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Christian Initiation

The Anglican Tradition

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In the twenty-seventh of the 39 Articles of Religion Baptism is declared to be 'a sign of Regeneration or New Birth, whereby as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church.' This affirmation excludes any conception of its efficacy which is either (1) atomistic or (2) purely or primarily symbolic, let alone psychological.

1. It is fundamental to the Anglican conception of Baptism, as indeed of all the Sacraments, that it belongs to the Church, being part of the Church's corporate life and having its meaning within that corporate life. It is impossible to exaggerate the personal aspect of Baptism because by means of it each single individual recipient is brought into a permanent relation and living contact with God. Such individuals are nevertheless brought to God and receive His grace in order that they may be lively members of the Body of Christ and, as such, members one of another. The primary purpose of Christian initiation is thus to minister life to the Church through its members who by this divinely appointed sign are grafted into it: it is the initial means by which the Church, the Holy People of God itself, is made, extended, renewed, vivified and unified as the mystical Body of Christ, consisting of Head and members in one organic and coherent pattern of life to the glory of God the Father. And by this means also the whole treasury of the Church's noble ancestry is placed at the disposal of the individual believer: for by incorporation into the Church we are united not merely to the contemporary members of Christ's Body but to the whole company of Christ's people, living and departed.

It follows from this that the way to understand the rites of Christian initiation is to consider first their place in the corporate life of the Christian Society and to proceed from this to their value for the individual. To invert the process and to ask first what is the difference between a baptized person and an unbaptized is to confuse the problem in advance.

Such a method of procedure is consonant with the outlook of the New Testament to which the sharp distinction between Christ and the Church, which has been sometimes drawn in modern times, is entirely alien. The clearest and most impressive illustration in the New Testament of the corporate aspect of Baptism is the passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians (5:25-27) where St. Paul argues that the true relation of husband and wife is signified and represented in the relation between Christ and His Church. 'Christ', he says, 'loved the Church and gave Himself up for it: that he might sanctify it having cleansed it

with the washing of water by the word, that he might present the Church to himself, a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish.' This is an ideal description whose perfect fulfilment is not to be looked for while the Church is still militant here on earth, but its truth does not belong only to the future. The Church is already a cleansed and consecrated society and to it, as a unity, applies not only the virtue of the Lord's sacrificial death, but the healing effect of the baptismal laver. The Apostle's language suggests something more than a succession of individual baptisms. He thinks of the unity between Christ and His Church as a unity which transcends and includes the many particular unities which exist between Christ and believers. It was entirely in keeping with such a conception that in an earlier chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians (4:5) he should enumerate as a cornerstone of the Church's unity the one baptism which equally with and inseparably from the one faith unites its members to its one Lord.

Article 27 derived the metaphor of grafting which it uses, and which is also echoed in the Anglican Baptismal service immediately after the actual baptism, from Romans 11. 17: there the Gentiles are compared to a wild olive grafted into the true olive, so as to be enriched by its life, the true olive being the Israel of God. This provides the context for understanding the consequences of baptism for the individual which in the Church Catechism are defined as 'a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness.' Baptism involves a complete change of environment for the recipient, because it incorporates him into a society which owes its existence to the creative act of God. God made for Himself a people, Israel after the flesh, and afterwards remade it through the redemptive work of His Anointed so that it might be the body indwelt by the Spirit of the exalted Christ. But incorporation into this divine society involves more than a change of environment. For in that change the baptized person becomes other than he was before. In virtue of it he is united to Christ so that to the new environment corresponds the regenerate person.

In affirming this union of the baptized believer with Christ St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans (6:3-11) shows at length by reference to the successive symbolic acts which have their place in the rite how we are buried with Him by baptism into death and share thereby in His resurrection, the reception of new life involving inescapably a death to the old. The thought is repeated in the Epistles to the Colossians (2:12, 3:1, 3) and to the Ephesians (2:5-6). The definition of the inward and Spiritual grace of baptism in the Catechism recalls the idea of assimilation to the death of Christ, but it is combined with the idea of new birth which is Petrine (1 Peter 1:23, 2:1) and Johannine (John 3:5) rather than Pauline. The association of baptism with a new birth seems to be absent from St. Paul's undoubted epistles in which there is nothing parallel to the phrase in Titus 3:5, 'the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' But the difference is more one of phraseology than of idea. For the many passages in which St. Paul speaks of a New Creation are closely parallel to the new birth of which St. Peter and St. John write. 'Whoever is in Christ, it is the new creation' (1 Cor. 5:17)—the new creation of which the Prophet spoke in the proclamation, 'Behold I create new heavens and a new earth' (Isaiah 65:17). For the new creation is not purely a future consummation but

