

ART. II.—HOLY BAPTISM.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE REFORMED CHURCH.

BY E. T. GERNHART, D. D., LANCASTER, PA.

We propose to institute an inquiry into the doctrine concerning *Holy Baptism* as held and taught by the Reformed Church.

We do not mean the Reformed Church of Germany, or the German Reformed Church, particularly. Nor do we mean the doctrine of the entire Protestant Church, which would include Lutheranism. We intend to limit our inquiry to the Reformed branch of Protestantism. Within this limit, however, we propose to survey the whole field; which will embrace the Reformed Church of Switzerland, of France, of Germany, of Holland, of Belgium, of Bohemia, of Poland, of England or the Anglican Church, and the Reformed Church of Scotland, or the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and Ireland, and its various subdivisions in America.

To determine this question in a satisfactory manner, it is necessary to go to the most trustworthy sources of information. These may be divided into three classes: 1. The works of the leading theological Professors and divines of the different branches of the Reformed Church, who are to be regarded as the representatives of the Reformation period, and the *exponents* of the Reformed faith; 2, the various Liturgies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and 3, the numerous Confessions of Faith and catechisms of the Reformed Church.

An examination of all these sources would be necessary in order to furnish the evidence in full concerning the Reformed Doctrine; but this would make a series of articles or a book,

instead of one article of ordinary length. We will therefore waive, for the present at least, an examination of the first two sources, and confine our attention chiefly to the third, which, taken by itself, is the most important. The Catechisms and Confessions contain the most direct and positive expression of the Reformed faith. Though the language is here and there affected and modified by reference to the errors of Romanism on the one side, and of Rationalism, Anabaptism and Infidelity on the other, and must in all such cases, be interpreted in the light of the prevailing issues, yet it is thus affected and modified in a much less degree than the writings of theologians and divines, which are to a large extent of a controversial character. This is true especially of the doctrine of Baptism. On no doctrine is the language of the Catechisms and Confessions, taken together, more clear, consistent and unequivocal. And when particular forms of expression involve a reference to questions of the age, it happens that the language presents no difficulty, but is intelligible both to clergymen and laymen; for the many questions at issue then concerning the nature and efficacy of Baptism, are the very questions which are at issue now, and with which every intelligent Christian is conversant.

The principal and most important aspect of the question at issue now in the Reformed Church of America, including the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, Reformed Dutch and German Reformed Churches, is whether Holy Baptism is the Sacrament of Regeneration? Has Christ ordained this Sacrament for the remission of sins, and the communication of a new and spiritual life by the Holy Ghost? Is it the act of God, in which he translates the subject from the state of nature into the state of grace, from the kingdom of the Devil into the kingdom of Christ? Does a person, who is a child of the Devil through the fall of Adam and the inheritance of original sin, become, by Baptism, a member of the mystical body of Christ and thereby a child of God? These several questions are but different forms of presenting one general question, namely: Does Baptism take away the guilt and pollution of sin and communicate the new life of the Spirit in Christ Jesus?

We answer in the affirmative; and maintain that the doctrine we hold concerning the objective, saving efficacy of this Sacrament is the true Protestant and Reformed doctrine. Our opponents, comprising four-fifths, if not nine-tenths, of the ministry and laity belonging to the Reformed family of Churches, answer in the negative, and maintain that the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is neither Reformed nor Protestant, but Romish.

This is one of the very questions that agitated the Reformed Church during the period of its organization; and in consequence the language of the Confessions in which the rationalistic errors of the sixteenth century are condemned and the positive truth taught, is as well adapted to the religious and theological mind of our day, as if these Confessions had been drawn up expressly for the purpose of lifting up a standard against the insidious unbelief of the nineteenth century.

CONFESSIONS OF THE REFORMED CHURCH.

With the view accordingly of ascertaining what the Reformed doctrine on the subject of Baptism is, we proceed to examine the following Confessions and Catechisms: The Augsburg Confession; the Tetrapolitan Confession; the First Basel Confession; the Confession of Bohemia; the Second Basel or Former Helvetic Confession; Calvin's Catechism; the Gallican Confession; the Confession of Scotland; the Confession of England; the Belgic Confession; the Heidelberg Catechism; the Latter Helvetic Confession; the Confession of Sigismund; the Confession of Poland; the Westminster Confession, and the Larger Catechism.

The *Augsburg Confession*, drawn up by Melancthon, was, at the instance of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, presented to the Diet of Augsburg, by the most renowned Princes of Germany and other States of the Empire, in June 1530, and although claimed as the first symbol of the Lutheran Church, must be regarded as the first Confession of the Protestant Reformation, made before the Reformed and Lutheran tendencies had developed themselves into division and separation. It is a formal expression of the Reformed faith, as it stood at that time, no less than of the Lutheran faith, and ought therefore to be consulted

on the subject of Baptism, in order to get a complete view of the Reformed doctrine. The Augsburg Confession, because of this relation which it bears to the first period of Protestantism, is included by *Mess* in his *Sammlung symbolischer Bücher der Reformirten Kirche*, published in 1828.

The *Tetrapolitan Confession*, composed mainly by Bucer, was presented by the deputies from the four free cities, Strasburg, Constance, Memmingen and Lindau, to the Emperor at the same diet of Augsburg in 1530; these cities being unwilling to subscribe the Confession drawn up by Melancthon. It was designed to be both a positive statement of the Reformed faith and a vindication of themselves against the charge, that they had departed from the truth as taught by the Word of God. Like the Augsburg Confession, it was delivered in both the Latin and German language.

The *First Confession of Basel*, sometimes called the Confession of Mühlhausen, was, according to what we regard as the best authorities, composed in the German language about the year 1532. There are those who hold it to be coeval with the Augsburg Confession, the Tetrapolitan Confession and Zwingli's Exposition of Faith. The author is not certainly known. Some suppose it to have been the production of *Occolampadius*, revised and improved by his successor *Oswald Myconius*. Subscribed by the ministers of Basel, it was first published in 1534. Then again in the year 1561, it was both recognised and received by the same ministers of Basel. It passed through many editions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and acquired great reputation and great influence as a Reformed Confession.

Following the order of time we cite next the *Confession of Bohemia*, which dates back to 1535, when it was first published in the vernacular tongue, and submitted to the king, Ferdinand, as containing the faith of the barons and nobles of the kingdom. It received the approval, as appears from the preface, of Luther, Melancthon, and other divines of Wittenberg.

Bohemia had numerous confessions, which, though the same essentially, vary from each other in the order of topics and in

forms of expression. Of these, according to Niemeyer, two are especially worthy of regard. To both of these he has given a place in his *Collection of Reformed Confessions*. The one is a revision of the Confession of 1535, and published in 1573, in Latin and German.

Of this the *Harmony of Protestant Confessions*, first published in Latin at Geneva, in 1581; then in English at Cambridge, 1586; and recently edited by the Rev. Peter Hall, M. A., London, 1842, says: "The Confession of Bohemia, being the last-composed of four former, which were far more ancient, being recited in the same order of chapters and arguments, and somewhat more plainly expressed, and in the year 1573, published in divers places, was also approved by common testimony of the University of Wirttemberg; even as Masters Luther and Melancthon had approved the former, published in the year 1532, being altogether the same in doctrine with this, as Luther his Preface witnesseth. And we called it elsewhere the Confession of the Waldenses, following the common title assigned unto these churches."

The Second Confession of Basel, more commonly known as the *Former Helvetic Confession*, was written by Bullinger, Myconius and Grynæus in 1536, under appointment of an ecclesiastical convention which had assembled for this purpose at Basel in the name of the different Protestant cantons of Switzerland. By the same authority it was afterwards ratified and published. It was submitted to the assembly of divines at Wirttemberg by Bucer and Capito. The year following, 1537, it was again submitted by Bucer, accompanied with an exposition, to the assembly of Smalcald, and approved by the whole assembly, as appears from Luther's letters to the Swiss.

The *Genevan Catechism* was first written in 1536, in French, by John Calvin for the use of the church of Geneva, but afterwards, at the instance of the ministers of Geneva, it was modified and enlarged, and published at Basel in Latin, in the year 1538.

The *Gallican Confession*, or the Confession of France, was first presented in French, in the year 1559, to Francis the

Second, King of France, at Amboise, in behalf of all the godly of that kingdom; again, in the year 1561, at Poissy, to Charles the Ninth; and at length also published in Latin by the pastors of the French churches, with a Preface addressed to all other evangelical pastors, in the year 1566.

The *Confession of Scotland* was first exhibited to, and allowed by, the three estates in Parliament, at Edinburgh, in the year 1560; again ratified at the same place, and by the same authority in 1567; and finally subscribed by his Majesty the King, and his household, at Holyrood House, January 28th, 1581. Written originally in the Scotch language, it was first published in 1568. It was subsequently translated into Latin, and published in 1612.

The principal *Anglican Confessions* are the Forty-two Articles of King Edward VI., drawn up and adopted by a Synod convened at London in the year 1552, and first published in London and Zurich in 1553; and the Thirty-nine Articles, the result of a revision of the Forty-two Articles, by the Synod of London, convened by authority of Queen Elizabeth, in the year 1562; the latter established by the solemn sanction of the State and the Church, being the recognized formula of faith which has prevailed in the Church of England, and in the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, down to the present day.

The *Confession of Belgium* was drawn up in 1561 or 1562, when Philip II. was about introducing the inquisition into the Netherlands for the suppression of the Reformed faith, with the view of averting the impending persecution. It was published in French, in the name of all the churches of Belgium, in the year 1556. In the year 1579 it was translated into the Belgian tongue, and in the public Synod of Belgium was repeated and confirmed.

The *Heidelberg or Palatinate Catechism*, written in German by Zacharias Ursinus and Casper Olevianus, under authority and by direction of Frederick III, Elector of the Palatinate, was laid before a Synod composed of representatives of the churches of his dominions, and unanimously adopted, January 1563. It was published in the same year both in German and Latin.

The *Latter Helvetic Confession* was written in Latin by Henry Bullinger, in 1562. At the instance of Frederick the Third, Elector of the Palatinate, it was translated into the German language, and published in 1566, in order to vindicate the faith of the Reformed Churches against the aspersions of the Lutherans. It was approved and subscribed not only by the ministers of Zurich, and their confederates of Berne, Schaffhausen, Sangallia, Rhetia, Mühlhausen and Bienne; but also by the churches of Geneva, of Savoy, of Poland, and likewise of Hungary and of Scotland. In the course of time it came to be known and regarded as the proper Swiss Confession.

