

parties, and partly by general considerations of a philological kind, which cannot reasonably be disputed, we are entitled to apply it to the interpretation of the scriptural passages in which baptism may be spoken of, or referred to; as if it were virtually identical with the faith or regeneration which it signifies or represents.

We remark, in the third place, that participation in the ordinance of baptism is an imperative duty incumbent upon all who are enabled to believe in Christ and to turn to God through Him, which it is assumed that they will at once proceed, if they have an opportunity in providence, to discharge, not merely as a duty required by God's authority, but also as a suitable expression and appropriate evidence of the change that has been wrought in their views and principles; and, moreover, that the New Testament, in its general references to this subject, having respect principally and primarily, as I have explained, to the case of adult baptism, usually assumes that the profession made in baptism corresponds with the reality of the case,—that is, with the previous existence of faith and union to Christ, and deals with it upon this assumption. All these general considerations, when brought to bear upon the interpretation of the passages usually produced by Papists and Tractarians in support of their doctrine upon this subject, afford abundant materials for enabling us to prove that these passages do not *require*, and therefore upon principles already explained, do not *admit*, of a construction which would make them sanction the notion that there is an invariable connection between baptism and regeneration, or even—what, however, is only a part of the general doctrine of an invariable connection—that none are regenerated or saved without baptism.

Some of the passages commonly adduced in support of the Popish and Tractarian doctrine upon this subject, contain, *in gremio*, statements which not only disprove their interpretation of the particular passage, but afford a key to the explanation of other passages of a similar kind. It is said, for instance,*—“the like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God).” Now here, indeed, as in one or two other passages, baptism is said to save us; but then a formal ex-

* 1 Pet. iii. 21.

planation is given of what this statement means; and it just amounts in substance to this, that it is not the outward ordinance of baptism, or anything which an outward ordinance is either fitted or intended to effect, to which this result is to be ascribed, but the reality of that of which baptism is the figure,—the sincerity of the profession which men make when they ask and receive the ordinance of baptism for themselves.

The only passage of those usually quoted by Papists and Tractarians in support of their doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which seems to bear with anything like explicitness upon the conclusion they are anxious to establish, is the declaration of our Saviour,* “Except a man be born again of *water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Protestants have usually contended that our Lord did not here speak of baptism at all, any more than He spoke of the Lord's Supper in the discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of the same Gospel; and they have no great difficulty in proving *this* much at least, which is all that the condition of the argument requires of them,—namely, *that it cannot be proved* that the water of which our Lord here speaks was intended by Him to describe the outward ordinance of baptism.

There is one of the passages commonly adduced by Papists and Tractarians, which, while it gives no real countenance to their doctrine, affords a very clear indication of the true state of the case in regard to this matter, and of what it is that Scripture really meant to convey to us concerning it. It is the record of the commission given by our Lord to His apostles after His resurrection, as contained in the sixteenth verse of the sixteenth chapter of Mark's Gospel, where we find that, after directing them to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, our Saviour added, “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved;” (here Papists and Tractarians commonly stop in quoting the passage, but our Lord goes on), “he that believeth not, shall be damned.” None can fail to be struck with the very remarkable contrast between the two different portions of this declaration,—the manifestly intentional, and very pointed, omission of any reference to baptism in the second part of it. Had the first part of it stood alone, it might have seemed to countenance the idea

* John iii. 5.

that baptism was just as necessary to salvation, and as invariable an accompaniment of it, as faith, although even in that case a more direct and explicit statement would have been necessary to make it a conclusive proof of this position. Had it been followed up by the declaration, "He that believeth not, *and is not baptized*, shall be damned," the Popish doctrine might have been regarded as established. But when we find that our Saviour, in so very marked and pointed a manner, dropped all reference to baptism in stating the converse of His first declaration, and connected condemnation only with the want of faith, the conviction is forced upon us, that He did so for the express purpose of indicating that He did not intend to teach that there was an invariable connection between salvation and baptism, though there certainly was between salvation and faith; and that He was careful to say nothing that might lead men to believe that the want of baptism excluded from the kingdom of heaven. The combination of baptism with faith, in the first part of the declaration, is easily explained by those general considerations which were formerly stated, and which warrant us in saying that, even had it stood alone, it would not have *necessarily* implied more than what all Protestants admit,—namely, that it was our Lord's intention that baptism should be set forth by His apostles as not less really obligatory with faith as a matter of duty, and was therefore usually to be expected in all who were enabled to believe as the certain consequence in all ordinary circumstances,—the appropriate and incumbent expression of their faith.*

If there be nothing in Scripture adequate to establish the doctrine of an invariable connection between baptism and the spiritual blessings of forgiveness and regeneration,—but, on the contrary, much to disprove it,—it is *still more* clear and certain that the Popish doctrine, that the sacraments confer grace *ex opere operato*, is destitute of any authority, and ought to be decidedly rejected. Even if the doctrine of an invariable connection between the sacraments and spiritual blessings could be established, as we have shown it cannot, it would still require *additional and independent* scriptural evidence to show that the *sacraments* confer grace *ex opere operato*; while, on the other hand, the refutation of the doctrine of an invariable connection overturns at once that of the

* See an able discussion of this subject in Turretine, Loc. xix., Qu. xiii.

opus operatum, and removes the only ground on which any attempt to prove it could be based. It should also be observed, that this doctrine with respect to the efficacy of the sacraments is much more directly and explicitly inconsistent with great scriptural truths, as to the principles that regulate the communication of spiritual blessings to men, than that merely of an invariable connection,—as is evident from this consideration, that this doctrine of the *opus operatum* ascribes to outward ordinances an influence and an efficacy in procuring forgiveness which the Scripture does not ascribe even to faith itself,—the only thing existing in men, or done by them, by which they are ever said in Scripture to be justified. Baptism, according to the Church of Rome, is the instrumental cause of justification, while faith is merely one of seven virtues, as they are called, which only prepare or dispose men to receive it; and a mere wish to receive the sacraments is represented as one of those six other virtues, each of which has just as much influence or efficacy as faith in procuring or obtaining justification,—the sacrament itself, of course, upon the principle of the *opus operatum*, having more influence or efficacy in producing the result than all these virtues put together; while, on the other hand, the Protestant doctrine, though assigning to faith, in the matter of justification, a function and an influence possessed and exerted by nothing else, does not ascribe to it any proper efficiency of its own in the production of the result, but represents it only as the instrument receiving what has been provided and is offered.

