

The inquiry, what is the extent and the specific nature of the benefits derived from Infant Baptism, if they are not such as to ensure future piety and obedience, is another cause which seems to have

occasioned a doubt in the minds of some, who do not coincide in their general opinions with those to whom we have last alluded. This inquiry is not hard to be answered in a clear and positive way, if we are intent only upon a right perception of general Christian principles : exceedingly hard, perhaps impossible, to be answered, if we give the reins to an excursive curiosity, or press the question into terms of great rigour and preciseness. Looking at the whole dispensation of the Gospel, as a method for the restoration of man, we have one simple end, and one simple cause of that end, before us. Dividing a little further, we perceive that this gracious purpose is wrought out among the several individuals who are made partakers of it, under a great diversity of degrees in the benefit ; that the new creature is as various and multiform as that which was to be renewed ; and that one man is no more exactly the same as another in the kingdom of grace, than in his first nature. Taking the individual for our subject, and judging of him by the light of Scripture, the analogy of reason, and the most probable notices of the actual experience of things, we should say that this restoration takes place in him, not complete at once, but by many degrees of uncertain progress, according to the will of the great new Creator, and the improvement made under His gracious discipline. If we might so apply the words of the Apostle, they are descriptive of what we mean ; “ all these worketh that one and the same “ Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.”

The covenant of the Gospel is the offer of this restoration ; some shall profit by it, and to others it will prove their greater condemnation, so far will they be from availing themselves of its truth, and its manifold assistance. Baptism is the beginning of this state of restoration, according to the positive terms of the covenant. Now it is easy to understand that nature, weak and corrupt in itself, is one state ; and the state of grace, with promise of pardon for sin, and aid of heavenly power continually at hand, is another. And it is not difficult to understand, that infants are as capable of being translated into this better state as their elders : for since they have that, which we call their human nature within them, though its faculties be not yet unfolded ; and since it participates of those accidents in its present condition, which the fuller disclosure of itself will not vary, but only exhibit ; there appears to be no more reason for doubting the capacity of Regeneration in an infant, than there is in one of full years, nor have we any cause at all to doubt the need of it, in the one more than the other. The influence of a sanctifying power may as certainly be communicated to the infant mind as to another ; the grant of release from its inherent corruption may be as certainly conveyed. Do we doubt in infants the principle of a corrupt nature ?—We do not. Then by every analogy, since the abstract nature of contraries may be understood the one by the other, we have no cause to doubt the activity of that new principle, in such way and order, as it may be

given ; no cause, we mean, on account of the difficulty of conceiving it. Looking to all the accidents, we mean not fortuitous, but arranged accidents of moral influence which make up the whole of life, we may apprehend with perfect consistency, how the use or abuse of conscience, and other moral powers, when they begin to act, the good or evil of example, the benefit of instruction, the improvement of Christian communion, or the neglect of it, shall subsequently make such an arrangement among the several members of a community, who had all of them the original grace bestowed, that we may despair of ever reducing each case by itself to its strict account, but may be contented with knowing the sum of the matter in this, as in many other instances ; viz. with knowing the principles by which we and others may be made better or worse ; by which we may improve or desolate our Christian hope ; and we may leave the rest to His unerring wisdom and justice, in whose hands we and all our hopes are, protected by the mercy of the covenant under which we are placed. But in the observation of life we repeat it, that as there are infinite degrees of that faith and obedience which shall ultimately be made perfect in heaven, as we have no means of approach to discern the operation of that principle of life which yields them, our belief of its existence is not to be made dependent upon that which we may be able to see, but upon those large assurances of its cooperation with the members of the Christian Church which are given in Scripture. And much

less ought we to stay till we can state definitely, and under adequate terms, the very process of its influence, or measure by a rule and line the extent of the gift before we believe it to have been actually given.

