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Nicholson

R E A S O N S

WHY I BECAME

A REFORMED EPISCOPALIAN.

BY
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NOTE.

The following statement of "Reasons, etc.," was delivered on the evening of the 21st of December, 1874, in the city of Newark, N. J., my place of residence, and the scene of my ministerial labors for almost the three years last past. It is now published by means of the press, in compliance with the earnest requests of many of my hearers, and also for the same reason which induced me to deliver it *viva voce*, namely, the wish to explain myself, and justify my course of action, to whomsoever may be sufficiently interested to read what I have here written. W. R. N.

R E A S O N S

WHY I BECAME

A REFORMED EPISCOPALIAN.

When a minister of the Gospel, identified for many years with one of the leading Churches of Christendom, has felt impelled by conscientious convictions to withdraw from its membership, and to remove his ministry into another Church, his own self-respect must induce in him the desire to explain the reasons of his action, and to bespeak for himself the favorable judgment of his fellow-Christians. Especially so, if the Church to which he goes is not yet a leading one, but is of an origin quite recent. Naturally, he would not be thought to have acted either lightly or whimsically. Moreover, as an honest thinker, he cannot but be desirous of promoting the progress of what he believes to be the truth, and of winning others, if he may, to the support of his cause. I do respectfully ask you, therefore, to listen to the following recital of my reasons for the change which I have made.

But before proceeding with my statement, permit me to make two remarks:—First, I do not propose to speak controversially; but rather, experimentally. I am to vindicate my own action; and it has appeared to me that in no way could I so well accomplish my purpose, as by disclosing to you a piece of living experience, narrating the processes of mind through which, in secret, I have passed, and describing those difficult and shipwrecking straits of logic into which I have been driven, as with a tenacious love, and in a life-long effort, I have striven to hold fast to the old Church. At the least, it will have the effect to show you how able were certain features of the Church from which I have come out to write themselves down in the disturbances of my consciousness, and that to me they were objections neither speculative nor whimsical. Whether, in view of what I shall describe, I am to be thought to have followed only a weak and ill-instructed conscience in arriving at my late decision, I shall leave it to you to say. Meanwhile, however, it being my very purpose to explain my own action, I beg your indulgence for unavoidable references to myself.

And secondly, since, in the nature of the case, I needs must speak in terms of condemnation of the objectionable things belonging to that Church, I pray you to believe that I shall express myself in no spirit of enmity at all, but only with a sad and sorrowing heart. I must say what I think is the truth; but of ill-natured words *none* have I to throw back at those with whom I have been so long associated. Too many precious years of my life have I spent in the service of that Church, and too deeply have I suffered in sundering my connection with it, that I should entertain for one moment any other feeling than what may be in perfect accord with the sacredness of the memories of the past.

THE CHURCH OF EARLIER LABORS.

It was in the early years of my manhood that I entered the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church. At that time she had but begun to emerge from under a certain wholesome influence, which had continued very much to affect her, even from the time of her origin in this country. It was immediately after the American Revolution that she became established as independent of the mother Church of England; but no sooner did she thus begin to run her career, than she felt upon her the strong hand of the Christian sentiment of the country. In deference to that influence, she made certain conciliatory changes in the English Prayer-book, before adopting it as her own; among other things, allowing the use of an alternative sentence in the Apostles' Creed, and making optional the use of the Sign of the Cross in Baptism. And down to the time of which I speak, she still continued to sympathize with, and to exemplify the Protestant simplicity and spirituality of that religious thought and feeling prevailing around her. I remember how faithfully were preached the necessity and the marks of conversion to God; and that prayer meetings were established institutions in many of her churches. Even the custom of occasionally inviting ministers of the other Protestant bodies of the land to occupy her pulpits—a custom which had come down all the way from Revolutionary times—was scarcely as yet discontinued; and it was only here and there that the unchurching dogma dared to show itself. In the midst of such associations I was admitted into her ministry. And besides, the XXXIX Articles of Religion are her formulated faith; and those articles were, and are still, with one or two exceptions, transparently Scriptural and thoroughly Protestant.

And then, both her Morning and her Evening Prayer were to me beautiful exceedingly. And so it was that, although I had found in the offices of the Prayer-book, as, for instance, in the Baptismal Office for Infants, an unfortunate phraseology which somewhat startled me, yet, as there were current several interpretations of that phraseology, one or another of which then seemed to me to be both easy and satisfactory, I soon came to look upon the objectionable passages in the coloring cast on them by all that spirituality of thought and feeling with which I was in daily contact in the persons of her ministers. In all those circumstances, and after such examination as I had given it, I accepted the Prayer-book as, on the whole, sufficiently satisfactory. At the same time, it should be borne in mind, that, as regards the examination of a great system, and the balancing of its various parts, no young man can be expected to wield the searching analysis which may be in the power of a mind maturely developed.

