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## **BAPTISM AS TAUGHT IN The Bible and the Prayer Book.**

BY  
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*"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience."*—1 Peter iii. 15, 16.

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## **BAPTISM AS TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE AND THE PRAYER BOOK.**

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FEW subjects have occasioned greater controversy than that of baptism, and few have been discussed with greater eagerness. The baptismal service of the Church of England has been a stumbling-block to many without her pale, and been made the basis of the extreme views

entertained by many of those within. Some have thought it unscriptural, and have resolved in consequence upon separation from our Church; while others have regarded it as containing the Church's principles more distinctly than the Articles, and have founded upon it the doctrine of spiritual regeneration as invariably connected with the sacrament. The object of the present tract is to compare the Prayer Book with the Bible: in doing which it will be needless to attempt any statement of the various opinions expressed upon the subject; our simpler and safer course will be to turn at once to the books themselves.

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## THE BIBLE

of course must claim precedence, and our endeavour will be to ascertain

I. What is the inward and spiritual blessing connected with the sacrament of baptism in Scripture?

II. What is the nature of the connexion?

I. That there are certain high and rich gifts connected with baptism in sacred Scripture must be acknowledged by all who study it in a childlike spirit. Men may entertain different opinions as to the connexion, and even as to the nature of the gifts, but that there are such gifts it is surely impossible to deny. Few words may suffice to shew that the sum and substance of these gifts is a saving union with our Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Cor. xii. 13, it is written, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." That these words apply to the inward and spiritual grace of which baptism is a sign and means, lies on their very surface. They are plainly speaking of an inward and spiritual work, for they ascribe it to the agency of the Holy Ghost himself—"By one Spirit are ye all baptized;" while the use of the word "baptized" is proof of a connexion between this inward change and the outward sacrament. The inward grace is the subject of the passage, and this grace is connected by the language with the outward sign. We are, therefore, fully warranted in employing this text as a description of that blessing with which baptism is connected. It does not teach us the nature of the connection, but it does teach us the nature of the gift. And what is this blessing? The formation of a union with Christ Jesus; an engrafting into the living vine; an incorporation amongst the members of His body. The agent who forms this union is the Holy Ghost. "By one Spirit." And the body with which the union is established is the mystical body of the Lord Jesus Christ; the body of which the Apostle speaks when he says, "And gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body." (Eph. i. 22, 23.)

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It is of the utmost importance that all should bear in mind that this is the great, grand gift to be sought in baptism. The Bible says not a word of the implanting of a principle which may or may not grow in after life; it speaks of nothing short of a union with our Lord in its highest, holiest, and most efficacious sense. If the grace be really given, in the fullest sense in which the words can be used we are made members of the body of our Lord. The same appears from many other passages. In Gal. iii. 26, 27, we read, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." And again, Rom. vi 3, 4, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death." These words are sometimes thought to apply simply to the profession made. As we are not now inquiring into the nature of the connexion, we need not pause to discuss that question: our only object at present is to shew that a union with Christ is the inward blessing with which baptism is connected in Scripture. And this appears plainly in both passages, for the words are, "Ye have put on Christ." "Ye are baptized into Jesus Christ."

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If this be plain, the remainder of our present inquiry will be easy: for there are two changes immediately produced when this union with Christ is formed, viz., a change of condition and a change of heart.

## CHANGE OF CONDITION.

No sooner is a union with Christ established, than there is a complete change in our position before God. When a man is not in Christ, he stands alone, and bears the whole weight of sin, both original and actual. He is like the manslayer outside the city of refuge, or like those who saw the waters of the flood arising, but were themselves outside the ark. Those that are "without Christ" are "without hope," for it is written, (Eph. ii. 12,) "That at that time ye were without Christ" (separate from Christ, not in union with Him), "being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Nothing can be plainer than the contrast here drawn between men without Christ and men in Christ. Those without Him are strangers from the covenant; but those in Him are reconciled, or made nigh by His blood. In Christ they are justified from all things. They are no longer under the curse, because His atonement has removed it from their head. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Coloss. i. 14.) They are no more regarded as sinners, for as their sin has been laid on Christ, so His righteousness is imputed unto them. "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

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## CHANGE OF HEART.

