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BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

BY THE RIGHT REV. E. A. KNOX, D.D., late Bishop of
Manchester.

"More, they (the Romanists) said he was no perfect Christian that was not anointed by the Bishop with his holy oil. This was another abuse. For whosoever is baptized receiveth thereby the full name of a perfect Christian, and hath the full and perfect covenant and assurance of salvation; he is perfectly buried with Christ, doth perfectly put on Christ and is perfectly made partaker of His resurrection" (Jewel's *Treatise of the Sacraments*).

THE object of this paper is to state, as clearly as is consistent with brevity, the doctrine which is at the back of our present service of Holy Baptism, and its relation to the service of Confirmation. Technical terms of controversy will be excluded, as far as possible. The desire of the writer is to enable the ordinary layman to form a judgment on the changes proposed in the revision of these two services. For the educated lay member of the Church has a right to be put in a position to judge for himself. He ought not to be warned off by injunctions to trust liturgical experts. For his faith the English Churchman is, by the constitution of his Church, directed to Holy Scripture. He is taught to give weight to tradition—the liturgical expert's quarry—only when such tradition is not at variance with Scripture. Churchmen are entitled to exercise jealous care that Prayer Book revision is not made the opportunity for reinstating traditions that were rejected by our Church as contrary to Holy Scripture.

I

BAPTISM THE SACRAMENT OF REGENERATION AND OF INCORPORATION INTO THE CHURCH

In dealing with the Sacrament of Baptism it is essential, first of all, to fix the meaning of the word "Sacrament," and then of the word "regeneration."

"A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us." For the moment we will set aside the words "ordained by Christ," and will assume that "given" refers to the "grace" and not to the "sign"; a point open to dispute. "It is a means whereby we receive grace and a pledge to assure us thereof." We are bound to ask "Who is the giver of the grace?" There can be only one answer, "The giver is God." We must also ask, "To whom does He give the grace?" There can be only one answer, "God gives the grace to those who receive the grace." The actions of God, if we may use such a term, or rather "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xl. 29). This is not a mere incidental remark in the course of an argument about God's dealings with Israel. We

must try to conceive of God as He truly is—not as one of ourselves, subject to conditions of time and space, affected in His purposes by that which happens under conditions of time and space. God is. With Him is neither yesterday, to-day, nor to-morrow. We are, indeed, bound to take His promises and warnings, as they are set forth to us in Holy Scripture. We are bound to act as those who are truly responsible for their actions, as those who can accept or reject the love of God. Yet, when we come to speak of a gift of God, and remember that the gift in question is the gift of Himself, whereby He makes us partakers of the Divine Nature, no such gift as that can be thought of as revocable. We may deceive ourselves with reference to it. We may think that we possess it when we do not. But, if God gives such a gift, and confirms His act by an outward and visible sign, a pledge to assure us thereof, if He gives us that sign as a means whereby our faith is enabled to receive the gift, then we pass into a world of realities and certainties, and those, who are baptized by the Holy Spirit in the baptism of water, are beyond all manner of doubt the children of God. The difficulties about Sacraments do not exist, never come into view, so long as we regard them strictly as visible confirmations of what God has already done. The difficulties do not begin, until we assume that human acts are binding upon God, that armies baptized by platoons against their will, or infants of heathen parents baptized indiscriminately, or even infants of godless parents in Christian countries, are all partakers of the Divine nature, because of the fact of their having been baptized. Then it becomes necessary, either to weaken the efficacy of the Sacrament, or, in the case of Baptism, to evacuate “regeneration” of its Scriptural meaning. Either we say that the Sacrament is a *symbol* (of the necessity) of new birth; or that new birth means endowment with faculties and powers to *become* the child of God, which faculties and powers may be atrophied by failure to use them. In either of these cases a low and unscriptural view is taken of the word “Sacrament.” It is clear also from the foregoing considerations, why a Sacrament must be ordained by Christ, and why no rite can be a Sacrament, unless it is ordained by Christ. Only the Giver can ordain visible confirmations of His gift.

We now pass to the meaning of the word “regeneration.” It is, of course, the equivalent of new birth. If one thing stands out pre-eminently in the whole New Testament it is that there is a spiritual birth which is distinct from the natural birth, that natural birth does not convey, nor confer, spiritual birth, and that without this spiritual birth we cannot enter into any sort of relation with God. So far we are on common ground. But we, who are familiar with infant baptism, are apt to overlook the fact that new birth is the equivalent of new creation, and that new creation means “actual conformity with God in character and conduct” (C. Gore, *The Holy Spirit in the Church*, p. 129). Regeneration suggests to us an *infant* life with capacities and powers wholly undeveloped, a state of innocence, perhaps, but not of positive and active good-