OMINOUS SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

It was not long, however, till I saw looming on the horizon the portentous Romanism of Dr. Pusey and his associates. They came onward, in the confident boast that the Prayer-book itself had furnished them with their most effective weapons: and, undeniably, there do stand in certain parts of that book such words, than which, if taken in their most obvious import, the teachers of error could ask for nothing better. Then it was that the question of interpreting those words became invested with a renewed interest. *There are the words.* Shall they be understood for what they say, as the opponents of the truth demand, and thus the victory be at once surrendered into their hands? Or, if not, which one of all the proposed interpretations will stand the fire of the Tractarian host, posted, as they are, on the vantage-ground of the *literal sense*? I am twitted with the remark that the Prayer-book itself has not changed at all since my ordination to the ministry. No, it has not; but except it can be shown that the places in dispute may be triumphantly interpreted on the side of Gospel truth, the very unchangeableness of the book may be an argument of tremendous force, why the Evangelical minister should change his Church relations. If the Protestant Episcopal Church, as *practically* considered, were now what she was many years ago, her Evangelical ministers might rest comparatively easy as to those parts of the Prayer-book referred to. In the Westmin-

ster Confession of Faith there is a strong statement of Baptismal Regeneration; but the Presbyterian Church can afford to ignore the statement, since it has never been brought forward, and the truth as it is in Jesus has hidden it out of sight. So, at least in a measure, could the Episcopal Church afford to do, at a particular period of her history. But now, when the obnoxious language is thrust upon the attention with a persistence indomitable, and its literal sense is insisted on and enforced by earnest, able, and wily advocates, and the people, by thousands, are being indoctrinated with the first principles of Romanism, all the worse is it for the Prayer-book that it has not changed, unless there is some interpretation to be put upon it, so strong, so adequate, and so patent to the view of all, as that thereby the book shall be rescued out of the hands of Romanizers, and the people shall cease to be educated by it into a receptiveness toward *advanced Romanism*.

What, then, as to the possibility of such an interpretation?

We will look first at the baptismal teachings of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

In the office for Infant Baptism the minister is required, after the baptism has been performed, and the very instant after, to say, "*We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit.*" In every case this must be said. It is a positive declaration that the infant, as *baptized*, and *because* of having been baptized, has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Nay, the minister is required to say this in a Thanksgiving, and to *tell God* that He has actually regenerated with His Spirit that particular infant.

Now all along I had held the theory, that "regeneration" was not to be taken, in this place, in its Scriptural sense, but only as importing that the child was *incorporated into the visible Church*. Of course, in the Scriptures, the word *regeneration* and its cognates, such as "born again," being made "the children of God," etc., are demonstrably used in the sense of a great radical moral change, a change substantially the same as that which is expressed in the word *conversion*, as an examination of the first Epistle of John, in particular, would show; but at the time of my entering the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal

Church it was a prevailing theory that regeneration was intentionally used, in the Baptismal Service, in a sense different from that of the Scriptures; and that theory is even yet accepted by many. I accepted it, as enabling me, without violating my conscience, to use the Baptismal Service; though feeling, at the same time, how unfortunate was this difference in meaning from that in the Scriptures. But when, by reason of the progress of Puseyism, I was induced to inspect more narrowly the foundations beneath my feet, I felt compelled to abandon it altogether. Baptism makes the child a member of the visible Church; and that was called *regeneration*. But, I said, The word does not fit the case. Regeneration does certainly imply a great and noteworthy change of some kind. Very well: now if the baptized child, upon coming to years of discretion, do not, for himself, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then, by the letter of Scripture, the wrath of God still abideth on him; on the contrary, the man who was never baptized in infancy, but who comes at length to believe in Christ, is pardoned, accepted, and made the child of God, as freely, as fully, as instantly, as though he had been baptized in infancy. All this results from the doctrine of Justification by faith. I said, therefore, However grateful it may be to the parent's heart, and however it may be his privilege, to have his child baptized, as expressing his precious belief that the salvation of Christ is meant for his child, and that in God's good time it shall, in answer to prayer, be given to his child, yet there is no such change with reference to the child at the instant of baptism as is by any means worthy of being called *regeneration*. And then I found that the Prayer-book did itself preclude the possibility of consistently holding that by regeneration it meant a mere ecclesiastical change. For when the minister, after the baptism, thanks God that the child has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, he thereby thanks God that the symbolized meaning of Baptism has been really *effectuated* in the child. If the child has been really regenerated by the Holy Spirit, then has the inward and spiritual grace of Baptism been really wrought out in him. Now turn to the Catechism, and in answer to the question, "What is the inward and spiritual grace of Baptism," it says, "A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." Thus, according to the Prayer-book, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is the same as a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness. Nay, it asserts this in so many words;

for in the very Thanksgiving in which the minister tells God that He has regenerated the child with His Holy Spirit, he is required to go on to say that the child, *being dead unto sin and living unto righteousness*, etc.

THEORIES OF INTERPRETATION.

