

## Regeneration

### **1. What the various Scripture terms by which this work of God is designated?**

1st. "Creating anew." Ephesians 4:24. 2nd. "Begetting." James 1:18. 3rd. "Quickening." John 5:21; Ephesians 2:5. 4th. "Calling out of darkness into marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9. The subjects of it are said, 1st. To be "alive from the dead." Romans 6:13. 2nd. To be "new creatures." 2 Corinthians 5:17. 3rd. To be "born again." John 3:3, 7. 4th. To be "God's workmanship." Ephesians 2:10.

### **2. What is the Pelagian view of regeneration?**

They hold that sin can be predicated only of volitions, and that it is essential to the liberty and responsibility of man that he is always as able to cease from as to continue in sin. Regeneration is therefore a mere reformation of life and habit. The man who has chosen to transgress the law, now chooses to obey it.

### **3. What is the doctrine of the Romish church on this subject?**

The Romanists, 1st, confound together justification and sanctification, marring these one act of God, whereby, for his own glory, for Christ's merits' sake, by the efficient powers of the Holy Ghost, and through the instrumentality of baptism, he at once cancels the guilt of our sins, and delivers us from the inherent power and defilement of original sin. "Council of Trent," Sess. 6, Chap. 7.

2nd. They hold the doctrine that regeneration is accomplished only through the instrumentality of baptism. This is effectual in every instance of its application to an infant. In the case of adults its virtue may be either resisted and nullified, or received and improved. In baptism (1) sins are forgiven; (2) the moral nature of the subject is renewed, (3) he is made a son and heir of God. "Cat. Rom.," Part 2., Chap. 2.

### **4. What are the different views as to baptismal regeneration entertained in the Church of England?**

1st. The theory of the party styled Puseyite, which is essentially the same with that of the Romish church. They hold in general that the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of baptism, implants a germ of spiritual life in the soul, which may long remain latent, and may be subsequently developed, or blasted.

2nd. That of a large party most ably represented by the late Bishop H. U. Underdonk, in his "Essay on Regeneration," Phila., 1835. He maintained that there are two distinct regenerations; one a change of state or relation, and the other a change of nature. The first is baptismal, the second moral, though both are spiritual in so far as both are wrought by the Holy Ghost. The first or baptismal regeneration is a new birth, since it constitutes us sons of God, as the Jews were made his peculiar people by that covenant, the seal of which was circumcision. The second is a

new birth, or creation in a higher sense, being a gradual sanctifying change wrought in the whole moral character by the Holy Ghost, and not necessarily connected with baptism.

### **5. What view of regeneration is held by those in America who maintain the "Exercise Scheme"?**

These theologians deny the existence in the soul of any permanent moral habits or dispositions, and admit the existence only of the soul or agent and his acts or "exercises." In the natural man the series of acts are wholly depraved. In the regenerated man a new series of holy acts are created by the Holy Ghost, and continued by his power. ?Emmons, Sermon 64., on the "New Birth."

### **6. What is the New Haven view, advocated by Dr. N. W. Taylor, on this subject?**

Dr. Taylor agreed with the advocates of the "Exercise Scheme," that there is nothing in the soul but the agent and his actions; but he differed from them by holding that man and not God is the independent author of human actions. He held that when God and the world is held up before the mind, regeneration consists in an act of the sinner in choosing God as his chief good, thus confounding regeneration and conversion The Holy Spirit, in some unknown way, assists in restraining the active operation of the natural, selfish principle which prefers the world as its chief good. "A mind thus detached from the world as its supreme good instantly chooses God for its portion, under the impulse of that inherent desire for happiness, without which no object could ever be regarded as good, as either desirable or lovely." This original motive to that choice of God which is regeneration is merely natural, and neither morally good nor bad. Thus 1st. Regeneration is man's own act. 2nd. The Holy Spirit helps man, (1) by suspending the controlling power of his sinful, selfish disposition; (2) by presenting to his mind in the clear light of truth the superiority of God as an object of choice. 3rd. Then the sinner chooses God as his chief good under the conviction of his understanding, and from a motive of natural, though not sinful, self-love, which is to be distinguished from selfishness, which is of the essence of sin. See "Christian Spectator," December, 1829, pp. 693, 694, etc.

### **7. What is the common doctrine held by evangelical Christians?**

1st. That there are in the soul, besides its several faculties, habits, or dispositions, of which some are innate and others are acquired, which lay the foundation for the soul's exercising its faculties in some particular way. Thus we intuitively judge a man's moral disposition to be permanently evil when we see him habitually acting sinfully, or to be permanently good when we see him habitually acting righteously.