ness. Such notions are wholly erroneous. There is nothing in Scripture that corresponds to them. We read no doubt (1 Peter ii. 7) of an appeal to Christians "as newborn babes long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation," but in the same breath the Apostle says (ver. 9) "ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellences of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." So, we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews (ver. 12) "ye are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food." But it is a disgrace to the Hebrews that they are in such a backward condition, and, in fact, in danger of falling away. So again, S. Paul exhorts the Ephesians (iv. 14) to be "no longer children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine," but "to grow up in all things unto Him, which is the Head, even Christ." But this childish estate is not wholly analogous to the childhood of natural life. In natural life childhood is a necessary condition. It is no disgrace to children that they are children, speak as children, feel as children, think as children. But to the Christian, who is a new creature in Christ, such immaturity is a reproach. He has become a man. He must put away childish things. He is no longer a child (Gal. iv. 1) "differing nothing from a bondservant . . . under guardians and tutors. . . . He is no longer a bondservant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." We have to keep such passages well in mind when we speak of "regeneration."⁴ It is hardly necessary to add that the New Testament writers do not contemplate in those, who are physically children, the spiritual experiences of full-grown men. Regeneration in those who are physically children will manifest itself in speech, behaviour, and thoughts suitable to childhood. But, for all that, it will be in childhood a *relation to God* identical with regeneration in manhood. In childhood, just as much as in manhood, it will mean "actual conformity with God in character and conduct." The infancy and boyhood of Jesus Christ in no way affected the reality and completeness of His Godhead. Regeneration means, in short, the indwelling of Christ in us by His Holy Spirit. Nothing less than this corresponds to the idea of the new birth or new creation. How it comes to pass that the regenerate do commit actual sin is another question, which must be considered presently.¹

Another source of the difficulties about Baptism arises from the fact that it is a Sacrament of incorporation. The child of God is also a member of Christ, that is, a member or limb of Christ's Body, the Church. As long as we think of the Church as an external corporation tracing its historical origin to Apostolic times, there seems to be no reason at all why incorporation into it should be a Divine act, or be attested by a Divinely ordained symbol: why Baptism should be a *Sacrament* of incorporation. Corporations are

¹ A beautiful picture from life of a "regenerate child" is presented in Dean Inge's account of his child Margaret Paula (Inge's *Personal Religion and the Life of Devotion*, pp. 90-end).

perfectly competent to institute their own ceremonies of admission. If they are religious corporations it is natural that those ceremonies should be of a religious character, that symbolic acts should attest what is being done, and that prayers should be offered on behalf of the Neophyte. But in all these arrangements there is no room for a Sacrament, for the putting forth of an act of Divine grace. On the other hand, if, among the Divine realities, there is a company "whose names are written in Heaven," a society of the redeemed whom the love of God has gathered into communion with Himself, it is not only fitting, but even necessary, that incorporation into this company should be by means of a Sacrament, for into this company none but God Himself can admit any one. On the other hand, by appointing a Sacrament to be performed by men, and in the world of time, God has been pleased to use human agency for administration of the Sacrament. That agency is the Church, and, for practical purposes, that means for us the Christian community in which the Providence of God has placed us. That this community should look upon baptism as admission into its society is right and natural. It is natural also that it should pray and believe that God should do what no human agency can do, that He should incorporate the baptized into the communion whose names are written in Heaven. But, just because we believe in the efficacy of the Sacraments, we dare not assert that every baptized person is so incorporated. We pray for this, we charitably assume this in our baptismal prayers. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut. xxix. 27); "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. ix. 6).

II

THE SINS OF THE REGENERATE

We return then to the question asked before. We inquire how it comes to pass that, if regeneration means "actual conformity with God in character and conduct," sin is found in the character and conduct of the regenerate. That it is so found is admitted by S. John, although he says (1 John iii. 9) "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because His seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God." This is the paradox stated as boldly as words permit (1 John i. 8), "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves" and (1 John iii. 9) "Whosoever is born of God doeth no sin." It has been suggested very forcibly (Law's *The Tests of Life*, pp. 226-28) that the Apostle is here indignantly repudiating the possibility that a man can be a child of God, and at the same time an evil-liver, and yet not cease to be the child of God. That is quite impossible. It is a contradiction in terms. On the other hand we have to remember that our "begetting" is a re-begetting. "If in our case there were no other element than the seed of God present in our nature—no 'old man' to put off, but only 'the new man' to put on—this would be actually true of us (Law, p. 227) (as it was true of Christ). Or, as Bishop

Moule puts it (*Veni Creator*, p. 178), "we see the believer, mortal, sinful, the ceaselessly needy recipient of mercy from first to last, yet so wonderfully visited and inhabited by his Regenerator, his Sanctifier, that along the lines of his own real will there runs the power of the personal Presence, yea, of the personal character, of the Lord the Life-giver. The more the man humbly, in watchfulness and prayer, but with entire willingness and simplicity "yields himself unto God" thus present, "the more shall he, intact in personality, have carried out in him the workings of that mind." The new birth is not therefore the destruction of our personality, and its replacement by another. There remains the self that came into being with our natural birth, with its inherited propensities, and its natural tendency to imitate the world around it and to borrow from that world its standards of right and wrong, "The infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerate" (Article IX). Whenever that self breaks away from the power of the indwelling Spirit, asserting its independence, at once the regenerate falls into sin. But, if he is indeed regenerate, in his regenerate personality he detests and abhors these aberrations, for they are a dethronement of the Personality to Whom he has surrendered his inmost being, a rebellion that must be instantly subdued by falling back upon the Power to which he has committed himself.