But what phraseology in human language can describe conversion, that radical moral change spoken of in the New Testament, if it is not done in the words, "a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness?" Do those words mean no more than that the child becomes a member of the visible church? Again, before the baptism, the minister prays, that the child, "coming to God's holy baptism, may receive *remission of sin* by *spiritual* regeneration;" and then, after the baptism, he thanks God that the prayer is answered, and that the child has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The regeneration, then, is *spiritual* regeneration, and includes *remission of sin*. And he prays again, "Give Thy Holy Spirit to this infant, that he may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation;" and after the baptism he thanks God that the Holy Spirit *has been* given to the infant, regenerating that infant, causing him to be born again, and making him an heir of everlasting salvation. Is such regeneration as that the merely being introduced into the visible Church? Moreover, as soon as the child can repeat the words, the catechism teaches him to say, "In baptism I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Not, that in baptism it was *represented* that, by faith in Christ, he *might become* a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; but that each and all of these things he was *made* in baptism. But what more can one become, by means of conversion or renovation, than to be a member of Christ and a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven? The Prayer-book does itself forbid that its word, regeneration, shall be taken as meaning an introduction into the visible Church. The very Prayer-book sense of it is the New Testament sense of it. It means, even in the Prayer-book, the removal of God's wrath, remission of sin, the heirship of everlasting life, and full personal acceptance. But the crying mischief is, that, according to the plain grammatical import of its language, that book teaches that all these blessings are conferred, inevitably and without exception,

in every instance of infant baptism; and I said that whatever other interpretation of the Baptismal Service there may be which an Evangelical man may hold, I certainly am forbidden by the Prayer-book itself to construe *regeneration* in any other sense than that of a radical *moral* change.

Another theory which obtained in that Church, and still obtains there, was this, that baptism washes away from the infant the guilt of original sin, and that such an effect may well be called *regeneration*. That theory, however, I never held, since I could find for it no scriptural support at all. In every case of adult baptism in the Scriptures, faith and repentance, either expressed or implied, are the conditions precedent. Now wherever faith and repentance are, there already is regeneration, and also forgiveness of sins, according to the Scriptures; and so the man to be baptized is already, even before his baptism, a fully pardoned man, "justified from all things," as well from the guilt of original sin, as from that of any other sin. But the only instances of baptism in the Scriptures are those of adults; infant baptism not being so much as expressly mentioned, and the practice of it being supported by inference alone. I could not believe that so saving an effect as the removal of the guilt of original sin was to be accredited to an ordinance which has nowhere in Scripture an unmistakable recognition; especially so, seeing that in the case of the adult—the only clearly recognized ordinance of baptism—faith and repentance, and therefore also regeneration and forgiveness, did *precede* the baptism, which baptism was only the authorized setting forth of what had been already done.

Nor could I ever accept the "germ" theory of Bishop Mant, that is to say, that in baptism a germ of life is implanted in the infant, which germ, according as subsequently nurtured and cared for, will develop into growth and fruitfulness, or according as neglected, will wither and die. The same arguments which disprove the original sin theory serve equally to disprove the germ theory. And besides, I never could detect any religious difference between the baptized child properly cared for, and the unbaptized child properly cared for.

I then fell back on that interpretation of regeneration in the Baptismal service which regards it as only an instance of calling the sign of a thing by the name of the thing itself. Baptism is the sign of regeneration, and so we may conveniently call it re-

generation. Just as, there hangs a picture on the wall, and you say, that is General Washington. It is only the sign of General Washington, not his very self. And just as we call the Lord's Supper the Communion; although it is not the communion, but only the sign of it. But while this way of speaking is very convenient, and in many connections is in no danger of misleading, yet I soon saw that it did not begin to measure the fullness of the meaning of the Prayer-book statements. To say to God, solemnly and thankfully, Thou hast regenerated this child with thy Holy Spirit, is a different mode of speech. It is like your saying, That picture is the living Washington.

Next, I adopted the "charitable presumption" theory, that is to say, that we may charitably take for granted the faith and prayer of the parents or sponsors in bringing the child to Baptism; and so, then also we may charitably presume that their prayers are answered, and the child is regenerated. But now, granting that there is faithful prayer on the part of those presenting the child, what ground is there in Scripture for believing that God must *instantly* answer that prayer? A believing, praying parent may well be assured that, sooner or later, in His own good time, God will honor his prayers in the conversion of his child; but he has no warrant for believing that his children must needs be converted at the instant of his praying for it. Besides, a large proportion of the parents or sponsors bringing their children to Baptism in the Protestant Episcopal Church are not even professors of religion; there being no rubric or law of that Church requiring even one of them to be so. Their faith and prayer cannot be presumed, for charity rejoiceth not against the truth. And yet, in every instance, that same thanksgiving to God for having actually regenerated the child with His Holy Spirit is required to be offered. And so was I driven off from this interpretation.

I then retreated into my last stronghold, that while the word regeneration is to be taken here in its full scriptural sense, yet is it only *constructively* or *representatively* affirmed of the child, seeing that the repentance and faith of the child are only constructive or representative. That is, Baptism should be administered only upon repentance and faith; but the child cannot repent and believe; yet the child's repentance and faith may be regarded as represented in the persons of the parents or sponsors, since they answer in the child's name. Now if repentance and faith be real, then the regeneration is real; but if they be only

represented, then is the regeneration only represented; and so in uttering that thanksgiving, while keeping the word to its full scriptural sense, I yet gave it, as regarded the child, only a fictitious application.