The subject of the sacraments forms a most important department in the system of Romanists. Their whole doctrine upon the sacraments in general,—their nature, objects, efficacy, and number,—their peculiar doctrines and practices in regard to each of their seven sacraments individually,—all tend most powerfully to corrupt and pervert the doctrine of Scripture with respect to the grounds of a sinner's salvation, and the way and manner in which God communicates to men spiritual blessings, as well as to foster and confirm some natural tendencies of the human heart, which are most dangerous to men's spiritual welfare. The effects which they ascribe to the sacraments in general and individually,—the five spurious sacraments they have invented without any warrant from Scripture,—and the load of ceremonies with which they have clothed those simple, unpretending ordinances which Christ appointed,—all tend most powerfully to promote the two great ob-

jects which the Romish system is fitted to advance,—namely, first, to lead men to reject the gospel method of salvation, and to follow out for themselves a plan of procedure opposed to its fundamental principles; and, secondly, to make men, in so far as they sincerely submit to the authority and receive the doctrines of their church, the abject slaves of the priest, by representing them as dependent, for the possession of spiritual blessings, upon acts which the priest alone can perform, and by ascribing to these acts of his an important influence in procuring for them the spiritual blessings they need. Some Romish writers have indulged their imaginations in drawing fanciful analogies from a variety of sources in support of these seven sacraments; while others have produced glowing eulogies upon the bountiful kindness and liberality of holy mother church in providing so many sacraments and so many ceremonies to supply all their spiritual wants, and to afford them spiritual assistance and comfort in all varieties of circumstances, upon all leading emergencies from their birth till their death,—baptism when they come into the world to take away all original sin, both its guilt and its power,—confirmation to strengthen and uphold them in the right path when they are growing up towards manhood,—penance and the eucharist during all their lives whenever they need them, the one to wash away all their sins, and the other to afford them spiritual nourishment,—and their extreme unction when they draw near to death.*

The leading aspect in which these ordinances, as represented and practised in the Church of Rome, ought to be regarded, is in relation to the scriptural authority on which their observance and obligation, and the effects ascribed to them either expressly or by implication, rest, and the bearing of the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome upon these points—on men's mode of thinking, feeling, and acting with reference to the only way of a sinner's salvation revealed in the word of God; and the conclusion to which we come when we contemplate the Popish doctrines and practices in this aspect, is, that they are wholly unsanctioned by, nay, decidedly opposed to, the word of God, and unspeakably dangerous to men's eternal welfare,—as having the most direct and powerful tendency to lead men to trust, in matters which con-

* Bellarmin. de Sacramentis in genere, Lib. ii., c. xxvi. Moehler's Symbolism, vol. i., p. 297.

cern their everlasting peace, to their fellow-men and to external observances, instead of trusting to the person and the work of Christ as the only ground of their hope, and looking to the state of their hearts and motives as the only satisfactory *evidence* that they are in a condition of safety. But it is impossible not to be struck also with the great skill and ingenuity with which all these observances and inventions are adapted to increase and strengthen the control of the church and the priesthood over the minds and consciences of men. Sacraments are provided for all the leading eras or stages in men's lives, and such representations are given of their nature and effects, as are best fitted to impress men with the deepest sense of the obligation and advantages of partaking in them. This tendency is brought out with increasing clearness when we advert to the two other sacraments which the Church of Rome has invented,—viz., holy orders and marriage: the first manifestly intended,—that is, so far as the ascription of a sacramental character is concerned,—to increase the respect and veneration entertained for the priesthood; and the second being just as manifestly intended to bring under the more direct and absolute control of the priesthood, a relation which exerts, directly and indirectly, so extensive and powerful an influence upon men individually, and upon society at large. If Popery be Satan's masterpiece, the theory and practice of the sacraments may perhaps be regarded as the most finished and perfect department in this great work of his. And it is not in the least surprising, that when recently the great adversary set himself to check and overturn the scriptural and evangelical principles which were gaining a considerable influence in the Church of England, he should have chiefly made use of the sacramental principle for effecting his design,—that is, the principle that there is an invariable connection between participation in the sacraments and the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, and that the sacraments have an inherent power or virtue whereby they produce these appropriate effects. In no other way, and by no other process, could he have succeeded to such an extent as he has done, in leading men to disregard and despise all that Scripture teaches us concerning our helpless and ruined condition by nature; concerning the necessity of a regeneration of our moral nature by the power of the Holy Spirit; concerning the way and manner in which, according to the divine method of justification, pardon and acceptance have

been procured and are bestowed ; concerning the place and function of faith in the salvation of sinners, and concerning the true elements and distinguishing characteristics of all those things that accompany salvation,—and, finally, in no other way could he have succeeded to such an extent in leading men who had been ministers in a Protestant church to submit openly and unreservedly to that system of doctrine and practice which is immeasurably better fitted than any other to accomplish his purposes, by leading men to build wholly upon a false foundation, and to reject the counsel of God against themselves ; while it is better fitted than any other to retain men in the most degrading, and, humanly speaking, the most hopeless bondage.

Sec. III.—Popish View of the Lord's Supper.

