

SECOND EDITION, ENLARGED.

TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.

SCRIPTURAL VIEWS OF HOLY BAPTISM,

AS ESTABLISHED BY THE CONSENT OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH, AND
CONTRASTED WITH THE SYSTEMS OF MODERN SCHOOLS.

What sparkles in that lucid flood
Is water, by gross mortals ey'd:
But seen by Faith, 'tis Blood
Out of a dear Friend's side.
CHRISTIAN YEAR. *Holy Baptism.*

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE PRINCIPLES NECESSARY FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF
SCRIPTURAL TRUTH, AND SOME OBSTACLES WHICH OF LATE
HAVE PREVENTED MEN FROM RECEIVING THAT OF
BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

EVERY pious and well instructed member of our Church will in the abstract acknowledge, that in examining whether any doctrine be a portion of revealed truth, the one subject of inquiry must be, whether it be contained in Holy Scripture; and that in this investigation, while, in proportion to the fulness of the evidence, he defers to the interpretations handed down to us through the early Church, so also must he lay aside all reference to the supposed influence of such doctrine, the supposed religious character of those who held it at any given time, and the like.

Any right-minded person, I say, will readily acknowledge this in the abstract: for to judge of doctrines by their supposed influence upon men's hearts, would imply that we know much more of our own nature, and what is necessary or conducive to its restoration, than we do: it would be like setting about to heal ourselves, instead of receiving with implicit faith and confidence whatever the Great Physician of our souls has

provided for us. The real state of the case is indeed just the contrary of what this habit would imply. We can, in truth, know little or nothing of the efficacy of any doctrine but what we have ourselves believed and experienced. Even in matters of our own experience we may easily deceive ourselves, and ascribe our spiritual progress exclusively to the reception of the one or the other truth, whereas it has depended upon a number of combining causes which GOD has ordered for our good, upon a great variety of means, by which GOD has been drawing us to Himself, whereof we have seized upon one or two of the principal only. In other cases we may be altogether mistaken. Thus, to take a published instance; a person now living has said of himself that “he read himself into unbelief, and afterwards read himself back into belief.” As if mere diligent study could restore any one who had fallen from the faith! Whereas, without considering what circumstances, beside the reading of infidel books, led him to infidelity, or what commencing unsoundness led him to follow up the reading of infidel books, on which he was not competent to judge;—the very fact of reading at one time infidel, at another Christian, writings, implies that the frame of mind was different at each time; so that by his own account, other causes must have combined both to his fall, and his restoration. Again, he himself incidentally shows that, though a sceptic, he still continued to exercise considerable self-denial, for the welfare of others: so that among the instruments of his restored faith, may have been one which he omitted, that his benevolence, like that of Cornelius, and the prayers of those, whom he benefitted, went up as a memorial before GOD.¹ But if we can be mistaken, even as to the influence of what we have tried, much more assuredly must we, in spiritual matters, be in ignorance of what we have not tried. We may have some intimation with regard to such questions, whether of doctrine or of practice, from the experience of good men; but so far from being judges about them, it will often happen that precisely what we are most inclined to disparage, will be that which is most needful for us. For, since all religious truth or practice is a corrective or purifier of our natural tendencies, we shall generally be in ignorance beforehand, what will so correct or purify them. Our own palate is disordered, our own eye dimmed: until God then has restored, by His means, our spiritual taste, or our spiritual vision, we should select for ourselves very blindly or undistinguishingly. In matter of fact, the Christian creed has been repeatedly pared down, as every one knows, in consequence of men’s expunging beforehand, what they thought prejudicial to the effect of the other portions of Scripture truth, Thus, early

¹ Knox’s Correspondence, t. ii. p. 586, 7. “It has often struck me that probably this good man was rewarded for his fraternal piety by his providential conversion to Christianity.”