Strange as it may seem, there I rested for some years, and, indeed, considerations are not wanting to show that such was the principle on which the Baptismal service was formed. If it be asked, how was it that the great Reformers could have constructed such a service? let it not be forgotten, that while the Reformation battle was fought on the question of the Lord's Supper, and consequently that subject was well ventilated, and in that department of truth the Reformation heroes of the Sixteenth century were thoroughly sound and scriptural, yet as so recently coming out of Romanism, they did not see all things with equal clearness, and especially in regard to Baptism they were misty and confused. At any rate, this principle of a *merely represented regeneration* was my only refuge. I had nothing else now to turn to, except I should peremptorily disregard the Prayer-book. And yet it was by no means smooth sailing with me, even on this principle. Many a contest have I had with myself. How often, as engaged in the administration of Baptism, the thought would flash forth and haunt me, for what am I thanking God so solemnly? for only a represented regeneration, a fictitious blessing? Is that right? Again and again, however, did I whip my moral sensibilities into quietness, till, not long since, a startling fact came home to me. In the office for *private* baptism, when it may be a matter of hurry to baptize the sick child, no provision is made for the presence of sponsors, and consequently no repentance and faith are there even represented; nevertheless that same thanksgiving is still to be said instantly that the child is baptized. It is not, therefore, a represented regeneration, but regeneration absolute and real; pronounced without the slightest reference to repentance and faith, and attributed to the single fact of *the performance of the baptism*; and *that*, too, while this book does expressly require that the regeneration pronounced shall be understood as meaning *forgiveness of sin, a death unto sin, a new birth unto righteousness, and heirship to eternal life*. My last interpretation had vanished from beneath my feet.

It was not the work of the Reformers of the Sixteenth century to put the Thanksgiving for regeneration into that private office; they did not do it. It was done by the Commissioners under

Charles II; and it was done as their spiteful answer to those clergymen of the Church of England who had entreated to be made free from saying the Thanksgiving in the *Public* office. They asked for a certain relief, and the answer came back to them in a doubled grievance. Thus, as also in many other particulars, the Prayer-book of the Protestant Episcopal Church is not as the first Reformers left it, but as the Romanizing Reformers or Reactionists under Elizabeth and Charles II have made it.

THE LITERAL RENDERING PREVAILS.

And now whither was I to turn? All my possible interpretations of that Infant Baptismal Service, short of the obvious grammatical import of its words, were gone. It was now perfectly evident to me, that the obvious grammatical meaning was the meaning intended, and that to impose a different interpretation was to do violence to the very genius and purpose of the service. It not only says *regeneration*, but it *defines* regeneration, expressly making it to include forgiveness of sin, a death to sin, a new birth to righteousness, membership in Christ, sonship to God, and heirship to everlasting life; and that identical regeneration it pronounces, without exception, upon every baptized infant; and lest, by any possibility, its intention should be misunderstood, it so pronounces in cases where not so much as a represented repentance and faith can have place, and solely by virtue of the administration of the sacrament. Nor is there anything in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion to counteract this teaching; the very article on Baptism seeming to refer wholly to Adult Baptism, and saying nothing of the nature and effects of Infant Baptism. Or, if that article be regarded as applicable to Infant Baptism, then, indeed, its only effect would be to make the Sacramentarianism of the Baptismal service yet stronger. Nothing remained to me, if I would be consistent with the Prayer-book, but to plant myself firmly on the plain literal meaning of the Baptismal Service. I was confounded. I could now see the truth of those words of Macaulay, "Sophistical is that peculiar form of mental aberration which refuses to recognize in the plain wording of the Baptismal service the regenerating virtue of the sacrament." And I could well believe that statement of Neal's, the eminent liturgiologist, "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."

But, with my views of the Gospel, it was now impossible for me to stand by the Prayer-book. If ever, in any service-book of Christendom, the *opus operatum* doctrine of Baptism was taught, it is taught in that of the Protestant Episcopal Church. *Regenerated by virtue of having been baptized!* That is a regeneration which bears no fruits; for what is the practical religious superiority of thousands of baptized children in this land, as compared with thousands of certain unbaptized children in this land? It is a regeneration which dishonors the work of the Holy Spirit, as if when He produces a new birth unto righteousness, there yet is no righteousness to be seen in the life. It is a regeneration which ignores the most solemn words of God, wherein He distinguishes His true children from those who are not. It is a regeneration which misleads and destroys the souls of men; deadening in its effects on the conscience, prompting many an impenitent man to take comfort in the fact that at any rate he was baptized as an infant, and that then he was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Just fancy St. Paul as believing in a Sacramentarian Regeneration. He who said, "I thank God I baptized none of you." What! thank God that he had no agency, as a minister of the Gospel, in securing to immortal souls the forgiveness of sin? He who said, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." What! sent forth to preach the Gospel, and yet not sent forth to do what he might toward developing in perishing souls the new birth unto righteousness? If this doctrine of Baptismal regeneration were true, we could not but stand in consternation at Paul. No, I could not accept the Prayer-book as now it stood revealed before me.