But there will also be a change of heart. It is wholly impossible that there should be a union so close, so intimate, so rich in gifts as this is, without the likeness of our Lord being formed in the heart of Him that is so united to him. The member of Christ must be like Him. This seems so obvious as scarcely to require proof. If we be so made one with Christ as to be accepted in Him, to share the love shewn Him, to be regarded in all respects as members of His body, we must be moulded after His likeness, and changed by the Holy Ghost after His image. The words of St. Paul, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," set this question at rest at once. They shew that there must be a change of heart whenever there is a union with the Lord. The same appears from 2 Cor. v, 17, 18, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, &c." The change here spoken of is not one of condition, or of covenant relationship with God; but a new creation of the soul, a renovation of the habit of the mind, of the thoughts, of the affections, of the whole bearing of the new created spirit. "Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new."

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None, therefore, can claim a union with Christ in whom no such change has taken place. The careless, thoughtless, prayerless professor may be in outward fellowship with the Church; but he is not, he cannot be, partaker of a union with Jesus. No system of man can dethrone from their sovereign authority those awakening words of sacred Scripture, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

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A union with Christ, therefore, involves invariably a change of condition and a change of nature; it only remains that we examine whether these change are connected in the word of God with baptism. If our first conclusion were correct, that a union with Christ is the blessing connected with the sacrament, it ought to follow that these two gifts are connected with it likewise.

What then saith the Scripture respecting the change of condition, or the pardon of our sins? In Acts ii. 38, we read, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And in Acts xxii 16, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Can anything be clearer than that there is a connexion in these passages between baptism and forgiveness?

A similar connexion may be observed between baptism and a change of heart.

In John iii 5, believers are said to be "born of water and of the Spirit." In the passage above referred to, Acts ii. 38, the gift of the Holy Ghost is described as a gift consequent on baptism. "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In Eph. v. 26, there is a clear connexion between baptism and the cleansing power of the word. "That He might sanctify it with the washing of water by the word." (See also Rom. vi.)

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The whole of Scripture, therefore, is harmonious. The great, grand, primary gift is a union with Jesus; and as this is inseparably connected with forgiveness of sin and renewal of heart, so these two blessings are connected with the sacrament of baptism. This is the sense in which throughout the following pages we employ the term "regeneration."

It is important that this definition should be borne in mind, for, if we are not agreed as to the meaning of terms, there can be no hope of agreement in our conclusions. When, therefore, the word regeneration is used in this tract it is in the higher sense just described. It is not used for that admission into the visible church with all its privileges and responsibilities which invariably takes place at baptism; nor is it spoken of as the sowing of a certain seed, which may or may not grow in after life; but it is employed to express the commencement of a new life in the Lord Jesus Christ invariably accompanied by justification and change of heart. I am anxious that there should be no mistake on this point; for those who do not believe in the invariability of baptismal grace are sometimes said to take low views of the sacrament of baptism. But nothing can be further from the fact, for it is just because we take high views of the spiritual grace connected with it that we believe that spiritual grace to be incompatible with the ungodly lives of too many of the baptized.

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We have thus far spoken of these spiritual blessings without attempting to define their connexion with the outward sign. Our only concern, hitherto, has been to shew that there is such a connexion clearly pointed out in the word of God. It now behoves us to examine—

II. Into the nature of that connexion.

1. And first we may remark, that the connexion is of such a character as to lead the Apostles when addressing their converts to assume the spiritual gift to have been received wherever the outward sacrament had been administered. The language of St. Paul to the Corinthians may illustrate what we mean. He is addressing a body of professing Christians, of persons baptized in the name of Jesus, and he assumes without the least caution or qualification that they were really what they professed to be, true, devoted, regenerate believers. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." (1 Cor. i. 2.) So also, as baptism was the visible act of union, he assumes that the Holy Spirit had been pleased to accompany it, and that they had been really united to their Lord; as, for example, when he says "By one Spirit are ye all baptized into one body." The same remark may be made of almost every passage in which mention is made to believers of their baptism. The Apostles gave free scope to their affectionate and hopeful interest; they addressed professors on the assumption that they were in fact what they were in profession; that they had received the gift of which they had received the sign and seal.