Heretics objected to the truth of the human nature of CHRIST: against the Reformers it was urged, that the doctrine of “justification by faith only” was opposed to sanctification and holiness: Luther, (although he afterwards repented,) excepted against GOD’S teaching by St. James, and called his Epistle an “Epistle of straw:” fanatics of all ages have rejected the use of both Sacraments: stated or premeditated prayer has been regarded as mere formality, and the like. And in these or similar cases, when at a distance, we can readily see how some wrong tendency of mind suggested all these objections, and how the very truth or practice objected to, would have furnished the antidote which the case needed. We can see e. g. how stated or fixed prayer would have disciplined the mind, how a form would have tended to make the subjects of prayer more complete: for we ourselves have felt, how, by the prayers which the Church has put into our mouths, we have been taught to pray for blessings, our need of which we might not have perceived, or which we might have thought it presumption to pray for. And this is a sort of witness placed in our hands, to testify to us, how in other cases also we ought with thankful deference to endeavour to incorporate into the frame of our own minds each portion of the system which GOD has ordained for us, not daring to call any thing of little moment, which He has allowed to enter into it; much less presuming to “call that common, which GOD hath cleansed,” or to imagine that, because we cannot see its effects, or should think it likely to be injurious, it may not be both healthful and essential.

The doctrine, then, of Baptismal Regeneration (rightly understood) may have a very important station in GOD’S scheme of salvation, although many of us may not understand its relation to the rest of that dispensation, and those who do not believe it, cannot understand it. For this is the method of GOD’S teaching throughout; “first believe and then you shall understand.”² And this may be said, in Christian warning, against those hard words, in which Christians sometimes allow themselves; as, “the deadening doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration;” language which can only serve to darken the truth to those who use it, and which is by so much the more dangerous, since all Christians believe that Regeneration sometimes accompanies Baptism. Since also Baptismal Regeneration was the doctrine of the Universal Church of CHRIST in its holiest ages, and our own reformers (to whom, on other points, men are wont to appeal as

² “We are not therefore ashamed of the Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, because miscreants in scorn have upbraided us, that the highest point of our wisdom is, *Believe*. That which is true, and neither can be discerned by sense nor concluded by mere natural principles, must have principles of revealed truth whereupon to build itself, and an habit of Faith in us, wherewith principles of that kind are apprehended.”—Hooker L. v. §. 63.

having been highly gifted with GOD'S Holy Spirit) retained this doctrine, it would seem to require but little modesty in a private Christian, not to feel so confident in his own judgment, as to denounce, in terms so unmeasured, what may after all be the teaching of GOD; "lest haply he be found to fight against GOD."

Others again, holding rightly the necessity of Regeneration for every one descended of Adam, would strongly set forth this necessity; but whether GOD have ordinarily annexed this gift to Baptism, this they would have passed over as a difficult or curious question. They bid men to examine themselves whether they have the fruits of regeneration; if not, to pray that they be regenerate. "This absolute necessity of regeneration," they say, "is the cardinal point; this is what we practically want for rousing men to the sense of their danger, and for the saving of their souls: what privileges may have been bestowed upon them in Baptism, or, in a happier state of the Christian Church, might not only be then universally bestowed, but be realized in life, is of lesser moment: regeneration, and the necessity thereof, is the kernel; these and other questions about outward ordinances, are but the husk only: regeneration and 'justification by faith only' "are the key-stones of the whole fabric." I would, by the way, protest against such illustrations, whereby men, too commonly, embolden themselves to call any portion of GOD'S institution for our salvation, "husk," or "shell," or the like: let it seem to us never so external, it can in no stage of the Christian course be dispensed with, which these similitudes would imply. Rather, if we use any image, we might better speak of the whole Gospel as an elixir of immortality, whereof some ingredients may be more powerful than the rest, but the efficacy of the whole depends upon the attemperament of the several portions; and we, who formed neither our own souls, nor this cure for them, dare not speak slightly of the necessity of any portion. Doubtless there are truths, which in one sense (comparatively speaking) may be called the great truths of Christianity, as embodying in them a larger portion of the counsel of GOD, and exhibiting more fully His attributes of holiness and love. Better perhaps, and more Scripturally might we speak of the truth,—the Gospel itself; yet there is no evil in that other expression, if intended solely as the language of thankfulness for the great instances of His mercy therein conveyed. If used, on the other hand,—I will not say disparagingly, but—as in any way conveying an impression that other doctrines are not in their place essential, or that we can assign to each truth its class or place in the Divine economy, or weigh its value, or measure its importance, then are we again forgetting our own relation to GOD, and from the corner of His world in which we are placed, would fain

