

THE UPPER ROOM,
AND OTHER SERMONS DELIVERED
ON IMPORTANT PUBLIC OCCASIONS

BEING IMPORTANT TRUTHS FOR THE TIMES.

BY THE RIGHT REV.
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"If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself
to the battle?"—1 Cor. xiv. 8.

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Preface

The volume now in the reader's hands requires little introductory explanation. It contains a very miscellaneous selection of papers which I have sent forth from time to time, in one shape or another, during a forty-five years' ministry. Some of these papers are not known beyond a small circle of kind friends. Not a few of them are the substance of pulpit addresses delivered on important public occasions, and composed with more than ordinary pains. All of them, I venture humbly to think, will be found to contain some useful truths for the times, and words in season.

I have reached an age when I cannot reasonably expect to write much more. There are many thoughts in this volume which I do not wish to leave behind me in the precarious form of separate single sermons, addresses, lectures, and tracts. I have therefore resolved to gather them together in the volume I now send forth, which I heartily pray God to bless, and to make it a permanent blessing to many souls.

J. C. LIVERPOOL

Palace, Liverpool 1st December 1887.

XVIII.

QUESTIONS ABOUT REGENERATION.

THE paper which begins at this page is intended to supply information to all Churchmen who are puzzled and perplexed about *baptismal regeneration*. That famous doctrine is so widely held, and so confidently declared to be true, that I think it desirable to discuss the whole subject under the simple form of questions and answers. I wish to show those whose minds are in a state of suspense, that Churchmen who hold that baptism and regeneration do not always go together, have a great deal more of reason, logic, Scripture, and the Prayer Book on their side than is commonly supposed. Their views, at any rate, ought not to be regarded, as they too often are, with supercilious and unreasoning contempt. I venture, therefore, to think that the arguments contained in this paper deserve respectful consideration.

1. *What is regeneration?*

It is that complete change of heart and character which the Holy Spirit works in a person when he becomes a real Christian. The Church Catechism calls it “a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness.” It is the same thing as being “born again,” or “born of God,” or “born of the Spirit.” “Except a man be born again” means “except a man be regenerate.” “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; that is, he is “born again, or regenerate” (John iii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 17).

2. *But are not all professing Christians real Christians?*

Certainly not. Thousands, unhappily, are only Christians in name, and have nothing of real Christianity either in their hearts or lives. Just as St. Paul said, “He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly” (Rom. ii. 28); so he would have said, “He is not a Christian, which is one outwardly.” Just as he said, “He is a Jew, which is one inwardly;” so he would have said, “He is a Christian, which is one inwardly.” In short, real Christians are regenerate, and merely nominal Christians are not.

3. *But how are we to know whether we are regenerate or not? Is it a thing we can possibly find out before we die?*

Regeneration may always be known by the fruits and effects it produces on a person’s life and character. It is always attended by certain marks, evidences, effects, results, and consequences. Every regenerate person has these marks more or less distinctly, and he that has them not is not regenerate. A regeneration which produces no effects, bears no fruit, and cannot be seen in a person’s life, is a regeneration never mentioned in Scripture.

4. *What are the marks and evidences of regeneration?*

They are laid down for us so clearly and plainly in the First Epistle of St. John, that he who runs may read them. It is written there, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;” “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ

is born of God;" "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him; "" Every one that loveth is born of God;" "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;" "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself" (1 John iii. 9, v. 1, ii. 29, iv. 7, v. 4, v. 18). If plain English words have any meaning, these texts mean that he who has these marks is "born again" or "regenerate," and he who has them not is not regenerate.

5. *Have all regenerate persons these marks of regeneration in the same degree of depth, strength, clearness, and distinctness?*

Most certainly not. There is a wide difference between the highest and lowest measure of grace possessed by those who are "born again." There are real and true Christians who are only "babes" in spiritual attainments, and there are others who are "strong," and vigorous, and able to do great things for Christ (1 John ii. 12–14). The Scripture speaks of little faith and great faith, of little strength and great strength. One thing only is certain,—every regenerate person has more or less the marks of regeneration, and he who has none of them is not born again (Matt. xiv. 31, xv. 28; Rev. iii. 8; Rom. xv. 1).