John Sigismund, Elector of Brandenburg, 1608-1619, provoked by the bitter hostility of the Lutherans to the Reformed to examine the doctrines of the Reformed Church, was constrained to embrace the Reformed faith, and passed over from the Lutheran to the Reformed communion formally, by celebrating the Lord's Supper according to the Reformed cultus, in 1613. This transition led to the preparation of a *Confession of Faith*, which was published in May, 1614.

The *Confession of Poland* is the Confession submitted by the Reformed theologians to the *Colloquium* at Thorn, in 1645, held at the instance and by the authority of Wladislaus, IV. King of Poland, 1632-1648, for the purpose of abating the fierce dissensions which prevailed among the Roman Catholics, Reformed and Lutherans in his kingdom, and bore the title: "Declaratio doctrinae ecclesiarum Reformatarum catholicarum." It soon acquired authority as a Confession of the Reformed Church, though of secondary importance.

The *Confession of Faith*, and the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms*, of the Presbyterian Church are the work of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, which, in the reign of Charles I., was convened by act of the Long Parliament, for the purpose of "settling the Government and Liturgy of the Church of England, and for vindicating and clearing of the doctrine of the said Church from false aspersions and interpretations." The Assembly met in the chapel of Henry VII., July 1st, 1643, and continued its sessions nearly five years, until Feb. 22d, 1648.

Though the immediate and specific design of the Westminster Assembly was not accomplished, as the political reaction and the restoration brought back with it the polity and cultus of the Episcopal Church, yet the work it performed has proven itself to be of vast significance. Whilst the Westminster Confession and Catechisms failed to become the faith of the Church of England, they were cordially adopted by the Reformed Church of Scotland, and have been held as the authoritative formularies of Christian doctrine in Scotland, Ireland and America, by all branches of the Presbyterian Church, for more than two centuries. And the Directory which the Assembly prepared has regulated and moulded Presbyterian worship, the worship of all the English Calvinistic Churches, and even supplanted, in great measure, the Palatinate Liturgy in the Reformed Dutch and German Reformed Churches of America.

Of these fifteen Confessions of the Reformed Church, of which we have now given a brief historical notice, there are six which possess primary and general authority, being by universal acknowledgment the true exponents of the Reformed faith as it stood in the sixteenth century. These are the *Former* and *Latter Helvetic* Confessions, the *Gallican*, *Scotch* and *Belgic* Confessions, and the *Heidelberg Catechism*. With these symbolical books the *Confession of Faith* of the Westminster Assembly and the *Larger Catechism* take rank as authoritative exponents of the faith of the Puritan branch of the Reformed Church as it prevailed in the century following. The other Confessions hold a secondary and subordinate position; not because they fail to be in full harmony with those acknowledged authorities, but because, owing to their form, design and local relations, their influence was more limited and less powerful. But we will examine them also, in order to show that the Reformed doctrine of Baptism was one and the same in all countries where the Reformed Church obtained a foothold.

As the Decrees of the National Synod of the Reformed Belgic Churches, assembled at Dort in 1618 and 1619, are limited to the celebrated Five Points of Calvinism,—divine predestination, redemption by the death of Christ, natural depravity, conver-

sion, and final perseverance,—they do not come under review in the examination of the question we have in hand.

REFORMED DOCTRINE OF A SACRAMENT.

The doctrine of Holy Baptism is rooted in the more general doctrine concerning a Sacrament. The nature of a Sacrament is the general nature of Baptism. Therefore, before we proceed to quote and examine the teachings of the Confessions on the particular question before us, we will first inquire into the Reformed idea of a Sacrament. The general being the basis of the particular, a correct apprehension of the one will qualify us to institute an intelligent inquiry into the other.

According to the idea universally prevalent among the Reformed Churches in all countries during the sixteenth century, a Sacrament is the visible *sign* of a present invisible grace. The visible sign is the natural element; in the Eucharist, bread and wine; in Baptism, water. The invisible grace is the spiritual gift of God. In Baptism, the gift is the presence and effective operation of the blood and Spirit of Christ; in the Eucharist, it is the nourishment of the believer unto everlasting life by the communication of the body and blood, or the glorified human nature, of Christ. The Sacrament is not an empty sign, not the natural element by itself. Nor is it the abstract grace of God; grace apart from the natural element. But a Sacrament is the institution of Christ in which the two things, the natural element and the spiritual gift, are one. They are not identical. The natural element is not transmuted into the spiritual gift; so that the natural element is only such in appearance, and not in reality. But the natural element remains what it was before it was made an essential part of the sacrament; water continues to be real natural water; bread and wine continue to be real, natural bread and wine. But the spiritual gift is joined to the natural element by the power of the Holy Ghost; and this union of the visible natural and the invisible spiritual in the institution, constitutes the Sacrament. In the absence of either, the Sacrament does not exist. Were the invisible grace not present in the administration, the natural

element, for want of the thing signified, would not be a sign. Were the natural element annihilated by transmutation into the invisible grace, this present grace, for want of the external sign, would not be the thing signified. Either form of error destroys the Reformed idea of a Sacrament.

In virtue of the union of the natural and spiritual in the Sacrament, the natural element certifies the presence of the spiritual gift for the purpose of salvation. It is thus a *seal* no less than a sign. The sign makes certain to faith the real presence of what is signified. It cannot certify the presence of what it does not signify. In Baptism, the water does not signify the penitence and faith of the subject, and therefore does not certify the genuineness of his personal experience. But it signifies the efficacious operation of the blood and Spirit of Christ. This grace being as truly present as the water, the administration of the Sacrament by the application of water in the name of the holy Trinity, certifies the invisible or spiritual work to be as real as the external transaction. In the holy Eucharist the bread and the cup do not signify the moral and spiritual fitness of the communicant, and therefore they do not certify his conversion and sanctification. But these signs certify the presence of the divine-human Christ as the true spiritual food of the believer. Christ Himself being thus as truly present as the bread and the cup, the communication of these elements by the minister certifies the communion of Christ with the believer to be as real as the outward eating and drinking.

The Sacrament being the visible sign of present invisible grace, it assures the believer of the reality of the divine act. The idea of sign involves the idea of seal. Were the Sacrament not a seal, it would not be a sign. As the sign is objective, so is the seal. Both pertain, not to men, not to personal experience, but to the Person and work of Christ as connected by the power of the Holy Ghost with the natural element. Thus the Reformed idea of sign completes itself in the idea of seal.

We have now presented, in our own language, the Reformed

idea of a Sacrament, as drawn from the Reformed confessions. Let us in the next place examine the authorities themselves.

The Latter Helvetic Confession says: "Sacraments are mystical symbols, or holy rites, or sacred actions, ordained of God Himself, consisting of His Word, of outward signs, and of things signified; whereby He keepeth in continual memory, and oft-times recalleth to mind, in His Church, His great benefits bestowed upon man; and whereby He sealeth up His promises and outwardly representeth, and, as it were, offereth unto our sight those things which inwardly He performeth unto us, and therewithal strengtheneth and increaseth our faith through the working of God's Spirit in our hearts."

"The principal thing, which in all the Sacraments is offered of the Lord, and chiefly regarded of the godly of all ages, which some have called the substance and matter of the Sacraments, is Christ our Saviour; that only sacrifice, Heb. x. 12, and that Lamb of God slain from the beginning of the world, Rev. xiii. 8."

"And as in the Old Church the Sacraments consisted of the Word, the sign, and the thing signified, so even at this day they are composed, as it were, of the same parts. For the Word of God maketh them Sacraments, which before were none; for they are consecrated by the Word and declared to be sanctified by Him who first ordained them. To sanctify or consecrate a thing, is to dedicate it unto God, and unto holy uses; that is, to take it from the common and ordinary use, and to appoint it to some holy use. For the signs that be in Sacraments are drawn from common use, things external and visible. As in Baptism; the outward sign is the element of water, and that visible washing which is done by the Minister. But the thing signified is regeneration, and the cleansing from sins. Likewise, in the Lord's Supper; the outward sign is bread and wine, taken from things commonly used for meat and drink. But the thing signified is the body of Christ which was given, and His blood which was shed for us, and the communion of the body and blood of the Lord. Wherefore the water, bread and wine, considered in their own nature, and out of this holy use

and institution of the Lord, are only that which they are called, and which we find them to be. But let the Word of God be added to them, together with invocation upon his Holy Name, and the renewing of their first institution and sanctification, then these signs are consecrated and declared to be sanctified by Christ. For Christ's first institution and consecration of the Sacraments standeth yet in force in the Church of God, in such sort, that they which celebrate the Sacraments no otherwise than the Son Himself from the beginning hath appointed, have still even to this day, the use and benefit of that first and most excellent consecration. And for this cause, in the administration of the Sacraments, the very words of Christ are repeated. And forasmuch as we learn out of the Word of God, that these signs were appointed unto another end and use than commonly they are used unto, therefore we teach that they now, in their holy use, do take upon them the names of things signified, and are not still called bare water, bread, or wine; but that the water is called *regeneration and bath of the new birth*; and the bread and wine *the body and blood of the Lord*, or the pledges and Sacraments of His body and blood. Tit. iii. 5. 1 Cor. x. 16. Not that the signs are turned into the things signified, or cease to be that which in their own nature they are, for then they could not be Sacraments, which would consist only of the thing signified and have no signs; but therefore do the signs bear the names of the things, because they be mystical tokens of holy things, and because the signs and the things signified are sacramentally joined together; joined together, I say, or united by a mystical signification, and by the purpose and will of Him who first instituted them. For the water, bread, and wine, are not common, but holy signs. And He that instituted water in Baptism did not institute it with that mind and purpose, that the faithful should only be dipped in the water of Baptism; and He who commanded the bread to be eaten and the wine to be drunk in the Supper, did not mean that the faithful should only receive bread and wine, without any further mystery, as they eat bread at home in their houses; but that they should spiritually be partakers of the things sig-

nified, and by faith be truly purged from their sins, and be partakers of Christ."*

We deem it scarcely necessary to follow this statement with any extended quotations from other Reformed Confessions, as it teaches the doctrine in question clearly and forcibly, both in a positive and in a negative form. It teaches what a Sacrament is in direct terms, and denies the errors with which the

* As the Swiss Confessions may not be accessible to many of our readers, and as this passage is perspicuous, comprehensive and very important in its relation to the doctrine of the Sacraments as taught in later Confessions and received in all the Reformed Churches, we subjoin the original text:

