

CHARGE OF THE LORD BISHOP OF MONTREAL.

13. The Confession of the Synod of Casner, printed in 1570, is that which I have mentioned as affording a solitary exception. Upon the effect of baptism, the doctrinal definitions of this Synod are rather obscure and perplexed, and although various meanings of the word baptism are given, in one of which it is stated to be taken "pro signo regenerationis et causâ regenerationis," it appears from the context, to be in a figurative sense that the word is understood to be thus applied. It is then said to be taken "pro signo regenerationis et causâ regenerationis, quod a Christo institutum est," and this seems to be the nearest approach to the doctrine exhibited in all the other Protestant Confessions of Faith.

Among the Ministers generally, of P. Land, according to its then existing divisions, with Lithuania and Samogitia, there was a Council of Lituonia upon a point of doctrine respecting the Lord's Supper, agreed upon at Soudouir, in 1570. This document contains only incidental notice of baptism, in these words:— "Et baptismus et crisma Domini sunt signa et testimoniis gratie . . . et ostendunt beneficia Evangelii ad singulos pertinere, qui his ritibus utuntur . . . Per baptismum singulis imbuatur Ecclesia. It will be observed that an expression used in the Scottish Confession of 1568, justitiae Christi participatio fieri, corresponds with a language used in our own Homilies, in which justification is spoken of, as an effect of baptism.

It has been seen how strongly the Belgian Confession affirms the agency of the divine Spirit in the sacraments; but at the same time, (as an exemplification of what is said in p. 33 of the Charge), the term Regeneration is, in that Confession, applied to the effect of Faith. "Credimus verum bene fieri, per auditum verbi Dei et Spiritus Sancti operationem unicuique nostrum inditam, nos regenerare atque veluti novos homines efficiere, et quos ad novam vitam vivere ducit, &c. This is the following up of the Grace of Baptism. The Collection of Confessions from which these extracts are taken, was edited by Gaspar Laurentius, and is bound up in the same volume with his Catholic constant of the Primitive Fathers, in their own words, and without comment, with the Doctrines of the Reformation.

Calvin, in the fourth book of his Institutes, maintaining the baptism of infants, speaks thus: Nam si inter illos Adæ sinendi sunt, in morte relinquuntur quando in Adam, nihil quædam mori possunt. Contra vero, Christiani sibi adhibet. Quid ita? Quia vita est. Eos ergo ut reprobos, aut participes fieri. Again,—"At quando, inquam, regenerantur infantes, nec boni, nec malis cogitationibus? Nos autem respondemus, opus Dei, etiam in capiti nostro non subiecto, non tamen esse nullum. Post infantes qui servandi sunt (at ceteræ ex eadem omnino obsequia) ante à Domino regenerari omnino obsequia sunt. Nam si ingentium sibi corruptio non dicitur, utero servati, et a reprobis esse opus, antequam in regnum Dei admittantur: quod iniquitatem potestatem aut iniquitatem. Si peccatores nascuntur, quomodo et David et Paulus affirmant: aut Deo ingratum involuntate manent, aut justificationem necesse est. In quibus utrumque quædam ipse iudex affert, nulli patre in regnum celorum ingressum nisi renatis. Atque ut obliquo modo hunc genus composit, documentum præbuit in Johanne Baptista, quem in matris utero sanctificavit, quid in reliquis posset."

Further on,—"Baptismi in futurum penitentiam et fidem: que tunc nondum in illis formatur sunt, æquivalentem Spiritus operationem utriusque semen in illis latet. Hæc responsio semel et iterum quædam ad verum nos torquent à Baptismi significatione petitum. Quæ est obsequia quæ à Paulo insignitur, ab hoc loco regnatio et consensio. It is very singular that Calvin, thus decidedly maintaining regeneration in baptism, should yet, in the course of the same argument, disconnect from baptism the mention of water, in the text John III. 5. In his Commentary in loc., taking the same view, he admits the prevailing opinion to be against him and speaks in rather a less positive tone. Chrysostomus, cuiusque præsertim asserit, aque nomen ad baptismum refert. Beza, the Colleague of Calvin, in his annotations upon the same passage, reasons, at first, upon the application of the passage to baptism, as a supposition (inasmuch as baptism is confessedly peculiariter modo regenerationis sacramentum,) proves that this supposition would not establish the invariable necessity of baptism, to salvation; then takes the supposition of a reference to the ablutions of the Law, and an illustration drawn from these of the greater necessity of spiritual purification; speaks of the water of baptism as a sign and seal of grace; and winds up by this statement of his own opinion, which will be seen to differ from that of Calvin: (i. e. with respect to this particular text.) Sed de baptismo hæc agi, sine simpliciter, sine aliquo ad leges abluitionis ablutione, omnino existimo.