judge of the order and correspondencies and harmonies of things, which can only be seen or judged of, from the centre, which is GOD Himself. We cannot, without great danger, speak of lesser, or less essential, truths, and doctrines, and ordinances, both because the passage from “less essential,” to “unessential,” is unhappily but too easy, and because although these truths may appear to relate to subjects further removed from what we think the centre of Christianity, the mode in which we hold them, or our neglect of them, *may* very vitally affect those which we consider more primary truths. We can readily see this in cases in which we are not immediately involved. Thus we can see how a person’s whole views of Sanctification by the Holy Ghost will be affected by Hoadly’s low notions of the LORD’S Supper; or how the error of Transubstantiation has modified other true doctrines so as to cast into the shade the one Oblation once offered upon the Cross; or how the addition of the single practice of “soliciting the Saints to pray for men,” has in the Romish Church obscured the primary articles of Justification and of the Intercession of our Blessed LORD; and yet Transubstantiation was at first connected with high reverential feeling for our LORD, and no one could have anticipated beforehand, that this one error would have had effects so tremendous. If then wrong notions about the one Sacrament, among both Romanists and Pseudo-Protestants, have had an influence so extensive, why should we think error, with regard to the other, of slight moment? Rather, should we not more safely argue, that since Baptism is a Sacrament ordained by Christ Himself, a low, or inadequate, or unworthy conception of His institution, must, of necessity almost, be very injurious to the whole of our belief and practice? Does not our very reverence to our SAVIOUR require that we should think any thing, which He deigned to institute, of very primary moment,—not (as some seem now to think) simply to be obeyed or complied with, but to be embraced with a glad and thankful recognition of its importance, because He instituted it?

The other point, which was mentioned as important to be borne in mind, in the inquiry whether any doctrine be a Scriptural truth, was, that we should not allow ourselves to be influenced by the supposed religious character of those whom we happen to know of, as holding it, or the contrary. This we should again see to be a very delusive criterion, in a case where we have no temptation to apply it: we should at once admit that Pascal and Nicole were holy men, nay, that whole bodies of men in the Church of Rome had arrived at a height of holiness, and devotion, and self-denial, and love of GOD, which in this our day is rarely to be seen in our Apostolic Church; yet we should not for a moment doubt that our Church is the pure Church, although her sons seem of late but rarely to

have grown up to that degree of Christian maturity, which might have been hoped from the nurture of such a mother: we should not think the comparative holiness of these men of GOD any test as to the truth of any one characteristic doctrine of the Church of Rome. We should rightly see that the holiness of these men was not owing to the distinctive doctrines of their Church; but that GOD had ripened the seed of life which He had sown in their hearts, notwithstanding the corrupt mixture with which our Enemy had hoped to choke it: we should rightly attribute the apparent comparative failure among ourselves in these times, not to our not possessing the truth, but to our slothful use of the abundant treasures which GOD has bestowed upon us. They hold the great Catholic truths of our Creeds, and much of the self-discipline (as fasting), or means of grace (as more frequent prayer), which modern habits have relinquished; and these have brought their fruit: yet we should not infer that all which they held was true, because they were holy. Holiness (whether produced in the teacher or the taught) proves the presence of *some* truth, not of the whole truth, nor the purity of that truth. And so also, with regard to any doctrine in which persons either within or without our Church may depart from her; no one can say with confidence, that the superior holiness of any who do not accept it, is attributable to their not accepting it, since it may be only that by their rejection of this one truth, they have not forfeited the blessing of GOD upon the other truths, which they yet hold: while others who do hold it, may be holding it in name only, and may never have examined the treasure committed to them, or stirred up the gift that is in them. It may be (to speak plainly) that many who deny or doubt about Baptismal Regeneration, have been made holy and good men, and yet have sustained a loss in not holding this truth: and again, that others may nominally have held it, and yet never have thought of the greatness or significance of what they professed to hold. If, again, right practice were a test of doctrine, then could there be no such thing as “holding³ the truth in unrighteousness,” for