"Sicut autem quondam Sacramenta constabant verbo, signo et re significata, ita nunc quoque iisdem veluti partibus absolvuntur. Nam verbo Dei sunt, quæ antea non fuerunt, Sacramenta. Consecrantur enim verbo, et sanctificata esse ostenduntur ab eo qui instituit. Et sanctificare vel consecrare, est rem aliquam Deo sacrisque usibus dedicare, hoc est, a communi vel profano usu segregare et sacro usui destinare. Sunt enim in Sacramentis signa petita ex usu vulgari, res externæ et visibiles. In baptismo enim, signum est elementum aquæ, ablativumque illa visibilis, quæ fit per ministerium. Res autem significata, est regeneratio vel ablutio peccatis. In cœna vero Domini, signum est panis et vinum, sumptum ex communi usu cibi et potus. Res autem significata, est ipsum traditum Domini corpus, et sanguis ejus effusus pro nobis, vel communicatio corporis et sanguinis Domini. Proinde aqua, panis et vinum sua natura, et extra institutionem divinam, ac usum sanctum, duntaxat id sunt, quod esse dicuntur, et experimur. Ceterum, si accedat Domini verbum, cum invocatione divini nominis, et renovatione primæ institutionis et sanctificationis, signa ista consecrantur, et sanctificata a Christo esse ostenduntur. Manet enim semper efficax in ecclesia Dei prima Christi institutio et consecratio sacramentorum, adeo ut qui non aliter celebrent Sacramenta, quam ipso Dominus ab initio instituit, fruantur etiam nunc primæ illa consecratione omnium præstantissima. Et idio recitantur in celebratione sacramentorum ipsa verba Christi. Et quoniam verbo Dei discimus, quod signa hæc in alium finem sint instituta a Domino, quam usurpentur vulgo, ideo ducimus signa nunc in usu sacro, usurpare rerum signatarum vocabula, nec appellari amplius aquam tantum, panem et vinum, sed etiam regenerationem vel lavacrum renovationis, item corpus et sanguinem Domini, vel symbola aut Sacramenta corporis et sanguinis Domini. Non quod symbola mutantur in res significatas, et desinant esse id quod sunt sua natura. Alioqui enim Sacramenta non essent, quæ re significata duntaxat constarent, signa non essent; sed ideo usurpant signa rerum nomina, quod rerum sacrarum sunt symbola mystica, et signa et res significatæ, inter se sacramentaliter conjungantur, conjungantur inquam, vel uniantur per significationem mysticam, et voluntatem vel consilium ejus, qui Sacramenta instituit. Non enim aqua, panis et vinum, sunt signa vulgaria, sed sacra. Et qui instituit aquam baptismi, non ea voluntate consilioque instituit, ut fideles aqua duntaxat baptismi perfundantur: et qui jussit in Cœna, panem edere, et vinum bibere, non hoc voluit, ut fideles panem et vinum tantum percipiant, sine mysterio, sicut domi suæ panem manducant, sed ad rebus quoque significatis, spiritualiter communicent, et vere per fidem abluantur a peccatis, et Christo participent."

truth may be confounded. Yet we will add a few brief extracts from some others in order to show the unanimity with which this idea of a Sacrament was affirmed.

We intend to quote the *twentieth article* of the Former Helvetic Confession, which speaks of the *Force and Efficacy of the Sacraments*, in connection with Baptism, and shall therefore not anticipate it here. But we will give a few passages from the *Declaration* of the same Confession. "A Sacrament is not only a sign, but it is made up of two things, to wit: of a visible or earthly sign, and of the thing signified, which is heavenly; the which two although they make but one Sacrament, yet it is one thing which is received with the body, another thing which the faithful mind, being taught by the Spirit of God, doth receive. For the signs and the things signified by the signs, do cleave together only by a certain mystical union, or, as others speak, by a Sacramental union; neither be they so made one, that one is made in its nature the other, or that one is contained in the other."

"And seeing that the Sacraments are the institutions and work of the Lord Himself, the faithful do receive them, not as certain superfluous inventions of men, as if at the hand of men, but as his heavenly gifts, and that at the very hand of the Lord. For touching the Word of the Gospel which he preached, the Apostle writeth thus: 'When ye received of us the Word, whereby ye learned God, ye did not receive it as the word of men, but, as it was indeed, as the Word of God, who also worketh in you that believe.' 1 Thess. ii. 13. The like reason is there of the Sacraments. Therefore just as we do, and always did, receive these sentences of Scripture touching the Ministry of the Word, namely: The Minister doth convert, remit sins, open the eyes and hearts of men, give faith and the Spirit: so, being well understood, we do acknowledge also these sentences touching the Sacraments, namely: The Minister, through Baptism, doth regenerate, and wash away sins; he doth distribute and present the body and blood of the Lord. Acts xxii. 16. Matt. xxvi. 26. And it is manifest that the ancient Fathers did use such kind of speeches, because that by

this means they would propound and commend more royally the gifts of God."*

The Bohemian Confession says: "The Sacraments may be called the holy covenants of God with His Church, and of the Church with God; the ministration of faith and love, by which the conjunction and union of God, and of Christ our Lord, with believing people, and theirs again with Christ, and that among themselves, is made and perfected, in one spiritual body of the Church; by which also, even as by the Word, Christ and His Spirit do cause in the faithful, that is, in those that use them worthily, a precious participation of His excellent merit; neither doth He suffer them to be only bare and naked ministrations and ceremonies; but those things which they signify and witness outwardly, them doth He work inwardly to salvation, profitably and effectually; that is, He cleanseth, nourisheth, satisfyeth, looseth, remitteth and confirmeth."†

The following is from the twenty-first article of the Confession of Scotland: "The Sacraments not only do make a visible difference betwixt His people and those that are without His covenant, but also do exercise the faith of His children, and, by participation of the same Sacraments, do seal in their hearts the assurance of His promise, and of that most blessed conjunction, union and society, which the elect have with their head, Christ Jesus. And thus we utterly condemn the vanity of those that affirm Sacraments to be nothing else but naked and bare signs. No; we assuredly believe that by Baptism we are ingrafted into Christ Jesus, to be made partakers of His righteousness, by which our sins are covered, and remitted; and also that in the Supper, rightly used, Christ Jesus is so joined with us, that he becometh the very nourishment and food of our souls."‡

* Declaration of the Former Helvetic Confession, under the head of *Holy Symbols*. Quoted from *The Harmony of Protestant Confessions*, 1581. Edited by the Rev. Peter Hall, M.A. London, 1842.

† Confession of Bohemia, chap. 11. Hall's *Harm. of Prot. Conf.*

‡ "Atque Sacramenta illa tam Veteris quam Novi Testamenti nunc a Deo instituta, non tantum visibilibus inter populum ejus et eos qui extra fœdus sunt distin-

The Belgian Confession uses language of the same import. "The Sacraments are visible signs and tokens of internal and invisible things; by the which, as by certain means, God Himself worketh within us, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore they are not vain or idle signs, neither yet ordained of God to deceive or frustrate us of our hope. For the truth of our Sacraments is Jesus Christ, without whom they are of no value."*

These citations fully sustain the general view we have presented of a Sacrament as held by the Reformed Church of the sixteenth century, and aid us in apprehending the true meaning of the sixty-sixth question of the Heidelberg Catechism. "The Sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the Gospel, namely, that He grants us out of free grace the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, for the sake of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross."†

guere, sed etiam fidem suorum filiorum exorcere, et participationem eorundem sacramentorum in illorum cordibus, certitudinem promissionis ejus, et felicissimam illius conjunctionis, unionis et societatis, quam electi cum capite suo Jesu Christo habent, obsignare. Itaque vanitatem eorum, qui affirmant, Sacramenta nil aliud quam meræ nuda signa esse, omnino damnamus. Quin potius, certo credimus, per baptismum, nos in Christo Jesu inseri; justitiamque ejus per quam omnia nostra peccata teguntur et remittuntur, participes fieri: atque etiam quod in Cœna Domini rite usurpata, Christus ita nobis conjungitur, quod sit ipsissimum animarum nostrarum nutrimentum et pabulum." Conf. Scot. Fidei, 21.

* Conf. Belgica. Art. xxxiii. De Sacramentis. "Sunt enim Sacramenta signa, ac symbola visibilia rerum internarum et invisibilium, per quæ, cœu per media, Deus ipso virtute Spiritus Sancti in nobis operatur. Itaque signa illa minime vana sunt, aut vacua; nec ad nos decipiendos aut frustrandos instituta. Ipsorum enim veritas ipse Jesus Christus, sine quo nullius prorsus essent momenti."

† Ursinus being the principal author of the Heidelberg Catechism, we quote some passages from his *Theses on the Sacraments*, given in his exposition of the text, in order to show the sense which he attached to his own language:

"There are two things to be considered in all Sacraments; the signs which are visible, earthly and corporeal; these are the rites and ceremonies, the things which are visible and corporeal, which God exhibits to us by the Minister, and which we receive corporeally; that is, by the members and senses of the body. Then we have the things signified, which are invisible, heavenly and spiritual, which include Christ Himself and all His benefits, and are communicated unto us of God by faith spiritually; that is, by the virtue and power of the Holy Spirit.

A Sacrament is not the external visible sign. This by itself is only natural water, or natural bread and wine. But the external sign, the natural element, is an integral part of a Sacrament. Without it there cannot be a Sacrament. On this point there is not a dissenting voice. All the Confessions condemn the notion that a Sacrament is a naked, empty, visible sign.

A Sacrament is not invisible grace, not Christ, not the blood and Spirit of Christ. In this consists the truth and virtue of a Sacrament; but a Sacrament in itself, by its very conception, as it obtained not only in the sixteenth century but in every age of the Church, is not equivalent to the idea of Christ, forgiveness of sins, or sanctification. Grace may confront us as a fact, or a doctrine, or a life, but in itself, disconnected from a natural element as its symbol, it belongs essentially to a category different from that of a Sacrament.

A Sacrament is that in which these two things are so really conjoined by *the Word of God*, that they are one. The Word of God makes the natural element the holy sign of a present, invisible, divine grace. In the first instance, Christ instituted the Sacraments by His Word. He took the natural bread, brake it, and said: Take, eat, this is my body. After the same manner, also, He took the cup, saying: This cup is the New Testament in my blood. By this, His Word and deed, the Holy Eucharist came into existence. So He commanded

"The change of the signs is not physical or natural, but merely relative; it has no respect to their nature or substance, which remains the same, but only to their use.

"The union between the signs and the things signified, is in like manner not natural or local, but relative, by the appointment of God, by which things invisible and spiritual are represented by those that are visible and corporeal, as by visible words, and are exhibited and received in connection with the signs in their lawful use.

"The names and properties of the things signified are attributed to the signs; and, on the other hand, the names of the signs are attributed to the things signified, on account of their analogy, or on account of the signification of the things through the signs, and on account of the joint exhibition and reception of the things with the signs in their lawful use.

"The things signified are always received in connection with the signs in the lawful use of the Sacraments. The signs are, therefore, not by any means empty or insignificant, notwithstanding the things are received in one way, and the signs in another." Williard's Ursinus, pp. 354, 355.

His Apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. By the same Word of God the force of the original institution is perpetuated. "Christ's first institution and consecration standeth yet in force in the Church of God." The Minister, clothed with Christ's authority, represents Him, and officiates in His name. Christ speaks effectively in the divine Word which the lips of His minister utter. Thus whenever His minister takes the natural element and consecrates it by *the Word of God*, it ceases, in virtue of the power of Christ in His Word, to be a bare, naked, natural element, and becomes a holy sign, exhibiting the very presence of supernatural, saving grace. Not that the natural element ceases to be natural, but with the natural there is conjoined mystically the supernatural. For "they which celebrate the Sacraments no otherwise than the Lord Himself from the beginning hath appointed, have still, even to this day, the use and benefit of that most excellent consecration." It is this mystical conjunction, by the Word of God, of invisible grace with the visible sign, that constitutes a Sacrament according to all the Confessions of the Reformed Church. So real is this union, that these signs, "in this their holy use, take upon them the names of the things signified, and are not still called bare water, bread, or wine; but the water is called *regeneration* and the *bath of new birth*, and the bread and wine are called *the body and blood of the Lord*."*

The efficacy of a Sacrament does not attach to the natural element as natural; not to water as bare water; not to bread and wine as bare bread and wine. The Confessions are unanimous in repudiating this absurd notion. "The outward signs are not the self-same thing, substantially and naturally, which they do signify; neither do they give it of themselves, and by their own power, no more than the Minister doth; but the Lord useth the Minister, and the signs and the Word, to this end, that, of His mere grace, He may represent, declare, visibly

* Conf. Helv. Posterior.

show, and set before our eyes, His heavenly gifts; and all this according to His promise."*

Nor is saving efficacy predicated of abstract divine grace. Non-sacramental grace, or the notion that the Holy Ghost by an immediate operation regenerates and saves men, is not recognized by the Confessions. While the Spirit by the preaching of the Gospel enlightens and awakens sinners before Baptism, this work of the Spirit does not supersede the necessity of the Sacraments, but only prepares the subject for the right observance of them. According to the Reformed idea of the established economy of salvation, there are in the Sacraments no bare, naked signs. "We utterly condemn the vanity of those, that affirm Sacraments to be nothing else but naked and bare signs."† On the other hand, the new life in Christ is not accessible to any who refuse to observe the Sacraments. "We condemn them also, who, because of the invisible things, do despise the visible, and think the signs superfluous, because they do already enjoy the things themselves."‡ The efficacy of the Sacraments, accordingly, does not attach to divine grace as such; not to grace conferred before Baptism, as if in virtue of the grace thus previously bestowed the Sacraments were made efficacious; nor to grace at hand and conferred independently of the Sacraments, as if saving grace were bestowed by an act of God which is direct and immediate, an act not mediated and conditioned by the ordinances of His own appointment.

But saving efficacy is predicated of a *Sacrament* proper; not of the natural element itself, nor of supernatural grace as such, neither one of which is a Sacrament; but of supernatural grace mystically conjoined with the natural element in the divine institution. In other words, the virtue of a Sacrament is not in the sign, nor in the thing signified, separately taken;

* Declaration of the Former Helvetic Confession.

† Conf. Scot. 21. De Sac. "Itaque vanitatem eorum, qui affirmant, Sacramenta nil aliud quam mera et nuda signa esse, omnino damnamus."

‡ Conf. Helv. Posterior. 19. De Sac. "Neque eos probamus, qui propter invisibilitatem, aspernantur in sacramentis visibilia, adeoque signa sibi credunt fore supervacanea, quod rebus se jam frui arbitrantur." Niemeyer's Ref'd. Conf., p. 516.

but in the mystical union of the sign and the thing signified; for it is the mystical union of the natural and the supernatural, effected by the power of the Holy Ghost, in which, according to all the Reformed Confessions, the Sacraments consist.

REFORMED DOCTRINE OF HOLY BAPTISM.

This general idea of a Sacrament underlies the Reformed doctrine of Holy Baptism.

From the Confessions and Catechisms enumerated, we proceed now to quote at length their deliverances on the question, reserving comment and argument until we have given a complete exhibit of what they teach.

From the Confession of Augsburg, A. D. 1530.

Art. 9. "Concerning Baptism they teach, that it is necessary to salvation, as a ceremony ordained of Christ. Also, that by Baptism the grace of God is offered: and that young infants are to be baptized: and that they, being by Baptism commended unto God, are received into God's favor, and are made the sons of God; as Christ witnesseth, speaking of little children in the Church. 'It is not the will of your Heavenly Father, that any of these little ones should perish.' Matt. xviii, 14. They condemn the Anabaptists, which allow not the Baptism of infants, and hold that infants are saved, though they die without Baptism, and be not within the Church of God."

This in another edition is set down thus:

"Touching Baptism they teach, that it is necessary to salvation, and that by Baptism the grace of God is offered; that children are to be baptized; and that such as by Baptism be presented to God, are received into His favor. They condemn the Anabaptists, that allow not of children's Baptism, and hold that children are saved without Baptism."

We have quoted this Article as translated in Hall's Harmony of Protestant Confessions; where the following note is appended: "Understand this by those things, which afterward were declared in the Agreement made at Wirtemberg in the year 1536, the 29th day of May; where these words be read: 'Master Luther and his fellows do agree upon this, that, by

the power of Christ, even those which are not baptized may be saved. But it is necessary that these should not condemn Baptism. And hence it is that they will have infants to be baptized of necessity."

From the Tetrapolitan Confession, 1530.

Chap. 17. "As touching Baptism, we confess, that which the Scripture doth in divers places teach thereof: that we by it are buried into the death of Christ, Rom. 6: 3, 4; are made one body, 1 Cor. 12: 13; and do put on Christ, Gal. 3: 27; that it is the font of regeneration, Tit. 3: 5; that it washeth away sins, and saveth us. But all these things we so understand, as St. Peter hath interpreted them, where he saith: To the figure whereof, Baptism, that now is, answering, doth also save us; not by putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the profession of a good conscience toward God, 1 Pet. 3: 21. For without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11: 6. And we are saved by grace, and not by our works, Eph. 2: 8, 9. And seeing that Baptism is a Sacrament of that covenant, which God hath made with those that are his, promising that He will be their God, and the God of their seed, and that He will be a revenger of their wrongs, and will take them for His people; to conclude, seeing it is a token of the renewing of the spirit, which is wrought by Christ; therefore they do teach that it is to be given to infants also, as well as that in times past under Moses they were circumcised. For we are indeed the children of Abraham; and therefore that promise: I will be thy God and the God of thy seed, Gal. 3: 7, pertains no less unto us, than it did to that ancient people."

From the First Confession of Basel, 1534.

"And just as in Baptism, wherein is offered to us by the Minister of the Church, the washing away of sins, which certainly the Father, Son and Holy Ghost only can accomplish, there remaineth true water: so also in the Lord's Supper, wherein is figured and offered to us by the Minister of the Church, with the bread and cup of the Lord, and with the words

of the Supper, the true body and the true blood of Christ, there remaineth bread and wine."*

From the Confession of Bohemia, 1535.

We quote from the *Harmony of Confessions* of 1581. "Touching holy Baptism it is taught, that men must believe and profess, that this is a Sacrament, or wholesome ministry of the New Testament, instituted of Christ the Lord, concerning which the faithful ministers have in charge, that by the administration hereof they benefit the holy Church. This Sacrament consisteth of an outward washing that is done with water, with calling on the name of the holy Trinity; that of the element and the word there may arise, and be jointly made withal, a Sacrament. And that washing is used both to signify, and to witness, a spiritual washing and inward cleansing of the Holy Ghost from the disease of hereditary sin, and from other sins, the guilt of which is here forgiven and taken away; and to the attaining of a new manner of birth, that is, of regeneration, or a washing with water in the word of life. Acts 2: 38; 22: 16. For we believe that whatsoever by Baptism, as by a Sacrament added to the word of the Gospel, is in the outward ceremony signified and witnessed, all that doth the Lord God work and perform inwardly; that is, that He washeth away sin, Tit. 3: 5; begetteth a man again, and bestoweth salvation upon him, John 3: 5; and, through the washing of water, cleanseth by the word the Society of His Church, Eph. 5: 26, clotheth and appareleth it with His Son, Gal. 3: 27; burieth and taketh away sin, Rom. 6: 4; and giveth testimony to, and sealeth the peace of a good conscience, 1 Pet. 3: 21. For Baptism is not a washing away of the outward filth of the flesh, but the stipulation or promise that a good conscience maketh unto God. For the bestowing of these excellent fruits was

* "Und gleich wie in dem Tauff, daran uns die abwaschung von den Sünden, die doch allein der Vatter, Son und heilig Geist, erzriichten müssen, durch den Diener der Kychen, angehoten, blybt war wasser. Also auch, in des Herren Nachtmal, in uns, mit des Herren brot und tranck, sampt den worten des Nachtmals, der war lyb und das war blut Christi, durch den Diener der Kychen fürbildet, und angehoten würdet, blybt brot und win." Basil. prior Conf. Fidei.

Holy Baptism given and granted to the Church; which the faithful shepherds of souls ought to administer, and which the faithful people of Christ, touching the receiving thereof, ought to use lawfully, but once only; yet, in deed and truth, throughout their whole life."

From the Former Helvetic Confession, 1536.

Art. 20. "The signs, which in the Church of God are called Sacraments, are two: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These, being tokens of secret things, do not consist of bare signs, but of signs and things also. For in Baptism water is the sign, and the thing itself is regeneration, and adoption among the people of God. . . . Whereupon we affirm that Sacraments are not only tokens of human fellowship, but also pledges of the grace of God, by which the Ministers do work together with the Lord, to that end which He doth promise, offer and bring to pass; yet so, as we said before of the ministry of the Word, that all the saving power is to be ascribed to the Lord alone."*

Art. 21. "Baptism, according to the institution of the Lord, is the font of regeneration, the which the Lord doth give to His chosen in a visible sign, by the ministry of the Church, in such sort as we have declared before.† In which holy font we do therefore dip our infants, because that it is not lawful for us to reject them from the company of the people of God, which are born of us, who are the people of God, and all but pointed out by the voice of God; especially seeing we ought godly to presume of their election."

The Declaration of the same Confession presented by Bucer to the Assembly at Smalcald in 1537, says: "Baptism is a

*The text is a translation from the Latin. We add the German: 20. "Deren zeichen, die man sacrament nempt, sind zwey, namlich der touff, und dz nachtmal des heren. Diese sacrament sind beduetliche heilige zeichen, und hoher heimlichen dingen, die aber nit bloss und lere zeichen sind, sonder sy bestond in zeichen und weselichen dingen. Dann im touff ist das wasser das zeichen, das weselich aber und geistlich ist die widergeburt und die uffnemung in das volk gottes."