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2. But secondly we may remark, that in the doctrinal statements of the Word of God the spiritual grace is proved to be separable from the outward sign.

As there are some passages where baptized believers are addressed, so there are others in which the doctrines of the gospel are defined and taught. The former correspond to the Liturgy, the latter to the Articles of our Church. It is very important to observe this distinction; for in the different classes of passages different modes of expression must be expected. Of course the whole of sacred Scripture, being inspired by the same Spirit, speaks the same truth; but it is one of the perfections of the Bible that it conveys truth in every form both of statement and application. We are bound, therefore, to study these various forms; and without doing so, we can never hope either to receive or convey the mind of God. Now it is obvious we should naturally look for the principle of assumption in that class of passages in which our baptismal privileges are made the subject of personal appeal. If regeneration were not assumed, the appeal would be altogether powerless. If the writer were to pause to fence in his argument, and check himself by his expository cautions, the whole address would be stripped of force and interest. When St. Paul, *e.g.*, with an overflowing heart, writes to the Colossians, "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, &c.," he cannot stop to caution them against presumption, or to point out the necessary signs of their election. Just so in addressing baptized persons, he appeals to them as regenerate without destroying the force of his address by cautions as to the nature of regeneration. Such cautions are given in the doctrinal passages of the Scriptures. To these, therefore, we must turn for exact and dogmatical statements of Christian truth. Now, as in the hortatory addresses of the Apostles, regeneration is invariably assumed until sad facts prove the contrary; so in the doctrinal statements of the Bible invariable grace is no less explicitly denied.

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(1.) In such passages it is laid down as a general law of God's kingdom that no outward ordinances whatever can invariably convey divine grace. It is our privilege, as believers, to expect His presence while in the way of His judgments we wait for His blessing; but "God is a Spirit and they that worship must worship Him in spirit and in truth," nor are we anywhere warranted in asserting that any act on man's part is invariably accompanied with any gift on God's part. He does not bind His gifts to our actions, even if those actions be hallowed by His own authority. Only examine his language respecting all His appointed ordinances.

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*Circumcision.* "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." (Rom. ii. 28, 29.)

*Sacrifice.* Great blessings were attached to sacrifices, but not invariably; for "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind." (Prov. xxi. 27.)

*Prayer.* We know the rich promises attached by God to prayer; but prayer itself may be powerless; for "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." (Prov. xxviii. 9.)

*Preaching.* There is scarcely any ordinance to which such language is applied as is used of preaching. It is "the power of God" (1 Cor. i. 18); the channel by which "faith cometh" (Rom x. 17); an instrument of the new birth (1 Peter i. 23, 25); and nothing less than a means of salvation to the hearer (1 Tim. iv. 16). Yet we must not argue even from this that the personal benefit is invariable; for "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." (1 Cor. i. 18.)

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But are not the two *sacraments* an exception? Certainly not that of the Lord's Supper. The blessing connected with this sacrament is the highest and choicest of which the Christian soul is capable, even the communion of the body and blood of Christ our Saviour. But this is not invariably given, for in some cases the communion is a curse and not a blessing. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (1 Cor. xi. 29.)

We should gather, therefore, from the harmony of God's dealings, that the spiritual grace was not invariably attached to the outward sign in Baptism. We find that under every dispensation He attached certain moral conditions, such as faith and repentance, which were pre-requisites, to any special grace conveyed by His ordinances. If Baptism be an exception to this general law we should expect to find some statement to this effect in sacred Scripture. If there be any deviation from God's wonted principles of religious government we should naturally expect to find the deviation explicitly taught. We might reasonably look for some dogmatical passage in which it is declared that every baptized person is invariably made one with Christ. But it we look in vain for such a passage. There are texts in which the connexion is assumed, but we may safely assert that there is not one single passage in which, as a matter of doctrine, invariability is either taught or proved. If, however, it be an exception to the general law, it must be so from one of two causes. Either there must be something peculiar in its nature as a sacrament, which makes the connexion sacramentally invariable without reference to moral character, or there must be something in the moral character of the recipient which invariably insures the blessing.