REMEDIES SUGGESTED.

But why not, then, select some one theory as your own, and hold it in spite of being inconsistent with the Prayer-book? Well, which one? That of the mere ecclesiastical sense? The service itself would contradict me in the minds of the people. And which would be the stronger, my single self and my teachings, or that service, hoary with the prescriptions of centuries? And so as to any other of the theories. Tremendous is the influence

of any Service Book, and it laughs at the puny pulpit in a contest with itself, as an educating power. As long as that service is performed, it misleads the people. Indeed, the people themselves are directly involved in the absurdity, or the impiety, or what not, of that Baptismal Thanksgiving; for it is in their name that it is uttered, "*we thank Thee,*" says the minister. It is not the conscience of only the Evangelical minister that is oppressed by such utterances, but at the same time, the consciences of thoughtful Evangelical laymen.

Or, why not *omit* the offensive passage, and brave the consequences? As to braving the consequences, that is but a little matter. But the omitted passage is still before the eyes of the worshipers; and let me explain my omission as I may, always, in more or less minds of every congregation, that same omitted passage is silently uttering its protest against what is regarded as my presumption. The educating mischief of the service still goes on.

But have not the Evangelical ministers of the Episcopal Church, for the last three hundred years, used that service without finding it oppressive? Let us see. When the Commissioners under Charles II had finished their Romanizing revision of the Prayer-book, putting it in exactly the form which it has to-day, there went forth a royal edict that on St. Bartholomew's Day all clergymen of the Church of England should signify their conformity to it; and on that day over two thousand of them abandoned their livings, and went out of that Church; and among them were such men as Baxter, author of the *Saint's Rest*; and Owen, the great commentator. Twenty-seven years afterwards, so great was the pressure of its objectionable features, the Prayer-book was again revised (this time in the interest of Protestantism) under William III; but unfortunately the majority of the clergy refused to adopt it, and the book continued as before. Charles Simeon said, with reference to this matter, "I know that many conscientious ministers have gone heavily all their days, because they knew not how to act; whether to use expressions which they did not approve, or to drop the use of them, or to relinquish the Church." So, too, have testified Thomas Scott and John Newton. And Bishop Meade, of Virginia, speaking of the Baptismal Service, said, "I never use it without pain, because its plain, literal meaning contradicts my belief." Yes, Evangelical men of other days have felt this oppression;

though, doubtless, the most of them have been tortured in secret, as I myself have been for years.

But is there no hope of having the Baptismal Service changed ? The Evangelical men have petitioned, and petitioned again, and petitioned still again, and petitioned yet again ; but never till the late General Convention were the petitions honored with even a hearing, and then it was due, no doubt, to the fact of the establishment of this Reformed Episcopal Church. The hearing, however, was all that they vouchsafed, for their vote of refusal of relief was overwhelming and crushing. If ever that Baptismal Service shall be changed, it will be as the result of the God-given success of the new Church.

Nor, if the change ever come, can it be satisfactory, except it go yet further, and touch the office for Adult Baptism as well. That entire office was added to the Prayer-book under Charles II, and, as might be supposed, it is very bad. The man to be baptized is required to make a profession of repentance and faith. Now, if he have repentance and faith, he is already a pardoned and regenerated man ; but in that service he is represented as still continuing under the wrath of God till the moment of the water being put upon him, when instantly the wrath is gone. That representation contradicts the article on justification by faith. The article, however, is hidden away in the book, and is scarcely ever referred to ; while that Baptismal Service is always before the eye on every occasion of the administration. It is the service which educates the worshippers in their theology.

EXCLUSIVEISM.

And now, in the second place, let us look at the teachings of the Protestant Episcopal Church on the subject of the ministry.

One of her Thirty-nine Articles is on this subject, and to its teachings I heartily subscribe. It says, "Those are lawfully called and sent to the work of public preaching or ministering the sacraments, who are chosen and called by men that have public authority given to them in the Congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." Of course, it is the Spirit of God who really calls a man into the work of the ministry ; but the Congregation, that is the Lord's people, have it for their prerogative to recognize the call of God, and to say to the man, we authenticate your ministry with our consent and welcome ; and they have the right to deputize a certain person,