2nd. These dispositions are anterior to moral action, and determine its character as good or evil.

3rd. In creation God made the disposition of Adam's heart holy.

4th. In the new creation God recreates the governing disposition of the regenerated man's heart holy.

It is, therefore, properly called a "regeneration," a "new creation," a "new birth."

**8. When it is said that regeneration consists in giving a new heart, or in implanting a new principle or disposition, what is meant by the terms "heart," "principle," or "disposition"?**

President Edwards says, "By a principle of nature in this place, I mean that foundation which is laid in nature, either old or new, for any particular kind or banner of exercise of the faculties of the soul. So this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul for a new kind of exercise of the same faculty of understanding. So that new holy disposition of heart that attends this new sense is not a new faculty of will, but a foundation laid in the nature of the soul for a new kind of exercise of the same faculty of will." Edwards on "Religious Affections," Pt. 3., sec. 1.

The term "heart," signifying that prevailing moral disposition that determines the volitions and actions, is the phrase most commonly used in Scripture. Matthew 12:33, 35; 15:19; Luke 6:43, 45.

**9. How may it be shown that this view of regeneration does not represent it as involving any change in the essence of the soul?**

This charge is brought against the orthodox doctrine by all those who deny that there is any thing in the soul but its constitutional faculties and their exercises. They hence argue that if anything be changed except the mere exercises of the soul, its fundamental constitution would be physically altered. In opposition to this, we argue that we have precisely the same evidence for the existence of a permanent moral quality or disposition inherent in the will, as the reason why a good man acts habitually righteously, or a bad man viciously, that we have for the existence of the invisible soul itself, or of any of its faculties, as the reason why a man acts at all, or why his actions are such as thought, emotion, volition. It is not possible for us to conceive of the choice being produced in us by the Holy Spirit in more than three ways:" First, his direct agency in producing the choice, in which case it would be no act of ours. Second, by addressing such motives to our constitutional and natural principles of self love as would induce us to make the choice, in which case there would be no morality in the act. Or, thirdly, by producing such a relish for the divine character, that the soul as spontaneously and immediately rejoices in God as its portion as it rejoices in the perception of beauty."

"If our Maker can endow us, not only with the general susceptibility of love, but also with a specific disposition to love our children; if he can give us a discernment and susceptibility of natural beauty, he may give us a taste for spiritual loveliness. And if that taste, by reason of sin, is vitiated and perverted, he may restore it by means of his spirit in regeneration." Hodge's Essays.

**10. In what sense may the soul be said to be passive in regeneration?**

Dr. Taylor maintains that regeneration is that act of the soul in which man chooses God as his portion. Thus, the man himself, and not God, is the agent.

But the Christian church, on the contrary, holds that in regeneration the Holy Ghost is the agent, and man the subject. The act of the Holy Spirit, in implanting a new principle, does not interfere with the essential activity of the soul itself, but simply gives to that activity a new direction, for the soul, though active, is nevertheless capable of being acted upon. And although the soul is necessarily active at the very time it is regenerated, yet it is rightly said to be passive with respect to that act of the Holy Spirit whereby it is regenerated.

1st. The soul under the conviction of the Holy Ghost, and in the exercise of merely natural feelings, regards some aspect of saving truth, and strives to embrace it. 2nd. The Holy Ghost, by an exertion of creative power, changes the governing disposition of the heart in a manner inscrutable, and by an influence not apprehended by the consciousness of the subject. 3rd. Simultaneously the soul exercises new affections and experimentally embraces the truth.

### **11. What is the difference between regeneration and conversion?**

The term conversion is often used in a wide sense as including both the change of nature and the exercise of that nature as changed. When distinguished from regeneration, however, conversion signifies the first exercise of the new disposition implanted in regeneration, i.e., in freely turning unto God.

Regeneration is God's act; conversion is ours. Regeneration is the implantation of a gracious principle; conversion is the exercise of that principle. Regeneration is never a matter of direct consciousness to the subject of it; conversion always is such to the agent of it. Regeneration is a single act, complete in itself; and never repeated; conversion, as the beginning of holy living, is the commencement of a series, constant, endless, and progressive. "Draw me, and I will run after thee." Canticle 1: 4. This distinction is signaled by the divines of the seventeenth century (Turretin, 50. 15, Ques. 4, ?13) by the phrases "conversio habitualis seu passiva," i.e., the infusion of a gracious habit of soul by God, in respect to which the subject is passive; and "conversio actualis seu activa," i.e., the consequent acts of faith and repentance elicited by cooperative grace and acted by the subject.