Another cause which appears to have suggested a doubt, as to the sense of the Church doctrine, is a doubt as to the meaning of a very emphatic passage of Scripture, supposed by some to be not necessarily applicable to Baptism; the words in St. John's Gospel, "Unless a man be born of water and the Spirit," &c. The interpretation which would detach these words from any reference to Baptism, is not ours. Moreover, we think it not only an erroneous one, but so entirely groundless, so manifestly unsound, that we should have the most serious apprehensions of that judgment in the interpreting of Scripture which should follow such a latitude in it. The last commission of our Saviour to His apostles was, "*to make disciples in all nations, baptizing them.*" The first actual preaching of the Gospel, on the day of Pentecost, was, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you.*" The promise was "He that *believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.*" And yet there is a doubt whether the text, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," relate to that method of entering into His kingdom which our Saviour commanded, which by His apostles was applied, and to which the promise of salvation is joined. We are

unwilling to speak severely of any mistake ; but we should not speak truly, if we did not request any person who may entertain this surmise of interpretation, to consider it again. We think it has not the shadow of a foundation to rest upon.—But there are two authorities on this point much better than ours. The first is the authority of the Liturgy itself, in the Baptismal Service, where the Regeneration by water and the Spirit, spoken of in the Gospel of St. John, is distinctly applied to Baptism, the water to the baptismal water, the Spirit to the gift of the Spirit. And this *very relation of the text to the baptismal rite* is made *the groundwork of the service*, and of the doctrine expressed in it. It is clear to demonstration, that the compilers of the Liturgy applied the text to the rite of Baptism ; and that they did so apply it, must be granted even by those who still may doubt, whether the same compilers understood “ the water “ and the Spirit ” to be always joined together.—The other authority is that of Hooker, who speaks not only his own sense, but that of all antiquity also, in explaining those words of the Gospel to apply to the rite of Baptism. His severity of animadversion upon those who would strain it to any other meaning is greater than any common mistake could have extorted from him. The expositors who had so strained it, in his time, seem to have added some degree of unfairness to their error. For he says of them, they had recourse to the disguise of a fact which they knew : and the fact was this, “ that of *all the ancients* “ *there is not one to be named* that ever did otherwise

“ either expound or allege the place, than as implying external Baptism <sup>h</sup>.”

<sup>h</sup> The whole of his comment upon this “ licentious and deluding” exposition, as he considers it, may deserve the attention of every fair inquirer into the meaning of Scripture.

“ For by water and the Spirit, we are in that place to understand (*as they imagine*) no more than if the Spirit alone had been mentioned, and water not spoken of. Which they think is plain, because elsewhere it is not improbable, that the Holy Ghost and fire do but signify the Holy Ghost in operation resembling fire; whereupon they conclude, that seeing fire in one place may be, therefore water in another place is, but a metaphor: Spirit, the interpretation thereof; and so the words do only mean, that unless a man be born again of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. I hold it for a most infallible rule in expositions of sacred Scripture, that where a literal construction will stand, the furthest from the letter is commonly the worst. There is nothing more dangerous than this licentious and deluding art, which changeth the meaning of words, as alchymy doth or would do the substance of metals, maketh of any thing which it listeth, and bringeth in the end all truth to nothing. Or howsoever such voluntary exercise of wit might be borne with otherwise; yet in places which usually serve, as this doth, concerning regeneration by water and the Holy Ghost, to be alleged for grounds and principles, less is permitted. To *hide the general consent of antiquity*, agreeing in the literal interpretation, they *cunningly, affirm* that *certain* have taken those words as meant of material water, *when they know*, that *of all the ancients there is not one to be named that ever did otherwise, either expound or allege the place, than as implying external Baptism*. Shall that which hath always received this, and no other construction, be now disguised with the toy of novelty? Must we needs at the only show of a critical conceit, without any more deliberation, utterly condemn them of error, which will not admit that fire in the words of John, is quenched with the name of the Holy Ghost; or, with the name of the Spirit, water dried up in the words of Christ? When the letter of the law hath two things plainly and expressly specified, water and the Spirit; water as a duty required on our parts, the Spirit as a gift which God bestoweth; there is danger in presuming so to interpret it, as if the clause which con-