It is proper, before leaving this subject, to advert to the special importance of the place which the Lord's Supper,—or the sacrament of the altar, as Romanists commonly call it,—holds in the Popish system, and the peculiar magnitude of the corruptions which they have introduced into it. This forms the very heart and marrow of the Popish system, and brings out summarily and compendiously all the leading features by which it is characterized. In a general survey of the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome upon this subject, we meet first with the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, which requires us to believe that, by the words of consecration pronounced by the priest, the bread and wine are changed, as to their substance, into the real flesh and blood of Christ,—the bread and wine altogether ceasing to exist, except in appearance only, and these being given to the partaker instead of the actual flesh and blood of the Redeemer. This doctrine not only contradicts the senses and the reason, but it cannot possibly be received until both the senses and the reason have been put entirely in abeyance. The imposition of the belief of this doctrine may not unjustly be regarded as a sort of experimental test of how far it is possible for the human intellect to be degraded by submitting to receive what contradicts the first principles of rational belief, and overturns the certainty of all knowledge. The manifest tendency of the inculcation of such a doctrine is to sink the human intellect into thorough and absolute slavery, or, by a natural reaction, to involve it in universal and

hopeless scepticism. Both these ruinous results have been fully developed in the history of the Church of Rome. There this doctrine of transubstantiation is made the basis of the foundation of some deadly corruptions of the fundamental principles of Christian truth, and of some gross practical frauds and abuses. It is the foundation of the adoration of the host, or the paying of divine worship to the consecrated wafer,—a practice which, on scriptural principles, is not saved from the guilt of idolatry by the mistaken *belief* that it is the real flesh of Christ. It is the foundation also of the doctrine and practice of the sacrifice of the mass,—that is, of the offering up by the priest of the flesh and blood of Christ, or of the bread and wine alleged to be transubstantiated into Christ's flesh and blood, as a proper propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. The mass is the great idol of Popery, and it presents a marvellous and most daring combination of what is false, profane, and blasphemous,—of what is dishonouring to Christ, and injurious to men, both as pertaining to the life that now is, and that which is to come. It dishonours and degrades the one perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, by representing it as repeated, or rather caricatured, daily and hourly by the juggling mummery of a priest. It tends directly to lead men to build their hopes of pardon upon a false foundation ; and the whole regulations and practices of the Church of Rome in connection with it, are manifestly fitted and intended to impose upon men's credulity, and to cheat them out of their liberty and their property. The celebration of mass for their benefit is made a regular article of merchandise ; and, by the device of private or solitary masses, the priests are enabled to raise much money for masses, which of course they never perform.

These hints may be sufficient to show that the whole subject of the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome in regard to the Eucharist, or the sacrament of the altar, is well worthy of being carefully investigated and thoroughly known, as presenting an epitome of the whole system of Popery,—of the dishonour done by it to the only true God and the only Saviour of sinners, and of its injurious bearing both on the temporal and spiritual welfare of men.*

* For the Protestant view of the sacraments in general, see "The Reformation," pp. 231, etc. (Edra.)

Sec. IV.—Infant Baptism.

The Reformers, and the great body of Protestant divines, in putting forth the definition of the sacraments in general, or of a sacrament as such, intended to embody the substance of what they believe Scripture to teach, or to indicate, as equally applicable to both sacraments; and in laying down what they believe concerning the general objects and the ordinary effects of the sacraments, they commonly *assume*, that the persons partaking in them are rightly qualified for receiving and improving them,—and further, and more specially, that the persons baptized are adults. It is necessary to keep these considerations in view in interpreting the general description given of sacraments and of baptism, in our Confession of Faith and the other Reformed confessions; and with these assumptions, and to this extent, there is no difficulty in the way of our maintaining the general principle, which can be established by most satisfactory evidence,—namely, that the fundamental spiritual blessings, on the possession of which the salvation of men universally depends,—justification and regeneration by faith,—are not conveyed through the instrumentality of the sacraments, but that, on the contrary, they must *already* exist before even baptism can be lawfully or safely received. The general tenor of Scripture language upon the subject of baptism applies primarily and directly to the baptism of adults, and proceeds upon the assumption, that the profession implied in the reception of baptism by adults,—the profession, that is, that they had already been led to believe in Christ, and to receive Him as their Saviour and their Master,—was sincere, or corresponded with the real state of their minds and hearts. It is necessary, therefore, to form our primary and fundamental conceptions of the objects and effects of baptism in itself, as a distinct subject, and in its bearing upon the general doctrine of the sacraments, from the baptism of adults and not of infants. The baptisms which are ordinarily described or referred to in the New Testament, were the baptisms of men who had lived as Jews and heathens, and who, having been led to believe in Christ,—or, at least, to profess faith in Him,—expressed and sealed this faith, or the profession of it, by complying with Christ's requirement, that they should be baptized. This is the proper, primary, full idea of baptism; and to this the general tenor of Scripture language

upon the subject, and the general description of the objects and ends of baptism, *as given in our Confession of Faith*, and in the other confessions of the Reformed churches, are manifestly adapted.

As, in the condition in which we are placed in providence, we but seldom witness the baptism of adults, and commonly see only the baptism of infants,—and as there are undoubtedly some difficulties in the way of applying fully to the baptism of infants the definition usually given of a sacrament, and the general account commonly set forth of the objects and ends of baptism,—we are very apt to be led to form insensibly very erroneous and defective views of the nature and effects of baptism, as an ordinance instituted by Christ in His church, or rather, to rest contented with scarcely any distinct or definite conception upon the subject. Men usually have much more clear and distinct apprehensions of the import, design, and effects of the Lord's Supper than of Baptism; and yet the general definition commonly given of a sacrament applies equally to both, being just intended to embody the substance of what Scripture indicates as equally applicable to the one ordinance as to the other. If we were in the habit of witnessing adult baptism, and if we formed our primary and full conceptions of the import and effects of the ordinance from the baptism of adults, the one sacrament would be as easily understood, and as definitely apprehended, as the other; and we would have no difficulty in seeing how the general definition given of the sacraments in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms applied equally to both. But as this general definition of sacraments, and the corresponding general description given of the objects and effects of baptism, *do not apply fully and without some modification* to the form in which we usually see baptism administered, men commonly, instead of considering distinctly what are the necessary modifications of it, and what are the grounds on which these modifications rest, leave the whole subject in a very obscure and confused condition in their minds.