†21. "Der touff ist uss der insatzung des heren, ein widergeberliche abwaschung, wölliche der her sinen uerworlten mit einem sichtbaren zeichen, durch den dienst der kirchen wie obengerodt und orlütret ist, unblütet und darstellt."

Sacrament wherein the Lord by a visible sign doth testify His grace unto us; whereby He doth regenerate us, and cleanse us from our sins, and also receive us to be His people, that we may live to Christ, die to the old Adam, and be partakers of the good things of Christ. For we are all born sinners; whereupon we have need of regeneration, and the purging of our sins, which cometh to pass by the free mercy of God; whereby also we are received into the covenant, that, being buried into His death, we may rise again in newness of life."

From the Genevan Catechism by Calvin, 1538.

"What is the significance of Baptism?"

It has two parts; on the one hand, the forgiveness of sins is figured, and on the other spiritual regeneration.

What resemblance does water bear to these things, that it may represent them?

The forgiveness of sin is a kind of bath, in which our souls are cleansed of their stains, for only by water is the filth of the body washed away.

What as to regeneration?

Since its beginning is the mortification of our nature but the end that we be new creatures, the figure of death is set before us in this, that water is poured upon the head; but the figure of a new life in this, that we do not remain sunk under the water, but for a moment at least we go as it were into the grave that we may immediately rise again.

Do you think that the water is the bath of the soul?

By no means. For it is wrong to snatch this honor from the blood of Christ, which was poured forth to this end that, having cleansed us from all our sins, He might present us pure and without spot before God. 1 Pet. 1: 19; John 1: 7. And we possess the fruit of this cleansing, when the Holy Spirit sprinkles our consciences with that sacred blood. But the seal we have in the Sacrament.

Do you then ascribe nothing more to the water than this only, that it is a figure of washing?

I regard it as a figure with which the truth is at the same time conjoined. For God in promising to us His gifts does not

deceive us. Hence it is certain that both the pardon of sins and the new life are offered to us, and received by us, in Baptism.*

Is this grace bestowed on all indiscriminately?

As many by their wickedness shut up the way to it, they make it of no effect for themselves. Therefore the fruit comes to none but to believers only. Yet for this reason, nothing is abated of the nature of Baptism.

But whence is regeneration?

From the death of Christ, and also from His resurrection. For by the power of His death, our old man is crucified, and the corruption of our nature is in a manner buried, that it may no longer live in us. But that we are changed into a new life unto obedience of the righteousness of God, this is the benefit of the resurrection.

How are these benefits conferred upon us through Baptism?

Because, we put on Christ and are given His Spirit, unless, by rejecting the promises here offered to us, we render them unfruitful."

From the Gallican Confession, 1559.

Art. 35. "We acknowledge that there are two only Sacraments common to the whole Church. Whereof the first is Baptism: the which is given to us to testify our adoption; because that therein we are ingrafted into Christ's body, that, being washed in His blood, we may also be renewed to holiness of life by His Spirit. This also we say; that although we are baptized but once, yet the fruit of baptism doth pertain to the whole course of our life: that this promise, to wit, that Christ will be always unto us sanctification, and justification may be sealed up in us with a pure and firm seal. Furthermore, although Baptism is a Sacrament of faith and repentance, yet, seeing that, together with their parents, God doth account their posterity also to be of the Church, we affirm, that infants, being born of holy parents, are by the authority of Christ to be baptized."†

* "Proinde et peccatorum veniam et vite novitatem offerri nobis in Baptismo, et recipi a nobis certum est." Cat. Gen. 5, De Sac.

† Art. xxxv. Agnoscimus duo tantum Sacramenta toti Ecclesie communia, quo-

Art. 38. "We say therefore, that the element of water, be it never so frail, doth notwithstanding truly witness or confirm unto us the inward washing of our souls in the blood of Jesus Christ, by the virtue and efficacy of the Holy Ghost."*

From the Confession of Scotland, 1560.

Art. 21. "We totally condemn those who affirm that the Sacraments are nothing more than mere naked signs. But on the contrary, we believe certainly, that, through Baptism, we are ingrafted into Jesus Christ,† and are made partakers of His righteousness through which all our sins are covered and remitted."

From the Anglican Confessions.

The XLII Articles of Edward VI, 1552. "Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and a mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from those who are not Christians, but it is also a sign of regeneration, whereby those who receive Baptism rightly, are, as by an instrument, grafted into the Church; the promises of the remission of sins and our adoption to be sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly sealed; faith is confirmed, and grace is increased by virtue of prayer unto God."

Of the Thirty-nine Articles, 1562, Article xxvii, which speaks of Baptism, is expressed in the same words.

As this language is not unequivocal, and therefore susceptible of an interpretation not in full harmony with other Reformed Confessions, we quote the article on *Sin after Baptism*, as indicating the sense in which the language must be understood.

Art. xvi. *Of Sin after Baptism.* "Not every deadly sin willingly committed after Baptism is sin against the Holy Ghost,

rum prius est Baptismus, nobis testificandae nostrae adoptioni datus, quoniam in eo inserimur Christi corpori, ut ejus sanguine abluti, simul etiam ipsius spiritu ad vitae sanctimoniam renovemur."

* Art. xxxviii. Dicimus itaque elementum aquae, quantumvis caducum, nobis nihilominus vero testificari interiorem animi nostri abluitionem in sanguine Jesu Christi per sancti spiritus efficaciam."

† 21. "Quin potius, certo credimus, per baptismum, nos in Christo Jesu inseri."

and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after Baptism. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may arise again, and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned, which say, they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent."

From the Belgic Confession, 1562.

Art. 34. "We believe and confess, that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law, hath by His own blood-shedding made an end of all other propitiatory sacrifice for sins. Also that Circumcision which was done by blood, being abolished, He hath instituted Baptism in the place thereof; whereby we are received into the Church of God, and separated from all other nations, and all kind of strange religions, being consecrated unto Him alone, whose badge and mark we wear. Finally, Baptism is a token to us that He will be our God forever, who is also our gracious Father. Therefore the Lord hath commanded all his to be baptized with pure water, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to signify that the blood of Christ doth internally, through the operation of the Spirit, perform and effect that in the soul, which water doth externally work upon our bodies. For as water, being poured upon us, and appearing on the body of him that is baptized, moistening the same, doth wash away the filthiness of the body; so the blood of Christ, washing the soul, doth cleanse it from sin, and doth change us, who are children of wrath, into sons of God. Not that this material water doth these things; but the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God, which is unto us as the Red Sea, which we must pass through, that we may depart from the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the Devil, and enter into the spiritual land of Canaan. Therefore Ministers verily do deliver unto us the Sacrament, and the visible thing; but the Lord Himself giveth unto us that which is represented by the Sacrament, namely, the gifts and invisible graces: washing, purifying and cleansing our souls from

all spots and iniquities; renewing also and filling our hearts with all comfort; and giving unto us a certain persuasion of His fatherly goodness, clothing us with the new man, and taking off the old man with all his deeds. Moreover, we believe that every one who desires to obtain eternal life, ought to be baptized with one Baptism, and to be content with this one Baptism, which never afterwards is to be repeated, seeing that we cannot be born twice.

"Neither does this Baptism profit us only at that moment, when the water rests upon us, or when we are sprinkled with it, but throughout the whole time of our life; otherwise it were necessary that we have the head always sprinkled with water."

From the Heidelberg Catechism, 1563.

Q. 69. "How is it signified and sealed unto thee in Holy Baptism, that thou hast part in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross?"

Thus: that Christ has appointed this outward washing with water, and has joined therewith this promise, that I am washed with His blood and Spirit from the pollution of my soul, that is, from all my sins, as certainly as I am washed outwardly with water, whereby commonly the filthiness of the body is taken away.

Q. 70. What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?

It is to have the forgiveness of sins from God, through grace, for the sake of Christ's blood, which He shed for us in His sacrifice on the cross; and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives.

Q. 71. Where has Christ promised that we are as certainly washed with His blood and spirit as with the water of Baptism?

In the institution of Baptism, which runs thus: Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He

that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. This promise is also repeated, where the Scripture calls Baptism the washing of regeneration, and the washing away of sins.

Q. 72. Is then the outward washing with water itself the washing away of sins?

No; for only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sin.

Q. 73. Why, then, doth the Holy Ghost call Baptism the washing of regeneration, and the washing away of sins?

God speaks thus not without great cause; namely, not only to teach us thereby that like as the filthiness of the body is taken away by water, so also our sins are taken away by the blood and Spirit of Christ; but much more, that by this divine pledge and token He may assure us, that we are as really washed from our sins spiritually, as our bodies are washed with water."

From the Second Helvetic Confession, 1562, 1566.

20. "There is but one Baptism in the Church of God: for it is sufficient to be once baptized or consecrated to God. For Baptism once received doth continue all a man's life, and is a perpetual sealing of our adoption unto us. For to be baptized in the name of Christ, is to be enrolled, introduced, and received into the covenant and family, and so into the inheritance of the sons of God; yea, and in this life to be called after the name of God, that is, to be called a son of God; to be purged also from the filthiness of sins, and endued with the manifold grace of God, unto a new and innocent life. Baptism therefore doth call to mind, and keep in remembrance, the great benefit of God performed to mankind. For we are all born in the pollution of sin, and are the sons of wrath. But God, who is rich in mercy, doth freely purge us from our sins by the blood of His Son, and in Him doth adopt us to be His sons, and by an holy covenant joins us to Himself, and enriches us with divers gifts, that we may live a new life. All these things are sealed in Baptism. For inwardly we are regenerated, purified,

and renewed of God by the Holy Spirit; and outwardly we receive the sealing of most notable gifts by the water, by which also those great benefits are represented, and, as it were, set before our eyes to be looked upon. And therefore are we baptized, that is, washed and sprinkled with visible water. For the water maketh clean that which is filthy, and refresheth and cooleth the bodies that fail and faint. And the grace of God dealeth in like manner with the soul; and that invisibly and spiritually."*

From the Confession of John Sigismund, Margrave of Brandenburg, 1614.

"Of Holy Baptism, the first Sacrament of the New Testament, His Electoral Grace believes and confesses that it is really a bath of new birth and renewal in the Holy Ghost,† and that no one can enter into the kingdom of heaven except he be born again of water and the Spirit; not that the outward water can wash away the sins both of unbelievers and believers, and regenerate them, but that in this holy Sacrament believers are adopted to be children of God, are cleansed from their sins by the blood of Christ and the Holy Ghost, and by this visible sign of the Covenant of grace are as by a certain seal assured of their salvation."