In the Litænie of Baptism of the Moravians or United Brethren, the following expressions occur in the Form for the baptism of children, of which there are two:—"By the Holy Sacraments, Bless us gracious Lord God— An infant we present to thee As thy redeemed property; And thou most mercifully intend This child (thou) to convert. By baptism, and the seal in blood, Out of the Father's of the Grace. Baptism is the answer of a good conscience towards God, the washing of regeneration and receiving of the Holy Ghost. Children may also be made partakers of this grace— Be present, Lord, though water falls To cleanse a soul from sin, Yet while we pass it let thy blood, Now make this infant clean."

By baptism we are made partakers of the forgiveness of sins and cleansing from sin, by the blood of Jesus Christ. The Litænie de Baptême de the French Walloon Protestants, after setting forth the corruption of man and the necessity and nature of spiritual regeneration, declares this blessing to be placed within our reach, in the first instance, conveyed to us by means of baptism. "Toutes ces grâces nous sont données quand il lui plaît de nous incorporer à son Église, par le baptême . . . Ainsi dans le baptême, nous recevons une double grâce de notre Dieu, pourvu que nous n'anticipions pas la vertu de ce Sacrement par notre iniquité. Réellement nous avons un témoignage certain, que Dieu veut nous être un Père propice, et nous pardonner toutes nos fautes et nos offenses. Secondement qu'il nous assistera par son Saint Esprit, afin que nous puissions combattre le Diable, le péché, et les convoitises de notre chair, et en remporter la victoire, pour vivre dans la liberté de son Règne, qui est la Règne de la justice. Puis donc que c'est la grâce de Jésus Christ que accomplis ces deux choses en nous, il s'ensuit, que la substance et la vertu du baptême sont aussi comprises en lui. En effet, nous n'avons point de purification qu'en son sang, ni de renouvellement qu'en la mort, et en sa résurrection. Mais comme Dieu nous communique ses richesses et ses bénédictions par sa Parole, aussi il nous les distribue par ses Sacraments."

The communications upon this subject which I have mentioned, in the Charge, that I was favoured by two of my brethren of the Clergy, are as follows:—"In reply to your letter of the 13th inst., which I have only just received, I would observe that the doctrine of Baptismal regeneration is stated in Chap. xxviii. §. 1, of the Westminster Confession of Faith, in the following words:—"Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. It may be remarked that the references are an integral part of the Confession of Faith; and the reference from the clause stating that Baptism is a sign and seal of regeneration in the above extract, is to Tit. iii. 5, which fixes beyond doubt the meaning of the Compilers. The same doctrine is stated in Quest. 105, of the larger Catechism, and in Quest. 94 of the shorter Catechism, which are both constituent parts of the Confession of Faith. The only drawback in the whole book on the doctrine of the Baptismal regeneration is in §. v. of Chap. xxviii. where, no doubt, influenced by their opinion of absolute reprobation, they seem to think it possible that some who are baptized may not be regenerated. The reference is to Acts viii. 13, 23."

"Hymn 740, page 608, Methodist Collection:— 1. God of eternal truth and love, Whose face the promised aid we claim, Thine own great ordinance approve, The child baptized into thy name Partaker of thy gifts make, And give him all these things to seek. 2. Father, if each thy sovereign will, In Jesus didst the infant enjoin, Answer thy following Spirit's seal And let the grace attend the sign; The seed of endless life impart Take thou upon this infant heart. 3. Answer on him thy wisdom's end In giving him the gift of good, Whatever thou didst for man bestow, What'er thou hast on him bestowed, Now to this favoured child be given Pardon, and holiness, and heaven."

The Hymn is not one of the Collection published during Wesley's life, but of a supplement published by the Conference in 1830, compiled chiefly but not entirely from both published and unpublished Hymns by the Rev. Charles Wesley. Whether he be the author of the one within or not I cannot say. They have borrowed freely from Watts, but this is not his. The foregoing addition of testimonies may serve, in any quarter not fixedly prejudiced, to show that, with some shades of difference, respecting the force or the comprehensiveness of the term, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration has been held, either in express terms or in perfectly equivalent language descriptive of the effects of the ordinance, (and often in times when the fire is appointed to try every man's work of what sort it is,) by men and bodies of men who were removed quite long since from all leanings to formalism and superstition; from all low and unscriptural tendencies in dealing with Gospel truth, or from all drowsy spirit of accommodation to worldly and carnal views; men and bodies of men who, in whatever other direction they may, in some examples, have deviated, have exhibited and upheld the most strongly developed views of the doctrines of Grace, and manifested the most ardent zeal to turn their fellow creatures from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.