These statements may, at first view, appear to be large concessions to the anti-pædo-baptists, or those who oppose the lawfulness of the baptism of infants, and to affect the solidity of the grounds on which the practice of pædo-baptism, which has ever prevailed almost universally in the church of Christ, is based. But I am persuaded that a more careful consideration of the subject will

show that these views, besides being clearly sanctioned by Scripture, and absolutely necessary for the consistent and intelligible interpretation of our own standards, are, in their legitimate application, fitted to deprive the arguments of the anti-pædo-baptists of whatever plausibility they possess. It cannot be reasonably denied that they have much that is plausible to allege in opposition to infant baptism; but I am persuaded that the plausibility of their arguments will always appear greatest to men who have not been accustomed to distinguish between the primary and complete idea of this ordinance, as exhibited in the baptism of adults, and the distinct and peculiar place which is held by the special subject of infant baptism, and the precise grounds on which it rests. Pædo-baptists, from the causes to which I have referred, are apt to rest contented with very obscure and defective notions of the import and objects of baptism, and to confound adult and infant baptism as if the same principles must fully and universally apply to both. And in this state of things, when those views of the sacraments in general, and of baptism in particular, which I have briefly explained, are pressed upon their attention, and seen and acknowledged to be well founded, they are not unlikely to imagine that these principles equally rule the case of infant baptism; and they are thus prepared to see, in the arguments of the anti-pædo-baptists, a much larger amount of force and solidity than they really possess. Hence the importance of being familiar with what should be admitted or conceded, as clearly sanctioned by Scripture, with respect to baptism in general, in its primary, complete idea,—estimating exactly what this implies, and how far it goes; and then, moreover, being well acquainted with the special subject of infant baptism as a distinct topic,—with the *peculiar* considerations applicable to it, and the precise grounds on which its lawfulness and obligation can be established.

It is not my purpose to enter upon a full discussion of infant baptism, or an exposition of the grounds on which the views of pædo-baptists can, as I believe, be successfully established and vindicated. I shall merely make a few observations on what it is that pædo-baptists really maintain,—on the distinct and peculiar place which the doctrine of infant baptism truly occupies,—and on the relation in which it stands to the general subject of baptism and the sacraments; believing that correct apprehensions upon these points are well fitted to illustrate the grounds on which

infant baptism rests in all their strength, and the insufficiency of the reasons by which the opposite view has been supported.

Let me then, in the first place, remark that intelligent pædo-baptists hold all those views of the sacraments and of baptism which I have endeavoured to explain, and are persuaded that they can hold them in perfect consistency with maintaining that the infants of believing parents ought to be baptized. There is nothing in these views peculiar to the anti-pædo-baptists; and there is, we are persuaded, no real advantage which they can derive from them in support of their opinions. These views are clearly sanctioned by our Confession of Faith; while, at the same time, it contains also the following proposition as a part of what the word of God teaches upon the subject of baptism: * “Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized.” Now, let it be observed that this position is all that is essential to the doctrine of the pædo-baptists, as such. We are called upon to maintain nothing more upon the subject than this plain and simple proposition, which merely asserts the lawfulness and propriety of baptizing the infants of believing parents. Let it be noticed also, that the statement is introduced merely as an adjunct or appendage to the general doctrine of baptism; not as directly and immediately comprehended under it, any more than under the general definition given of a sacrament, but as a special addition to it, resting upon its own distinct and peculiar grounds. This is the true place which infant baptism occupies; this is the view that ought to be taken of it; and I am persuaded that it is when contemplated and investigated in this aspect, that there comes out most distinctly and palpably the sufficiency of the arguments in favour of it, and the sufficiency of the objections against it. On this, as on many other subjects, the friends of truth have often injured their cause, by entering too fully and minutely into explanations of their doctrines, for the purpose of commending them to men’s acceptance, and solving the difficulties by which they seemed to be beset. They have thus involved themselves in great difficulties, by trying to defend their own minute and unwarranted explanations, as if they were an essential part of the Scripture doctrine. It is easy enough to prove from Scripture

* C. xxviii., s. iv.

that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God, and that they are not three Gods, but one God; but many of the more detailed explanations of the doctrine of the Trinity which have been given by its friends, have been untenable and indefensible, and have only laid it open unnecessarily to the attacks of its enemies. In like manner, we think it no difficult matter to produce from Scripture sufficient and satisfactory evidence of the position, that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized; but minute and detailed expositions of the reasons and the effects of infant baptism are unwarranted by Scripture; they impose an unnecessary burden upon the friends of truth, and tend only to give an advantage to its opponents. The condition and fate of infants, and the principles by which they are determined, have always been subjects on which men, not unnaturally, have been prone to speculate, but on which Scripture has given us little *explicit* information beyond this, that salvation through Christ is just as accessible to them as to adults. One form in which this tendency to speculate unwarrantably about infants has been exhibited, is that of inventing theories about the objects and effects of infant baptism. These theories are often made to rest as a burden upon the scriptural proof of the lawfulness and propriety of the mere practice itself; and thus have the appearance of communicating to that proof, which is amply sufficient for its own proper object, their own essential weakness and invalidity.

It is manifest that, from the nature of the case, the principles that determine and indicate the objects and effects of baptism in adults and infants, cannot be altogether the same; and the great difficulty of the whole subject lies in settling, as far as we can, what modifications our conceptions of baptism should undergo in the case of infants, as distinguished from that of adults; and, at the same time, to show that, even with these modifications, the essential and fundamental ideas involved in the general doctrine ordinarily professed concerning baptism are still preserved. The investigation even of this point is, perhaps, going beyond the line of what is strictly necessary for the establishment of the position, that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized. But some notice of it can scarcely be avoided in the discussion of the question.