The hall-mark of Regeneration, as taught in the New Testament, is the attitude of the regenerate towards the law of God, not only the ceremonial law, but also the moral. To the unregenerate and yet conscientious man the Divine law is just and holy and good. But it presents itself as a body of restraints, inhibitions, and infringements of freedom. That is the view of morality that dominates modern fiction. The hero is always represented as too great, too noble for conventional bonds. Obeying some impulse of his nature, he breaks through them, and emerges into a land of enlightenment, where the story leaves him, as often as not, in the society of his neighbour's wife. The liberty achieved is the liberty of the volcano or earthquake. But it has been an escape from inhibitions. Another attitude to the law of God is that of the man who uses it for self-discipline. Recognizing the righteousness of it and the revolt of his natural self against it, he determines either in his own strength, or by Divine assistance, to work out by obedience a better and nobler self. His life becomes a life of self-chastisement. Two great moral dangers attend it—the danger of despair through the failure of self-discipline, and the danger of self-righteousness, if he is so foolish as to contrast his own with the undisciplined lives around him. The Scripture teaching of regeneration puts the will of the regenerate into harmony with the law of God. For it is the Divine law-giver Who rules in the personality of the new man, so that he loves the things that God commands, and hates what God forbids. But, all along, the regenerate is conscious that it is not his natural self that has acquired these new tastes. It is the spirit of Christ in him that so moves and prompts him. But the Spirit does more. He reveals increasingly the alienation from God, and

the corruption, of the man's natural self. Self-righteousness is wholly inconsistent with true regeneration. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

One more difficulty remains to be considered before reviewing the Baptismal services. The more meaning we attach to regeneration, the more necessary does it seem at first sight, that Baptism should be deferred until the new birth has manifested itself, and the more unsuitable appears to be the practice of Infant Baptism. But surely this is to assume that no one can be regenerate until he can both be conscious of regeneration, and give some account of it. Is that really true? Is the free grace of God limited to adults? No one would maintain that it is. The act of free love by which the Holy Spirit of God takes hold of human personality and subjects it to Himself is due to no merit of ours, cannot be brought about by any process of reasoning or self-discipline. Indeed infants have this advantage over adults, that there cannot be any suggestion of merit of their own to offer. Therefore, tender age brings no bar to the grace of God: why should it be a bar to the sacrament of His grace? For the sacrament is a means which God uses in His work of regenerating the soul.

III

THE BAPTISMAL SERVICES: DIFFICULTIES OF REFORMERS

We may now pass to consideration of the Baptismal services, which could not be rightly understood without first knowing what is meant by the Sacrament of Regeneration. The compilation of those services must have presented greater difficulties to our Reformers than any other part of the Prayer Book. They were building on the principle that nothing was to be required as necessary to salvation which was not contained in Scripture, or to be proved and concluded from Scripture. But there is not in the New Testament any explicit mention of the baptism of an infant. On the other hand, they themselves, and the whole nation, had been baptized as infants. If Infant Baptism could not be concluded from Holy Scripture, then there were no baptized Christians alive, except the Anabaptists on the Continent, whose wild excesses had discredited their doctrine. Was it possible to establish the baptism of infants on firm foundations of Scripture? Such baptism could be traced clearly to the times immediately after the Apostolic writings. But on what foundation had it rested?

On the one hand, the whole New Testament taught the necessity of a new birth, and connected that new birth with baptism. On the other hand, it represented the baptized as "having put on Christ," as "led by the Spirit of God," as "risen with Christ" from the death of sin to a life of righteousness. But there were evidently, already, baptized persons, of whom such statements were manifestly untrue, Ananias and Sapphira, Demas, Alexander the coppersmith, Diotrephes. Either baptism and regeneration must be the beginning of a life which came to nothing, the begin-

ning of an eternal life which ended in time, or else it must be possible to receive baptism with profession of faith and repentance, and yet not to receive the new birth. So much was quite evident from Scripture. But it was also evident that, even in the case of adults, the love of God and the action of His free grace preceded the conversion, the repentance, and the faith of the baptized. The act of God in eternity preceded, and was the cause of, all that took place in time. It was not the merit of the convert's repentance nor any natural faith of his that produced regeneration. In fact, he could not truly repent or believe till he was regenerate. If this were so—and from New Testament teaching who would doubt it?—a strong case, an irresistibly strong case, was established for bringing to baptism, and so including in the Christian community, infants who would otherwise be spiritually orphans. To keep them unbaptized was to repeat the fault of the disciples, who would have driven away the babes whom their mothers brought to our Lord. So the Reformers considered that "the baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ."

It remained to express this belief in a form of service which should preserve all that agreed with it in Pre-Reformation use, and bring out more clearly, by additions or alterations, the grounds on which infant baptism was administered, and the grace of that sacrament.

CHANGES INTRODUCED : (1) PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

(1) To effect this purpose, it was necessary, first of all, to make the administration of the sacrament, normally and usually, a public act of the Church. Hitherto, children not born within eight days before Easter, or eight days before Whitsuntide, had been baptized as soon as they were born. Theoretically, lay baptism was only allowed if the child was likely to die—practically, it may have been much more common. The child so baptized was brought to church to be made a catechumen. This was, normally, the public service, solemn and public baptism being reserved for Easter Day and the vigil of Pentecost. For these regulations was substituted our present rule of baptism on Sundays and Holy-days, "when the most number of people come together, and as part of Morning or Evening Prayer." It is deeply to be regretted that this most wise reform has fallen into disuse. Neglect of it has done more than anything else to obscure the meaning of Holy Baptism.