is already in some degree anticipated in the Christian dispensation. The thought recurs in contexts which are explicitly baptismal where St. Paul compares the union of the Christian with Christ to the putting off of a garment—an analogy plainly suggested by the stripping off of clothes before baptism and the reclothing of the neophyte in a white robe. 'As many of you as were baptized into Christ, did put on Christ' (Gal. 3:27). 'Put off the old man . . . Be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth' (Ephes. 4:22-24; cf. also Ephes. 2:10 and Col. 3:10). Man's salvation consists in a fresh act of creation whereby the outline of the original creation is restored and brought to fulfilment. By His self-oblation unto death Christ forged a new humanity which burst the bonds of the prison-house of death and this new nature, as the second Adam, he is able to impart to others (Cor. 15:22). The implication of the whole of the New Testament teaching on baptism is that it is the indispensable means which confers the capacity to share in this new created humanity of which Christ is the source, and that because thereby we become very members of His body incorporate in Him (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27).

2. In the twenty-seventh Article Baptism is declared to be a sign of Regeneration. 'Sign' is clearly used in the sense defined in article 25 where sacraments are affirmed to be 'effectual signs of grace.' It implies that baptism not only symbolizes new birth, but conveys it. Centuries of philosophical and theological discussion lay behind the terminology. It was St. Augustine who laid the foundations of sacramental theology as it developed in the West in an age when the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation were reaching their final formulation. The outcome of the distinctions and discriminations of the mediaeval schoolmen who developed the definitions which Augustine first formulated is embodied in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, where a sacrament is defined as 'a thing apparent to the senses and having by God's appointment the power not only of signifying but also of effecting holiness and righteousness.' True to ordinary scholastic use the word is employed as meaning the outward and visible sign. Clear cut formulas of this character are not congenial to Eastern Christianity. The ancient Churches of the East accept the sacraments as ineffable mysteries by means of which there is effected an interpenetration of the Divine presence into our world and they lay great stress on the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying created things. Nevertheless Catholic orthodoxy, whether in East or West, is agreed in regarding sacramental grace as an invisible gift given in and through a visible sign which is consequently more than symbolical.

It would be altogether idle to attempt to discover in the language of the New Testament writers a precise doctrine of the relation of the outward to the inward such as is presupposed in the definitions of the confessional declarations of the Reformation period. It can be readily admitted that St. Paul's description of Baptism as a death unto sin and a rising again unto life with the Risen Christ must have gained in impressiveness from the symbolism of immersion, but it does not follow from this that the expressions he uses are merely symbolical. They are not purely figurative, but look back to the Baptism of Jesus Himself in the River Jordan, which has been rediscovered by a group of modern scholars as the master-key

to the understanding of the origin and meaning of the Christian rite. The Fathers of a later age delighted to enlarge on the theme that by His immersion in the Jordan Jesus sanctified water 'for the mystical washing away of sin,' not to mention breaking the head of the dragon lurking in its waters (Psalm 74:13), of which St. Cyril of Jerusalem has a good deal to say: but the Baptism of Jesus had a deeper significance than this. It was a foreshadowing of His mission as the Son and Servant of God, dedicating Him to the task of reconciliation through suffering (cf. Mark 10:38, Luke 12:50, John 1:29-34), a task which was accomplished by His death, resurrection and ascension and the New Covenant inaugurated by these events. In that atoning work—a work of essentially prevenient and redundant grace—Christian Baptism no less than the Eucharist has its ground as the effective means of applying its benefits through faith to Christ's followers. It is very difficult to reconcile St. Paul's words with a doctrine of Baptism which interprets the rite simply as a symbol witnessing to something that had happened already or would happen at some future date; for the aorists he uses indicate that a definite spiritual event occurred in the life of the believer when he came up from the water. In fact, the teaching of the New Testament about Christian initiation is characterized throughout by a realism which implies a direct divine action on man. It has been mistakenly argued from this that Christian Sacramentalism was an importation from the Greek mysteries. But the sacraments of the New Covenant have no genealogical link with the pagan mysteries. In the Bible what is done to the body is regarded as done to the man, because man is not regarded in the Greek way, as an immortal spirit temporarily inhabiting a body, but as a creature compact of body and soul.