The scriptural evidence, in support of the position that the

infants of believing parents are to be baptized, consists *chiefly* in the proof which the word of God affords, to the following effect:—that, in the whole history of our race, God's covenanted dealings with His people, with respect to spiritual blessings, have had regard to their children as well as to themselves; so that the children as well as the parents have been admitted to the spiritual blessings of God's covenants, and to the outward signs and seals, of these covenants;—that there is no evidence that this general principle, so full of mercy and grace, and so well fitted to nourish faith and hope, was to be departed from, or laid aside, under the Christian dispensation; but, on the contrary, a great deal to confirm the conviction that it was to continue to be acted on;—that the children of believers are capable of receiving, and often do in fact receive, the blessings of the covenant, justification and regeneration; and are therefore—unless there be some very express prohibition, either by general principle or specific statement—admissible and entitled to the outward sign and seal of these blessings;—that there *is* a federal holiness, as distinguished from a personal holiness, attaching, under the Christian as well as the Jewish economy, to the children of believing parents, which affords a sufficient ground for their admission, by an outward ordinance, into the fellowship of the church;—and that the commission which our Saviour gave to His apostles, and the history we have of the way in which they exercised this commission, decidedly favour the conclusion, that they admitted the children of believers along with their parents, and because of their relation to their parents, into the communion of the church by baptism.

This line of argument, though in some measure inferential, is, we are persuaded, amply sufficient *in cumulo* to establish the conclusion, that the children of believing parents are to be baptized, unless *either* the leading positions of which it consists can be satisfactorily proved to have no sanction from Scripture, *or* some general position can be established which proves the incompatibility of infant baptism, either with the character of the Christian dispensation in general, or with the qualities and properties of the ordinance of baptism in particular. I do not mean to enter upon the consideration of the specific scriptural evidence in support of the different positions that constitute the proof of the lawfulness and propriety of baptizing the children of believing parents, or of the attempts which have been made to disprove

them singly, and in detail. I can only advert to the general allegation, that infant baptism is inconsistent with some of the qualities or properties of the ordinance of baptism, as it is set before us in Scripture.

It is manifestly nothing to the purpose to say, in support of this general allegation, that baptism in the case of infants cannot be, in all respects, the same as baptism in the case of adults; or, that we cannot give so full and specific an account of the objects and effects of infant as of adult baptism. These positions are certainly both true; but they manifestly concern merely incidental points, not affecting the root of the matter, and afford no ground for any such conclusion as the unlawfulness of infant baptism. In the case of the baptism of adults, we can speak clearly and decidedly as to the general objects, and the ordinary effects, of the administration of the ordinance. The adult receiving baptism is either duly qualified and suitably prepared for it, or he is not. If he is not duly qualified, his baptism is a hypocritical profession of a state of mind and heart that does not exist; and, of course, it can do him no good, but must be a sin, and, as such, must expose him to the divine displeasure. If he is duly qualified and suitably prepared, then his baptism, though it does not convey to him justification and regeneration, which he must have before received through faith, impresses upon his mind, through God's blessing, their true nature and grounds, and strengthens his faith to realize more fully his own actual condition, as an unworthy recipient of unspeakable mercies, and his obligations to live to God's praise and glory. We are unable to put any such clear and explicit *alternative* in the case of the baptism of infants, or give any very definite account of the way and manner in which it bears upon or affects them individually. Men have often striven hard in their speculations to lay down something precise and definite, in the way of general principle or standard, as to the bearing and effect of baptism in relation to the great blessings of justification and regeneration in the case of infants individually. But the Scripture really affords no adequate materials for doing this; for we have no sufficient warrant for asserting, even in regard to infants, to whom it is God's purpose to give at some time justification and regeneration, that He uniformly or ordinarily gives it to them before or at their baptism. The discomfort of this state of uncertainty, the difficulty of laying down

any definite doctrine upon this subject, has often led men to adopt one or other of two opposite extremes, which have the appearance of greater simplicity and definiteness,—that is, either to deny the lawfulness of infant baptism altogether, or to embrace the doctrine of baptismal justification and regeneration, and to represent all baptized infants, or at least all the baptized infants of believing parents, as receiving these great blessings in and with the external ordinances, or as certainly and infallibly to receive them at some future time. But this is manifestly unreasonable. “True fortitude of understanding,” according to the admirable and well-known saying of Paley, “consists in not suffering what we do know, to be disturbed by what we do not know.” And assuredly, if there be sufficient scriptural grounds for thinking that the infants of believing parents are to be baptized, it can be no adequate ground for rejecting, or even doubting, the truth of this doctrine, that we have no sufficient materials for laying down any precise or definite proposition of a general kind as to the effect of baptism in the case of infants individually.

But the leading allegation of the anti-pædo-baptists on this department of the subject is, that it is inconsistent with the nature of baptism, as set before us in Scripture, that it should be administered to any, except upon the ground of a previous possession of faith by the person receiving it. If this proposition could be established, it would, of course, preclude the baptism of infants who have not faith, and who could not profess it if they had it. We are persuaded that this proposition cannot be established, though we admit that a good deal which is plausible can be adduced from Scripture in support of it. It is admitted that all persons who are in a condition to possess and to profess faith, must possess and profess it before they can lawfully or safely receive the ordinance of baptism. This can be easily established from Scripture. It is admitted, also, that the ordinary tenor of Scripture language concerning baptism has respect, primarily and principally, to persons in this condition,—that is, to adults,—and that thus a profession of faith is *ordinarily* associated with the Scripture notices of the administration of baptism; so that, as has been explained, we are to regard baptism upon a profession of faith, as exhibiting the proper type and full development of the ordinance. Had we no other information bearing upon the subject in Scripture than what has now been referred to, this

might be fairly enough regarded as precluding the baptism of infants; but in the absence of anything which, directly or by implication, teaches that this previous profession of faith is of *the essence* of the ordinance, and universally necessary to its legitimate administration and reception, an inference of this sort is not sufficient to neutralize the direct and positive evidence we have in Scripture in favour of the baptism of infants. The only thing which seems to be really of the essence of the ordinance in this respect is, that the parties receiving it are capable of possessing, and have a federal interest in, the promise of the spiritual blessings which it was intended to signify and to seal. Now, the blessings which baptism was intended to signify and seal are justification and regeneration,—that is, the washing away of guilt, and the washing away of depravity. These, and *these alone*, are the spiritual blessings which the washing with water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, directly signifies and represents. Faith does not stand in the same relation to baptism as these blessings do, and for this obvious and conclusive reason, that it is not directly and expressly signified or represented in the external ordinance itself, as they are.

