

THE Christian privilege of Sonship is that of filial life restored to man in and through Christ. This blessing, connecting the Mediatorial Trinity, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in a special manner with the new relations of the believer, may be distinguished as the internal Regeneration and the external Adoption. But, however distinct, these two are to be united when we consider the peculiar Prerogatives of the children of God viewed as His children: they are the rights of adoption conferred on such as are made capable of them by their renewal, or, in another view, the rights of regeneration which in adoption are acknowledged and bestowed.

1. No terms are more strictly correlative than Regeneration and Adoption. They describe the same blessing under two aspects: the former referring to the filial character, the latter to the filial privilege. But they are not thus closely connected as cause and effect: they are co-ordinate, and the link between them is the common Sonship. The assurance of filial adoption does not produce the regenerate life; nor does the infusion of the perfect life of regeneration of itself invest the children of God with all the prerogatives of heirship. Moreover, they are as distinct from the other leading blessings in the economy of grace as they are themselves united. The justified state does not involve of necessity the special privileges of adoption; nor does regeneration as such imply the specific relation to God which sanctification signifies.

Regenera-
tion and
Adoption.

The two terms we now consider embrace in their unity an entirely distinct department of the Spirit's administration of the New Covenant; they lead us into the household of faith and the family of God. Touching at many points those other departments, they are nevertheless perfect and complete in themselves.

Connected
with
Trinity.

2. The privilege of Christian sonship connects the Holy Trinity in a peculiar manner with the administration of grace. If such a distinction may be allowed, it has a more direct connection than the other privileges of the covenant with the Son Incarnate. This specific blessing is in relation to justification and sanctification what the Son is in relation to the Father and the Holy Ghost. Among the last sayings of the Saviour were these: *I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to that Father of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named.* He who is the Logos to the creation generally is the Son towards the filial creation. But this special relation to the Son extends to both aspects of sonship as adoption and regeneration. We are adopted into the relation which the Son occupies eternally: hence the term which expresses this prerogative is *υιοθεσία*, where the *υίός* is preserved as the solitary word that is ever used to signify the Son's relation to the Father. We are regenerated by the life of Christ imparted through the Spirit: hence it is *παλιγγενεσία*, and we are *τέκνα*, both terms as it were reproducing in time the eternal generation. Our regeneration answers to the eternally Begotten, our adoption to the eternally Beloved.

John xx.
17.
Eph. iii.
15.

United.

John i. 12,
13.

3. There are some passages in the New Testament which unite the two; and these may be introduced as the general preface to what follows. *But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God: ἐξουσίαν τέκνα Θεοῦ γενέσθαι*, authority or privilege to be made into children, because they believe on the name of the Son. This is precisely the same as what is afterwards called adoption. *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God:* here we have a most complete definition of regeneration. The two ideas run through the eighth chapter of the Romans; though both there, and in the Galatian epistle, it is the adoption that is more conspicuous. In St. Peter we have both. *Which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again:* this is regeneration; *to an inheritance incorruptible* denotes the adoption to which inheritance belongs as a

1 Pet. i. 3,
4.

privilege. But best of all in St. John : *Behold . . . that we SHOULD BE CALLED and WE ARE the sons of God.* In this however, as in all, our Lord Himself gave the word : *If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed ;* that is, by the possession of a place among the children, and the children's freedom. *If God were your Father, ye would love Me :* here, as the context shows, regeneration or the possession of new life is meant.

1 Jno. iii. 1
2 : καὶ
ἐσθὲν,
A.B.C.
Sin.
John viii.
36, 42.