The connotation of the term sacrament became a subject of acute, and sometimes embittered, controversy in the Reformation period. The controversy was provoked by Zwingli who in strict accordance with classical usage, like the humanist he was, defined the term to mean a visible mark of allegiance and though not always consistent in his denials, would never allow that sacraments are more than mere signs. Hence the name of 'Sacramentaries' first given by Luther to him and his followers, the meaning of which is the exact contrary of the meaning of the term 'Sacramentalist.' Calvin adopted a mediating position attributing to sacraments what he called an *obsignatory* function. He and his followers looked upon them as seals or testimonies of the Divine grace, perhaps then and there, but perhaps also independently bestowed. 'A sacrament,' he said in his *Institutes* (IV. XIV. 1) 'is an external symbol by which the Lord seals on our consciences his promises of good will towards us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith.' In particular he denied that Baptism was the means whereby God conveys to the soul the grace of the Holy Ghost to form it again to newness of life and limited its efficacy to that of a sign and seal whereby God attests and ratifies His promise to bestow this blessing on the believing recipient. It has been contended that Article 27 was designed to countenance this attenuated conception of the efficacy of baptism. The contention gains a certain plausibility, because some of its phrases do seem to echo the language which Calvin used. It is for instance stated in it that 'the promises of the forgiveness of sin and our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed by baptism' and this can be construed to mean that the relation of outward to inward

is not regarded as that of cause to effect, but that of seal and promise. On this theory it would be necessary to interpret the phrase 'as by an instrument,' which occurs earlier in the Article, in the sense of a legal document conveying the possession of a property which will actually be transferred on attaining the age of majority. But the view cannot be reconciled with the language of Article 25 which is largely based on the confession of Augsburg. The Anglican Church is not concerned to deny the truth contained in the Calvinistic definition of a sacrament: it acknowledged that the sacraments are 'sure witnesses' as well as 'effectual signs' of the grace of God and reiterated the acknowledgement when it included in its Catechism the declaration that sacraments are 'a pledge to assure us' of spiritual grace as well as a means whereby we receive it. But on the issue which Zwingli precipitated it ranged itself with the Lutherans firmly on the side of Catholic tradition. Moreover, the obnoxious view of baptism renders almost meaningless much of the language of the Anglican service of Baptism, e.g. the words in which after the baptism we give thanks 'that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant by thy Holy Spirit.' Anglicans of the rank and file owe the obstinate conviction which they generally cherish that baptism conveys something more than a title to the divine grace largely to the fact that the original creator of Anglicanism was more of a liturgist than a theologian.

It follows from such a conception of the efficacy of the sacrament of baptism that it is in some sense causal. The actual terminology which Article 27 uses, 'as by an instrument,' comes near to committing the Anglican Communion to a theory of causality which the disciples of St. Thomas Aquinas championed. For among Latin theologians there has been much debate since the golden age of the schoolmen as to the precise mode of the causality of sacraments and seven centuries of perhaps over-subtle speculation have not sufficed to decide it. In all their speculations they have shown a truly fastidious jealousy for the recognition of grace as never anything less than God's self-impartment to man, which entirely refutes the charge that Catholic theology ascribes a magical character to the sacraments. So far from standing in their own right, the sacraments, according to Catholic theology, owe their whole meaning and power to Christ in His eternal Priesthood, who is alone the efficient cause of grace. In the middle ages there were two rival schools of opinion, distinguished by the keywords 'moral' and 'physical,' as to the mode of the causality of the sacraments. St. Bonaventura maintained that sacraments are 'occasional' causes of grace, i.e. divinely appointed occasions without which there is no assurance of grace being conferred. The theory was developed by Duns Scotus who conceived the relation between the outward sign and the inward grace as one of pre-established harmony resting upon the decree of God and, therefore, infallible. The other opinion is that which found favour, if not with Aquinas, at least with his disciples. It regards the sacraments as physical instruments of grace in the sense that the power of God flows through them and so elevates the material vehicle that it produces an effect of which, left to itself, it is quite incapable. Both theories bristle with difficulties, nevertheless, if the sacraments in general, and baptism in particular, are anything more than signs pointing as it were from a distance to grace which is really received through and on account of something else, neither can be pronounced unworthy attempts to grapple with