Faith is, indeed, ordinarily, and in the case of all who are capable of it, the medium or instrument through which these indispensable blessings are conveyed; and there is certainly much better scriptural evidence in support of the necessity of faith in order to being saved, than in support of the necessity of a profession of faith in order to being baptized. But yet it is quite certain, that faith is not universally necessary in order to a right to these blessings, or to the actual possession of them. It is universally admitted that infants, though incapable of faith, are capable of salvation, and are actually saved; and they cannot be saved unless they be justified and regenerated. And since it is thus certain that infants actually receive the very blessings which baptism signifies and represents, without the presence of the faith which is necessary to the possession of these blessings in adults,—while yet the Scripture has much more explicitly connected faith and salvation than it has ever connected faith and baptism,—there can be no serious difficulty in the idea of their admissibility to the outward sign and seal of these blessings, without a previous profession of faith.

If it be said that something more than a mere capacity of

receiving the blessings which baptism signifies and represents, is necessary to warrant the administration of it, since the ordinance is, in its general nature and character, distinguishing, and it is not all infants that are admitted to it—it is not difficult to show, that not only does the admission of this general idea, as pertaining to *the essence* of the doctrine of baptism, not preclude the baptism of infants, but that we have in their case what is fairly *analogous* to the antecedently existing ground, which is the warrant or foundation of the administration of it to adults. In the case of adults, this antecedent ground or warrant is their own faith professed; and in the case of the infants of believing parents, it is their interest in the covenant which, upon scriptural principles, they possess simply as the children of believing parents,—the federal holiness which can be proved to attach to them, in virtue of God's arrangements and promises, simply upon the ground of their having been born of parents who are themselves comprehended in the covenant. If this general principle can be shown to be sanctioned by Scripture,—and we have no doubt that it can be conclusively established,—then it affords an antecedent ground or warrant for the admission of the children of believing parents to the ordinance of baptism *analogous* to that which exists in believing adults,—a ground or warrant the relevancy and validity of which cannot be affected by anything except a direct and conclusive proof of the absolute and universal necessity of a profession of faith, as the only sufficient ground or warrant, in every instance, of the administration of baptism; and no such proof has been, or can be, produced.

Calvin, in discussing this point, fully admits the necessity of some antecedent ground or warrant attaching to infants, as the foundation of admitting them to baptism; but he contends that this is to be found in the scriptural principle of the interest which the infants of believing parents have, *as such*, in virtue of God's arrangements and promises, in the covenant and its blessings. He says, “*Quo jure ad baptismum eos admittimus, nisi quòd promissionis sunt hæredes? Nisi enim jam ante ad eos pertineret vitæ promissio, baptismum profanaret, quisquis illis daret.*” *

My chief object in these observations has been to illustrate the importance of considering and investigating the subject of infant

* Tractatus, p. 386. Ed. 1576.

baptism as a distinct topic, resting upon its own proper and peculiar grounds,—of estimating aright its true relation to the sacraments in general, and to baptism as a whole,—and of appreciating justly the real nature and amount of the modifications which it is necessary to introduce into the mode of stating and defending the general doctrine as to the objects and effects of baptism, in the case of infants as distinguished from adults; and I have made them, because I am persuaded that it is when the subject is viewed in this aspect, that the strength of the arguments for, and the weakness of the arguments against, infant baptism, come out most palpably, and that by following this process of investigation we shall be best preserved from any temptation to corrupt and lower the general doctrines of the sacraments,—while at the same time we shall be most fully enabled to show that infant baptism, with the difficulties which undoubtedly attach to it, and with the obscurity in which some points connected with it are involved, is really analogous in its essential features to the baptism of adults, and implies nothing that is really inconsistent with the view taught us in Scrip^ture with respect to sacraments and ordinances in general, or with respect to baptism in particular.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY.

IN the rationalistic perversion of the true principles of the Reformation, as to the investigation of divine truth and the interpretation of Scripture, we have the foundation on which Socinianism is based,—namely, the making human reason, or rather men's whole natural faculties and capacities, virtually the test or standard of truth; as if the mind of man was able fully to take in all existences and all their relations, and as if men, on this ground, were entitled to exclude, from what is admitted to be a revelation from God, everything which could not be shown to be altogether accordant with the conclusions of their own understandings, or thoroughly comprehensible by them. In regard to this principle, and the general views of theology, properly so called, which have resulted from its application, it is not always easy to determine whether the application of this peculiar *principium theologiæ* produced the peculiar theology, or the peculiar theology, previously adopted from some other cause, or on some other ground, led to the maintenance of the peculiar *principium*, as the only way by which the theology could be defended. If men had adopted rationalistic principles as their rule or standard in the investigation of divine truth and the interpretation of Scripture, they would certainly bring out, in the application of them, the Socinian system of theology; and, on the other hand, if, from any cause or influence, they had already imbibed the leading elements of the Socinian system of theology, and yet did not think it altogether safe or expedient to deny the divine origin of the Christian revelation, they must, as a matter of course, be forced to adopt, as their only means of defence, the rationalistic principle of interpretation. These two things must, from the very nature of the case, have always gone hand in hand. They could scarcely, in any