6. *But are not all baptized persons regenerate, and does not regeneration always accompany baptism?*

Certainly not. Myriads of baptized persons have not a single Scriptural mark of regeneration about them, and never had in their lives. They know nothing whatever of "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." On the contrary, they too often live in sin, and are enemies of all righteousness. To say that such persons are "regenerate" on account of their baptism, is to say that which seems flatly contrary to the First Epistle of St. John. The Church Catechism says that baptism contains two parts,—the outward and visible sign, and the inward and spiritual grace. But the Catechism nowhere says that the sign and the grace always go together.

7. *But does not the Baptismal Service of the Church Prayer Book say of every baptized child, "This child is regenerate" and does it not tell us to thank God that it hath "pleased Him to regenerate the infant"? What can this mean? How can it be explained?*

The Baptismal Service uses these expressions in the charitable supposition that those who use the Service, and bring their children to be baptized, are really what they profess to be. As Bishop Carleton says, "All this is the charity of the Church; and what more can you make of it?" As Bishop Downname says, "We are to distinguish between the judgment of charity and the judgment of certainty."

8. *But is this explanation of the language of the Baptismal Service honest, natural, and just? Is it the real meaning which ought to be put on the words?*

It is the only meaning which is consistent with the whole spirit of the Prayer Book. From first to last the Prayer Book charitably assumes that all who use it are real, thorough Christians. This is the only sense in which the

Burial Service can be interpreted. This is the only sense in which we can teach children the Church Catechism. We bid them say, “The Holy Ghost sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.” Yet no man in his senses would say that all children who say the Catechism are really “sanctified” or really “elect,” because they use these words.

9. *But ought we not to believe that all who use Christ’s ordinances receive a blessing as a matter of course?*

Certainly not. The benefit of Christ’s ordinances depends entirely on the spirit and manner in which they are used. The Scripture expressly says that a man may receive the Lord’s Supper “unworthily,” and eat and drink “to his own condemnation.” The Articles of the Church of England declare that in such only as receive sacraments “rightly, worthily, and with faith,” they have a wholesome effect and operation. They do not convey grace as a matter of course, “*ex opere operato*,” in the same way that a medicine acts on the body. The famous Hooker teaches that “all receive not the grace of God which receive the sacraments of His grace.” To maintain that every child who is baptized with water is at once regenerated and born again, appears to turn the sacrament of baptism into a mere form, and to contradict both Scripture and the Thirty-nine Articles.

10. *But do not all infants receive baptism worthily, since they offer no obstacle to the grace of baptism? and are they not consequently all regenerated, as a matter of course, the moment they are baptized?*

Certainly not. No infant is of itself worthy to receive grace, because, as the Catechism says, it is “born in sin and a child of wrath.” It can only be received into the Church, and baptized on the faith and profession of its parents or sponsors. No true missionary thinks of baptizing heathen children without friends or sponsors. The Church Catechism asks the question, “Why are infants baptized?” But it does not give as an answer, “Because they offer no obstacle to grace,”—but “because they promise repentance and faith by their Sureties.” Let us always remember that an infant has no title to baptism but the profession of its *Sureties*. Surely when these Sureties know nothing of repentance or faith, or of what they are promising, common sense points out that the infant is not likely to get any inward benefit from the sacrament. In plain words, if parents or sponsors bring an infant to baptism in utter ignorance, without faith or prayer or knowledge, it is monstrous to suppose that this infant *must*, nevertheless, receive regeneration. At this rate, it would matter nothing in what way sacraments are used, whether with ignorance or with knowledge, and it would signify nothing whether those who use them were godly or ungodly; the children of believing and of unbelieving parents would receive precisely the same benefit from baptism! Such a conclusion seems unreasonable and absurd.

11. *But does not St. Paul say in his Epistles that Christians are “buried with Christ in baptism;” and that baptized persons have “put on Christ”?*

(Gal. iii. 27; Col. ii. 12).

No doubt St. Paul says so. But the persons of whom he said this were not baptized in infancy, but when they were grown up, and in days too when faith and baptism were so closely connected, that as soon as a man believed he confessed his faith publicly by baptism. But there is not a single passage in the New Testament which describes at length the effect of baptism on an infant, nor a single text which says that all *infants* are born again, or regenerated, or buried with Christ in baptism. As Canon Mozley says, "Scripture nowhere asserts, either explicitly or implicitly, the regeneration of infants in baptism" (Mozley's *Baptismal Controversy*, p. 34). Besides this, we are expressly told that Simon the sorcerer, after his baptism, had "no part" in Christ, and his "heart was not right in the sight of God." Simon, therefore, could not have been regenerated, or born again in baptism (Acts viii. 21).