Another occasion of doubt has been the use made by many divines of the word Regeneration, when they were not speaking of Baptism. There needs be no embarrassment from any such cause. Every act of the Holy Spirit, upon the mind of the Christian, conducing to form in him the new life, is an act of regenerating power ; every advance of the Christian in that new life, is an increase of his Regeneration. The first gift of new life in Baptism is most properly called Regeneration, because it is the first : setting aside that accident of its being the first, the reason of man shall never be able to pronounce wherein it differs from any subsequent gift conducing to the furtherance of the same state. To have life, and to have it more abundantly, is the privilege of the Christian : he may have life from his birth, whether of nature or of grace ; he may have it also from that which sustains him and aids him to form the perfect man within him. That which is increased, say the old logicians, must be made greater by the continual

cerneth ourselves, were more than needeth. We may, by such rare expositions, attain perhaps in the end to be thought witty, but with ill advice. Finally, if at the time, when that Baptism which was meant by John, came to be really and truly performed by Christ Himself, we find the apostles that had been, as we are, before baptized, new baptized with the Holy Ghost ; and in this, their later Baptism, as well a visible descent of fire, as a secret miraculous infusion of the Spirit ; if on us He accomplish *likewise the heavenly work of our new birth, not with the Spirit alone, but with water therunto adjoined*, sith the faithfullest expounders of His words are His own deeds, let that which His hand hath manifestly wrought, declare what His speech did doubtfully utter."

addition of parts similar to itself. Making allowance for the difference of subjects, we do not perceive any difficulty in understanding how men may be Regenerate in Baptism; and yet divines be continually speaking of another and subsequent Regeneration. The *use* of discriminating terms is always of service; but for the credit of our whole body<sup>i</sup> of theology, we wish to say, that the promiscuous use of the word is strictly correct, though it has proved inconvenient. For the circumstance of priority in time is not a sufficient ground of making two terms for a subject otherwise agreeing in itself. It is one of the differences, which the analysis of language seldom attends to. But considering the importance to our feelings, in the distinction between the beginning of the Christian state, and our confirmation or progress in it; considering that the first dawn and dayspring from on high will always be hailed by the attentive mind with a becoming earnestness; and considering the absolute and eminent virtue which this solemn rite derives from the institution of Him who enjoined it, as the beginning of our new life; it would be more prudent to divide the phrase, and prevent

<sup>i</sup> A passage from Barrow may shew the extent of the synonymy which has been used in this case. Speaking of the Holy Spirit he says, "both these operations (enlightening our minds, sanctifying our wills,) do constitute and accomplish that work which is styled the regeneration, renovation, vivification, new creation, resurrection of a man, the faculties of our souls being so improved, that we become, as it were, other men thereby."—Works, vol. ii. p. 505. And hence one of the English reformers says, that a Christian man's life "is a continual Baptism."

ambiguity in the reader's mind, even where there is none, or need be none in the writer's: and as we are apt to honour the day of our birth, above all others, in the short period of our mortal existence, so to distinguish the day of our Christian birth by an appropriate acknowledgment of it in our ordinary language.

It will be seen that we do not adopt the inference intended to be drawn from the production of inconsistent language, in the use of this term, to inconsistent doctrine. Writers who describe a baptized infant as unregenerated, may not mean that he never had the grace of Regeneration given, but that he has not improved it, that it has been resisted; quenched in him. We have observed some passages where the *same* writer has described the regenerating efficacy of Baptism; and yet, in his practical discourses, has spoken of some of his hearers as unregenerate.—All this is sufficiently consistent.

Again, some stress has been laid upon the analogy between Circumcision and Baptism. It has been said, that they are corresponding rites in the two covenants, each being only an admission into the exterior and visible Church. They are corresponding rites; but the two covenants are essentially different; and according to the difference of the covenants, will be the difference of the analogous parts in each. Otherwise, since there is a very extensive analogy between the two covenants, if there were no differ-

ence in correlative parts, the two covenants would be one and the same ; which they are not. One great difference between them, is in the actual promise of the Holy Spirit, in the latter. Moreover, Christians are baptized *in His name*, importing, no doubt, the covenanted relation, between Him and them. This was not so in the law of Moses, nor the covenant with Abraham. The greater effusion of mercy, in every way, after the exaltation of the Redeemer, is a characteristic difference between the Gospel and every thing besides.

These considerations, however, lead us to the second thing which we proposed ; viz. to endeavour to ascertain the proper style and tenor of instruction to be used in popular discourses, with respect to this topic.