the mystery of the relation of the outward to the inward. It would be perhaps paradoxical to contend that an Anglican is debarred by the apparently Thomistic language of the article from holding the Scotist view.

Some Traditional Principles

Ranging itself, as it thus undoubtedly does, with what may be called the major hemisphere of Christendom in its doctrine of the efficacy of baptism, the Anglican Communion adheres to certain traditional principles both in its teaching and practice which challenge criticism from one quarter or another. I conclude by offering some comments on five of these.

1. Anglicanism assents to the belief universally held in the Church until the era of the Reformation that baptism is necessary to salvation, qualified, of course by the proviso, never questioned since St. Ambrose preached his famous sermon at the obsequies of Valentinian II, that the desire for baptism suffices in the case of a man whose desire is thwarted through no fault of his own. This was one of the chief issues on which in the Elizabethan age Anglican divines came into collision with the Puritans, who, to quote from the *Westminster Confession*, held that 'grace or salvation is not so inseparably annexed unto baptism that no person can be regenerated or saved without it.' One corollary of the conviction that baptism is indispensable was the reduction to a minimum of the essential qualifications requisite in one who was to administer the rite, so that baptism by a lay person in case of urgency was universally accepted as valid. Post Augustinian tradition in the West went even further than this and denied that any qualification whatever in the minister was absolutely requisite save that of intention; provided there was the intention to do what the Church does, baptism performed by an unbaptized and unbelieving person was recognized and historical instances can be quoted of such baptisms being accepted by the Anglican Church. In the Elizabethan age controversy was focussed on the question 'whether there be any such necessity of baptism as that for the ministering thereof the common decent orders should be broken': the Puritans objected to the rubric in the Prayer Book directing a private ministrations of baptism when great need shall compel, as 'inferring a necessity over rigorous and extreme' and in particular regarded the administration of baptism by a woman as a nullity. Their contentions were refuted at length by Hooker with massive erudition in the fifth book of *the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, and finally discountenanced at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604.

An impugner of the doctrine would adopt very different and less easily assailable grounds in the present day. He would probably appeal to the example of loyal disciples of Christ like the Quakers who reject sacraments altogether as the most cogent argument against those who maintain that baptism is the necessary means of incorporation into the Body of Christ. And it must be frankly acknowledged that the problem created by the existence of unbaptized 'saints' does not admit of any facile solution. I do not think any Anglican would be ready with complete equanimity to consign a devout Quaker to the uncovenanted mercies of God, as if he were a pagan. Nevertheless, it can be said on the other side that the Quakers do treat with indifference an ordinance of the New Testament which the Church from the first has regarded as

vital. They now claim to have repudiated the sacraments of the Gospel in order to assert the sacramental mystery of all life, but in origin their rejection of sacraments was an outcome of the prejudice that created things are unworthy to be vehicles of a divine gift. Sacraments belong not to the order of nature but to the order of grace and the rejection of the sacramental principle springs ultimately from a type of spirituality which shrinks from the full implications of the Incarnation and refuses to allow that the material order can be used to subserve spiritual ends. Moreover, the true approach to a right understanding of the sacraments is to consider first their place in the corporate life of the Church and it is difficult to see how the Church could preserve its sacramental character at all, if it failed to maintain a sacrament of initiation into its membership.

