

- tion of the latter, but the adopted sonship which cries : *I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness !*
- Earnest.** 2. They enter into an heritage of which they have now only an earnest. The inheritance of Christians is in its deepest meaning *reserved in heaven*. Under whatever aspect it is viewed the Christian heritage is enjoyed only in its firstfruits. This is declared by St. Paul : *ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession*. When Christ shall claim us as His possession we shall claim Him as ours, *in Whom also we have become an inheritance*. It is after speaking of the Christian inheritance that the epistle to the Hebrews says : *for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end*.
- Fulness.** 3. That participation awaits the believer : we are *waiting for the adoption*, which will *change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body* ; and will enable us in our integrity of body and spirit to *appear with Him in glory*. The death of the Testator has put us in possession of a portion of the goods that fall to us under His covenant-testament. But we must die ourselves to enter upon the vast remainder. Then will He at the last great distribution say to every one of His brethren : *all that I have is thine !* It is He who closes the New Testament with the promise of the filial inheritance : *he that overcometh shall inherit all things ; and I will be his God and he shall be My son*. Thus does the new covenant echo at its close the final promise of the old : *and they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels ; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him*.
- Pa. xvii. 15.
 1 Peter i. 4.
 Eph. i. 13, 14.
 Eph. i. 11.
 Heb. iii. 14.
 Fulness.
 Rom. viii. 23.
 Phil. iii. 21.
 Col. iii. 4.
 Heb. ix. 16.
 Luke xv. 31.
 Rev. xxi. 7.
 Mal. iii. 17.

HISTORICAL.

Ecclesiastical Theories. The variations in opinion on this general subject may be classed under these heads : the various theories of the relation of the new birth to the sacrament of baptism ; differences as to the measure of human co-operation admitted ; its place in the Ordo Salutis, or plan of salvation ; its effect upon the various constituent elements of human nature ; and its value as a Divine gift in respect to the other blessings of the Christian covenant.

I. A certain theory of Baptismal Regeneration appears in the first ages of the Church, which seems in some measure to have merged the internal regeneration into the external adoption.

Sacra-
mental
Regenera-
tion
Early
Church.

1. The first question will be considered again more fully when we reach the doctrine of the Sacraments ; a brief statement, rather historical than polemic, is however necessary here also.

(1.) This was probably one out of many results of Jewish influence on Christian thought. During the interval between the Old and New Testaments the converts to Judaism were said to be born again : "a convert is like a newborn child." As to his new position he was called a Proselyte : either of the Gate, as admitted to civil privileges and a place in the Court of the Gentiles ; or of Righteousness, as circumcised and baptized and bound to the whole law. The term therefore answered to the Christian Adoption. So Maimonides : "The Gentile that is made a proselyte, and the servant that is made free, behold, he is like a child new born. And, as to all those relations he had whilst either Gentile or servant, they now cease." But there was in Judaism no other regeneration than that of this external adoption.

Rabbi-
nical.

(2.) Early Patristic literature similarly fell into a vague style of connecting the two. It represented the new birth as a translation into the Christian estate, an initiation by baptism into the Christian mysteries. The internal renewing process was faithfully taught ; but was not connected always with the scriptural term : in fact, regeneration was equivalent to adoption simply. The new life was spoken of as renewal or renovation ; and thus adoption, instead of being a concomitant of the new birth, was its precursor. The Regeneration was understood in the same broader meaning which our Saviour gave it when He spoke of the final restitution of all things ; only that in their view this regeneration was simply the establishment of the new order of Christianity.

Regenera-
tion in the
broader
sense.

(3.) In this sense baptismal regeneration has been understood by very many advocates of infant baptism in every period. They use the term with a larger meaning than it generally bears : as the external estate out of which the new birth grows. Baptismal regeneration accordingly is, in the case of children, baptismal adoption, as baptism undeniably seals to the children of Christian parents their place in the family of God ; it is also a seal or pledge

Baptismal

of a regenerating grace awaiting all Christian children duly baptized, the pledge being the preliminary grace that rests upon them and prompts to personal dedication in due time when that pledge can be by themselves redeemed.

Confessions.

2. In a stricter sense the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is held by the larger part of Christendom: that, namely, which holds the sacraments to be the preeminent and proper Means of Grace. The Roman Catholic, Oriental, Lutheran, and Anglican communions, though in varying language, hold that regeneration is generally connected with baptism as its instrument. The Lutheran Augsburg Confession says: *De baptismo docent, quod sit necessarius ad salutem.* And what this necessity means is taught by Luther's Catechism: *Baptismus operatur remissionem peccatorum, liberat a morte.* The English Article xxvii. gives its sentiment thus: "But it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church: the promises of forgiveness of sins, and of our adoption to be the sons of God, are visibly signed and sealed." Here it is obvious that a certain distinction is made between regeneration, of which baptism is the sign, and adoption, of which it is the instrument. The Westminster Confession declares the same; with both a needful and a needless qualification. "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 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." In these weighty words the regeneration of infants in baptism is clearly asserted to be possible, and, in the case of the elect, certain. But the addition of the words "not tied to that moment," and "in His own appointed time," may seem to allow that the full regeneration is reserved for the period when the infant shall be capable of receiving the gift.