While, therefore, I repeat that where the dispute is a mere dispute about words, it is to be regretted that there should be any controversy upon the subject, and while I would, according to what appears to my judgment to be the sense of the inspired word of God, concede that such texts as John i. 12, 13, i. John v. 7 and v. 1, (taken as examples,) are not spoken with any special and immediate reference to baptism,—"I do conceive it to be a manifest and utter mistake to suppose that vital religion is endangered by the doctrine of the Church of England upon the point in question, and a lamentable consequence of the alarm raised in this behalf, that any of her conscientious Clergy should be led to avail themselves of those evasive constructions, those coloured statements and those arguments strained almost to distortion, which have been provided for the case, in order to reconcile the forms which they subscribe and use with what they regard as the doctrine of Scripture. It has not been my object, upon the present occasion, to cite the language of these forms; they are, indeed, in all our hands and speak for themselves—but whoever may be desirous of seeing the perfect and close accordance of their language with the more private expressions of sentiment exhibited in the writings of our great Reformers and other luminaries of acknowledged brightness in our Church, will do well to consult a pamphlet by the Rev. John Oswald Dukeque, published in 1843, under the title of Baptismal Regeneration; (Livington, London.)

If we look fairly and honestly at the view held by our own and by the great foreign Reformers upon this subject, and compare it with the reprobation—not infrequently the scornful and, considering the institution of Christ to be concerned, the irreverent reprobation of the same views, which we now hear from zealous men in religion, we can only suppose that, in their estimation of things, the doctrine of development which has lately been maintained by certain advocates of the Romish system, is in very truth, to be applied in the history of Protestantism. In consistency with this idea, we actually do find that a Clergyman who has attacked certain positions assumed by the Bishop of London, takes the ground, himself, of "an improved theology" existing in our own day, compared with that which prevailed when our public formularies were framed.

A pamphlet has found its way into the Colony, on that side of the question, from which one specimen of reasoning may be selected. The author, commenting upon John iii. 5, speaks thus:—"If at connection, I ask, is here seen to exist between baptism and regeneration? The utmost it expresses is that two things are requisite, baptism and regeneration—or to

as we see in our own, treating of the Creed, the commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Sacraments, as the ground work of instruction, but which is divided into fifty-four sections, to be used on so many successive Sundays, one for each, contains the following passages, in speaking of Baptism:—"La Ministre.—Volonté vous dire que, l'Être en sol seulement une figure? "N'est-ce pas une figure, mais à laquelle est jointe en même temps, la vérité. Car Dieu ne nous promet rien en vain. C'est pourquoi il est certain que l'Être en sol est jointe en même temps, à l'offrande dans le Baptême et que nous l'y recevons en effet."—"M.—Comment cette grâce nous est-elle appliquée dans le Baptême? "K.—En ce que nous sommes revêtus de Jésus Christ et nous y recevons une espérance."

be born of water and of the Spirit." It does not seem very easy to understand how a birth by water can be taken to exclude regeneration by water. If the text had been, Except a man receive water and be born of the Spirit, as describing baptism, with the very purpose in view, of dissipating any share of instrumentality in the water, as a divinely appointed vehicle, in effecting the new birth, can hardly be considered an evidence of standing upon very sure and well-understood grounds. The manner in which this author deals with the formularies of the Church appears to me to justify all which I have said respecting the pernicious sophistry by which men truly in earnest for what they believe to be the truth of God, can be brought to impose upon their own minds, in making these formularies speak what they wish them to speak.

I find it noticed in Mr. Dukeque's pamphlet that the Church, in as far as she was represented by her prelates, in conference with the Puritan objectors, pronounced, specifically, upon a point which I have touched in page 35 of my Charge:—"The effect of children's baptism depends neither upon their own present natural faith and repentance, (which the Catechism says expressly they cannot perform,) nor upon the faith and repentance of their natural parents or pro-parents, or of their god-fathers or god-mothers; but upon the ordinance and institution of Christ. "It may be remarked that this answer is quite borne out by the opinion of Augustine," (which he then proceeds to cite.)

It will be seen by a letter from one of my Clergy which I have quoted in this note, that I have committed a slight oversight in ascribing the Hymn for Baptism in the Methodist Collection, without any qualifying doubt, to the pen of Charles Wesley.