³ Or “hold down the truth,” Rom. i. 18, but *κατεχω* is used without emphasis, Luke xiv. 9. for “take,” “hold;” and 2 Thess. ii. 6. it signifies “hinder;” Luke iv. 42. “detain,” not “keep down.” The doubt was not alluded to (Ed. i.), because it does not in the least affect the argument. In either case, the truth is *in the persons*, whether they keep it for a time, and then at last lose it, or forcibly keep it down, and repress it from rising up, and being present to their minds, and influencing them. And so St. Paul, verse 19, directly asserts that “that which might be known of God was manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them;” and this is explained, verse 20, to be “His invisible power and Godhead;” and, verse 21, he says, “they knew God.” Their condemnation was not that they knew not God, for then, in comparison, “they had had no sin,” (John ix. 41.), but that they knew Him, and yet acted against their knowledge, by “changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man,” and so at last God gave them up unto

which however the Apostle pronounces the condemnation of the Heathen. Further, if the comparison were any test at all, it must manifestly be made not at one period only, but throughout the time that such doctrine has been held by the Church; one must compare, not the men of our own day only, but those of all former times, Confessors, Saints, and Martyrs, which were impossible! This is not said, as if we were competent judges even as to our own times, or as if any could be, but GOD alone, who searcheth the hearts; for if the number of those, who being earnest-minded and zealous men, do not hold Baptismal Regeneration, were increased an hundred fold, or if those who imagining that they hold Baptismal Regeneration, do in fact use it as a screen to hide from themselves the necessity of the complete actual change of mind and disposition necessary to *them*, were many more than they are,—still, who can tell to how many thousands, or tens of thousands, this same doctrine has been the blessed means of a continued child-like growth in grace, who have been silently growing up, supported by the inestimable privilege of having been made GOD’S children, before they themselves knew good or evil; who have on the whole been uniformly kept within CHRIST’S fold, and are now “heartily thanking their heavenly Father for having called them” thus early to this state of salvation, into which, had it been left to their frail choice, they had never entered; who “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” that they were *placed* in the Ark of CHRIST’S Church, and not first called, of themselves to take refuge in it out of the ruins of a lost world.⁴

Most of this, people will in the abstract readily acknowledge; even if they are not conscious of the full value of the Church, as an Interpreter of Holy Scripture, still they will confess that Scripture is the only ultimate authority in matters of Faith, and that in searching it they ought not to be biassed by any questions of expediency, or grounds distinct from the obvious meaning of the Inspired word: and yet they will probably find on

an undistinguishing (αδοκιμοϛ) mind; so that, *at last*, they lost the knowledge also. And so it is with individuals; men act at first against the light and truth in them, and afterwards, and at length only, is the light withdrawn. See St. August. Tract. 2. in Joanu. § 4.

⁴ “They with whom we contend are no enemies to the Baptism of infants; it is not their desire that the Church should hazard so many souls by letting them run on till they come to ripeness of understanding, that so they may be converted and then baptized, as Infidels heretofore have been; they bear not towards God so unthankful minds as not to acknowledge it even among the greatest of His endless mercies, that by making us His own possession so soon, many advantages which Satan otherwise might take are prevented, and (which should be esteemed a part of no small happiness) the first thing whereof we have occasion to take notice is, how much hath been done already to our good, though altogether without our knowledge.”—Hooker, b. v. § 64, p. 287.

examination that some of these irrelevant grounds have occasioned them to hold Baptismal Regeneration to be an unscriptural doctrine. If they examined Scripture at all, yet still the supposed effects of this, and of a contrary doctrine, the supposed character of those who hold it, or the reverse, were in fact their rule for interpreting Scripture; or perhaps wearied with the controversy (which is and must be in itself an evil) they came to the conclusion that, if we but hold the necessity of Regeneration, it matters not when we suppose it to take place,—thus *assuming*, in fact, the unscripturalness of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, since if GOD has connected Regeneration with Baptism, it must be of importance.