12. *But does not St. Peter say, "Baptism doth also save us"? and if it saves us, must it not also regenerate us?* (1 Pet. iii. 21).

No doubt St. Peter says so. But those who quote this text should not stop at the words "save us," but read carefully on to the end of the sentence. They will then see that St. Peter distinctly fences and guards his statement, by saying that the baptism which "saves" is not the mere outward application of water to the body, but the baptism which is accompanied by the "answer of a good conscience toward God." Moreover, it is a curious fact that St. Peter, who uses the expression "baptism saves," is the very same Apostle who told Simon *after baptism* that he was "in the bond of iniquity," and his "heart was not right in the sight of God" (Acts viii. 21).

13. *But does not our Lord Jesus Christ say to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"?* (John iii. 3). *Does not this prove that all who are baptized with water are regenerate?*

Certainly not. It proves nothing of the kind. The utmost that can be made of this famous and often quoted text is, that it shows the necessity of being "born of water and the Spirit" if we would be saved. But it does not say that all who are baptized, or "born of water," are *at the same time* "born of the Spirit." It may prove that there is a connection sometimes between baptism and regeneration, but it does not supply the slightest proof that an *invariable* connection always exists.

14. *But may it not be true that all baptized persons receive the grace of spiritual regeneration in baptism, and that many of them afterwards lose it?*

There is no plain warrant for such a statement in the Bible. St. Peter says expressly, that we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible" (1 Pet. i. 23). The Seventeenth Article of our Church speaks of grace as a thing that cannot be lost: "They that be endowed with so excellent a benefit of God, walk religiously in good works,—and at length attain to everlasting felicity." It is very dishonouring to the mighty inward work of the Holy Ghost

to suppose that it can be so continually lost and trampled under foot. Moreover, myriads of baptized persons from their very earliest infancy never give the slightest evidence of having any grace to lose, and are not one bit better, as boys and girls, than the unbaptized children of Quakers and Baptists. No wonder that Robert Abbott, Bishop of Salisbury in 1615, asks the question, "If there be that cure that they speak of in the baptized, how is it that there is so little effect or token thereof? "

15. *But may it not be true that all baptized persons receive the grace of regeneration in baptism, and that it remains within them like a dormant seed, alive, though at present bearing no fruit?*

Certainly not. The Apostle St. John expressly forbids us to suppose that there can be such a thing as dormant or sleeping grace. He says, "Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God" (1 John iii. 9). This witness is true. When there can be light which cannot be seen, and fire without heat, then, and not till then, there may be grace that is dormant and inactive. The well-known words, "Stir up the gift of God that is in thee," are far too often addressed to the baptized. Yet common sense will tell any one who refers to his Bible that these words were not used at all about the effects of baptism, but about the gifts of ministers (2 Tim. i. 6).

16. *But do not the early Fathers hold that all baptized persons are necessarily regenerated in baptism? and, have not many great and learned divines in every age maintained the same opinion?*

The Fathers used very extravagant language about both the sacraments, and are not safe guides on this point. Moreover, they often contradict themselves and one another. The divines who deny that regeneration always accompanies baptism are as worthy of attention, and as learned and wise, as any divines who ever held baptismal regeneration. It is sufficient to say that Archbishops Cranmer, Whitgift, Usher, and Leighton, Bishops Latimer, Ridley, Jewell, Davenant, Carleton, Hopkins, and Robert Abbott, have left distinct evidence that they did not consider the grace of *spiritual* regeneration to be necessarily and invariably tied to baptism. After all, in questions like these we must call no man Master. It matters little what man says. What saith the Scripture?