### **12. How can it be proved that there is any such thing as that commonly called regeneration?**

1st. By those Scriptures that declare such a change to be necessary. John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15.

2nd. By those passages which describe the change. Ephesians 2:5; 4:24; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23.

3rd. From the fact that it was necessary for the most moral as well as for the most recklessly sinful. 1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 1:13;16.

4th. That this inward change is not a mere reformation is proved by its being referred to the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:19, 20; Titus 3:5.

5th. From the comparison of man's state in grace with his state by nature. Romans 6:13; 8:6?10; Ephesians 5:8.

6th. From the experience of all Christians, and from the testimony of their lives.

### **13. What is the nature of supernatural illumination?**

The soul of man is a unit. A radically defective or perverted condition of any faculty will injuriously affect the exercise of all the other faculties. The essence of sin consists in the perverted moral dispositions and affections of the will. But a perverted condition of these affections must affect the exercises of the intellect, concerning all moral objects, as much as the volitions themselves. We can not love or desire any object unless we perceive its loveliness, neither can we intellectually perceive its loveliness unless its qualities are congenial to our inherent taste or dispositions. Sin, therefore, is essentially deceitful, and man as a sinner is spiritually blind. This does not consist in any physical defect. He possesses all the faculties requisite to enable him to see the beauty, and to experience the power of the truth, but his whole nature is morally perverted through his evil dispositions. As soon as these are changed he will see, and, seeing, love and obey the truth, although no constitutional change is wrought in his nature, i.e., no new faculty given, but only his perverted faculties morally rectified. This illumination is called supernatural, 1st, because, having been lost, it can be restored only by the immediate power of God. 2nd. In contradistinction to the maimed condition of man's present depraved nature. It, however, conveys no new truths to the mind, nor does it relieve the Christian, in any degree, from the diligent and prayerful study of the Word, nor does it lead to any fanciful interpretations of Scripture foreign to the plain sense of the letter; it only leads to the perception and appreciation of the native spiritual beauty and power of the inspired word, and the truths therein revealed.

### **14. How may it be proved that believers are the subjects of such illumination?**

1st. It is necessary. 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 3:14; 4:3; John 16:3. From the constitution of our nature we must apprehend an object as lovely before we can love it for its own sake.

2nd. The Scriptures expressly affirm it. "To know God is eternal life." John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 13; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 1:18; Philippians 1:9; Colossians 3:10; 1 John 4:7; 5:20; Psalm 19:7, 8; 43:3, 4.

As the soul is a unit, a change in its radical moral dispositions must simultaneously modify the exercise of all its faculties in relation to moral and spiritual objects. The soul can not love that the loveliness of which it does not perceive, neither can it perceive the loveliness of an object which is totally uncongenial to its own nature. The first effect of regeneration, or a radical change of moral disposition, in the order of nature, therefore, is to open the eyes of our understandings to the excellency of divine truth, and the second effect is the going forth of the renewed affections toward that excellency so perceived. This is what Pres. Edwards ("Religious Affections," Pt. 3., sec. 4) calls "the sense of the heart."

### **15. What is the nature of that conviction of sin which is the attendant of regeneration?**

Spiritual illumination immediately leads to the perception of the righteousness, goodness, and exceeding breadth and exactness of God's law, and by contrast of the exceeding sinfulness of sin in the abstract, Romans 7:7, 13; and above all of his own sin thus revealing, in contrast to the divine purity and righteousness, the pollution of his own heart, his total ill desert, and his entire helplessness in all his relations to God. Job 13:5, 6. This is a practical experimental knowledge, produced by the wrestling e]legcov, of the Holy Ghost (John 16:8) of guilt, of pollution, and of helplessness.

**16. What is the nature of that conviction of sin which often occurs before or without regeneration, and how may it be distinguished from the genuine?**

Natural conscience is an essential and indestructible element of human nature, including a sense of right and wrong, and painful emotions associated with a sense of the latter. Although this faculty may be for a time perverted, and the sensibility associated with it hardened, yet it may be, and often is, in the case of the unregenerate, quickened to a painful activity, leading to a sense of ill desert, pollution, helplessness, and danger. In eternity this will constitute a large measure of the sufferings of the lost.