This is very natural; for men must lean upon something. Our Reformers, in their interpretation of Scripture, besides the divine means of prayer, leant on the consent and agreement of the “old holy Catholic Doctors,” who had received their doctrine immediately, or but at a little interval, from the Apostles, when every link almost in the chain was a Saint and Martyr. The agreement of the Church was to them the evidence of GOD’S speaking in the Church. But now that men have forgotten these maxims, and the blessed dead who resisted unto blood Heathen malice, and established and fixed for us the Creeds wherein we find rest, and look upon deference to the Church almost as a relic of Papal errors, man, since he is not made to be independent, leans upon his fellows; and the supposed spiritual character of individuals is made the test of truth. Man cannot escape from authority: the question only, in religious truth as in civil society or in private life, is, whose authority he will follow.

This mode of judging is indeed a tacit recognition of external authority; those who adopt it have virtually renounced the narrow and cold notion of individual judgment, and taken refuge from it in that of a body of Christians; they adopt and imitate the principles of our Church, which refers us to the agreement of Catholic antiquity, only that unhappily they take as a test moderns instead of ancients; those who arose after the waters had been polluted, instead of those who lived near the source; a section of the Church, instead of the Church itself. They are thereby necessarily much narrowed in their choice, substituting a sort of Ultra-Protestant Popery of one or more individuals, for the Catholic unity of all times and Churches.

The several controversies with infidels, again, have led to some false maxims as to the tests of truth: for, instead of setting forth against these despisers the power of the Gospel of CHRIST as a *whole*, that it is “the power of GOD unto salvation to every one that believeth,” that “the truth,” i. e. the *whole* Gospel, “will set free” those who receive it, men have dwelt too much upon its natural tendency, as they deem it, to produce

such or such effects, upon the efficacy of particular doctrines, or its contrast in such or such points with other religions; thereby fostering the conviction that we are much more judges in these matters than we are. These men, however, were contented with contrasting Christianity, or parts thereof, with that which was out of the pale of the Gospel; and for this, happily, a more general and superficial view and statement of doctrine sufficed: others have arisen, who have applied this same test *within* the compass of Christianity, contrasted the supposed efficacy of one doctrine with another; and thus we have made ourselves judges in matters yet more beyond our grasp. Undoubtedly faithful and sound preaching is likely, by GOD'S blessing, to produce a harvest: the holy and earnest life of a religious pastor is a yet more powerful sermon: his performance of his weekly duties, his greater watchfulness over the right dispensation of the Sacraments, his more earnest prayers are also means of promoting GOD'S kingdom. Obviously then, the blessed effects of a whole ministry cannot be made a test of the truth of each doctrine preached: and yet more obviously perhaps on this ground, that there is not *complete* agreement in the doctrines, the preaching of which is attended with these apparent effects: add also, that even in this way, one must judge not by the preaching of those, who being already full of fervour preached these doctrines, but by that of their disciples;⁵ for it may be that that influence was owing to the fervour of the individuals, not to the entire truth of their system. For since we do not think that incidental error will mar the benefit of a whole ministry, or that fallible man, though richly endowed by GOD'S Spirit, is yet rendered infallible, we cannot infer that because his teaching is blessed, therefore every portion of it must be sound. Rather, one might infer from the fact that the same doctrines when preached by a less gifted follower, have not the same efficacy, that the former efficacy was not to be referred to the truth of *each* doctrine, which was preached, but to the Spirit of GOD, with which each faithful minister is endowed. Had the effect been the result of the whole doctrine, and of that only, the effects had been more uniform. Lastly, we must look not to immediate only but to lasting effects, not only to the foundation but to the superstructure. This arguing from the supposed effects of a system, as it is at this day the plea for every irregularity, so is it most used by a body where the good effects are the least lasting, and subsequently are fearfully neutralized; and it is in great part owing to the absence of this doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration,

⁵ Thus the early Pietists in Germany, whose system and practice much resembled that of the body here alluded to, had, from their personal character, a great, and for the time a blessed, influence; but they shook the Lutheran body, and prepared the way for its downfall: their successors with the same system had no weight.

that while a foundation is so often laid, the edifice of Christian piety among us still bears such low and meagre proportions, and still further, that there is not more of early Christianity among us. As of course, if it is a Scriptural truth, the neglect of preaching it must be a loss as well as a negligence.