case, be separated in the order of time; and it is of no great importance to determine, in particular cases, which may have come first in the order of nature,—*which* was the cause, and which the effect. Papists allege that Socinianism was one of the consequences of the Reformation,—of the unrestrained and licentious speculations upon religious matters which they ascribe to that important event. The principles on which the Reformers acted, and on which the Reformation was based, were not the causes of, and are not responsible for, the errors and heresies which have sprung up in the Reformed churches. At the same time, it cannot be disputed, that the Reformation tended to introduce a state of society, and a general condition of things, which led to a fuller and more prominent development of error, as well as of truth, by giving freedom of thought, and freedom in the expression of opinion. In the Church of Rome, and in countries that are fully under its control, the maintenance of any other errors and heresies than those which that church sanctions, is attended with imminent danger, and leads to sacrifices which few men are disposed to make, even for what they may regard as true.

This was the condition of Christendom before the Reformation. It lay wholly under the domination of a dark and relentless despotism, the tendency and effect of which were, to prevent men from exercising their minds freely upon religious subjects, or at least from giving publicity to any views they might have been led to adopt, different from those which had the civil and ecclesiastical authorities on their side. Wherever the Reformation prevailed, this state of matters gradually changed. Despotism gave place to liberty. Liberty was sometimes abused, and this led to licentiousness. But it is not the less true that liberty is preferable to despotism, both as being in itself a more just and righteous condition of things, and as being attended with far greater advantages, and with fewer and smaller evils.

Sec. I.—Origin of Socinianism.

With respect to Socinianism in particular, there is much in the history of its origin, that not only disproves the Popish allegation of its being traceable to the principles of the Reformation, but which tends to throw back upon the Church of Rome a share, at least, of the responsibility of producing this most pernicious

heresy.* The founders of this sect were chiefly Italians, who had been originally trained and formed under the full influence of the Church of Rome. They may be fairly regarded as specimens of the infidelity,—or free-thinking, as they themselves call it,—which the Popish system, in certain circumstances, and in minds of a certain class, has a strong tendency in the way of reaction to produce. They were men who had come, in the exercise of their natural reason, to see the folly and absurdity of much of the Popish system, without having been brought under the influence of truly religious impressions, or having been led to adopt a right method of investigating divine truth. They seem to have been men who were full of self-confidence, proud of their own powers of speculation and argument, and puffed up by a sense of their own elevation above the mass of follies and absurdities which they saw prevailing around them in the Church of Rome; and this natural tendency of the men, and the sinful state of mind which it implied or produced, were the true and proper *causes* of the errors and heresies into which they fell. Still it was the Church of Rome, in which they were trained, and the influences which it brought to bear upon them, that, in point of fact, furnished the occasions of developing this tendency, and determining the direction it took in regulating their opinions. The irrational and offensive despotism which the Church of Rome exercised in all matters of opinion, even on purely scientific subjects, tended to lead men who had become, mentally at least, emancipated from its thralldom, first and generally, to carry freedom of thought to the extreme of licentiousness; and then, more particularly, to throw off the *whole* system of doctrine which the Church of Rome imposed upon men, without being at much pains to discriminate between what was false in that system, and what might be true. This is, indeed, the true history of Socinianism,—the correct account of the causes that in fact produced it.

Lælius Socinus, who is usually regarded as the true founder of the system,—though his nephew, Faustus, was the chief defender and promulgator of it,—seems to have formed his opinions upon theological subjects before he was constrained to leave Italy, and take refuge among the Protestants, where somewhat greater freedom of opinion was tolerated. He did not certainly find

* Mosheim's Church History, last section of sixteenth century.

among the Reformers, with whom he came into contact, anything to encourage him in the theological views which he had imbibed; but neither was he brought, by his association with them, under any of those more wholesome influences, which would have led him to abandon them, and to embrace the great doctrines of the Reformation. He continued to manifest the same tendency, and the same disposition, which he had exhibited in Italy; and he retained the theological views which, in substance, he seems to have formed there. So that, though he published little or nothing, and did not always very fully or openly avow his peculiar opinions, even in private intercourse, yet, as there is reason to believe that he was really and substantially the author of the system afterwards developed and defended by his nephew, his history is truly the history of the origin of the system; and that history is at least sufficient to show, that Popery is much more deeply involved in the guilt of producing Socinianism than Protestantism is.

It may be worth while, both as confirming the views now given of the character and tendencies of Lælius Socinus, and also as illustrating the method often adopted by such men in *first broaching* their novel and erroneous opinions, to give one or two specimens of what the Reformers with whom he came into contact have said regarding him. He carried on for a time a correspondence with Calvin; in which, while he does not seem to have brought out distinctly the theological views afterwards called by his name, he had so fully manifested his strong tendency to indulge in all sorts of useless and pernicious speculations, as at length to draw from that great man the following noble rebuke: "You need not expect me to reply to all the monstrous questions (*portenta quæstionum*) you propose to me. If you choose to indulge in such aerial speculations, I pray you suffer me, a humble disciple of Christ, to meditate on those things which tend to the edification of my faith. And I indeed by my silence will effect what I wish,—viz., that you no longer annoy me in this way. I am greatly grieved that the fine talents which the Lord has given you, should not only be wasted on things of no importance, but spoiled by pernicious speculations. I must again seriously admonish you, as I have done before, that unless you speedily correct this *quærendi pruritus*, it may bring upon you much mischief. If I were to encourage, under the appearance of indulgence, this vice, which

I believe to be injurious, I would be acting a perfidious and cruel part to you; and, therefore, I prefer that you should now be somewhat offended by my asperity, than that I should abstain from attempting to draw you away from the sweet allurements of the curiosity (or love of curious speculation) in which you are entangled. The time, I hope, will come, when you will rejoice that you were awakened from it, even by a rude shock."*