or persons, to say this to the man in their name. This I hold to be true doctrine, and in accordance with it the Church of England, previously to the Carolinian period, did not re-ordain those who came to her with only Presbyterian ordinations. But the *liturgical* doctrine now rife and the present practice of both the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church are totally different. In her Ordination office she says, "No man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon in this Church, or suffered to execute any of the said functions, except he hath had Episcopal Consecration or Ordination;" and so the Protestant ministry all around her cannot be admitted to her ministry except by reordination. This *exclusiveness* was put into the Ordination office under Charles II, whose Commissioners essentially changed the words from what they were before. Again she says to the man whom she is ordaining, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God now committed unto thee *by the imposition of our hands.*" Here, then, is the *tactical succession* of the ministry, and this tactical succession, too, was first put into the Ordination office under Charles II. Ordination by a Bishop alone, and by the laying on of his hands, that is what she liturgically says. A Romish Priest she receives to her ministry without re-ordination; a Presbyterian Minister she does not receive without re-ordination. Her position with regard to the ministry then, is this: Those only she recognizes as ministers who have been put into the ministry by the laying on of the hands of those called Bishops, which Bishops themselves were ordained and consecrated by the laying on of the hands of other Bishops, and so on, back to the Apostles. This is what in another place she calls the Apostolical succession; and the indispensable importance of it she unquestionably teaches. Her restrictive legislation, whereby I was forbidden to ask a brother minister of any of the Protestant Churches to interchange his ministry with mine, even for an hour, demonstrates it to be her own sense of the meaning of her service. True, it is in defiance of the broad terms of her article of religion already referred to. But what of that? The Ordination Service it is, not the article, which educates both her ministers and people on the subject of the ministry.

Now this teaching was horrible to me. I had satisfied myself, by as thorough an examination as I was capable of making, that not one word of it could be found in the Bible. That Bishops

are an order superior to presbyters, or that Bishops only can ordain—neither proposition has any warrant of Holy Scripture. Nor can it be proved by Scripture that the laying on of hands was ever used, or is required to be used, in the ordination to the ministry of either evangelist, or of pastor and teacher. That foremost of the English Reformers, Cranmer, declared, that only *appointment* to the ministry was all-sufficient, and that according to the New Testament, no other consecration or ordination was needed. And the XXVth Article of religion declares that the Romish Sacrament of orders is no sacrament, for this reason, "that it has not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God;" so that according to that article, neither the laying on of hands, nor any other visible sign is scripturally required for ordination to the ministry; although if any church choose to make use of it for that purpose, no doubt it is free so to do. No one element of the presumptuous claim of the Protestant Episcopal Church on the subject of the ministry is sustained by Divine authority. Could I have any hope that the teachings of the Ordination Service would ever be changed? Could I have founded a hope on the basis of the conflict of that service with the Articles? The Articles may peep and mutter from out of their hiding place, but their protest is lost amid the din and stir of the ordination scenes.

But aside from the fact that such teaching has no Bible foundation at all, it was to me startlingly incredible. How is it that it is the Apostolical Succession alone which can give a title to minister, when, at the same time of its not being proved in the Bible, there yet are even no authentic and incorrupt genealogical tables by which the succession can be shown? When the order and names of the first Bishops of Rome cannot be settled? and when it is a known fact that the great Church of Alexandria, down to about the time of the Council of Nice, in the Fourth century, claimed and practiced Presbyterian ordination alone? And how can so prodigious a thing as the Apostolical Succession be true, when, if true, it is so unimportant? For from what evil possible to befall a Christian church has it saved a church? Or what attainment of most eminent graces has the absence of it ever prevented? Draw a line through Christendom and down the centuries; on the one side of it you may find the majority of those claiming to have the succession, and that majority taught error; on the other side are the majority of those making no claim to the Succession, and that majority taught truth.

The Arian churches of the Fourth century are acknowledged to have had the Succession. The Greek Church has it, the Romish Church has it; and yet the Church of England separated from the Romish Church on the ground that she taught damnable error. And if Christ had meant to establish Episcopal ordination as an exclusive principle, would He so systematically and constantly depart from His own law of the ministry, in so abundantly blessing in their work of saving souls the non-Episcopal ministers, who, according to this theory, are systematically disobeying Him?

I could not reconcile it to myself to continue identified with such a doctrine of the Christian ministry. I felt myself in a false position with regard to what I believed to be the truth on this vitally important subject. I was abased and humiliated, that I belonged to a great Ecclesiastical organization which thus was habitually putting such studied dishonor upon the work of the Holy Spirit in the various Protestant ministers around me. I said, I cannot remain so.

SACERDOTALISM.

And now I might tell you of the claimed *priesthood* of the Protestant Episcopal ministry, and what a galling burden it was to both my conscience and heart; how I saw that this aspect of her ministry was the result of her Apostolical Succession theory; and how I counted the logical steps of priesthood, as actually trodden before my eyes, on and on into the most advanced Ritualism, into confession, and absolution, and the blasphemy of the real presence in the bread and wine, and the turning of the worship of God into spectacular arrangements and a sensuous bewilderment.

ECCLIASTICISM.