(2) THE FONT WATER

(2) In the next place, pure water, poured into the font at the time of baptism, was substituted for a compound of water with wax, oil and holy chrism. Symbolism, more or less innocent in origin, had resulted, as it often does, in superstition. The prayers used in this benediction of the font had encouraged and fostered superstition. "May the virtue of the Holy Spirit descend upon

the fulness of this font and fertilize all this substance of water with regenerating effect. Here may the stains of all sins be blotted out. Here may nature built up in Thy likeness, and restored to the glory of its first beginning, be purged from all the squalor of its old estate, that every one who enters this sacrament of regeneration may be born again to the new infancy of innocence." In the Prayer Book of 1552 there was left not even the petition which we now have: "Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin." The benediction of the font fostered superstitious ideas. Mystic virtue was believed to reside in the font water. In fact, it had become necessary to forbid its being sprinkled on the bystanders at the font.

(3) EXORCISMS

(3) *Thirdly*, it was necessary to remove a frequent repetition of exorcism. The child, even though baptized, was regarded as possessed of Satan: "Cursed devil, recognize thy sentence and give honour to the true and living God: give honour to Jesus Christ His Son and to the Holy Spirit: and depart from this servant of God in as much as God and our Lord Jesus Christ *has vouchsafed* to call him to His grace and benediction and to the baptismal font, by the gift of His Holy Spirit." This kind of exorcism was repeated at least four times in the service. The salt also that was placed in the child's mouth was exorcised. So was the font water before the various compounds were added to it. The deliverance wrought by the Risen Lord, "From him that had the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. iii. 14), was but imperfectly realized in the mediæval world. The service reflects in every page the terrors under which the pagan world had lived. We owe to our Reformers, who abolished these exorcisms, a liberation of which little is known or thought to-day.

(4) OTHER CEREMONIES

(4) *Fourthly*, besides the mixing of the font above mentioned, the following ceremonies were made to cease: placing exorcised salt in the child's mouth, laying of the priest's hand on the top of the child's head, placing the priest's spittle in the child's ears and nostrils, and placing a lighted taper in the child's hand. In the Prayer Book of 1549 were retained the giving of the chrisome,¹ and the anointing of the infant. But these were removed from the book of 1552, and in both books the one signing with cross (in place of several crossings) was explained to be a token of enlistment in Christ's army.

(5) SPECIAL GOSPELS

(5) *Fifthly*, a gospel declared by the doctors to be efficacious against falling sickness was removed (St. Mark ix. 17-30), and the gospel, St. John i. 1-14.

¹ The baptismal robe.

But these changes give a very imperfect idea of the really revolutionary alterations wrought especially by the Prayer Book of 1552. For, although several petitions were collected out of the former office, these relics serve rather to illustrate the freedom with which the old material was handled and the greatness of the change effected. The old service consisted of three parts: the making of a catechumen, the benediction of the font, and the rite of baptizing. Of these, the benediction of the font was occasional. It disappeared. The actual rite of baptism was usually domestic (although the sponsorial questions and answers, the anointing, the chrisome, and the giving of the taper included in that rite, were taken in church). All these were recast. The making of the catechumen, predominantly a process of exorcism, disappeared. The new service was essentially a service of public baptism.

IV

THE NEW SERVICE

The new service was made to consist of the following parts: (1) prayer for the regeneration of the child; (2) reading of a gospel, to assure the godparents that the prayer had been heard, and that Christ had promised to bestow all that had been asked; (3) the child's promise, through his godparents, of repentance, faith and obedience; (4) prayer that the child, already received by Christ, forgiven, and gifted with the new birth by the Holy Spirit, might realize in the actual warfare of life the privileges of which he had been made partaker, with the grace of perseverance to the end, especially that all things belonging to the Spirit might live and grow in him; (5) the actual baptism, followed by reception into the congregation, and enlistment into Christ's army; (6) thanksgiving for the mercies received; (7) exhortation to the godparents on their duties.

ITS CHARACTERISTIC BOLDNESS

The contrast between the two services cannot be too strongly emphasized. The old service made the baptized child a catechumen, and completed the baptismal rite by ceremonies charging the child to preserve the innocence with which he had been invested, to guard his baptism, and to keep the commandments, that he might have eternal life. It was essentially a service which removed obstacles, the indwelling of Satan and the guilt of original sin. It was a service which bestowed new birth, grace of innocence, and of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but left the final entry into eternal life dependent on the use made of this initial grace. The new service, on the other hand, storms heaven, asks for eternal life, asks for partaking of the Kingdom of Heaven, asks for victory and triumph over all spiritual obstacles, and leaves no room for doubt whether these prayers have been heard, but assures the godparents that they have been heard, and gives thanks to God that

He has received the infant for His own child by adoption and has incorporated him into His Holy Church. Especially, it should be noted that the old service contains no mention of incorporation into God's Holy Church.

PRAYER FOR INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Before we pass on, attention must be drawn to a prayer in the Pre-Reformation service which appears at first sight to be absent from the Reformed, that is, the prayer that the baptized may be "a temple and habitation of God." It has even been asserted that our baptismal prayers contain no petition that any such gift may be bestowed. Thus Canon Mason writes (*Relation of Baptism and Confirmation*, p. 247), "'Give Thy Holy Spirit to this infant,' so the Church prays immediately before the christening of the child, but adds at once, 'that he may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation.' The nature and extent of the gift to be expected at the font is defined and restricted. It is such a gift, or impartition, as regenerates, not *that which takes up its abode* in the regenerate." In making this distinction Canon Mason appears to have overlooked the words, which do in fact correspond with the Pre-Reformation petition, "Sanctify him with the Holy Ghost." "Grant that *all* things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him." There is no sanctification apart from "indwelling." It is the indwelling and abiding that "sanctifies." For holiness belongs to God alone. It should be added that Divine indwelling is implied in the prayer for incorporation into the Church. The child, incorporated into Christ's Holy Church, is one of those "several buildings" of which the Apostle writes (Eph. ii. 21) (in Christ): "Each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple, in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." The conception that anyone can be a member of Christ, and of His Holy Church, and yet not "an abode" of the Holy Spirit, does violence to the very elements of Christian faith. Neither our own service, nor the Pre-Reformation service, gives any sanction to such an idea.