* *Conf. Helv. Posterior XX.* "Unus est duntaxat Baptismus in Ecclesia Dei, et satis est semel baptisari, vel initiari Deo. Durat autem semel susceptus baptismus, per omnem vitam, et est perpetua obsignatio adoptionis nostrae. Etenim baptisari in nomine Christi, est inscribi, initiari, et recipi in fœdus, atque familiam, adeoque in hæreditatem filiorum Dei, in eo jam nunc nuncupari nomine Dei, id est, appellari filium Dei, purgari item a sordibus peccatorum, et donari varia Dei gratia, ad vitam novam et innocentiam. Baptismus ergo in memoria retinet, et reparat ingens Dei beneficium, generi mortali præstitum. Nascimur enim omnes in peccatorum sordibus, et sumus filii iræ. Deus autem qui dives est misericordia, purgat nos a peccatis gratuito, per sanguinem filii sui, et in hoc adoptat nos in filios, adeoque fœdere sancto nos sibi convocat et variis donis ditat, ut possumus novam vivere vitam. Obsignantur hæc omnia baptismis. Nam intus regeneramur, purificamur, et renovamur a Deo per spiritum sanctum: foris autem accipimus obsignationem maximorum donorum, in aqua, qua etiam maxima illa beneficia representantur et voluti oculis nostris conspicienda proponantur. Ideoque baptisamur, id est, abluimur, aut aspergimur aqua visibili. Aqua enim sordes mundat, deficientia et aestuantia reorant, et refrigerat corpora. Gratia vero Dei hæc animabus præstat, et quidem invisibiliter vel spiritaliter."

† "Von der heiligen Tauffe, als dem ersten Sacrament des Neuen Testaments

*From the Confession of Poland, or Declaration of Thorn, 1645.**

"Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ and to be administered by the Minister of the Word, both to infants born in the Church, and to adults coming into the Church by profession of faith, by the washing of water in the name of the Holy Trinity; in order to signify and witness the internal absolution from sins, or the remission of sins, by the blood of Christ, and to effect a renewal, or regeneration, by the Holy Ghost.

"We solemnly declare accordingly that this Sacrament, because itself the appointment of Christ, is altogether necessary, as the ordinary medium of salvation; though we do not affirm that this necessity is so absolute, that whosoever, whether an infant or adult, has departed this life without external Baptism, must in every case, even if it happen without any contempt, be damned. Here rather does this rule especially prevail, that not the want but the contempt of the Sacrament damns."

From the Westminster Confession of Faith, 1648.

"Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life; which Sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world."

"Although it be a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized, are undoubtedly regenerated.

"The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time

glauben und bekennen Seine Church. (In, dass dieselbe sey wahrhaftig ein Bad der Wiedergeburt und Erneuerung im Heiligen Geist." Conf. Sigismundi.

* Generalis Professio, Doctrinae Ecclesiarum Reformatarum in Regno Polonice, Magno Ducatu Lithuanice, annexisque Regni Provinciis, in Conventu Thoruniensi, An. 1645, ad liquidationem Controversiarum maturandam, exhibita. d. 1, Sep.

wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such, whether of age or infants, as that grace belongeth unto,* according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time."

From the Larger Catechism.

Q. 165. What is Baptism?

A. Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into Himself, of remission of sins by His blood, and regeneration by His Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible Church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's."

Comment and Argument.

Here we have before us, drawn out in full, the explicit teaching of the Reformed Church on the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. These Confessions represent not only Switzerland, France, Germany, Belgium, Poland, England and Scotland, but Holland, Hungary, and every other country or State to which the Reformed Church gained access during the sixteenth century. They extend from the year 1530 to 1648, that is, into the middle of the seventeenth century, thus showing that amid all the civil convulsions, and the philosophical and theological conflicts of the age, the original doctrine lived on in the faith and consciousness of the Church.

In full harmony with the general idea of a Sacrament already given, the Confessions teach that Baptism *consists of two things*: a visible sign and invisible grace; the visible being water, or an external washing of the body with water; whilst the invisible is the blood and Spirit of Christ, or the inward cleansing of the

* The *Confession of Faith* limits the saving efficacy of Holy Baptism to those whom "God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory." Those who are "fore-ordained to everlasting death" receive no spiritual benefit from the Sacrament.

soul from the pollution of sin and the quickening of the new life in Christ by the Holy Ghost.

The natural element of water is not Baptism; though it is an essential part of the Sacrament. The Confessions attach importance to the washing with water as an indispensable part of the transaction; but always repudiate the notion that the external washing is Holy Baptism proper, or the substance and truth of the Sacrament.

Nor does the forgiveness of sins and regeneration by the blood and Spirit of Christ constitute Baptism. The grace of God in Jesus Christ is indeed the principal part of the Sacrament, but disconnected from the washing with water it is no more entitled to the name of Baptism than is the simple external washing with water itself. Disjoined, neither one is the Sacrament. There is not, on the one hand, a Sacrament of water-baptism, and on the other, a Sacrament of Spirit-baptism. Of such distinction and dualistic opposition there is no trace in any of the Confessions.

Holy Baptism is that divine ordinance in which *these two things are united*. This is either clearly expressed or necessarily implied in all the teachings of the Confessions. In addition to the proofs furnished in support of the general idea of a Sacrament as held by the Reformed Church, we will cite a few passages pertaining to the constitution of Baptism. "This Sacrament consisteth of an outward washing, that is done with water with calling on the name of the Holy Trinity; in order that, of the element and the Word, there may arise, and be jointly made withal, a Sacrament."^{*} "There is in every Sacrament," says the Westminster Confession of Faith, "a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other."[†] In answer to the Question: What are the parts of a Sacrament? the Larger Catechism answers: "The parts of a Sacrament are two; the one, an outward and sensible sign used according to Christ's own

^{*} Conf. of Bohemia. Chap. 12..

[†] Westminster Confession of Faith. Chap. 27, 2.

appointment; the other, an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified."^{*} The spiritual grace is as really and truly a part of Baptism as the outward sign; and the spiritual grace, according to this same Catechism, is remission of sins by the blood of Christ and regeneration by His spirit.[†]

On this point Ursinus is very explicit in his Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism. "There is in Baptism," he says, "a double water: the one external and visible, which is elementary; the other internal, invisible and heavenly, which is the blood and Spirit of Christ. There is also a double washing in Baptism; the one external, visible and signifying, namely, the sprinkling and pouring with water, which is perceptible by the members and senses of the body; the other internal, invisible and signified, namely, the remission of sins on account of the blood of Christ shed for us, and our regeneration by the Holy Spirit and ingrafting into His body, which is spiritual, and perceived only by faith and the Spirit."[§] Now, bearing in mind that in his *Theses concerning Sacraments in general*, he maintains that "the things signified are always received in connection with the signs in the lawful use of the Sacraments," there can be no doubt as to his true meaning. Nor can there be any doubt as to the doctrine taught by the Heidelberg Catechism, when it affirms that "I am washed with His blood and Spirit from the pollution of my soul, that is, from all my sins, as certainly as I am washed outwardly with water."

^{*} Larger Catechism. Q. 163.

[†] Larger Catechism. Q. 165.

[‡] "Baptism comprehends these three things:

1. The sign, which is water and the ceremony connected with it.
2. The things which are signified thereby, which are the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, the mortification of the old man, and the quickening of the new man.
3. The command and promise of Christ, from which the sign obtains its authority and power to confirm." Williard's Ursinus, p. 357.

In this analytical definition, as it may be called, Ursinus teaches positively that the quickening of the new man is as really a part of Baptism as the outward washing with water. The three things specified are each an essential part of the Sacrament.

[§] This is the word used in Parry's translation.

[§] Williard's Ursinus, p. 372, 4th Thesis on Baptism.

The union of spiritual cleansing and regeneration with the outward washing with water, is not natural, nor local, but mystical. It is established by the Word of Christ in the original institution of Baptism. The Word of Christ thus connecting the spiritual and the natural is of force always, not effectual only in the moment when He spoke the Word, but effectual for all time.* When a Minister of Christ administers the solemn rite in the name of the Holy Trinity, thus repeating by His authority His own words, the baptismal transaction is no less divine than human; an internal saving act of Christ by His own Word and Spirit, no less than an external act by His Minister. "Christ baptizes us by the hand of His Ministers, just as He speaks through them"†

It is of this mystical union of the cleansing and regenerating power of Christ by His Spirit with the outward washing with water, that the *objective efficacy* of Baptism is predicated. Not of the outward washing with water simply. "Not that this material water doth these things."‡ Calvin asks: "Do you think that the water is the bath of the soul?" and then answers: "By no means."§ In like manner, the Heidelberg Catechism denies that the outward washing with water is itself the washing away of sins.

Nor is the objective saving efficacy predicated of the blood and Spirit of Christ separately taken; as if any person refusing to be baptized, might apply directly to Christ and obtain from Him by His Spirit the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, without the intervention of Holy Baptism. As we said before of the general doctrine of a Sacrament, so now we say of this particular doctrine, that there is in the Reformed Confessions no trace of the theory of abstract saving grace, now so extensively prevalent among our American Churches, as must be evi-

* "For we believe that the Baptism of the Church, which is but one, was sanctified in God's first institution of it, and is consecrated with the Word, and is now of full force, by and for the first blessing of God upon it." Latter Confession of Helvetia. Chap. 20.

† Williard's Ursinus. Page 372.

‡ Belgian Conf. Art 34.

§ Gen. Cat. V. De Sac.

dent to any unprejudiced mind that will carefully examine the extracts which we have embodied in this Article. The Confessions nowhere recognize the notion that a sinner may reject or neglect the sign, and yet possess the thing signified; that he may refuse the external washing with water, and yet receive the inward cleansing by the Spirit. On the contrary to be baptized is a first and positive duty, imposed by the direct command of Christ, and incumbent unconditionally upon all to whom the Gospel is proclaimed. Those who refuse to comply with His command commit sin against Christ, and persist in sinning against Him so long as they refuse.*

The Confessions are very careful to draw a broad line of distinction between the visible sign and the invisible grace, between the outward washing with water and the inward cleansing of the Spirit. Just as clearly do they discriminate between the efficacy of the two parts. Whilst the power of spiritual cleansing is denied of natural water, it is affirmed only of the blood and Spirit of Christ. On this point, the Heidelberg Catechism expresses unequivocally the opinion common to all the Reformed Confessions. To the question: "Is then the outward washing with water itself the washing away of sins?" the answer is given, "No; for only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit can cleanse from all sin." Says the Confession of Belgium: "The truth of our Sacraments is Jesus Christ, without whom they are of no value;" and the Confession of France: "The whole substance and truth of the outward signs is in Christ Jesus; from whom if they be separated they be nothing else but vain shadows and smoke." The saving efficacy of Baptism is not in natural water, but belongs exclusively to the Spirit of Christ; and the subject derives no spiritual benefit from external washing, but only from the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost.