Since the very object of the second inquiry is to attempt that most hazardous duty of giving advice, we entreat the candid interpretation of our readers to the few hints which we wish to offer towards such a purpose ; being aware that it is in itself not very easy to find the true character of sound evangelical instruction, as we may perceive by the great differences, perhaps defects, in the manner of many who are charged with the duty of dispensing it ; and that, in proportion to the uncertainty of the right method, and the consequent need of advice, may be our inability either to discern it or describe it. We are not presuming now to speak of preaching in

general, but only of preaching on the single topic of Christian Regeneration.

Christian privileges, like that great one of being born of Christian parents, who were the instruments of bringing us to God by Baptism, and auspicating our life in the covenant of His Son, may be enforced as a topic of thankfulness, and of encouragement ; of thankfulness for past mercy, and encouragement to hope the continuance of it.

These privileges may also be a topic of most just reproof. Where the advantage has been great, and no proficiency made ; reason makes the condemnation more severe, in proportion to the height of the favour neglected, the calling disobeyed, the heavenly influence resisted.

Such is the constant voice of Scripture also. Indiscriminate exaltation of the mercy of God, as already displayed in any manner, whether in our first calling by Baptism, or by His other gracious acts or promises, may produce confidence, ingratitude, indifference to the hopes and terrors of the life to come. But the energy of warning truth calling for improvement, for faith, for affection, for gratitude, upon the ground of an actual participation in the grace of the mediatorial covenant, is as wise as it is just, and may strike the heart of every Christian who has not actually renounced the terms of the baptismal covenant, and ceased to feel the power of it, by dis-

believing it.—So much for the application of this doctrine to the use of ordinary instruction, if we begin by considering Baptism in itself.

Beginning at the contrary end of the subject, which indeed is the point which presses most strongly upon the preacher's notice, because it is for ever present to his own mind, and meets him perhaps with still more importunate notoriety in the world about him, the actual abundance of sin among those who have been baptized into the Gospel, and have lived professing it, he has here another kind of exercise for the strain of his duty. His work is different, so must be the execution of it. Lethargy, confidence in sin, want of all semblance of Christian charity, disregard to moral and religious obligation, a selfish and worldly mind, can only be pampered by the insinuation of security in the privileges of the baptismal state. It is not for the preacher to say that men have forfeited them irrecoverably, and fallen into the interdicted state, where peace and hope can never come. But the terrors of the judgment to come, the danger of the *unregenerate*, that is, the unreformed life, the fearful condemnation of knowing the Gospel and not living by it, seem not only salutary topics, but strictly necessary: because they are the topics which excite trains of thought and feeling directly adverse to the existing habits; which plant the evil of the sin and the evil of the danger against each other; which shew the person to be warned what he is by the anticipation of what he

may be. On such a subject it would be less useful to speak of what God hath done for him, than what he has not done for himself: less useful to speak of what God hath done for him, than what He may do against him hereafter: less useful to tell him of the sanctification he has received, than of the sanctification he wants.—Not only is there the need of this adaptation of doctrine to different views of the respective condition of those who are to be instructed, but the same individual will require the interchange of support, and reproof, and consolation, and alarm, to sustain him in his Christian course, or to recall him from his deviations from it. We do not divide our congregations into two classes, as regenerate and unregenerate, so known unto us, though, in the eyes of Infinite Wisdom, they may be separated into parts as widely different from each other, as those terms import; but knowing that there is a continual struggle between the principle of nature and the principle of grace in the Church of God, and that each and all need the edification which is to be drawn from all the doctrines of revealed truth; that not only sinners must be checked, and the faithful encouraged, but also that all are sinful, and all may have the fire of grace still burning unquenched within them from that altar from whence it was first taken; and that the minister of truth is to dispense the whole counsel of God; it should seem that the compass of his labour in ministerial doctrine is to preach to men as well that they are regenerate, as that they are comparatively not regenerate, to ad-