THE EFFECT OF BAPTISM AS TAUGHT BY THE NEW SERVICE

The result of the foregoing examination of our baptismal service seems to establish one point very securely. The Reformers did not depreciate the sacrament of baptism, so far as its spiritual efficacy was concerned. On the contrary, they retained all that they found in the old liturgy of the blessings attached to it, and added others. They also expressed themselves with a confidence not to be found in the old liturgy that the prayers which they offered had been heard. They were not afraid to lay themselves open to the inevitable challenge to reconcile their service with the conditions of actual life. They were fully aware that a large number—let it be so affirmed, if men would, that the majority—of the

baptized did not "lead the rest of their lives according to its beginning." They would have answered that baptism was no magical charm by which sinners were converted into saints; that it was one thing for God to bestow the fulness of His grace, another thing for man to receive it; that nothing would be gained by waiting till men and women gave evidence of conversion to God in their outward life and profession—the story of the Anabaptists was proof enough, how deceptive such evidence might be. Whether the baptized were an infant or an adult, he must be baptized on the assumption that the love of God had called him out of the sinful world into the Holy Church of God. It was also more true to the principle of faith to claim all that God had to give, before the child had done anything to deserve His gifts. At the same time, they were far from regarding the future with indifference—very far, indeed, from forgetting that open confession of Christ is an indispensable condition of discipleship. They made careful provision for the responsibility of the Church to the baptized, and of the baptized to the Church.

V

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH TO THE BAPTIZED

The responsibility of the Church to the baptized. For this purpose the sponsorial system was retained and developed. "The use of sponsors in baptism is of early date. In the time of Tertullian it was established" (i.e. at the close of the second century and beginning of the third) "and is thenceforth frequently mentioned. In the case of adults the sponsors guaranteed the candidate's character, instructed him, accompanied him at the rite, and formed links of union between the new member and the Church. In the case of children, the duty of making the answers devolved upon the sponsors, and their responsibilities were naturally much heavier than when they stood for adults" (Thompson's *Office of Baptism and Confirmation*, p. 185). In this way, Ananias at Damascus may be regarded as a sponsor for Saul of Tarsus.

THE SPONSORS REPRESENT THE CHURCH

But while it is easy to understand such sponsorship, the sponsorship for infants can only become a reality if we bear in mind the solidarity of ancient family life, its unity for purposes of worship, its common responsibility for maintaining the worship of the family deities, and the liability of the whole family to punishment for the guilt of one member. But, whereas these thoughts would lead us to expect the father to be the child's sponsor, we frequently find him and the mother excluded from this office. Why? Not, as is commonly supposed, to provide a Christian protector in case of the parent's death. If that idea came in at all, it was secondary and an afterthought. The sponsors represented not the parents but the new family into which the child was entering. Their

voice was the voice of the Church. Their answers were the answers of the Church. Their promises were the promises of the Church. It is the Church that presents the child to Christ, and the god-parents are the deputies and spokesmen of the Church. The Reformers, therefore, in view of the very high value which they attached to baptism, increased the responsibilities of the godparents, that is, of the Church itself. For, having assured them that their prayers on behalf of the infant were heard, and that Christ had promised all for which they asked, the Church required of them not only the profession of the Apostles' Creed—which was all that the Pre-Reformation Church required—our Church required also renunciation of the world, the flesh and the devil, and an engagement to keep God's holy commandments. The congregation, then and there, through the sponsors, promised to the child about to be admitted into the new family. It is often said that the sponsorial system has broken down. But is it not the Church itself that has broken down? Rent by schisms, split up by social divisions, eagerly seeking to assimilate its life and belief to that of the world, with what front of assurance can it answer the question: Dost thou renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomps and glory of the world, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow nor be led by them? It was bold of the Reformers to assume the existence of a really holy Church—but without this assumption they must have abandoned the sponsorial system, and, therewith, the baptism of infants.

DISCONNECTION OF BISHOP FROM BAPTISMAL SERVICE

Their boldness, however, went yet further. In the abolition of the old baptismal ceremonies they had broken the last link which directly connected the Bishop with every baptism. The rule that baptism is not to be administered without the consent of the Bishop goes back as far as the time of Ignatius (end of the first century). In the East, where confirmation immediately followed baptism, the Bishop's presence would normally be necessary, as soon as confirmation was confined to the Episcopal Office. It would also be more easily secured, as long as baptism was confined to the festivals of Easter and Whitsuntide. But, in the West, confirmation was deferred till the Bishop should visit the neighbourhood. The chrism, however, still connected the Bishop with every baptism, for it was from the Bishop alone that the chrism could be obtained, and from him a fresh supply must be obtained by every parish priest every year, on pain of deposition. The abolition of the ceremony of anointing cut off this link between the baptized and the Bishop, with the important result that our Church recognized completely and whole-heartedly the baptisms of non-episcopal Churches. It may be said that the confirmation link remained. But confirmation, as it was then administered, appeared to the Reformers "a corrupt following of the Apostles" (Article XXV): a matter of two collects with a signing with the cross on the forehead, and anointing the child's thumb with oint-

ment—a ceremony in which there was no “laying on of hands,” the most formal of services, administered often, so it is said, by the Bishop without even dismounting from his horse.