2. The Anglican Church retained infant baptism contenting itself with recasting the rites it had inherited from an age when adult baptism was normal so as to make them more suitable for infants. It was, in fact, only as an afterthought that it provided in 1662 a form for the baptism of those of riper years. It has, of course, never for one moment taught a doctrine of baptismal regeneration which would lend any countenance to the idea that without subsequent faith baptism could avail to secure eternal life for the recipient on reaching an age when faith could be expected or that the grace received could operate fruitfully for the renewal of the soul without the personal surrender of the will in response to it. The stress which it lays on the responsibilities of godparents is proof both of its conviction that the grace bestowed on an unconscious infant needs to be claimed and used, if the potentialities it places at the command of the recipient are to come to fruition, and also of its concern that it shall be so used and claimed. But the retention of infant baptism, nevertheless, implies that its efficacy is in some degree immediate and not solely proleptic. The Anglican Church did not base a practice which can be neither proved nor disproved from the evidence of the New Testament on Apostolic tradition, as the early Church did, but defended it on the ground that 'it is most agreeable with the institution of Christ,' whose own example it quoted in its baptismal office as a warrant for believing that infants, who are at least personalities in germ, are capable of receiving spiritual blessing. Modern Anglicans would defend the practice on the ground that it is not only agreeable with the institution of Christ, but congruous with an invariable principle of God's dealing with the soul. Religion begins not with what we do for God, but with what God does for us. The good will of our Heavenly Father is not something which we can earn by so much repentance or faith or so many good works. His love and His gifts of grace are prior to the commandment to serve Him: privilege comes before responsibility. Nothing could be more scriptural. So viewed, baptism becomes a powerful moral lever encouraging men to follow after holiness: for, while heightening the gravity of sin in the baptized, the grace supplied is an assurance of inexhaustible aid to rise to the height of their calling.

No one acquainted with the conditions prevailing in the mission field would deny the immense advantage that the Church in those conditions owes to the perennial object lesson in the principles of an ethical sacramentalism afforded by the baptism of adult converts, demanding, as this does, not only the due performance of a sacred rite by the minister, but a right response of mind and will on the part of the

recipient publicly witnessed by the congregation of the faithful. But it ought to be recognized that the protest of the Anabaptists in the age of the Reformation that true baptism should always presuppose actual belief in the receivers and is otherwise no baptism, was a novelty. In the ancient Church those who objected to infant baptism did not oppose it on doctrinal grounds. The first known objector was Tertullian and the strong views he expressed on the subject were due to his belief that sin after baptism was either unforgivable (*de Pudicitia* 9) or, at least, exceedingly dangerous. This belief was fostered by the extreme rigour of the penitential system of the early Church and in the fourth century frequently led to the postponement of baptism until the approach of death. Convinced that baptism was the sovereign remedy for sin, people dreaded more the irremediable consequences of a lapse from grace after baptism than the risk of ultimately failing to receive it and held it in reserve for their last hours. But this practice did not express the mind of the Church which is, e.g. faithfully interpreted in the sermon of Gregory of Nyssa against those who postpone baptism.

3. In close association with the idea of regeneration Anglicanism affirms with the oecumenical creed that baptism is for the remission of sins. This clause of the Nicene Creed recalls and summarizes innumerable allusions in the New Testament which attest that the outward lustration of the body is not merely an expression of repentance but a means of inward purification and acceptance with God (*Acts* 2:38, 22:16, *1 Cor.* 6:11, *Ephes.* 5:26f., *1 Peter* 2:21, *Rev.* 7:14 and *John* 9:7 which is a clear allegory of baptism). Such language is entirely relevant to the adult candidates of whom it is used in the New Testament, but does its retention when administering baptism to infants, who *ex hypothesi* cannot have committed actual sins, necessarily presuppose the sombre logic of St. Augustine's doctrine of an hereditary taint involving guilt contracted by mankind through the fall of the first forefather of our race?

There is no question that the figment of 'original guilt' or 'guilt of nature' was developed partly as a solution of the difficulty caused by the apparent incongruity of administering a sacrament the declared and symbolized purpose of which was the washing away of sin at an age when the recipient was incapable of incurring personal guilt: but there is equally no question that this was a theological afterthought to justify a practice which had grown up spontaneously as a result of popular sentiment rather than of reasoned theory and in the course of time had received official recognition. All that the practice presupposes is the contrast between humanity as it is in Adam and humanity as it is in Christ, which St. Paul develops in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and the fifteenth of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Each individual is born into the world as a member of the natural order, as one more unit in the human race. And humanity as a whole and not merely in its individual members is deeply and radically involved in sinfulness. This fact is independent of any view we may take of the story of the fall in the third chapter of Genesis and it remains true whatever we may think of the various attempts which have been made to give it theological definition. We are free to argue about the degree to which heredity or environment has a share in it, but to deny it outright is only compatible with an altogether superficial rationalization of the fundamentally irrational mystery of evil. In triumphant opposition to the old humanity thus involved in sinfulness stands the new humanity