Again, I might tell you how from her doctrine of the ministry result her controlling views of the Constitution of the Visible Church of God, namely, that it is constituted of a particular form of external organization, and that all bodies not having an Episcopal regimen are only sects, and schismatics, just as if there were a book of Leviticus in the New Testament, or even a Deuteronomy; as if the unity of the Church of Christ were *uniformity* instead of *unanimity*; as if the continuity of the Church of Christ were that of an outward organization, instead of the continuity of faith, and worship, and brotherhood, and

communion with Christ; and how I felt that all this was very wrong, and very dishonoring to Christ; and how pained I had long been at thinking that all my labors, poor as they might be, were doing their part toward extending the influence of a Church whose church-views were so variant from the New Testament, and so contradictory to the actual truth of things; and how I had often imagined, supposing that all those sects and schismatics were swept from the land, what might then be the Christian power of the Protestant Episcopal Church, as left alone in her glory, and as against the combined hosts of evil, that like a dim taper she would burn in the midst of Continental darkness. Of course I knew that these Church principles of hers were in opposition to her XIXth Article of religion; but that article was only as a pebble beneath the wheels of her chariot. This narrow ecclesiasticism was in the ascendant; for it was implied and enforced in her Ordination Services, and embodied in her actual legislation, and made aggressive and oppressive in her infliction of punishment; as, witness her Canon against any fraternal intercourse with non-Episcopal Churches, and that other presumptuous Canon which prescribes a sentence of deposition from her ministry to be pronounced upon any minister of hers who goes into another part of the Lord's vineyard, although he may still preach the Gospel as faithfully as ever Paul did. Was there any hope that either her priesthood or her peculiar ecclesiasticism would ever be blotted from her Prayer-book?

WHY NOT FIGHT THE BATTLE IN THE CHURCH?

But I hasten to the conclusion. And now, in the third place, I notice the question, why not stay and fight it out in the Church? This question was before me all through that sorrowful time of my coming to a decision. I looked it through and through, as far as I was able. If the grievance had been only that of advanced ritualism in a few parishes, while yet the Church at large were sound, then I had felt that the case was essentially different. Ritualism, however, is only as foam on the surface; the real grievance is that the waters are always there ready to produce the foam. Or, if the Prayer-book, as it is a great practically educating power, were on the side of evangelical truth, even though the Church at large were full of error, again I had felt that the case was essentially different. But that Prayer-book—with it as it is, there can be nothing but hopelessness in any contest in the

Church. Said Dr. Pusey, many years ago, "so long as that Jewel, the Prayer-book, remains, you cannot either destroy or weaken Tractarianism." And his prediction has proved true. Only, now, things are even worse; for the Sacramentarian and Sacerdotal errors of the Church have got a tremendous start ahead; and that being so, and at the same time with a Service-book which is continually molding the church into accordance with itself, how can there be victory for truth in that war?

Then I said, but, supposing Evangelical men to go on fighting, may they not force a change of the book? And then the last forty years brought me their answer.

What an unceasing fight has been kept up during all that time, and by the ablest Evangelical minds, whether here or in England. But with what result? And again, human nature itself brought me its answer. Romanism is the religion of the natural heart, said Archbishop Whately; and it is true. Now when Romanizing principles have already fought their way, over all opposition, to an enthronement in the practical working of a Church, how much hope is there that that Church will consent to change the book which is as honey to the taste? The Prayer-book was revised and purged of its errors under William III; but the Church refused to receive it, because King Charles' book, the very one now in use in the Episcopal Church, had been educating the Church into sympathy with itself for just twenty-seven years. And see the Canon on Ritual, as passed by the late General Convention; they had not the heart to *prohibit* anything of Ritualism. Surely, it will require a very long time, even with the hardest fighting, to get that book freed from its errors.

And then I could not help asking myself, How about the time meanwhile? The Baptismal regenerationism, the Sacerdotalism, and the exclusiveness, are ever going on in the exercise of their great influence. What about my children? What about those whom I might be the means of bringing into the Episcopal Church? Should I be content to be a half-way house for the comers into that Church, where they might be entertained for a while, and then, by influences beyond my control, be pushed upward into the very Alps of an un-gospel Churchmanship? Aye, what about myself? For the man who sets his house down in a malarious atmosphere must have a rare vigor at throwing off disease, if he do not catch the fever. There are to-day not a few ministers of that Church, who once were the boldest of the

bold in their stand of opposition to the un-gospel principles of which we have been speaking, but who are now thoroughly easy under their association with those principles, or at least have ceased to be known as the same zealous, uncompromising, and sharply-cut thinkers for the truth which once they were. The battle-strokes of some of those men sounded far and wide; to-day, however, they stand with folded arms, or else are fighting on the other side. How long is it duty to risk this sort of thing, in the dreamy hope that in the far-off, indefinite future a change of the Prayer-book may come? Is there no limit to this patience and forbearance? No limit to one's complicity with, for instance, the office of Adult Baptism, which so publicly, so formally, and so invariably snuffs out the light of justification by faith? No limit to one's complicity with a Church which so dishonors the Holy Spirit, as regards His grand work of spiritual religion in the non-episcopal Churches?