* "They, therefore, which condemn these Sacraments, and through stubbornness will not suffer them to be of any force with themselves, and making small account of them, do esteem them as trifles, or do otherwise abuse them, contrary to the institution, will, or commandment of Christ; all these do grievously sin against the Author thereof, who hath instituted them, and make a very great hazard of their salvation." Confession of Bohemia. Chap. 2.

If we interpret such language in the light of the modern theory of Baptism, a theory which the Confessions deny and reject, it may easily be perverted, and be made to convey a meaning which seems to support the notion of abstract saving grace. Such an interpretation, however, would do violence to the theory of a Sacrament which the Reformed Confessions affirm most explicitly, as well as to the logical connection of the language. If anything be certain beyond the shadow of a doubt, it is that Baptism, according to all the Confessions, is the mystical conjunction of the blood and Spirit of Christ with the outward washing with water, established and perpetuated through all time by the Word of God, which conjunction or union is so real that the sign takes the name of the thing signified, and so essential that either one part without the other, the sign without the thing signified, or the thing signified without the sign, would not be Baptism.

But if the broad distinction which the Confessions draw between the natural water and the work of the Spirit, denying saving efficacy of the one and affirming it only of the other, be understood in the light of their own idea of Baptism, this distinction will be seen to be both important and necessary; for it is made, not to deny objective efficacy of Holy Baptism proper, nor to affirm that salvation from sin and regeneration are effected by the Holy Spirit independently of this Sacrament; but in order to deny cleansing and quickening virtue of the outward washing separately considered, and to affirm that these spiritual blessings are conferred by the blood and Spirit of Christ as the thing signified and really present and operative in the sacramental transaction.

The Confessions teach accordingly that *we receive forgiveness of sins, and are born again of the Spirit, through the Sacrament of Baptism*. As this is a turning point in the question, let us briefly review the evidence.

"And as the Lord is the author of the Sacraments, so he continually worketh in that Church where they are rightly used; so that the faithful, when they receive them of the Ministers do know that *the Lord worketh in his own ordi-*

nance, and therefore they receive them as from the hand of God." "Inwardly we are regenerated, purified, and renewed of God through the Holy Spirit, and outwardly we receive the sealing of most notable gifts by the water." *Latter Helvetic Confession*, Chap. 19, 20.

"In Baptism water is the sign, and the thing itself is regeneration, and adoption among the people of God." *Former Helvetic Confession*, Art. 20. "Baptism is a Sacrament whereby the Lord doth regenerate us, and cleanse us from our sins." Declaration of the same Confession.

"For we confess * that these outward signs are such, that God by the power of His Holy Spirit, doth work by them, that nothing may be there represented in vain." "In Baptism we are ingrafted into Christ's body." *Gallican Confession*, Art. 34, 35.

"We believe certainly, that, through Baptism, we are ingrafted into Jesus Christ." *Conf. of Scotland*.

"It is certain that both the pardon of sins, and the new life are offered to us, and received by us, in Baptism." *Genevan Catechism* by Calvin.

"By the Sacraments, as by certain means, God Himself worketh within us, through the power of the Holy Ghost." "The Lord hath commanded all his to be baptized with pure water, to signify that the blood of Christ doth internally, through the operation of the Spirit, perform and effect that in the soul, which water doth externally work upon our bodies." *Belgic Confession*.

"To be baptized in the name of Christ, is to be purged from the filthiness of sins, and endued with the manifold grace of God, unto a new and innocent life." *Latter Helvetic Conf.*

"By the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost." *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

These citations might easily be multiplied. But it is scarcely

* *Fatemur enim, talia esse signa hæc exteriora, ut Deus per illa, sancti sui spiritus virtute, operetur, ne quicquam ibi frustra nobis significetur.* *Conf. Fidei Gall* Art. xxxiv.

necessary. Those given are so clear, direct and unequivocal, especially when taken together, and in connection with the entire doctrine of the Confessions relatively to the Sacraments, that there is no room for two opinions. Through all of them runs the same general idea, namely, that God forgives our sins, and communicates a new and spiritual life by the Holy Ghost through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. In some the doctrine is defined on all sides dialectically, and with so much perspicuity and force that it stands in the firmament of the Reformed Church as distinctly as the sun in the heavens. In others, it is not taught so explicitly, because there is either no reference to opposing Romish, Anabaptistic or Rationalistic errors, or the opposition between the truth and various errors is not so nicely and formally defined; but the doctrine, as we have stated it, underlies and pervades every Confession.

There are *two points* more that require consideration.

In order to complete a correct view of the Reformed doctrine of Baptism, it is important not to confound its objective efficacy with its subjective efficacy. Though these philosophic terms do not occur in the Confessions, yet the facts which these terms designate are very carefully distinguished. The objective efficacy is the divine power belonging to, and inherent in, the constitution of Baptism itself, irrespectively of the use or abuse of the Sacrament by men. The subjective efficacy is this same power actualized in the conversion, sanctification, and the final complete salvation of the subjects of Baptism. All of us make the same distinction in regard to the Word of God. The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. v. 12.). There is divine power in the Word itself, whether men receive it or reject it. This is its objective efficacy. But the preaching of the Word may issue in the personal salvation, or the personal damnation, of those that hear it, according as they receive it in true faith, or reject it in unbelief. The subjective efficacy of the preached Word does not depend exclusively on the Word itself; but depends also on the will of men. What the Word is in itself, it is and ever will be, whether the millions who hear it are finally saved, or but

hundreds. The same distinction is to be made in regard to the Sacrament of Baptism.

Now the Reformed Confessions teach that the *objective* efficacy of Baptism is *unconditional*. What it is in itself does not depend on the worthiness or moral character of the officiating minister, nor upon the worthiness or moral character of the persons baptized. The washing with water becomes a Sacrament by the Word of God, not by the word of man. As its *intrinsic* power is not derived from the piety of the minister, so neither can this power be diminished or affected by his want of piety.

So the Confessions teach. "As we esteem not the goodness of the Sacrament by the worthiness or unworthiness of the Ministers, so likewise we do not weigh them by the condition of the receivers. For we know that the goodness of the Sacraments doth depend upon the faithfulness, or truth, or mere goodness of God. For even as God's Word remaineth the true Word of God; wherein not only bare words are uttered when it is preached, but therewithal the things signified by the words are offered of God, although the wicked and unbelievers hear and understand the words, yet enjoy not the things signified, because they receive them not by a true faith; even so, the Sacraments, consisting of the Word, the signs, and the things signified, continue true and perfect Sacraments, not only because they be holy things, but also for that God also offereth the things, howsoever the unbelievers receive not the things which are offered. This cometh to pass, not by any fault in God, the author and offerer of them; but by the fault of men, who do receive them without faith, and unlawfully; whose unbelief cannot make the truth of God of none effect, Rom. iii: 3." *Latter Helvetic Confession*, Chap. 19.

"Seeing that the institution and work of the Word and of the Sacraments proceed not from men, but from God; we do here reject the error of the Donatists and Anabaptists, who esteemed the holy gifts of God according to the worthiness and unworthiness of the minister." *Declaration of the Former Helvetic Confession*.

These quotations from the two Swiss Confessions express clearly the Reformed view concerning the objective constitution of Baptism. By the Word of God the efficacious grace of Christ is joined unconditionally to the washing with natural water in the Sacrament. We say *unconditionally* relatively to men. The will of men, the character of men, is not a condition of the constitution of Baptism. The only condition is the Word and power of Christ working by the Holy Ghost. The Word has been spoken. The sacred mystery is established, and is continued with all its original force perennially, from age to age, by the ever living power of the Word in the Church.

The officiating Minister may be unworthy. He may administer the Sacrament without a due sense of its great solemnity. But his unworthiness does not change the Sacrament into something that is not proper Baptism; nor does it limit or diminish its efficacy or force as a grace-bearing ordinance.

Nor does the character of the subject affect its objective constitution and efficacy. Whether it be Paul or Simon Magus that is baptized, the Sacrament in itself is the same. The subject is introduced into the covenant of grace, and made a member of the Church of Christ. Baptism is and remains always the sign and seal of divine grace, just as the Word is the same power of God whether Paul proclaims it to Timothy or to Felix. Or just as natural birth makes the child a member of the family, and invests it with all the rights of a child, whether as it grows up it honors father and mother, or dishonors them.

But the subjective efficacy of baptism is *not unconditional*. Whether or not Baptism issue in a godly life and eternal salvation, depends also on the will and character of the subject. A baptized person must recognize and improve the grace conferred in Baptism. This he may fail to do. Like the prodigal son, he may leave his Father's house, and waste his inheritance in riotous living. Or like Esau, he may sell his birth-right for a mess of pottage. Simon Magus, after receiving Baptism, was in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. Ananias and Saphira were baptized and celebrated the holy Eucharist,

but they lied to the Holy Ghost, and were punished with instantaneous death. These being dead branches on the true Vine, are cut off and cast into the fire.

Baptismal grace does not constrain the will of man as by an external force. He is free to choose between good and evil. He may yield, and particularly if rightly instructed, he is predisposed to yield, to the constraining power of the Holy Ghost given him in Baptism, repent and believe, follow Christ, and ultimately attain to the resurrection of the dead. Or he may abuse the grace he possesses. He may resist the constraining power of the Spirit, live in sin and wickedness, and inherit everlasting punishment. Just as the hearer of the Word may close his heart against its penetrating power, shut his eyes to the light of truth, and live on in worldliness, vanity and sin. Or just as a son, possessing all the advantages of Christian parentage, of high social position, and liberal education, may nevertheless disobey his father and mother, follow the tendencies of a perverse will, serve the lusts of the flesh, and become an outcast from society.

There is no conflict or inconsistency between these two things, either in fact or logically. The Confessions teach both with equal clearness. Whilst the objective efficacy is *unconditional*, the subjective efficacy is *conditional*. In the Genevan Catechism, in answer to the question: "Is this grace bestowed on all indiscriminately?" Calvin says: "As many by their wickedness shut up the way to it, they make it of no effect for themselves. Therefore the fruit comes to none but to believers only. Yet for this reason nothing is abated of the nature of Baptism."* The essential nature and objective efficacy of the Sacrament are unaffected by those who receive baptismal grace in vain. It is only through the repentance and faith of the baptized that this grace issues in an actual Christian life and experience. For want of repentance and faith, though Baptism does not fail to fulfil its office, many make it

* "Multi dum illa sua pravitate viam praecludunt, efficiunt, ut sibi sit inanis. Ita non nisi ad fideles solos poverint fructus. Verum, inde nihil Sacramenti naturae deedit." Catech. Genev. De Sac.

of no effect for themselves. They do not possess the fruit. They abuse the grace conferred on them. Members of the family of God, its spiritual blessings all sealed to them, possessing the Holy Spirit, and entitled to all the grace needful in order to overcome the power of sin, conquer the world and the devil, and attain to a resurrection in the likeness of the Redeemer, they yet fail to realize the end of baptismal grace, because they ignore their filial relation to their Heavenly Father, despise the spiritual blessings sealed to them, grieve the Holy Spirit working in them, and resist the grace by which they have been apprehended.