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That there is nothing peculiar in its nature as a sacrament is amply proved by the language of St. Peter. "The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet iii. 21). A certain character is here asserted to be needful in the recipient: the blessing is not given unless there be the answer of a good conscience towards God; and there is no sacramental peculiarity which excepts Baptism from the general law, and attaches the gift

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invariably to the sign.

It is argued, however, that infants oppose no obstacle to the operation of Divine grace, and, therefore that in their case the moral character of the recipient invariably insures the blessing. We are not about to discuss this question, for it is not amongst "the things that are written." There is not a word upon the subject in the Scriptures, and, therefore, we can only expect to be perplexed and led astray when we attempt to define and to determine. This, only, we would remark—that there is no argument drawn from the moral innocence of infants to prove their invariable regeneration, which would not equally prove that Esau was as much a child of God as Jacob. They were born on the same day, and of the same parents; they were circumcised by the same persons under the same circumstances, and we leave it to those who believe God's gifts to become invariable through the moral innocence of infants to explain the words of God himself, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." (Rom. ix. 13.)

(2.) Again, In all the doctrinal passages of Scripture the new birth is said to be invariably accompanied by holiness of personal character.

Only refer to the first epistle of St. John, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (1 John iii. 9, 10.) "Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John iv. 7, 8.) "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John v. 4.) "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (1 John v. 18.)

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There are some acknowledged difficulties in these passages; but we make a fearless appeal to any unprejudiced mind: do they not teach beyond the possibility of controversy that the man without faith and without love is not born of God, and that we have no scriptural warrant for calling those regenerate who grow up in sin, who spend their strength in sin, and who go to the grave with the curse of unrepented sin upon their heads?

(3.) The practice of the Apostles accords with these doctrinal statements. They always assumed regeneration in baptized professors until sad facts proved the contrary; but there was a limit to this assumption. And when these sad facts occurred, they declared in language the most explicit that such characters were not regenerate by God.

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The language of St. Peter to Simon Magus in Acts viii, 21, is not addressed to him as to a regenerate man in a state of inconsistency; but to an unregenerate man in a state of false profession. In one sense Simon had believed. Like the devils he had been convinced, but he had no union with his Saviour either before his baptism or after it; and though on the principle of assumption the inspired Apostle had sanctioned his baptism on his profession, on the principle of Christian truth he pronounced him reprobate on the manifestation of his sin. "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God."

The language of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians is of the same character. In 2 Cor. xiii, 5, he says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" The word here rendered "reprobate" is the word which would be applied to false coinage when tested and found wanting. Those, therefore, who were not in the faith were regarded by St. Paul not as regenerate persons who were inconsistent, but as base metal; persons who bore the outward sign of Christianity, but who were not really regenerate, and were, therefore, enjoying no real union with the Lord Jesus.

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Just so St. John wrote of those who had apostatized from the faith. (1 John ii, 19.) "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." In these words there are three things carefully to be observed. First: The persons alluded to must have been baptized professors, who at one time had been in fellowship with the Apostles, for it is quite impossible to suppose them unbaptized at the time when they were "with us," *i.e.* in union and communion with the Church. Secondly: These persons had broken off from this communion, and were openly antichristian in their principles. Thirdly: St. John explains their conduct upon the principle that they had never been what they had professed to be, and describes their desertion of the truth as a manifestation of their real, though previously hidden, character. On the principle of assumption they had been received into the fellowship of the Church of God; but they were condemned as reprobates as soon as sad facts made manifest the falsehood of their profession. We should not fear to rest the whole question of invariable regeneration in baptism upon this one single text. It is impossible to suppose them unbaptized, and with the inspired Word before us it is equally impossible to regard them as regenerate.

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While, therefore, in their hortatory addresses the inspired Apostles always assumed the gift to have been imparted whenever the sacrament had been received, in their doctrinal statements of Divine truth they taught plainly that baptized unbelievers are not to be regarded as regenerate, and that in accordance with the general law of God's kingdom the outward sign of Baptism may be unaccompanied by the inward gift.

We proceed, then, to our next subject of inquiry, namely, the teaching of the Church of England.