vance and set forward the kingdom of God among them by the display of their past blessings, and of the threats pronounced upon their present sins ; and to vary and combine his application, so that all may find their case depicted to them, and may live by his dispensation of the heavenly word, leading them on to perfection, or recalling them to their first principles, as seasons may dictate, or his judgment advise ; or, in the energetic language of the Apostle, to preach the word with fidelity in all its forms, “ in season, and out of season :” for such is his charge. In a word, if he wish to advance the just estimation of the sacraments, let him set them forth in the fulness of the Gospel promises, as appointed means for the initiation and progress of the Christian, in his communion with God. If he wish to encounter the wickedness of the world, let him remind his hearers of “ the debt of baptismal obligation ; of the renouncing the life of sin, of the belief of the Christian faith, of the keeping of the commandments,” and of the sanctions by which these claims are bound upon him in the records of eternity. To omit the one would be to do despite to the institution and promise of Christ ; to omit the other would be to hazard the souls of men, to his own cost and theirs. Both kinds of preaching are true ; both necessary. The one is neither more true nor more necessary than the other ; but under various emergencies of his cure, and various needs of every member of it, each will have its place, each may produce its good. The duty is his, the concern is theirs, whom he has to instruct, the

event is in the hands of Him whose commission he bears, a commission full of wisdom beyond his comprehension ; of responsibility, not for that which he may have effected, but for that which in the fidelity of obedience he may have laboured to do.

The variety of address in the Gospel itself, and in the Epistles of St. Paul, which have been set forth, in a recent work, with so much justice of elucidation, in their system and connexion, as a model of Apostolical preaching, must dictate to our minds the necessity of this comprehensive and combined arrangement of discourse, by which all may be taught their whole concern of religion, and each may find his present state accurately described to him in its mixed nature, through the illumination of the word of God, which “ is sharper than a two-edged sword, “ and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of “ the heart.” If he has been once regenerated, daily renovation is still wanted ; and by whatever name that renovation may be called, it is the right object of his prayers, and his endeavours, and must be the theme of his reiterated instruction. The belief, with thankfulness, that he has been once aided with the Spirit of God, neither supersedes the duty of prayer for the increase of it, nor of his watchfulness to improve by each accession of it. Commensurate with the hearer’s wants and duties must also be the range of the preacher’s instruction.

Whatever relates to the style of practical instruc-

tion addressed to the people is of the greatest consequence. For it is by such instruction that the principles of the Gospel are applied to them, are put to use, are made what they were intended to be, the very mode, if we may so speak, of our existence. It is the ultimate incorporation of them into life which makes the difference in a person, between being a creature of the world, and a creature of the Gospel. Doctrines themselves may be considered in two ways. The first perfection of them is that they be true ; the second and greater perfection of them is that, being true, they be also edifying. On the other hand, error is always obnoxious, simply as such ; but it is of the worst kind when it corrupts. There may be sterile truth, and harmless error. It is not therefore the speculative perfection, nor the mere logical consequence, that makes the great concern in doctrines addressed to the people, but joined with them the stress and bearing which the error or the truth may induce into men, not as reasoning beings only, but made such as they are, that is, to act and be influenced in many other ways according to their mixed nature and their popular character. A sense of this importance in the style of the doctrines addressed to them seems to have originated this whole controversy. Some persons called for another, and, as they thought, a better mode of preaching than they said was prevalent among the clergy : among other improvements they wished the doctrine of Regeneration to be preached, and the need of it to be urged. Now this precise term does not, we suppose, contain

in it the very essence of the Gospel. We are not speaking of the thing implied by it, which is that very essence, but of the word and symbol. We are aware that some words by association and habit have a positive virtue in them, which makes them unexchangeable. But in argument, a correct synonym, or an equivalent phrase, is, when substituted, as good as the original term. Let us assume then, that the thing itself intended by that word is a change of life to Christian holiness : or let any other correct definition of it be given. The one party and the other, in this question, agree in the necessity of urging men to Christian holiness, to a new life, to a new heart. The one say, it is all to begin ; the other say, it was begun in Baptism. Both agree in the need of inculcating it now. If the belief that it was begun in Baptism be likely to check the actual and necessary attainment of it, the doctrine which teaches that belief may be *dangerous*. But if those who believe in its communication in a certain degree to the soul in Baptism press the consciences of baptized persons with the need of daily and continued increase of holiness ; and tell them, as, in conformity with that belief, they ought, that without such moral renovation, in act, and principle, and life, the grace of Baptism will only bring them into heavier guilt ; then they seem to be doing the same thing which the others wish them to do, who affirm that the entire work is still to be done ; for they both allow that the preacher must urge holiness, and the people labour for it.

