

true, a candid man, whose conscience cannot reconcile the Calvinistic system with our Baptismal Office, will take the trouble to read both sides of the question, and compare his pre-conceived notions with the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers, as well as that of our own more learned divines. In almost every such case the plain, literal, and grammatical sense of the Prayer Book is the result of the reader's convictions, and his conscience finds immediate relief. But others, shunning the testimony of the Primitive Church, go on in the painful "non-natural" way, laying themselves open to any Spurgeon or other hard-hitter, who holds their opinions, but scouts at their position. In these days, however, when the depraver of the Prayer Book, on the Ritualistic side, goes to Rome, the sound earnest revival spirit in our Church which sloughs him off is bringing the depraver of the Prayer Book, on the other side, to a crisis. Hear our author:—

"Here are no less than five different explanations, all or any one of which destroys the unity of the Baptismal Service, and violates its plain letter. They are so constantly obtruded as to suggest great sensitiveness of conscience behind them. They have been unceasingly offered, but without relieving many of a sore burden which the service imposes. Some have outgrown the scruples of their consciences, but every new generation is obliged to pass through the same struggles as those who have gone before. The world is slow to believe that popular devotional formularies are so recalcitrant in their meaning that a vast amount of historical lore is necessary for their right interpretation, and has been quick to style these various explanations 'traditional, evasive expedients,' bad in principle and unsatisfactory in result.

"However satisfactory to the clergy these expedients may be, the laity, for the most part, are ignorant of or unwilling to accept them.

"Godly men, in other years and lands, have had such doubts as are herein expressed. The pious Simeon said:

"In the Baptismal Service we thank God for having regenerated the baptized infant by His Holy Spirit. Now, from hence it appears that, in the opinion of our reformers, regeneration and remission of sins did accompany baptism."

"Macaulay reckoned as

"Sophistical that peculiar form of mental aberration which refuses to recognize in the plain wording of the Baptismal Service the regenerating virtue of the sacrament"

"Baptist Noel says:

"I once labored hard to convince myself that our reformers did not and could not mean that our infants are regenerated by baptism. But no reasoning avails. The language is too plain."

"The venerated Bishop Meade once wrote:

"Why could not another prayer on the same plan be introduced into the Baptismal Service, and allowed to be used in the place of the one which we must now use, but which I never do without pain, because its plain, literal meaning contradicts my belief?"

"We are compelled to choose between two interpretations: One is the non-natural, offends many consciences, and results in a confused, deceiving formulary. The other is natural, logical, convincing to those who accept it. It teaches what Hagenbach asserts to be the teaching of the divines of the Church of England, 'the doctrine of baptismal regeneration with caution.' It is a part of what Dean Alford has recently called 'a piece of the original scarlet . . . which was tolerated for old customs' sake, and for the sake of those who cared for it.' Is not Neal's word historically true: 'Neither among the Eastern Offices of Baptism, all of which I know well—Constantinopolitan, Copto-Jacobite, Armenian, Syro-Jacobite, Ethiopic, Nestorian—nor, to the best of my belief, among those of the West, is there one which so unequivocally asserts the unconditional regeneration of an infant as our own Office?'"

After the foregoing, our readers can readily imagine the manifold expressions in the Communion Office, and especially in that of the American Prayer Book, which contain—not exactly the milk for babes—which our author would desire. No wonder, he says, after giving a list of such expressions:—