forged by the might of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and baptism is the door by which we enter within the circle of its redemptive influence and the new supernatural life which alone can restore us to spiritual health is imparted to us. An adult who comes to Baptism may be conscious of this profound contrast between the pre- and post-baptismal state, as was St. Cyprian in the classical passage in which he put his own experience on record (*de Gratia Dei* 1 § 4). But the contrast is there for everyone, adult or infant, who passes through the waters of baptism. It is a passage from the realm of nature to the realm of grace, and in the realm of grace the first necessary blessing is the forgiveness of sins.

The Church was conscious of this contrast long before Augustine gave it theological precision and emphasized the thought that baptism put an end to the long exile of the descendants of Adam and restored to them the lost paradise by the decorations customary in its earliest baptistries. The most ancient surviving example of a baptistry exists at Dura and dates from the third century. In the apse above the font a fresco representing Christ as the Good Shepherd leading His sheep is counterbalanced by another representing the fall of our first parents, and in another early baptistry at Naples the Good Shepherd is represented in repose surrounded by His flock in a paradisaical setting of trees and flowers and fountains. The contrast is further reinforced for Anglicans by the allusions which occur in the first prayer in the service of baptism to two other examples of the cycle of typology which, following Apostolic guidance (1 Cor. 10:2, 1 Peter 3:18-21, 2 Peter 2:5), taught the Christians of the primitive Church to see their own experience foreshadowed in acts of divine judgment and redemption narrated in the Old Testament—the Deluge and the Passage of the Red Sea. This prayer, derived not from a mediaeval source but from Luther, was remodelled by the hand of a master in the revision of 1552. In both the types the waters are not so much instruments of cleansing as of chastisement. The purging of the iniquity of the antediluvian world by the flood was for the early Christians a symbol of the annihilation of the old man in the sacred font and the sparing of just Noah to be the starting point of a new humanity a figure of the resurrection of Christ after his descent into the underworld to be the first born of the new creation to which we belong in virtue of our baptism. Similarly the passage of the Red Sea prefigured for them the victory of Christ over the powers of darkness accomplished at the season of the Passover by which mankind was liberated from thralldom to the tyranny of Satan: the type had a singular appropriateness in that age in view of the fact that it was during the Paschal vigil that baptism was normally conferred on the individual, so that in the observances of this culminating commemoration of the Christian year the mystery of redemption was set forth on the threefold plane of figure, reality and sacrament. Both types had a regular place in the catechetical instruction by which the significance of their initiation was expounded to the neophytes of the early Church during the Paschal octave, and we are learning again to appreciate the pastoral value of the ancient typology, as it is possible to lay such stress on the efficacy of the sacrament to the exclusion of any explanation of its meaning and symbolism that the rite itself tends to seem arbitrary and artificial.

4. The Anglican Church retained the rite of Episcopal Confirmation as in some sense the completion of Christian initiation and the normal qualification for entry on the full privileges of the Christian life as a communicant. This has proved itself to be a source both of theological embarrassment and pastoral enrichment to it.

Theological embarrassment arises from the fact that, whereas in the age of the Fathers baptism and confirmation were linked together in the framework of a single complex rite and the gift of the Holy Spirit normally ascribed to the final act of the rite, whether the laying on of hands was accomplished by unction or not, both the Anglican services and the teaching of Anglican divines have been profoundly influenced by a change of doctrine which developed in the mediaeval west, when the ancient liturgical pattern was cut into two halves and confirmation normally separated from baptism by an interval of years. The language of the service for infant baptism in the Book of Common Prayer implies unequivocally that Baptism is the occasion when the Holy Spirit is bestowed and is thus in line with the western mediaeval conception of it as a complete initiation. Nevertheless Anglican theology, as illustrated for instance by Jeremy Taylor's treatise *Christs Teleiōtike*, and Anglican liturgical revision reveal a progressively increasing reluctance to discard altogether the initiatory aspect of confirmation and to treat it in accordance with the teaching of the mediaeval schoolmen and the Roman Church as an independent rite conferring an augmentation of grace from the Holy Spirit proper to growing years.