17. *But does not this view of regeneration, according to which many baptized persons are not regenerate at all, and receive no benefit whatever from their baptism, do great dishonour to one of Christ's sacraments, and tend to bring it into contempt?*

Not at all. The truth is exactly the other way. To say that infant baptism confers grace mechanically, as a chemical solution produces an effect on a photographic plate, and that if water and certain words are used by a thoughtless, careless clergyman over the child of thoughtless, ignorant parents, the child is at once born again,—to say, furthermore, that an immense spiritual

effect is produced by baptism when no effect whatever can be seen,—all *this*, to many thinking persons, seems calculated to degrade baptism! It tends to make observers suppose that baptism is useless, or that regeneration means nothing at all. He that would do honour to baptism should maintain that it is a high and holy ordinance, which, like every ordinance appointed by Christ, ought not to be touched without solemn reverence; and that no blessing can be expected unless it is used with heart, and knowledge, and faith, and prayer, and followed by godly training of the child baptized. Above all, he should maintain that when baptism does good, the good will be *seen* in the life and ways of the baptized. Those who do not feel satisfied about this matter will do well to study attentively the strong language which God uses about His own ordinances, when used formally and carelessly, in the prophet Isaiah (Isa. i. 11, 12). What did the prophet mean when he wrote these words: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord.—I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs”? He evidently meant that God’s own ordinances may be made *perfectly useless* by man’s misuse of them.

18. *But may we not believe that regeneration means nothing more than a change of state, and does not mean a moral and spiritual change at all? May we not believe that it is a mere ecclesiastical word, signifying nothing more than admission to a state of Church privilege? And may we not then say that every person baptized is regenerated in baptism?*

Of course we may say and believe anything we please in a free country like England, and this idea of an ecclesiastical regeneration cuts the knot of some difficulties, and has always satisfied some minds. But it is an insuperable difficulty that the word “regeneration” is never once used in this sense in the New Testament. Moreover, the parallel expression “born of God,” in St. John’s First Epistle, most certainly means a great deal more than being admitted into a state of ecclesiastical privilege! To say, for instance, “Who-soever is baptized doth not commit sin,—and overcometh the world,” would be ridiculous, because untrue.—Moreover, the Church Catechism distinctly teaches that the inward and spiritual grace in baptism is not a mere ecclesiastical change, but “*a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.*” Moreover, the Homily for Whitsunday expressly describes regeneration as an inward and spiritual change. One thing is very certain: no unlearned reader of the Bible ever seems to understand how a person can be “regenerate” and yet not saved. The poor and simple-minded cannot take in the idea of ecclesiastical regeneration!

19. *But is it not more kind, and liberal, and charitable, to assume that all baptized persons are regenerate, and to address them as such?*

Most certainly not. On the contrary, it is calculated to lull conscience into a fatal security. It is likely to feed sloth, check self-examination, and encourage an easy, self-satisfied condition of soul. No religious statement is kind

and charitable which is not strictly true. To keep back any part of God's truth, in order to appear *kind*, is not only a mistake but a sin. The way to do good is to warn people plainly, that they must not suppose they are regenerate because they are baptized. They must be told to examine themselves whether they are "born again," and not to believe they are regenerate, except they have the scriptural marks of regeneration.

20. *But is it really necessary to attach such importance to this doctrine of regeneration? Is it not sufficient to teach people that they must be "good," and go to church, and be "in earnest," and do their duty, and that then they will get to heaven, somehow, at last, without telling them in this positive dogmatic way, they must be "born again"?*

The answer to these questions is short and simple. Christians have no rule of religious faith and practice except the Bible. If the Bible is true, regeneration is absolutely necessary to salvation. It is written, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;"—"Ye must be born again;"—"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven" (John iii. 3–8; Matt, xviii. 3). It is possible for people to enter heaven and be saved, like the penitent thief, without baptism; but no one can be saved and go to heaven without regeneration. The penitent thief, though not baptized, was "born again." Regeneration, therefore, is a doctrine of primary and first-rate importance.

21. *But if these things are true, and no one can be saved without regeneration, are there not many professing Christians who are in a very dangerous position? Are not those who are without the marks of being "born again" in imminent peril of being lost for ever?*

Of course they are. But this is exactly what the Bible teaches from first to last about them. It is written, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." It is written again, "Many walk of whom I tell you weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction" (Matt. vii. 13; Phil. iii. 18). It is the most miserable part of many people's religious condition, that they fancy they will go to heaven because they are baptized and go to church, while in reality, not being regenerate, they are on the road to eternal ruin.

22. *Can ministers of the Church of Christ give regenerating grace to their people?*

Most certainly not. St. John expressly says that those who are born of God are born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 13). "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but God only can "give the increase" (John vi. 63; 1 Cor. iii. 7). Ministers, like John the Baptist, can baptize with water, but Christ alone can "baptize with the Holy Ghost" (Mark i. 8). To give spiritual life, as well as physical life, is the peculiar prerogative of God. Man can neither give it to himself, nor to another.