The principle of practical doctrine admitted by both, is, so far as we have just now considered it, coincident and commensurate on each side. We do not persuade indifference to the severe truth, but it may be of use to shew that both opinions, both systems in the point of Regeneration, when they come to meet the consciences of men, take nearly the same scope and direction, and have the same matter in common. Those therefore who have been animated to the assault of an existing doctrine, upon the motive of a regard to practical holiness and active Christianity, may perhaps see that those whom they oppose may be pursuing the same business as themselves, although they do not set out from the same tenets, nor speak in the same language. The interest of religion may not be absolutely dependent upon the peculiar view which they take of Regeneration : much less upon the very word itself. We know, however, how much men are divided and governed by words, and it is because of their dominion in giving an impulse to the mind that religion and morals are so much concerned in the due appropriation of them. If "Regeneration" be an efficacious word, there is a fair reason for insisting upon it. If others lead to the same effect, the practical interest is saved, and one motive for controversy is so far abated. The accuracy of a right faith may be made a separate question if it should be necessary. But men may be taught the Gospel, safely and effectually, *in great measure*, upon the same grounds by those who think differently of Baptismal Regenera-

tion. At any rate, a high esteem of the value of Baptism does not, either in rigid or in popular argument, undermine the practical reasons for any kind of exertion towards a Christian life. If it be so preached as to operate to this pernicious effect, the wrong belongs to the teacher and not to the doctrine. In discussing the doctrine therefore, there is no sufficient cause for aggravating the discussion with the charge and alarm of an evil tendency on one side to abuse the consciences of men, and blind them with the confidence of a false security. And if there be no sufficient cause for that apprehension, and the controversy be entirely discharged of the burden of it, perhaps the distinct and fair reasons may obtain a more disinterested hearing. For it must be confessed that a zeal for practical religion, mixing itself with the infirmities and misapprehensions of men, may be as injurious to sound religious truth, as it is possible for an erroneous faith to be injurious to the efficacy of religion.

A question sometimes put, which of certain disputed doctrines is most conducive to a Christian life? is premature and unfair, as long as there is any hope of ascertaining which is the true one. For that only which is true, is to be maintained. But among truths, the most improving are to be preferred for the more constant use, and more frequent inculcation. And this is the true province of zeal, in the range of its exertions to spread a living piety in the world, viz. not to make doctrines, but select

and apply them. Upon the supposition, therefore, that our view of Baptismal Regeneration is correct; and with the further knowledge that a daily and present change is still to be made in the hearts and lives of baptized persons: we may account for a fact which we do not wish to disguise; that many of our best divines, such as Tillotson, when they are not writing professedly of Baptism, still make Regeneration the great theme of their discourse, by which they intend the present conversion of men from sin to holiness. Their judgment and feeling probably was, that the more useful topic to be sounded in the ears of their people, was the present debt of their Christian calling. From which judgment and feeling we probably should not dissent.

But when the demand, whether just or invidious, was made upon our clergy to preach the doctrine of Regeneration, it certainly was some answer, to reply, that Regeneration was given in Baptism, and therefore the Liturgy itself took care of the doctrine. It may be, however, that there was too much stress laid upon this one part of the reply, as if it met the whole challenge of the complaint preferred. For the conversion of the man to Christian principles in act, in habit, and in practice, by whatever name that may be called, was not strictly included in the Regeneration of Baptism. If it were included, then so many divines would have mistaken their way, who continued to call men to such conversion, even after they were baptized. Nay those divines are often

silent as to the fruit of Baptism, when they are most strongly inculcating the topics of Spiritual improvement. The answer, therefore, was in some sense a partial one. So far as it related to Baptism, it was correct. But more remained to be said. It has indeed been said, but has lost something of its proper force and prominence, by the comparative stress laid upon the baptismal doctrine. Our hope is, that the clergy of our Church will be found faithful in propounding, with a sincere and enlightened labour, the whole of that truth which is confided to them; and will so furnish a correct and substantial reply to any complaint made against them. If there were any failure in this discharge of their trust, it is neither the refutation of an ill-worded or acrimonious censure, nor the exposure of doctrinal error in those who stir the complaint, which would make amends for a defect fatal to interests too great for controversy.

FINIS.

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