As Churchmen we cannot fail to be most deeply interested in the truth and consistency of our Church's system; and when we see it attacked on the one hand, and misapplied on the other, it is

truly refreshing to the spirit to be able to bring it fearlessly to the test of God's unerring word. By the Bible, then, let us boldly try the

## PRAYER BOOK.

In such an inquiry it is our first duty to ascertain what the Prayer Book itself teaches. We care not what men say, write, or think respecting it; our business is with the real doctrine of the book itself, "in the plain and full meaning thereof." We will adopt the same arrangement as before, and endeavour to ascertain

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I. What is the gift connected by the Church with the sacrament of Baptism?

II. What is the nature of the connection?

I. As in the Scriptures, so in the Prayer Book, the gift connected is said to be a saving union with out Lord Jesus Christ.

"Wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."—*Catechism*.

"And humbly we beseech Thee to grant, that he, being dead unto sin, and living unto righteous, and being buried with Christ in his death (taken from Rom. vi.), may crucify the old man, &c."—*Baptismal Service*.

As in the Scriptures, so in the Prayer Book, this union with Christ is supposed to lead invariably to the two changes above stated, viz., a change of condition, and a change heart.

## CHANGE OF CONDITION.

"They that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of an adoption to be the sons of God, by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed: Faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer to God."—*Art. 27*.

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"Regard, we beseech Thee, the supplications of thy congregation, sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin (from Acts xxii. 16), and grant that this child now to be baptized therein may receive the fulness of Thy grace, and ever remain in the number of Thy faithful and elect children, through Jesus Christ our Lord."—*Baptismal Service*.

"We give Thee 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, and to incorporate him into Thy holy Church."—*Baptismal Service*.

## CHARGE OF NATURE.

"What is the inward and spiritual grace?"

"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."—*Catechism*.

"O merciful God, grant that the old Adam in this child may be so buried that the new man may be raised up in him."

"Grant that all carnal affections may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him."—*Baptismal Service*.

There is nowhere In the Prayer Book, any more than in the Bible, the smallest allusion to the idea of a certain spiritual seed being implanted at Baptism, which may or may not grow in after life. Both agree in looking for the highest gifts, and the highest gifts alone. We do not pray that the child may be put merely into a new position, which he may use or not, as it may happen, but that he "may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation." We look for a permanent, lasting, saving change; viz., adoption into God's family, regeneration by the Holy Ghost.

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And as for the idea that the Church looks for baptismal justification without a change of heart as its necessary and invariable accompaniment, we would only ask the advocates of such a theory to explain, if they can, the language of the Catechism, which says that "the inward and spiritual grace is a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." Never, surely, does the Church of England teach that there can be such a death and such a life without an inward and sanctifying change by the Holy Ghost.

II. As to the gift itself, therefore, there is complete agreement. The great subject of discussion, however, is the connexion. By some it is thought invariable, at least in the case of infants; *i.e.*, it is maintained that every baptized infant is there and then, ipso facto, regenerate. Our present object is to shew that such a theory is at variance with the teaching of the Church, for that the inward gift, though assumed upon profession, is explicitly taught to be separable from the outward sign.

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1. The spiritual gift is assumed to have been received whenever the outward sacrament has been administered. The whole of our services are constructed upon this principle. We are all baptized upon a profession of our faith, and all meet in the house of God in the character of baptized believers; the Church, therefore, as a public body, is bound to assume our profession real. This it

does in all its services; so that there is not a single prayer throughout the Liturgy which is not drawn up on the principle of assumption. Upon this principle persons are supposed at their burial to have been believers, as they are assumed in their confessions to be repentant, and at their baptism to be regenerate. Indeed it may be laid down as a general rule that whenever there is anything personal in the bearing of a passage, the person affected is always assumed to be in fact what he is in profession.

This principle of assumption appears as plainly in the Catechism as the Liturgy. There is a great distinction to be observed between the language of the Articles and the Catechism. The Articles teach truth abstractedly—the Catechism in its personal application to the individual who employs the words. In the Catechism, therefore, grace is always assumed. The child is assumed to be a true believer and to be living in the constant habit of thankful prayer, as for example in the words, “I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that He hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: And I pray unto God to give me His grace that I may continue in the same unto my life’s end.”