These observations⁶ are not made under any idea that they who oppose the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration are more zealous and earnest than they who preach it; quite the contrary; they who believe and realize the height of the gift of GOD in Baptism must, in the belief of the great things which GOD has done for them and His whole Church, have a source of solemn responsibility and deep awe, and humble amazement of God's graciousness, peculiar to themselves; and in proportion as they are penetrated with it, their preaching must be also raised. One may appeal safely on this point to the solid, subdued, but sublime eloquence of the early Church, or to those of our own who in older times most realised their Baptismal gifts. Baptismal Regeneration, as connected with the Incarnation of our blessed Lord, gives a depth to our Christian existence, an actualness to our union with CHRIST, a reality to our sonship to GOD, an interest in the presence of our Lord's glorified Body at GOD'S right hand, a joyousness amid the subduing of the flesh, an overwhelmingness to the dignity conferred on human nature, a solemnity to the communion of saints, who are the fulness of Him, Who filleth all in all, a substantiality to the indwelling of CHRIST, that to those who retain this truth, the school which abandoned it must needs appear to have sold its birthright. But it is one thing to hold Baptismal Regeneration, and another to hold merely that there is no regeneration subsequent to Baptism. A mere negative view must always be a cold one. Any careless person may hold Baptismal Regeneration negatively; they only can hold it positively and in its depth, who have endeavoured to realize it. Yet as well might we urge the case of the Antinomian, i. e. of him who holds justification by faith *negatively*, in opposition to the necessity of good works, against that holy doctrine, as the case of him who should in like way abuse the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, to lower the greatness of subsequent holiness. Both may be abused to men's own destruction; both may be blasphemed in consequence of their being held in name only; both may be held imperfectly and inadequately; nay, both in this life must be so held; yet one would not select those who hold either, and therewith other truths,

⁶ The following remarks are made reluctantly now (Ed. ii.), because, in a controversial writing, what had been said above has been construed into an admission of the superiority of those who oppose the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. The author wished, while he might, to avoid every thing directly bearing on modern controversy.

most imperfectly, as the specimens of the effects of the doctrine in itself. Let those who would remonstrate against any such injustice, in the case which they make their own, beware how they be themselves guilty of the like injustice.

But, again, it might very well be, that a body of men, having much zeal for religion, and very active in promoting it, might yet for a time be in error upon some one or more points; nay, in circumstances such as the present are represented to be, it is probable that it would be so. It is professed, that they who now oppose Baptismal Regeneration, arrived at their present views by a sort of reaction; the Church, it is represented, was in a state of lethargy and coldness, preaching moral discourses, and forgetful of her office as teacher of the truth, when certain individuals were aroused, and preached faithfully the leading truths of the Gospel, of which our generation is reaping the fruits. In like manner individuals who oppose the same doctrine, are wont to refer to the time when they suppose they held it, as a period of religious apathy, during which they lulled their consciences with the notion that, having by Baptism been made children of GOD, they had nothing further to do.⁷ In either case (whether of individuals or bodies), it is probable that they would arrive at a portion only of the truth. It is not in these sudden reactions that GOD generally imparts a consistent enlarged view of truth. To such he gives what is most needful for them, and they are often energetic preachers of conversion; but the deeper, calmer, insight into truth, He usually reserves for those (whether bodies or individuals) whom He has gently led, and who have on the whole equably followed his leading. Under the elder dispensation, schools of the prophets were formed, so soon as GOD purposed to raise up a succession of teachers for His Church; from very youth were they to be trained to the service of the Lord. Samuel himself, who was employed to form them, was before his birth consecrated to the Lord, and formed in His temple; the forerunner of the Lord was sanctified from his mother's womb; and of the Apostles whom He chose, the saintly disciple whom He loved, who loved most early, steadily, boldly, alone by the Cross, was chosen further that he should

“Armed in his station wait,
“Till his Lord be at the gate;”

⁷ Hence such persons persist in calling the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration “deadening,” and “soul-destroying,” because *they* held it amiss, and so it became deadening to them; e. g. “A Tract for the Times in Reply to the Oxford Tracts,” p. 1 & 13, notes.