3. By many the regeneration of the soul is regarded as sacramentally pledged and promised in virtue of the general grace bestowed upon mankind in redemption. Baptism is therefore a sign of the blessing into which preliminary grace is to mature ; and the seal of its bestowment if that preliminary grace is used aright. It should be remembered that in this scheme regeneration stands connected with all the blessings of the Christian covenant, as in the sentences quoted from the formularies above. Baptism is not more intimately allied with the new birth than with remission of sins and sanctification to God. There is, according to the Nicene Confession, "one baptism for the remission of sins," that is, one baptism unto pardon, regeneration, sanctification, and all the benefits of our Lord's passion. Children baptized are externally pardoned, adopted, and made holy : the internal reality corresponding with these is sealed to them by the preliminary grace that belongs to the family of redeemed man, and especially to the children of the household of faith. Baptism in this doctrine, which carefully stated is irrefragable, is the sign and seal and instrument to adult believers of their pardon and renewal and sanctification. To the children of believers it is the sign and seal and instrument of imparting these blessings so far as they are capable of them : original guilt is removed, the bias to evil is counteracted by initial grace, and adoption into the household of faith is absolutely conferred. If what may be loosely called the germ of grace is regeneration in the infant, then it becomes new birth in the adult.

Baptismal
Adoption.

4. The strict systematic dogma of the two mysteries which makes baptism the sacrament of birth, and the eucharist the sacrament of nourishment, may have some measure of truth in it so far as the word means the sacramental emblem. But it must not be forgotten that our Lord speaks of the sacramental eating and drinking of Himself as connected with regeneration. If the words of St. John's Gospel are referred to the Lord's Supper then we have a eucharistic regeneration as well as a baptismal : *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you : it is not, ye have no abiding life.*

The two
Sacra-
ments one

John vi.
63.

II. The measure of human co-operation has been much contested.

Human
Agency.

1. Extreme Calvinism holds that the life of regeneration is given by an act of as absolute sovereign power as that which

gave physical existence : therefore, as there are undeniably some stirrings of spiritual life in penitents, and the beginnings of tendency to life even before true repentance, these are all regarded as evidences of renewal, and regeneration is placed before all other blessings of the Spirit. Man in this theory is purely passive. This doctrine effaces preliminary grace, so far as that grace tends to spiritual activity : such grace is preliminary no longer, but the very regeneration itself. It forgets that wherever the human will is a factor, there can be no pure passivity ; and that the actual state of the soul in which it is passive under the regenerating power of the Spirit is itself produced by a self-surrendering faith of the penitent desire.

Pelagianism.

2. Pelagianism, at the opposite extreme, reduced the great change to an act of the human will : as it is always in man's power to choose, and act accordingly, he really may regenerate himself by fixing his purpose fully on the Good. Semi-Pelagianism admitted that the first conversion requires Divine power, but claimed that the human will in its freedom is that power itself ; and as to the regeneration of the soul it has always regarded that as the Divine blessing on human determination. But this dogma in every form lowers grace to external teaching and inducements : nature itself is in a sense grace, and the operation of the Holy Ghost effects nothing that the human will does not under His influence itself accomplish. The error in every Semi-Pelagian theory is that of forgetting that the Holy Spirit always ends, even as He always begins, the work of goodness in man without human concurrence. He begins before co-operation joins Him ; and co-operation must cease at the crisis where He finishes the work.

Semi-Pelagianism

Synergism.

3. Synergism in the Lutheran church differed little from the latter ; but its esteem of the sacramental blessing of baptism gave Divine grace its full honour in relation to baptized children.

Arminian.

Arminianism in its doctrine of universal prevenient grace carries back the Synergism, or co-operation between God and man, to the nature behind and before baptism. In certain American schemes, which represent regeneration as the right ultimate choice of the soul, there are some errors to be noted. (1.) This choice is a conviction and desire before regeneration, and may be called conversion ; or, in its higher form of entire consecration of the will, it

is a fruit of renewal. It cannot be regeneration itself. (2.) The state of the soul before God is more than merely its present will and act or exercise: it has a disposition or character underlying this with which the new birth has most to do. (3.) Therefore, in common with almost all errors on this subject, these Semi-Pelagian rather than Arminian theories imply a failure to distinguish between the preliminary grace of life and the life of regeneration.

III. Regeneration is sometimes erroneously placed first in the order of the bestowment of Gospel privileges. The release of the sinner from condemnation must take precedence, his new life then begins in its fulness, and that life is consecrated to God in sanctification. But in many confessions regeneration takes the lead, and this doctrine is maintained in various forms by parties fundamentally differing as to the nature of the blessing itself.