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Upon the same principle he is assumed in the second answer to have been made in baptism “a member of Christ,” &c. The fourth answer is manifestly drawn up on the principle of assumption; it declares what ought to be, and assumes that it is, the child’s character. The second answer must, in common consistency, mean the same; and it would be just as reasonable to maintain that the Church teaches the invariable prayerfulness of every child who repeats the Catechism, as the invariable regeneration of every child received into its fold by baptism.

Now this principle of assumption is exactly that which we discover in the addresses of the Apostle. Thus far, therefore, there is agreement between the Bible and the Prayer Book.

2. As a matter of doctrine, the Prayer Book teaches, like the Bible, that the spiritual gift is not invariably given in connexion with the outward sign.

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Upon such a subject our chief reference should obviously be to the Articles. They correspond to the doctrinal teaching of the Scriptures, the Liturgy to the devotional and hortatory addresses. In the Articles alone there is no personal application, and, therefore, they alone are free from the principle of assumption. As we have before remarked, they deal with abstract truth; and contain a scheme of theology carefully drawn up for the security of the Church. To them, therefore, we are bound in common sense to refer for all dogmatical assertions as to the doctrinal principles of our Church.

Now it is quite impossible for any language to be simpler and clearer than that of the Articles.

Of both sacraments it is said, Art. 25, “In such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect and operation; for they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves damnation, as St. Paul saith.” And of Baptism, Art. 27, “It is a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church.”

The doctrine of these passages exactly corresponds with that of Scripture. They deny in the plainest possible language the invariability of the connexion; they define the two sacraments by the same conditions; they make not the most distant allusion to any sacramental peculiarity in baptism; but assert of both with the most positive distinctness, that in such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect and operation.

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Nor is there any exception in the case of infants. Our Reformers in framing the Articles adhered most resolutely to their Bibles, and when the word of God was silent they were silent also. There is no exception respecting infants in the Scriptures; there is none therefore in the Articles. They state as much as, and no more than, the word of God itself instructs them. Nay more, it is plain, both from the Catechism and the Baptismal Service, that no such distinction is recognized. The Catechism does not set aside the necessity of faith and repentance in the case of infancy, but supposes it satisfied by the promise of the sureties. So, also, in the Baptismal Service, the same questions are asked as are asked of adults. There is not the least distinction in respect of infancy; nor the least hint at invariable moral qualification, setting aside the necessity of a positive declaration of the Christian faith. Of course there are difficulties connected with the baptism of unconscious children, but these have nothing to do with our present subject. All that we are now concerned with is the fact that our Church makes no distinction in their favour, but that in every instant she requires a certain confession, and thereby in every instance denies the invariability of the connexion between the inward gift and the outward sign. <sup>[29]</sup>

p. 29

Again, therefore, we find complete and exact agreement between the Prayer Book and the Bible. In all personal passages the connexion is assumed. In doctrinal statements moral conditions are required, and the invariability of the connexion is denied.

This distinction is the simple key to the two passages in the Baptismal Service which have occasioned so much discussion. “Seeing, now, dearly beloved, that this child is regenerate.” “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, and to incorporate him into Thy holy Church.”

p. 30

If the preceding argument be correct, the question with reference to these passages is obviously reduced to this: Are they the language of strong faith assuming the gift given when the outward act had been duly performed? Or, are they a dogmatical statement of the doctrine that every baptized infant is by that act regenerate by the Holy Ghost?

It can scarcely be denied that the prayer is drawn up in the spirit of assumption; we may confine the question, therefore, to the declaration. Now, if there be any truth in the rule that where there is anything personal in a passage, the person affected is always assumed to be in fact what he is in profession, it must apply to these words which are pre-eminently personal in their character. Earnest prayer has just been offered; the Church has done her utmost to arouse the spirit of repenting faith; a declaration of faith and repentance has just been made; and the sole object of the sentence is to move the congregation to united thanksgiving and prayer.