forming and carrying on the Church when the rest were removed, and (through his disciple St. Polycarp) the author of the earliest school of Christian doctors for the transmission of sound doctrine. So also in later times, they to whom, in her hour of need, the Church of CHRIST has been most indebted for the maintenance of purity of life and doctrine, St. Basil,⁸ St. Gregory of Nazianzum, St. Athanasius the Great, St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, St. Ephraim, were, by pious mothers, sisters, grandmothers, bishops, piously trained, and grew up in that ripening piety; or else as St. Hilary and St. Cyprian, born heathens, faithfully followed God's earliest guidance to the truth. St. Augustine, on the other hand,—although *his* wanderings were before he received the seal of Baptism, and through subsequent stedfastness he became, as it were, a guardian angel to the Church, standing in the gap against Pelagianism,—yet propagated or introduced error into the Church along with the good seed, was the author of a stern theory of predestination, and through his statements, a chief promoter of the belief in Purgatory.

It is, then, even probable, on the very view of the case set forth by the adherents of this system, that men or parties, so circumstanced, should in this sudden recovery have seized hold of certain prominent truths, applied them forcibly, but have forgotten others, which still are essential to their perfect use and truth. They have re-erected the temple of God, but it has no longer Aaron's rod that budded, nor the Manna, nor the Shechinah—the full truth of the indwelling of the LORD in His Church. It was so in the Swiss reformation, whose traditions of doctrine and exposition of Scripture, those of the school in question have engrafted upon the Church: and, as in the early reformation, many of the German Reformers, together with the truths which they learned from St. Augustine, imbibed from him also a rigid predestinarian theory, and subsequently relaxed it, so now, together with the truths which Calvin, (the parent, as it were, of their reformation,) intended to advocate, men have unwittingly entertained also his deep disparagement of the Sacraments, whereby he corrupted the truths which he held. They received both together; and because the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration must

⁸ St. Basil, chiefly by his grandmother Macrina, a confessor of the Catholic Faith; and a disciple of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus; St. Gregory of Nazianzum, by the excellent Nonna, who, like Hannah, dedicated her son to God from the womb, and soon after his birth, placing the Gospel in his hand, devoted him at the Altar to the service of the Lord, as was St. Ephraim also, the son of Confessors; St. Athanasius, by very pious parents, and then by the saintly Alexander the Bishop; St. Ambrose, by his sister Marcellina, who devoted herself to celibacy, that she might the more “care for the things of the Lord;” St. Chrysostom, by his mother Anthusa, who lived a widow from her twentieth year, retiring from the world, wherewith she was connected, to devote herself to educate her son.

correct *his* view of “justification by faith,” they think it opposed to the doctrine in itself. Their views then are defective, in that, arising (according to their own statement,) in a cold period of the Church, they seized upon certain principal truths,⁹ as the means of restoring the energy of the Church, or of rousing men from their lethargy; but as men awaking from a slumber in alarm, look not around with full self-possession, they let slip other truths. Without deciding as to the whole extent of their allegations, the eighteenth century was comparatively a stagnant period of the Church,—in England, owing to the violent revolution, whereby so many of her best members, the Non-juring Clergy, were ejected, and that, at one time, the State set itself to corrupt and degrade her, and her writers looked for strength in foreign alliances;—abroad, through the development of the principles of the ultra-reformation, and the influence of degraded England and corrupted France. But this very fact, while it accounts for the weight attaching to any energetic, though partial, statement of truth, affords a presumption, that persons vehemently roused at that period, and connecting themselves with a defective reformation, would not see the whole; their influence was blessed as far as they were faithful, fell short, where their system was defective.

A happier time, we trust, is dawning, when with the energy for conversion which now exists, shall be combined care for the young, such as the belief in GOD’S gift through Baptism brings with it, and the holy calmness of a complete faith.