23. *But supposing these things are true, what ought those unhappy persons to do who have no marks of regeneration about them, and feel that they are not born again? Are they to sit still in hopeless despair?*

The Bible gives a simple answer to that question. If a man *really* feels his need of regeneration and desires it, he must seek Christ, the fountain of life, and cry mightily to Him. He must ask Him who baptizes with the Holy Ghost to baptize his heart, and to give him grace. It is written, “To as many as received Him, He gave power to become the sons of God” (John i. 12). He must pray for a new heart. It is written, “Your Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him” (Luke xi. 13). He must seek life diligently in the use of God’s Word. It is written that “faith cometh by hearing.”—“Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth” (Rom. x. 17; James i. 18). No man ever sought grace honestly in this way, and sought in vain. He that will not take the trouble to seek in this fashion does not really desire regeneration, and is not in earnest about his soul.

24. *But supposing a person finds in himself some reason to hope that he really is born again, and has the true marks of regeneration, what is he to do? Is he to sit still, and take no more trouble about his soul?*

Certainly not. He must strive daily to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ” (2 Pet. iii. 18). He must seek to deepen and strengthen the work of the Holy Spirit within him, by diligently exercising the grace he has received. He must “cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. vii. 1). He must endeavour to “abide in Christ” more closely, and to live the life of faith in the Son of God. He that thinks he is regenerate, and does not feel a continual desire to be more holy and more like Christ every year he lives, is in a very unsatisfactory and unhealthy state of soul (John xv. 4, 5; Gal. ii. 20; 2 Pet. i. 5–10).

25. *Have Evangelical Churchmen who hold the views of regeneration maintained in this paper any cause to be ashamed of their opinions?*

None whatever. They can safely defy any one to prove that their views are not in harmony with Scripture, with the Thirty-nine Articles, with the Prayer Book, with the Catechism, with the Homilies, and with the writings of many of the best divines in the Church of England. Those who occupy such a position as this have no cause to be ashamed. The last day will prove who is right. To the judgment of that day we may safely and confidently appeal.

I conclude this paper with one general remark about the great principle on which the “Book of Common Prayer” was at first compiled. It is one which runs throughout the Liturgy from end to end. The mischief which has arisen, and the false teaching which has flowed from gross ignorance or neglect of this principle, are simply incalculable. Let me show what it is.

The principle of the Prayer Book is to suppose all members of the Church

to be in *reality* what they are in *profession*, to be true believers in Christ, to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost. The Prayer Book takes the highest standard of what a Christian ought to be, and is all through worded accordingly. The minister addresses those who assemble together for public worship *as believers*. The people who use the words the Liturgy puts into their mouths are supposed to be *believers*. But those who drew up the Prayer Book never meant to assert that all who were members of the Church of England were actually and really true Christians! On the contrary, they tell us expressly in the Articles, that “in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good.” But they held that if forms of devotion were drawn up at all, they must be drawn up on the supposition that those who used them were real Christians, and not false ones. And in so doing I think they were quite right. A Liturgy for unbelievers and unconverted men would be absurd, and practically useless. The part of the congregation for whom it was meant would care little or nothing for any Liturgy at all. The holy and believing part of the congregation would find its language entirely unsuited to them, and beneath their wants.

How any one can fail to see this principle running through the Prayer-book Services, is one of those things which I must frankly say I fail to understand. It is quite certain that St. Paul wrote his Epistles in the New Testament to the Churches upon this principle. He constantly addresses their members as “saints” and “elect,” and as having grace, and faith, and hope, and love, though it is evident that some of them had no grace at all! I am firmly convinced that the compilers of our Prayer Book drew up its Services upon the same lines, the lines of charitable supposition; and it is on this principle alone that the book can be interpreted, and especially on the subject of Baptism and Regeneration.*

* Those who wish to study this subject more deeply are advised to read—Canon Faber’s *Primitive Doctrine of Regeneration*, 8vo. Dean Goode on *The Effects of Infant Baptism*, 8vo. Canon Mozley on *Baptismal Regeneration*, 8vo. Canon Mozley on *The Baptismal Controversy*, 8vo.