This abuse of baptismal grace does not annul the objective nature, efficacy, and design of Holy Baptism. That, we repeat, is unaffected by their wickedness. In itself and in its relations it is the same divine institution and divine transaction.

Nor, on the other hand, does baptismal grace destroy the moral nature of men. Because God, in the Baptismal act, translates the subject from the sphere of fallen nature into the real kingdom of grace present on earth, it does not follow that he, though chosen of God, must not also choose Christ himself, and live in His service faithfully to the end, in order to be saved; nor does it follow that he can choose Christ and persevere in His service without a free act of his own will. He is qualified and disposed, by the possession of divine grace, both to resolve to follow Christ, and to carry out his resolution steadily against all opposition; which implies, however, that he is able also not to resolve thus to follow Christ. More than this. He is not only able not to resolve to follow Christ, but, as his old, fallen nature is not yet extinct, but only in process of total destruction, he is ever in real danger, though engrafted into Christ by the Spirit, of falling away from Christ through the allurements of the world and the assaults of the devil, and being lost. Baptism renders salvation possible; it puts the baptized person in a state of grace, a position in which he can watch and pray, worship God acceptably, be nourished by the body and blood of the Lord, grow in faith and knowledge, and fight against sin and Satan in the full armor of the Gospel.

But it does not make salvation from sin certain unconditionally. It does not remove the danger of failure. It does not impose upon the baptized person the necessity of becoming an earnest Christian and persevering in the Christian life. He is not forced to walk in the way of actual salvation. Otherwise a man would no longer be a free moral being.

Yet the possibility of salvation is real. If the baptized person will but surrender himself from the heart to his Saviour, and remain faithful to his calling unto death, baptismal grace will be consummated in his resurrection from the dead and his entrance into the perfect state of glory. The subjective conditions being met, the life everlasting is as undoubted and certain as the fact of Baptism.

Without baptism this real possibility does not exist. According to the established economy of grace, he only enters into the kingdom who believes the gospel and is baptized.

This relation of Baptism to the baptized, the Confessions, as we have seen, compare to the relation which the preaching of the Word bears to the hearers, and illustrate the one by the other. The preaching of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all those that believe. Divine power is inherent in the Word. But the hearer is not forced to receive it. If he remain in unbelief and sin, it does not follow that the Word is not a divine power in itself. The practical effect of the Word is conditional, but its objective force is unconditional.

But we may illustrate the same idea by an analogous fact in human life. A young man may be endowed with extraordinary powers of mind, qualifying him to become a profound scholar, an eminent author, a prominent statesman, or a great artist. Yet he may not become either one or the other. The real possibilities of his genius may never be realized.* To become in fact what he is potentially, he needs opportunity or occasion, education, and above all things, a will to act. Wanting in these, particularly in will, he may live and die as though, for all practical purposes at least, he were not thus endowed.

*The beautiful lines of Thomas Gray, in his celebrated Elegy, naturally suggest themselves:

Because endowed with extraordinary natural powers, it does not follow, necessarily, that he will become an eminent and influential man. This result is conditional. It depends upon himself.

Nor does it follow, because he fails to attain to eminence and distinction, that he is not more highly endowed than the majority of men. What he is by natural birth, is unconditional. It does not depend upon himself, not upon opportunity or education, not upon his will.

So is a man born into the kingdom of Heaven by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, endowed with divine grace, which is the new life in Christ Jesus. He is a babe in Christ. As such, there is in him the real possibility of a complete normal development of spiritual life, including the fruits of the Spirit, the resurrection from the dead, and glorification with Christ in Heaven. But as he is a person, neither a machine nor an animal, this actual result depends upon tuition and discipline, but mainly upon his own will and intelligence. Whilst God works in him both to will and to do, he must also work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, (Phil. ii, 12.) Therefore he may fail to become, in fact, in the kingdom of Heaven what he is potentially, in virtue of his new birth of the Spirit; just as the design of God may never be realized when He endows a person, by natural birth, with the powers of genius.

Hence it does not follow that a person must be saved because he is born of the Spirit in Holy Baptism; just as a man must not rival the greatness of Napoleon or Washington, Homer or Shakspeare, because by nature a genius.

Nor does it follow that a person is not really born of the Spirit into the kingdom of Heaven by Baptism, because he lives in sin, and is lost; just as we cannot infer that a man is not by nature a genius, merely because he accomplishes nothing that is great and good, and lives in obscurity and vice.

The parallel is valid. The kingdom of grace is an order of

"Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast,
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute, inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood."

life as real as the kingdom of nature. Natural birth is not a theory, not abstract doctrine, not a mere emotional process, but it is the real beginning of concrete natural life, comprehending body and soul. So is the new birth of the Spirit not a theory, not an invisible ideal transaction, but a transition from nature to grace, as real as the transition from the womb of the mother into the sphere of individual existence, and is therefore the real beginning of a new concrete spiritual life, which comprehends the body as well as the soul, and completes itself in the resurrection, as fallen natural life completes itself in death and the grave. In both we are passive. A child is begotten and born by the antecedent law and powers of nature. It is re-begotten and reborn by the antecedent law and powers of the Holy Ghost in the Church. Yet so soon as born it is met by the conditions of the ethical world. The design of natural birth will be realized if these conditions are met. So soon as reborn it is met by the conditions of the ethical world as these obtain in the sphere of grace. And if these conditions of grace are met, the design of the new birth of water and the Spirit will be realized in complete salvation.

The difficulty of appreciating the force of this analogy arises from the prevalence of a false idealistic habit of thought. Evangelical theology, so-called, has little or no faith in the reality of the Church, or in the reality of regeneration. Regeneration is regarded as merely a subjective change, a change in the general habit of feeling, thought, and of the will, produced by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of Bible doctrines, instead of a new creation in Christ, involving the entire man. And the will of God is regarded rather as an outside, immutable, mechanical force, than as a living, concrete, ethical power. So soon as the Church is seen to be a constitution more real than the constitution of nature, the birth of the Spirit to be more real and comprehensive than the birth of the flesh, and the new life in the second Adam to be more real than the old life in the first Adam, the difficulty disappears, and the analogy has the force of an argument as well as that of an illustration.

We do not wish to imply that the Confessions adopt this analogy. They confine themselves to a comparison of Baptism to the Word. We have added it in order to show that the Reformed doctrine is sustained and illustrated by the analogy of natural life no less than by that of the preaching of the gospel.

There are still two other points involved in the results of our inquiry that require elucidation. One relates to a false interpretation of the sixty-fifth question of the Heidelberg Catechism, which teaches that the Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the Sacraments. The other is the difference between the Reformed doctrine of Baptism, and the *opus operatum* theory of the Roman Catholic Church. But as our investigation has already exceeded its intended limits, we waive the consideration of them, at least for the present.

CONCLUSION.

As stated at the outset, it has been our design to ascertain what is the Reformed doctrine concerning Holy Baptism, from a full and thorough examination of the Confessions of the Reformed Church.

It was not our design to show that the Reformed doctrine is in full accord with the doctrine as held during the first three or four centuries of the Church, or as taught in the New Testament. On these points we neither affirm, nor deny, nor imply anything. They lie beyond the range of our inquiry.

Nor do we wish to imply that the Reformed dogma is perfect; that the Church of the present, and the future, is slavishly bound to hold and teach neither more nor less than the Reformed Church of the sixteenth century held and taught; or that there is no room nor occasion for further progress in the knowledge of the truth concerning the Sacrament of Baptism; and that as psychological, exegetical and theological science advances in the order of legitimate development, informed by living faith in the incarnate Word, and guided by the light of history, the Protestant Church may not attain to a conception of Holy Baptism that will answer more fully to the New Testament idea than any that meets us in existing Confessions.

These points we do not touch. Nor is any view we may take of these questions inconsistent either with our design, or with the result of our investigation.

The simple and only question now before us is: what was the prevailing view of Baptism in the Reformed Church of the sixteenth century? That view we have drawn from the Reformed Confessions themselves, the most authoritative and satisfactory sources of information.

They teach as with one voice, that Holy Baptism, being the union by the power of the Word, of the thing signified with the sign, is the Sacrament of Regeneration; that in and through Baptism we receive forgiveness of sins, are ingrafted into Christ, and are thus made partakers of a new spiritual life by the power of the Holy Ghost; and that no one can have the assurance of sins forgiven, and peace with God, or can enter into the kingdom of Heaven, who refuses to be baptized.

This is the *Protestant* doctrine. It is the doctrine of the *Reformed* Church in all its branches. Nor is it contradicted by a single acknowledged formulary of faith.

Modern evangelical theology denies and repudiates this doctrine of the Reformed Church. It denies that Baptism is the Sacrament of Regeneration. It denies that there is an inward and necessary connection, effected by the Word of God, of the blood and Spirit of Christ, which is the thing signified, with the outward washing with consecrated water, which is the sign. It denies that in Baptism we are really ingrafted into Christ by the Holy Ghost, and thus have forgiveness of sins, and a new spiritual life, comprehending the entire man. This is to deny that Christ is true to Himself in His own living Institution; or that He really does by His spirit what He signifies by the outward transaction; and virtually resolves the Sacrament into a lifeless form, and an empty ceremony.

By such denial, modern evangelical theology shakes hands with the old anabaptistic heresy of the Reformation period, which the Reformed Confessions with one accord denounce; and convicts itself of being non-protestant and anti-protestant, non-reformed and anti-reformed. It affirms, in regard to Baptism, what the Reformed Confessions in most explicit terms

deny, and denies what they most solemnly affirm; yet plumes itself on this open hostility to the old faith, as being the badge of uncompromising fidelity to the Protestant Church.

Upon the unbelieving spirit that sees in Holy Baptism only an empty and inefficacious sign, and thus turns the acts of Jesus Christ into pantomime, the entire Reformed Church of the sixteenth century joins with the Confession of Scotland in pronouncing the condemnatory sentence: *Itaque vanitatem eorum, qui affirmant, sacramenta nil aliud quam mera et nuda signa esse, omnino damnamus.*