It has seemed necessary to premise thus much, both because the habits of mind referred to, have an evil tendency, far beyond even this one important subject, and also because the difficulties raised against Baptismal Regeneration seem to lie entirely in these collateral questions, not in the defect of Scripture evidence for its truth. They are made however, more in the hope of removing difficulties from the minds of such as have not yet taken any decided line against the doctrines of the Church, than of convincing such as have: and to the former only will the evidence

⁹ It ought to be borne in mind that Dr. Chalmers’ testimony so often alleged, as decisive between two sorts of preaching, contrasts simply Christian preaching, as a whole, and Heathenism. For what Dr. C. speaks of, is “pressing the reformations of *honor* and truth and integrity, the *virtues* and proprieties of *social life*,”—“subordinate reformations.” Why so might Cicero have preached. A mode of preaching “wherein Christ was *scarcely ever* spoken of, or spoken of in such a way as stripped Him of all the importance of His character and offices,” has obviously nothing to do with any thing existing at the present day, nor with the belief that Christ imparts His gift of the new birth through Baptism. Bp. Sumner, in quoting this passage, (Apost. Preaching, c. v. end,) keeps the same contrast between Christianity and Heathenism, or Christianity as a replication of the religion of nature. This is seldom observed by those who quote them.

proposed be addressed. But let not others think, that because the evidence does not persuade them, this is owing to its want of validity: for Scripture evidence is throughout proposed to those who believe, not to those who believe not; it will be enough for those who “continue in the things which they have learned, and have been assured of, knowing of whom they have learned them;” (2 Tim. iii. 14) but there is no promise that any, be they nations, sects, or individuals, who have failed to hold fast to them, should be enabled to see their truth. God has provided an institution, the Church, to “hold fast” and to convey “the faithful word as they had been taught.” (Tit. ii. 2.) He ordered that the immediate successors of the Apostles should “commit the things which they had heard of them to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim. ii. 2.) Whoever, then, neglects this ordinance of God, and so seeks truth in any other way than God has directed it to be sought, has no ground to look to obtain it; nay, it appears to be a penalty annexed to departure from this channel of truth, both in individuals and bodies, that they not only lose all insight into the Scripture evidence for that truth, but gradually decline further from it, and but seldom, and not without extraordinary effort, recover. The first misgivings, and restrictions, and limitations, are forgotten: what was originally an exception is made a rule and a principle; and departures, which were at first timidly ventured upon, and excused upon the necessity of the case, (as that of Calvin from episcopal ordination, or the license with regard to the authority and extent of the Canon of Scripture among several denominations of Christians,) are by their followers looked upon as matters of glory and of boast, and as distinctive marks of Protestantism. For, on the one hand, the dissatisfaction generated by a state of doubt leads us to prefer even wrong decision to suspense or misgiving; we “force ourselves to do this” unbidden “sacrifice:” on the other, our natural listlessness and dislike of exertion tempts us to make an arbitrary selection of such portions of the vast compass of Divine Truth as is most congenial to ourselves, (since to enter equally into all its parts costs much effort,) and this done, we acquire a positive distaste for such truth as we have not adopted into what is practically our religious creed: we dislike having our religious notions disturbed; and since no truth can be without its influence upon the rest, the adoption of any forsaken truth involves not only the admission of a foreign and unaccustomed ingredient, but threatens to compel us to modify much at least of our actual system.

My object, then, in the following pages is partly to help, by GOD’S blessing, to relieve the minds of such persons as being in the sacred ministry of the Church, or Candidates for the same, have difficulty in reconciling with their ideas of Scripture truth, what appears even to them

to be the obvious meaning of our Baptismal and other¹⁰ Formularies, as to the privileges of Baptism; partly (and that more especially) to afford persons a test of their own views of their Saviour's ordinance, by comparing them with the language and feelings of Scripture. And this, because a due sense of the blessings which He has bestowed upon us, must tend to increase our love for Him; as also, because I know not what ground of hope the Church has to look for a full blessing upon its ministry from its Head, so long as a main channel of His grace be, in comparison, lightly esteemed.

¹⁰ Persons often forget that Baptismal Regeneration is taught in the Catechism as well, as undoubtingly, and as warmly, as in the services of Baptism and Confirmation; for when the child is taught to say that it was "in its Baptism made a member of Christ and a child of God," that "being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby (by the spiritual grace of Baptism) made the children of grace;" what is this but to say that they were born of God, i. e. re-generate? and every child is taught to "thank its Heavenly Father for having called it into this state of salvation through Jesus Christ our Saviour," and humbly to pray—not that it be brought into any other state, but—"that it might continue in the same to its life's end."