THE NEW USE MADE OF CONFIRMATION

The Reformers adopted, transformed and made use of this abused and corrupted rite for two new purposes. They made it (1) the climax of a post-baptismal catechumenate, and (2) an opportunity of giving effect to the responsibility of the baptized to the Church. To appreciate the changes thus introduced we must first take into account (a) the charge to the sponsors; (b) the provision of a Church catechism. We may then pass on to the responsibility of the baptized to the Church.

THE NEW CATECHUMENATE

(a) The charge to the sponsors should be read and contrasted with that which it replaced, which was a charge to keep the child from fire and water, to teach him the Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria, and the Creed, to have him confirmed, to return the chrisome and to wash their hands before leaving the church. It is enough to set against this the words: “Ye shall provide that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments and *all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health*; and that this child may be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life; remembering always that baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ and to be made like unto Him,” etc.

PROVISION OF A CHURCH CATECHISM

(b) *Provision of a Church catechism.*¹ The catechism was originally (i.e. in the Prayer Book of 1549) intended for use at confirmation. The children are to be brought to the Bishop “so soon as they can say in their mother tongue the Articles of the Faith, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and can answer to such questions of this short catechism as the Bishop (or such as he shall appoint) shall by his discretion appose them in.” But by the Prayer Book of 1552 its use was greatly enlarged. The Curate, on Sundays and Holy-days, after the 2nd lesson of Evening Prayer, was bound to instruct and examine the children in some part of this catechism. All Fathers, Mothers, Masters and Dames were to cause their Children, Servants, and Apprentices to attend this catechizing. The Church took seriously in hand the duties involved in the sponsorial relation, appointed regular times to discharge them, and provided the outlines of the Christian teaching that was to be given. In these outlines the starting-point was the fact and meaning of baptism, and that meaning was expressed in the form

¹ It would be entirely erroneous to suppose that the mediæval Church made no provision for instruction of children in the Faith. Various primers were extant, and no doubt used, but not as preparation for confirmation.

of the status of the baptized. He was "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven." He had been "called by his Heavenly Father into a state of salvation."

VI

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BAPTIZED TO THE CHURCH

The responsibility of the baptized to the Church, or the public profession of the confirmed. To appreciate the value and importance of this new use of confirmation we must first note the differences between the confirmation services of 1549 and 1552. In 1549 the ceremony of the chrisome at baptism had been retained with the implication that a child of tender years may retain his innocence, but will presently come to an age when, "partly by the frailty of his own flesh, partly by the assaults of the world and the devil," he will "begin to be in danger to fall into sin." The purpose of confirmation then was to impart "strength and defence against all temptations to sin, and the assaults of the world and the devil." The implication is manifest. Baptized children have an innocence which is their own possession, though bestowed by grace. That innocence must be maintained and fortified by further grace in confirmation. We are brought back to the idea of a righteousness built up by human effort assisted by the grace of God. The second Prayer Book abolished the chrisome—harmless and picturesque as the ceremony might appear to be—because of its inconsistency with the Scriptural idea of regeneration. The "chrisome," in fact, was inconsistent with the conception that the new birth is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the regenerate, in whom "there still remains the infection of nature" (Article IX). The gift which God bestows on the regenerate is not some precarious and rather imaginary innocence of childhood. It is the indwelling Spirit of Christ whose power in us works "conformity in character and conduct to the will of God." That Spirit belongs to all who by faith "put on Christ." "Ye are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 26, 27). The age of the baptized makes no difference in the nature of the gift, but only in the degree in which the regenerate is able to make use of it.¹

Just because of their faith in the greatness of the gift of God, the Reformers found it necessary to provide some service in which the baptized should testify before the Church his acceptance of the gift. Necessarily that service was deferred to years of discretion. Necessarily it assumed a twofold character, the witness of the regenerate to the Church, and the witness of the Church to the now conscious regenerate.

¹ It may be reasonably asked how it comes to pass that the catechism of the first Prayer Book was adopted substantially in the second, if the baptismal doctrine of the two is so different. The answer is to be found in the fact that the catechism marks a stage of Reformation teaching in advance of the first Prayer Book. The catechism, in fact, prepared the way for our present baptismal service.

For this purpose, no service was more fitting than the "laying on of hands." The ceremony itself was the ancient ceremony of adoption. There was precedent for the use of it in the New Testament. It gave an opportunity of connecting the confirmed with a wider circle of the family of God than was afforded by the narrow bounds of parochial life. Through the presence of the Bishop and his part in it, the confirmed was made to realize his place in the Church of God as a whole. It was also a post-baptismal ceremony with precedents in liturgical history. The Church, therefore, determined that the laying on of hands should be used for the purposes above mentioned, and as a service of admission to Holy Communion.