It must be acknowledged that when challenged by the question 'what mean ye by this service?' in regard to the rite of confirmation and its relation to Baptism, Anglicans have never been agreed as to what they should answer and this lack of agreement is amply illustrated by the debate on the subject which has been enlivening the Anglican Communion of recent years. The discussion is not solely a controversy between scholars and theologians, but has an important bearing on Anglican approaches to union with the Free Churches. For it is difficult to describe the relation between the two rites without either unduly minimizing the distinctive gift received in confirmation or appearing to unchurch the baptized Christian who remains unconfirmed. In point of fact, in the case of the only union between an Episcopal Church and non-Episcopal Churches which has yet been successfully launched, representative Anglicanism, as embodied in the Lambeth Conference of 1930, did not insist on Episcopal Confirmation as a pre-requisite term of union, but was content that its use should be commended in a footnote.

On the other hand, it cannot be said that lack of doctrinal precision has, in fact, tended to lower the dignity of Confirmation in the Anglican Church. On the contrary, its experience in ministering Confirmation in accordance with the provisions of the Prayer Book has enabled it to establish a practice which has to be reckoned a treasure of great price—a pastoral opportunity which has been forfeited alike by the Orthodox East through the conservatism which retains Chrism only as a feature of infant baptism and by the Roman West, thanks to the custom of administering confirmation at too young an age. This treasure the Church of the British Isles has passed on as part of its heritage to the world-wide fellowship of churches which looks to Canterbury as its focus.

One great gain has been secured by the emphasis in the Anglican service on the element of Ratification, present from the first but specially prominent since 1662 when an explicit renewal of their baptismal vows on the part of the candidates was inserted. The introduction of this feature into the service has been criticized as tending to detract from the importance of the divine activity in Confirmation, but it is essential to the Catholic interpretation of the sacraments to see in them divine acts which anticipate a response from the human side. There are many indications, of which the Collect for Easter Eve, first composed for the Scottish Prayer Book of 1637 and later included in the English Prayer Book after the Restoration, is one, that the compilers and revisers of that Book were haunted by the memory of the great Paschal Baptisms of the Ancient Church, when Christian initiation was normally imparted as the crown and consummation of a process of conscious faith in Jesus the Messiah, of repentance from sin and of conversion from idols to serve the living God. The renewal of vows at confirmation after systematic instruction outlined in the Church Catechism serves to supply in the case of those baptized in infancy just this element of conscious renunciation of the pagan world and adherence to Christ which is so conspicuous a feature in the theology of initiation in the New Testament and the adult baptisms of the early Church. At the same time it goes a long way to disarm the cavils and scruples of those who disapprove of infant baptism, because it excludes the possibility of such undeniably requisite response of faith and discipleship.

5. Finally, the Anglican Church adheres to the principle that Baptism creates the capacity to receive the other sacraments and grace-conveying ordinances of the Church. This may be illustrated by an example which has a peculiar relevance to the Church in India, in view of the increasing tendency in certain sections of the Christian community to contract mixed marriages. Christian marriage definitely presupposes that the parties to it are baptized and owes its sacramental character to the fact that they are. St. Paul in Ephesians 5:22-32 declares that the archetype of Christian marriage is the union between Christ and his bride, the Church, and unless the parties to a marriage have been sacramentally incorporated into the Body of Christ by baptism his words are emptied of all meaning. It is for this reason that an Anglican clergyman is forbidden to use more than the minimum portion of the marriage service necessary for a legal marriage when one of the parties to a marriage is an adherent of another Christian body who has not been baptized. By the same token a marriage contracted by two non-Christians, which before conversion may have been potentially polygamous or potentially dissoluble, is raised to the dignity of Christian marriage by virtue of the baptism of both parties to it and is thenceforth reckoned as exclusive and lifelong.



The man who tells the truth out of cynicism is a liar.

—D. Bonhoeffer: *Letters and Papers from Prison*.