Zanchius, too, was an Italian, and, like Socinus, had fled from that country, because it was not safe for him to remain there, in consequence of the anti-Papal views which he had adopted. But then, unlike Socinus, he was a sincere and honest inquirer after truth. He had sought and obtained the guidance of the Spirit of God. He had studied the Bible, with a single desire to know what God had there revealed, that he might receive and submit to it. And he had in this way been led to adopt the same system of theology as Calvin and the other Reformers, and proved himself an able and learned defender of it. In the preface to his work on the Trinity, or "*De Tribus Elohim*," as he calls it,† he thus describes Socinus: "He was of a noble family, well skilled in Greek and Hebrew, and irreproachable in his outward conduct; and on these accounts I was on friendly terms with him. But he was a man full of diverse heresies, which, however, he never proposed to me, except, as it were, for the purpose of disputation,

* "Non est quod expectes, dum ad illa, quæ objicis, quæstionum portenta respondeam. Si tibi per aëreas illas speculationes volitare libet, sine me, quæso, humilem Christi discipulum ea meditari, quæ ad fidei meæ edificationem faciunt. Ac ego quidem silentio meo id quod cupio consequar, ne tu mihi posthac sis molestus. Liberale vero ingenium, quod tibi Dominus contulit, non modo in rebus nihili frustra occupari, ed exitialibus figmentis corrumpi vehementer dolet. Quod pridem testatus sum, serio iterum moneo: nisi hunc quærendi pruritus mature corrigas, metuendum esse, ne tibi gravia tormenta accersas. Ego si indulgentiæ specie vitium, quod maxime noxium esse judico, alerem, in te essem perfidus et crudelis. Itaque paululum nunc mea asperitate offendi malo, quam dulci- bus curiositatis illecebris male captum non retrahi. Erit tempus, ut spero, cum te ita violenter expergefatum fuisse gaudebis." A letter without date, but probably written in December 1551 or January 1552; See Vita F. Socini, prefixed to first edition of Bib. Frat. Polon. Przypcovius, the author of this Life of Faustus Socinus, professes to give this extract from Calvin's MS., which he had before him. There are similar indications of his character in Calvin's letters to him, published in his *Epistolæ* (opera, tom. ix., pp. 51, 57, 197). This letter is given in an English translation, in Bonnet's edition of the Letters of Calvin, vol. ii., p. 315. Bonnet says that it is "published here for the first time." He professes to give it from a Latin copy in the Library of Geneva.

† Published in 1572.

and always putting questions as if he wished for information. And yet for many years he greatly promoted the Samosatanean heresy, and led many to adopt it.”*

Such was the origin of Socinianism, and such, to a large extent, has been the kind of men by whom it has been advocated, although many of them have been fortunate enough to find themselves in circumstances that rendered it unnecessary to have recourse to the policy and management which its founder adopted, as to the mode of bringing out his opinions.

Sec. II.—Socinian Views as to Scripture.

The Socinians differ from the great body of Christians in regard to the subject of the *inspiration* of the sacred Scriptures. This was to be expected; for, as they had made up their minds not to regulate their views of doctrinal matters by the natural and obvious meaning of the statements contained in Scripture, it was quite probable that they would try to depreciate the value and authority of the Bible, so far as this was not plainly inconsistent with professing a belief, in any sense, in the truth of Christianity. The position, accordingly, which they maintain upon this point is, that the Bible contains, indeed, a revelation from God, but that it is not itself that revelation, or that it is not, in any proper sense, the word of God, though the word of God is found in it. They virtually discard the Old Testament altogether, as having now no value or importance but what is merely historical. And, indeed, they commonly teach, that the promise of eternal life was not revealed, and was wholly unknown, under the Old Testament dispensation; but was conveyed to man, for the first time, by Christ Himself, when He appeared on earth: men, under the patriarchal and Mosaic economies, having been, according to this view, very much in the same situation as the mass of mankind in general,—that is, being called upon to work out their own eternal happiness by their own good deeds, though having only a very imperfect knowledge of God, and of the worship and duty which He required, and having only a general confidence in His goodness and mercy, without any certainty or assurance as to their final destiny. Jesus Christ, according to Socinians, was a mere man, who was

* Zanchii opera, tom. i., Genev. 1619.

appointed by God to convey His will more fully to men; and the *sole* object of His mission was to communicate to men more correct and complete information concerning God and duty,—and especially to convey to them the assurance of a future state of blessedness, to be enjoyed by all who should do what they could in worshipping and serving God, according to the information He had communicated to them.

They profess, then, to receive as true, upon this ground, all that Christ Himself taught. They admit that the teaching of Christ is, in the main, and as to its substance, correctly enough set forth in the New Testament; and they do not allege that it can be learned from any other source. But then, as to the *books* which compose the New Testament, they maintain that they were the unaided compositions of the men whose names they bear; and deny that they, the authors, had any special supernatural assistance or superintendence from God in the production of them. They look on the evangelists simply as honest and faithful historians, who had good opportunities of knowing the subjects about which they wrote, and who intended to relate everything accurately, as far as their opportunities and memories served them; but who, having nothing but their own powers and faculties to guide them, may be supposed, like other historians, to have fallen sometimes into inadvertencies and errors. And as to the apostles of our Lord, whose writings form part of the canon of the New Testament, or the substance of whose teaching is there recorded, they commonly deny to them any infallible supernatural guidance, and admit that they were well acquainted with the views of their Master, and intended faithfully to report them, and to follow them in their own preaching. But they think that the apostles probably sometimes misunderstood or misapprehended them; and that they are not to be implicitly followed in the reasonings or illustrations they employed to enforce their teaching,—an observation, of course, specially directed against the Apostle Paul.

With these views of the apostles and evangelists, and of the books of the New Testament, they think themselves warranted in using much greater liberty with its words and language, in the way of labouring to force them into an accordance with their system of theology, than can be regarded as at all warrantable by those who believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,—that holy men wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of