Ordo
Salutis

1. All advocates of sacramental regeneration *ex opere operato* hold this opinion, at least in the case of infants baptized. Generally, a distinction is established between the regeneration which confers at the outset a germ of spiritual life and the renewal which goes on, with varying and sometimes very irregular processes, to the end. Conversion, on that scheme, is placed after regeneration, which is reduced in its significance to the infusion of a principle of grace neutralizing, or rather contending with, the vice of nature; and, when fall from grace makes it needful, counter-acting original sin as a principle of concupiscence.

Taking
the lead in
Sacramen-
tarianism.

2. The Latitudinarians who believe in the regeneration of mankind in Christ, and allow no subsequent regeneration as necessary, of course entertain the same notion. By some it is so far modified as to admit a difference, so to speak, between the regeneration that imparts to all the first germ of life, and the new birth or the full consummation of that life. The error of this system, in its best forms, is simply its effacing the distinction between the universal grace which is unto life and life itself. Its sufficient refutation is that one saying: *If any man be in Christ he is a new creature.*

In
Latitudi-
narianism.

3. This order is quite essential to Calvinism, which allows of no life in the soul of man other than regenerate life, and makes regeneration the precursor of conviction, repentance, faith, and conversion. The first spark of sovereign grace decides all: that once kindled introduces the rest, and can never be extinguished.

2 Cor. v.
17.
Calvinism.

- Whether Repeated. 4. Calvinism and Sacramentarianism and Latitudinarianism strangely agree, therefore, in denying the possibility of the repetition of regeneration. It is certainly true that the New Testament speaks of one washing of the man who *needeth not save to wash his feet*; also that it declares the impossibility of renewal *unto repentance*, in the case of certain apostates, though not of renewal generally; also that it describes the extinction of the Spirit's life as very difficult. The renewal of regenerate life, however, is never absolutely denied. The theory of the Gospel as laid down by our Lord Himself indicates one regeneration and constant renewal unto its perfection as a full birth of God. But the infinite grace of the new covenant is not bound to that one theory: the high ideal is not to be rigorously pressed.
- John xiii. 10. Heb. vi. 6. Human Nature. IV. It is important to notice the many views which are held by philosophic theologians as to the relation of the new birth to the constitution of human nature. This is literally an illimitable subject in itself, though limited in regard to the present question. The true principles of the question are simple.
- Whole Nature. 1. Regeneration is the restored life of the whole nature of man: it is a new heart, the heart being the soul or self, including though distinct from the mind, the affections and the will. These three are one in human nature, and in regeneration, which, in its full meaning, is a new creation or a renewal of the inmost personality.
- No Change in Substance. 2. It is not a change in the substance of the soul, nor in its individual acts; but in the bias towards evil which is the character. That bias, however, is not destroyed though it is arrested and made subordinate. In perfect regeneration, which is equivalent in another region of thought to entire sanctification, that bias is utterly suppressed and destroyed.
- No added Spirit. 3. Hence there is in regeneration no distinction between the spirit and the soul, between the *πνεῦμα* and the *ψυχή*. The regenerate is spiritual, inasmuch as the Holy Ghost reigns in his spirit: not because by the impartation of the Holy Ghost he has acquired that element, or even attained to the supremacy of the spirit in his nature. Both these are true in the popular and figurative speech of Scripture, which sometimes speaks as if the spirit in man is latent until possessed by the Divine Spirit, and as if the unregenerate spirit is no better than an animal soul.

But the development of this view into a theory of human nature as unrenewed and renewed leads to great confusion.

V. Lastly, divergences in regard to the value of regeneration as a principle of new life have been more or less anticipated.

Value of
Regenera-
tion.
More than
External
Condition

1. The lowest degree is that assigned by those who regard it as the merely being born into a condition or constitution of things. Against this virtual annihilation of the specific gift of the new birth enough has already been said; too much, however, cannot be urged in opposition to a notion which limits the high estate of regeneration to a blessing unconsciously received. All men are born into the new constitution of grace; multitudes of Christian children are baptized into it. But regeneration is more than this universal blessing of redemption.

2. Next comes the opinion of those who make it the mere infusion of a germ, so slight that (1) it can scarcely be distinguished from the universal preliminary life that is the gift of redemption, and (2) it is utterly inconsistent with the high views of the ascendancy of the regenerate life which Scripture teaches. The lowest doctrine sanctioned by the Word of God includes freedom from the law of sin and death.

More than
Germ.

3. Some descriptions of this blessing pitch it in so high a strain as to be utterly inconsistent with the common facts of experience. St. John and St. Paul must be reconciled in the true doctrine of regeneration, even as St. Paul and St. James in the true doctrine of justification. St. Paul speaks of a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, which are *contrary the one to the other* in the ordinary regenerate estate; St. John declares that the ideal and perfect new birth, or being *born of God*, is inconsistent with sin, it *cannot sin*. The one Apostle refers to regeneration in its earlier stages; the other to its perfection. But neither of them denies that a child of God may relapse into sin and need forgiveness. And St. John's sublime doctrine in this text must be harmonised with that of St. Paul, as well as with his own words: *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father.*

Not too
High.

Gal. v. 17

1 John iii.
9.

1 John ii.
1.

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