On the other hand, that conviction of sin which is peculiar to the regenerate is distinguished by being accompanied by a sense of the positive beauty of holiness, and an earnest desire to escape not merely the pangs of remorse, but chiefly the pollution and the dominion of sin.

**17. What is the nature of those new affections which flow from the renewal of the heart, and how are they distinguished from the exercises of unrenewed men?**

Spiritual illumination gives the perception of that loveliness which the renewed affections of the heart embrace and delight in. These are spiritual because they are formed in us, and preserved in healthy exercise by the Spirit of God. They are holy because their objects are holy, and because they delight in their objects as holy. The affections of unrenewed men, on the other hand, however pure or even religious they may be, are merely natural in their source, and attach merely to natural objects. They may be grateful to God for his benefits, but they never love him simply for the perfections of his own nature.

**18. What is the nature of that new obedience which results from regeneration, and how does it differ from mere morality?**

The perfect law is spiritual, and consequently requires perfect conformity of being as well as of action; the central and governing principles of life must be in harmony with it. The regenerate man, therefore, thinks, and feels, and wills, and acts in conformity with the spirit of the whole word of God as far as revealed to him, because it is God's word, from a motive of love to God, and with an eye single to his glory. The sanctified affections are the spring, the heart searching law the rule, and the glory of God the end, and the Holy Ghost the coworker in every act of Christian obedience.

Morality, on the other hand, has its spring in the merely natural affections; it aims only at the conformity of the outward actions to the letter of the law, while self, in some form of self-righteousness, reputation, safety, or happiness, is the determining end.

### **19. How may the absolute necessity of regeneration be proved?**

1st. The Scriptures assert it. John 3:3; Romans 8:6; Ephesians 2:10; 4:21;24. 2nd. It is proved from the nature of man as a sinner. Romans 7:18; 8:7; 9; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1. 3rd. From the nature of heaven. Isaiah 35:8; 52:1; Matthew 5:8; 13:41; Hebrews 12:14; Revelation 21:27. The restoration of holiness is the grand end of the whole plan of salvation. Ephesians 1:4; 5:5, 26, 27.

### **20. Are infants susceptible of regeneration; and, if so, what is the nature of regeneration in them?**

Infants, as well as adults, are rational and moral agents, and by nature totally depraved. The difference is, that the faculties of infants are in the germ, while those of adults are developed. As regeneration is a change wrought by creative power in the inherent moral condition of the soul, infants may plainly be the subjects of it in precisely the same sense as adults; in both cases the operation is miraculous, and therefore inscrutable.

The fact is established by what the Scriptures teach of innate depravity, of infant salvation, of infant circumcision and baptism. Luke 1:15; 18:15, 16; Acts 2:39. See below, Chapter 42.

### **AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENTS**

ROMAN DOCTRINE. "Conc. Trent," Sess. 6. Ch. 7. "Justification (Regeneration) is not only a remission of sins, but also a renewal of the inner man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts whereby a man born unjust becomes just, and from an enemy becomes a friend, that so he may be an heir according to the hope of eternal life. The onuses of this justification are the final cause, the glory of God and of Christ, and eternal life, the efficient cause, the merciful God who gratuitously washes and sanctifies, sealing and anointing with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance; the meritorious cause, his own most beloved and only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when we were enemies, did, on account of the great love wherewith he loved us, merit justification for us by his most holy passion on the wood of the cross; and did for us, make satisfaction to God the Father, also the instrumental cause, the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which (faith) justification has never come to any one; and finally the formal cause, is the righteousness of God, not that whereby he is himself righteous, but that whereby he makes us righteous, namely that with which we, being by him endowed, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are not only reputed, but are truly called, and are righteous."

LUTHERAN DOCTRINE. "Formula Concordi"(Hase), page 679. "For conversion is such a change of the man through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the understanding, will, and heart of man, that he is able (i.e., by the operation of the Holy Spirit) to embrace the offered grace. Ib. p. 681. But the understanding and will of the man not as yet renewed are only the subject to be

converted, because they are the understanding and will of a man spiritually dead, in whom the Holy Ghost works conversion and renewal, in which work the man to be converted contributes nothing, but is acted upon, until he is regenerated. But afterwards in other good works enduring, he cooperates with the Holy Spirit, doing those things which are well pleasing to God, in that manner which has now been declared by us fully enough in this treatise."