NOTE II. It is indeed a sad and rather a very common error, in running away from formalism and superstition and the ascription of merit to ceremonial works, to run into the opposite extreme and to hold it for an evidence of spirituality to depreciate the ordinances of the Faith, as well as the stated observances of the Church. The disposition here mentioned is one often found in persons neither deficient in good disposition nor in general intelligence, proceeding from the mere weakness of nature which is unskilled to preserve the safe and middle way of the truth. And to this account or to that of the contact of some accidental influence, whenever we have no evidence of the contrary, we ought willingly to put it down. But it is a point in which men should watch and examine themselves well; for a snare may be here spread for their souls which they do not suspect; and there are many other cases in which the same disposition is, in reality, so far from being characteristic of that spiritual force of heart, to which it is apt to lay pre-eminence claim, as to manifest a close and very discernible alliance with the native propensities of the carnal mind with which it is well known that the word of God teaches us to chase all variance and strife and vain glory in religion; the ambitious exhibition of religious gifts and attainments; the spirit of division and faction; repugnance to constituted authority; the eager adulation of party tests, in things which men are neither the better if they do, nor the worse if they do them not; the gloriating in men, on the one hand, and the species of ostracism, on the other, by which a ban is set upon those who adhere to the old paths of the Church.

"With homely earnestness," says the Bishop of Oxford in the introduction to his excellent compilation "from old English divines," for the use of Communicants, "With homely earnestness, (Luther) charges on the devil the delusion which, continually crying Spirit! Spirit! destroys the while all roads, bridges, scaling-ladders and paths by which the Spirit can enter: namely, the visible order established by God in holy baptism, in outward forms and in his own word."

Daubigie, the recent historian of scenes in which Luther is, in a manner, his hero, has not, in this respect, exhibited the sentiments of Luther. It would appear, however, that he has become sensible of having been carried too far in another direction, since, in later publications, he has given offence, upon this ground, to certain parties, who have before been his unqualifying admirers, have professed that they hardly recognize the same man.

NOTE I. I wish it to be understood that our Clergy are not at liberty in this Diocese either to administer baptism to children in health or to celebrate marriage, in any other place than the Church, except where the parties reside at such a distance from any Church as to be precluded from habitually attending it for public worship. The injunction to solemnize marriage only in the house of God, (when it is within reasonable reach,) according to the excellent and known rule of the Church, had been issued before in the cities of Quebec and Montreal; and such an injunction was in accordance with the wishes of Clergymen of the Diocese who, desirous of observing the rule, naturally felt that they ought to be sustained in insisting upon it, by the episcopal authority. Some of the Clergy had, however, for many years before enforced its uniform observance in their parishes. I believe it can be hardly necessary to combat a notion so entirely groundless, as that the Licence can make it compulsory to celebrate marriage, if desired in a private house. There is no law of force in this Province, which compels the Clergy to violate the rules of their Church. And the Church, both with reference to Banns and Licence, as may be seen in the Rubrics of the Marriage Service and in the 62d Canon, directs that the ceremony shall be performed in the house of God. The dispensation from this rule which is procured by a special Licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury, (and from him alone,) serves only to confirm the rule in a more positive manner, in the case of banns or that of any other than such special Licence, since nothing but such special Licence can give exception from its operation. That exception is the precise object of that Licence; and no Licence not specially issued for that object, can possibly have the same effect.

The observance, therefore, of the rule of the Church in this behalf, is certainly lawful, and it is certainly honest, i. e. openly and decent, and not contra bonos mores; and being lawful and honest, it falls of course, when enjoined, within the matter of the oath of canonical obedience to the Bishop, which the Clergy who officiate in the Diocese, have taken. But this is a point which I am confident that I have no need to urge. In delivering and in publishing with the notes which have been appended to it, the foregoing Charge to my Clergy, I have made a great effort, "in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling," to face a variety of questions more or less difficult, and to dispose, as I am best able, of some points of a thorny and contentious aspect. Let me hope in God that I have—in this department of my duty at least—exhausted the task; and that if I am permitted to meet my brethren again in the same way, I may have the comfort of confining myself to topics of simple edification in the plain and unquestioned duties of my office calling. My earnest prayer to God, with reference to the last, as well as to the daily close of my labours, may be expressed in the familiar words of good Bishop Ken:—"That with the world, myself and thee, I ere I sleep, at peace may be!"

* See particularly Numbers vi. 3. 1 Cor. i. 10, 11, 12; iii. 12, 13. 2 Pet. ii. 14, 15. Phil. i. 15, 16; 3 Tim. iii. 3. Jas. iii. 1. † Calvin refers to the same source, the practice of infant communion, which crept in among the reformed Churches.

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