With this object it was so constructed that, while it most naturally referred to baptism, it carefully excluded the idea that some new gift was being conferred which was not bestowed in baptism. The prayer for the seven-fold gift of the Holy Spirit was not a prayer for bestowal of the gift, but for increase in that seven-fold gift already bestowed. The increase connected with the laying on of hands was not some new regeneration but a *daily* increase, a growing up into the stature of Christ. Although the ceremony might not be repeated, it stood not for some solitary event in the Christian life: "Let Thy Fatherly Hand *ever* be over them. Let Thy Holy Spirit *ever* be with them." The reference to Apostolic precedent is not to any command of the Apostles, still less to any command given to them by Christ, but simply to their example, "after the example of Thy Holy Apostles." We do what they did, but we do not administer a sacrament, for that, without express command of God, we cannot do. It would be difficult to conceive a service more full of dignity, more impressive, better calculated to inspire courage and high resolve, more tenderly conveying a sense of the Fatherly love of God, and yet at the same time more carefully guarded against any hint that some grace was being conveyed by "laying on of hands" different from, and superior to, the grace attached to faithful reception of holy baptism.

SOME RECENT TEACHING ON IMPORT OF LAYING ON OF HANDS

A very different view of confirmation has been assiduously inculcated of late years, a reaction, perhaps, in some measure from the Tractarian teaching about baptism. That teaching insisted strongly on the efficacy of holy baptism. But a lamentable contrast was obviously evident between the power connected with baptism in Scripture and in the Primitive Church, and the actual results as manifested in the lives of ordinary Christians. It was natural enough to explain the contrast by deficiency of faith in the sacrament, and by carelessness in the administration of it. It was natural that the Tractarians should hope that their new doctrine, or supposed revival of the old, would be followed by a great uplift in the spiritual life of the Church. These expectations were disappointed. Masses of the baptized remained unconverted. High Churchmen found it necessary to borrow not a little from the

armoury of their Evangelical brethren. Emotion began to take a prominence in the teaching of those whose spiritual ancestors sorely suspected it. Conversion must follow regeneration. Attention also was diverted from baptism to confirmation. Confirmation was exalted as a sacrament. Baptism not followed by it was incomplete. Some advocated administration of confirmation to children emerging from infancy. Others saw in it an opportunity of inculcating in the young the use of auricular confession. Bishops were entreated to multiply centres of confirmation, to administer it to the dying, to refrain from giving addresses, and to trust to the efficacy of the form itself. Among other results of this agitation has been an attempt to prove from Scripture that the Apostles reserved to themselves, and of course to their successors the Bishops, the exclusive right of administering this so-called sacrament. For although no command of our Lord could be quoted as instituting it, in the same way that He instituted baptism and the Lord's Supper, it was held that nothing short of His express authority would have entitled the Apostles to make such use as they made of it. One of the most recent and careful exponents of this view is Dr. Chase, the late Bishop of Ely, whose position and learning compel an attentive examination of his teaching.

VII

EXAMINATION OF BISHOP CHASE'S "CONFIRMATION IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE"

The whole of Dr. Chase's contention really rests on two passages in the Acts of the Apostles. It is true that he adds to these:—(1) 2 Timothy i. 6. He has to admit that it is "perhaps universally assumed that these words refer to Timothy's ordination." Dr. Chase's attempt to disprove the universal assumption is ingenious, but is unconvincing, especially against so great a weight of adverse opinion. (2) Hebrews vi. 1, etc., where the words "laying on of hands" occur as an elementary part of Christian teaching immediately after the word "baptisms." But here again other explanations are perfectly legitimate. The "laying on of hands" follows "baptisms," but immediately precedes "resurrection of the dead." It may well refer to healing of the sick. The argument gains no positive weight from this quotation. (3) Hebrews vi. 4. Here Dr. Chase *assumes* that participation in the Holy Spirit was conveyed by laying on of hands although no allusion to the practice is made in the passage. (4) Hebrews x. 29, "doing despite to the Spirit of grace," is supposed to allude to confirmation, because the reference to the blood of the Covenant is supposed to allude to baptism. The "blood of the Covenant" surely suggests the Eucharist rather than baptism. We may without hesitation reject these alleged supports of Dr. Chase's theory. There is not one of them that is not open to another, and probably better interpretation on the soundest principles of exegesis.

We fall back, then, upon the two passages in the Acts, the laying

on of hands by Peter and John at Samaria and by Paul at Ephesus. Of these Dr. Chase says (*Confirmation in the Apostolic Age*, p. 23), "The Confirmation scenes in the Acts are chosen, we cannot doubt, from many similar scenes. Each is a representative scene for a particular period of the Church's development. The significance of each lies in the fact that it is illustrative." He concludes, after dwelling on the two scenes, that (1) in the Apostolic Church a definite bestowal of the Holy Spirit followed baptism; (2) the outward sign was the laying on of hands; (3) the gift was sometimes followed by an extraordinary manifestation of the Spirit; (4) the minister at least normally was an Apostle; (5) laying on of hands was not confined to one school of the Apostles. . . . "The imposition of hands after baptism is represented as the natural act of the Apostles. No explanation of the origin of the practice is given. In the first days it had an early place in the life of the Church. Short of an express statement to the contrary, we could have no more convincing proof that herein the Apostles were following a command which they had received from the Lord Himself" (Chase, p. 34).

These are sweeping and startling conclusions, and they all rest on the assumption that "*we cannot doubt*" that the two instances are illustrative of the habitual practice of the Church. But what, if we do doubt it? What, if through some lurking uncertainty in Philip's mind, some unbelief in the capacity of the Samaritans to receive the Holy Ghost, the ordinary manifestations of His presence and power were withheld? What, if the Apostles felt it necessary to correct this unbelief by a personal visit? It is clear that the narrative impresses on us the absence of the "manifestations" that were apparently usual in the early Church. "To *each one* is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal" (1 Cor. xii. 7). Or it may even be that the manifestations were absent, because Simon Magus, like an Achan, troubled the newborn Church. Several conjectures are probable, and there will always be as much reason at least to suppose that the Samaria baptism was irregular and exceptional, as that St. Luke mentions it as illustrative.