Assumption, therefore, is absolutely necessary to the construction of the service; thanksgiving would be impossible without it; and if, in such circumstances, the Church did not assume the gift, she must be compelled to stop the mouth of God's faithful children, when they would pour forth the gratitude of a hopeful and overflowing heart.

p. 31

This view of the passage is confirmed by the similar assumption in the corresponding prayer after the reception of the other sacrament "Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank Thee, for that Thou dost vouchsafe to feed us, who have duly received these holy mysteries with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ," &c. Here are two assumptions—1st, That all the communicants have received the sacrament duly; and 2nd, That they have all been fed with the spiritual grace of which it is a sign. But no one with the Articles before him can suppose that the Church intended to teach that every communicant invariably feeds on the most precious body and blood of Christ.

At the same time it may be proved, with the certainty of mathematical demonstration, that these words are not the language of assertion. It cannot be believed, with the 25th and 27th Articles before us, that our Church asserts the invariability of regeneration in all adults who are baptized. No language could be more decisive or distinct than theirs. "In such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect and operation." But on turning to the Service of Baptism for Adults, we find the very same words used as are employed for infants, "Now that this person is regenerate." It must be obvious to any man, that if these words are to be understood as a positive doctrinal assertion of invariable regeneration in adults, they are in flat contradiction to the Articles. If they are intended to assert the doctrine that every baptized adult is regenerate, they are in exact and direct opposition to the passages quoted above, which teach most carefully that every baptized adult is not regenerate. If this be the real meaning of our Service, the Prayer Book, in this matter, flatly contradicts itself. If, on the other hand, the passage in the Baptismal Service be the language of assumption, all is harmonious. In its statement of doctrine, the Church gives the caution; in its application to the individual, it confidently and unreservedly assumes the gift. In the case of adults, therefore, the language must be that of assumption, not assertion. But there is an exact identity between the words used for infants and adults. In this respect there is not a shade of difference between the two offices. "Now that this child is regenerate," says the one; "Now that this person is regenerate," says the other. Is it consistent, is it logical, is it common sense, to say that one thing is meant in one passage, and another thing in another? That one thing is meant on the 81st page, and a totally different thing by the same words on the 84th page of the same book? That one is assertion, while the other is admitted to be assumption? Common sense demands that in the same book, the same words should mean the same thing. The two passages must therefore be either both assumption or both assertion. Assertion is impossible in the one, and, therefore, assumption is logically necessary in both.

p. 32

p. 33

There is, therefore, throughout the Prayer Book a beautiful agreement with the Bible. They both, in hortatory passages, assume regeneration where faith has been professed, and the sacrament administered. They both in doctrinal statements teach distinctly that baptized persons are not all regenerate. The Churchman needs no more than this agreement for the satisfaction of his conscience. There may be one or two expressions which he may wish could be so modified as to make clear at a glance the Church's meaning without the necessity of comparing them with the Articles. But still, on the great Protestant principle of the sovereign supremacy of the Bible it is enough for him that the Liturgy is scriptural, and that the Word of God has supplied the model for its construction. It is scriptural in its silence, in its assumptions, in its assertions. It says nothing where the Bible gives no guide, and therefore makes no distinction between adults and infants; it assumes where the Bible assumes, and therefore speaks of all baptized persons as regenerate; and with the Bible as its authority, it asserts, in language the most unequivocal and explicit, that baptized persons are not invariably regenerate, for that the gifts of divine grace are not invariably connected with either of the sacraments which God has appointed in His Church.

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## FOOTNOTES.

[29] The rubric at the close of the baptismal service is sometimes quoted in opposition to the above statements. "It is certain from God's word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved." From this it is argued, that the Church does enter into the particular case of infants, and teach their invariable regeneration. "If saved," it is said, "they must be justified—and if justified regenerate. Hence, as the Church declares all dying children to be saved, she teaches thereby that all baptized children are regenerate." The unsoundness of such an argument is best seen by following it to its conclusions: for it would be quite as sound reasoning to say that if justified they must be believers, and if believers, possessed of judgment and responsibility. The fallacy lies in this: it is taken for granted that God applies the saving blood of Christ in the same way, and the same way alone, to unconscious infants and responsible adults. As there is no foundation for this in Scripture, the whole argument falls to the ground. Would that churchmen were content to follow the example of our Church, to accept the assurance of infant salvation without straining it into a system, or attempting to define what God has left unrevealed!

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