But now the question came up before me in another form. May not Evangelical men, even though the Prayer-book be never changed, do more to oppose effectually the prevailing errors of that Church by staying in it, than by going out of it? A careful consideration of this form of the question showed me, in the light of my own experience, that no Gospel minister of that Church can bear his testimony *outside of* the damaging associations of his Church. If, for example, he preach on Justification by faith, and he bring forth to view the freeness and the instantness of a believer's pardon and acceptance with God, simply as a believer, and if at the same hour he administer the Office of Adult Baptism, wherein the Baptismal water is made to take away God's wrath at sin, then these authoritative utterances of the Font have cast a blur over those teachings of the Pulpit, and his hearers become confused and obfuscated, although they be not definitely aware of it. The reigning Churchism distracts the judgment and depresses the spiritual perceptions. Preach as I might, nevertheless I was more or less confounded with the system, of which, indeed, I was practically a part. The same Bishop who might go to the House of Prayer, and there administer his functions amid lighted candles, and fuming incense, and the obeisances of the altar, must also go to Trinity Church, and although there he would be surrounded by the most contrasting simplicity, yet is he the same Bishop, and the directly antagonistic teachings of those two Churches are sheltered beneath the

same Episcopal wing; and preach as I might, that very association would take the edge off my ministry, and tinge and color it in the eyes of observers. As to the effect, then, it was not a full, free, untrammelled testimony to the Gospel of the grace of God. I could not regard it as being the most effectual opposition to the errors around me. Whereas, methought, a clean separation from the whole system, a going out from the Church, would be, so far as my influence might extend, like the painter's pencil, when, in outline clear and symmetrical, it has wrought its work upon the almost breathing canvas. Or, it would be like a light on a hill. Or, like a bugle-blast waking up the drowsy thinkers. And thus this Reformed Episcopal Church will ever stand alongside the Old Church, as though it were a *Sursum Corda* pronounced, or sung, or thundered, into that Church's ears.

And again I thought, But will they not say of me, He has deserted his flag. What would be thought of the soldier, who should haul down his flag, and betray his cause to the enemy? My heart rose up at the suggestion, and its answer was in my ears like the sound of a marriage bell. No, my flag was never the Episcopal Church; it was Jesus Christ. The Episcopal flag, indeed, was there, but it was only the flag of my regiment: and when that regiment had become mutinous, and were themselves playing into the hands of the enemy, I said I would get away from it, on purpose to join a loyal regiment on the same great battlefield. And sure enough, here in sight is the same old flag. It is the gospel banner still. And bravely the fight goes on.

One other thought made me anxious. Ought I to leave my parish? In all likelihood (I said to myself) they all will continue as they are; and though grieved, perhaps offended, yet others could be found to minister to them as well or better than I had done. On the other hand a tie had been formed between us, and it was sacred. Ought I to leave them? And yet my going away into the Reformed Episcopal Church might be made of God the occasion of bringing to their hearts a greater definiteness of spiritual perception. At any rate, I was in the Lord's hands, and I could not but feel that He was saying to me, Go. And at last, in tears, I said it to myself—Go. Then I wrote it down. And then I sent it forth; and irrevocably I stood committed. But I had need to say to my beating heart, be steady, have faith in God. If the loved ones turn from me, it is for Jesus I have braved it all. But God was good. Instead of averted faces, so many of my flock came *hurrying*

me. And they came closer than ever, and their sympathy grew stronger, and Jesus seemed sweeter, and with an acclaim, like the sound of many waters, they answered me back, we go with you; we too must go.

My brethren of the Reformed Episcopal Church, we have a goodly heritage. A Service-book we have which we are free to love all through; and a Church, therefore, about which, even with the approbation of Gospel truth, we can afford to be enthusiastic. Our Book was not the growth of a day. It is in most things essentially the same as that known as Bishop White's Prayer-book, in the making of which were associated with the Bishop such men as Wharton, and Smith, and Prevost, and Washington, and Jay, and laymen of the revolution: and Bishop White's book was founded on that of 1689, the revised Prayer-book of William III, in the production of which were such men as Tillotson, Burnet, Stillingfleet, Patrick, and others: and the book of William III was founded on that of Edward VI, and Cranmer, and Hooper, and Bradford. We have all those sublime devotions of the ages to which we have been accustomed, and we have them in a complete setting of Gospel simplicity. We are a body of Christians loving a liturgical form, yet, by no means repressing extemporaneous prayer. We prize our own green pastures and still waters; but often through the boundless landscape would we walk together with our Presbyterian brethren, and Methodist, and Baptist, and all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, indeed, a goodly heritage. We now see that, when that brave and godly man, with a daring self-forgetfulness, gave himself to this work of Reform, it was God who guided him; and here to-night we thank God for Bishop Cummins. Our friends of the old Church call us narrow, or what not. Well, we are willing to be called anything in company of the great names already mentioned. But at least, we are not too narrow to receive the blessing of God; not too narrow to contain that Gospel which has been the salvation and the joy of all saints; not too narrow to spread ourselves over our Divinely given area of work for the saving of souls. Certainly our Church must expect to have her trials; for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. But the best of all is, God is with us. And

“We would rather walk with God in the dark, than go alone in the light;

“We would rather walk with Him by faith, than walk alone by sight.”

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