The laying on of hands at Ephesus is open to the same line of doubt. What, if this occasion also was not illustrative but abnormal? What, if questions may have arisen whether the baptism of John could be followed by a second baptism? In both cases, at Ephesus as well as Samaria, it is to be noted that the laying on of hands was followed by manifestations, not necessarily unusual, but certainly evidential. If so, the laying on of hands may have been an additional and exceptional ceremony in special cases to convey assurance that a baptism, which for some reason appeared to be, or might be held to be, defective or irregular, was in fact perfectly valid. Without going so far as to say that these are assumptions "*which we cannot doubt,*" they may at least have as good claim to consideration as the assumption that the cases are "*illustrative.*"

It would be possible to strengthen this alternative supposition by pointing out that the gift of the Holy Spirit without laying on of hands preceded baptism in the case of Cornelius, and that in the case of Saul of Tarsus it preceded baptism but followed laying on of hands by one who was not an Apostle. Exceptions at least must be admitted. That is not all. St. Luke records four other cases of baptism, the 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost, the Ethiopian eunuch, Lydia, and the gaoler at Philippi, but makes no mention in any of these of "laying on of hands." Again, we read of divisions at Corinth, which turned partly on the person by whom various Corinthians were baptized. Could they not have been settled by the greater gift? If baptism was attended by some inferior gift of the Holy Spirit, surely the confirmation gift, bestowed only by Apostles, would have been the standard of appeal.

Dr. Chase tries to fortify his theory by some twenty quotations from the Epistles relating to the gift of the Spirit, or reception of the Spirit. In *not one of them* is this gift connected with laying on of hands. The mention of baptism is frequent throughout the New Testament. The laying on of hands immediately after baptism occurs twice. We are told that "we cannot doubt" that the two cases were illustrative, and imply an express command of our Lord. But doubts will persist. The plain fact is that Dr. Chase's style of argument would prove with equal certainty the right of the Popes to take to themselves the words "Tu es Petrus."

Prayer-book revision conducted on such lines as these opens the door to much error. But there is no question that Dr. Chase's argument is the basis of the proposed alternative confirmation service, and for that reason it has been necessary to dwell on it.

VIII

CONCLUSION: THE NEW LIFE

But we would conclude on another note. Our whole argument has brought out into strong light two points that need to be emphasized in our Church life to-day. Baptism has shown itself to be the sacrament of a new life, the Divine life brought into our natural life, and that Life is Love. The commandment "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" is impossible of fulfilment for the unregenerate man. He may be conscious that he ought, as a matter of gratitude, to love God. He may even stir up an emotion sustained by remembrance of all that is beautiful, all that is noble, all that in art or nature seems to carry us beyond ourselves. But, if St. Paul is right in saying that "love never faileth" (1 Cor. xiii. 8), no emotion can really convey all that is meant by love, for emotions are, above all things, transient and evanescent, dependent on moods, and largely on external conditions. Love is essentially the union of two wills in a perfect harmony. The only love wherewith we can truly love God is the communion of the Spirit dwelling in us with the Triune God. The Holy Spirit reveals to us the love that God hath towards us and in us. He communicates the pardon of sin, the glorious

gift of a righteousness that is not our own: He imparts the peace passing all understanding, which floods the soul that is reconciled to God. He also, as our new and true self, cries, "Father, Father." "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). He translates the wishes—that we call prayers—into conformity with the will of God, and satisfies us that in God's will is our peace. It is only on the foundation of this intimate communion between God and man that any hope can rest for the strivings after a better world, a new social order, a Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Any attempt to build these on impulses of human nature is building on sand. Only a Church that is truly regenerate can bring any hope of regeneration into the world. The Fatherhood of God is the foundation of the Brotherhood of Man, and Holy Baptism is the Sacrament of the Fatherhood of God.

Our study of confirmation makes evident the true foundation of Christian assurance. Though we dare not call that a sacrament for which we have not the express command of Christ, yet we may find in confirmation a sorely needed stay and support. For in many things we all offend. We are miserable sinners. We have left undone what we ought to do, and have done what we ought not to do. There is no health in us. But is it not our Father's hand resting on us that wrings these confessions from our lips? To the world they are unreal. It cannot believe that it is possible for a Christian to say honestly "that the burden of his sins is intolerable." Something much weaker must be substituted. But the son on whose head rests the touch of his Father's hand is conscious of what his Father is, and of what he himself ought to be. He knows what it is to sin against light and against love, and he needs some assurance against his heart which condemns him. That assurance he finds in the remembrance that it is the indwelling Spirit, Who brings to light with ever-increasing fulness, "daily increasing," the length, the breadth, the depth, the height of the love of God. In a world that has lost count of sin, that seems to find God useful only for the improvement of material conditions, the child of God falls back on an assurance, conveyed to him with the laying on of hands, that God loves him with an everlasting love, and has publicly, in the face of the Church, acknowledged him to be His son indeed. The world may be shaken to its foundations, but the removing of things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, confirms his faith in those things which are not shaken, which remain. He has received a kingdom which cannot be shaken, and offers service well pleasing to God with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire (Heb. xii. 28, 29). But that which is to the world a consuming fire is to him a light shining more and more unto the perfect day.
