

Does baptism regenerate them? We have no ground for believing that it does: and ample ground for dismissing the theory of Baptismal Regeneration as a soul-destroying heresy, discountenanced alike by Scripture and by experience. Faith is not hereditary: the children of believers are sometimes notoriously wicked, yet as a *general rule* pious parents, who train their children properly, have the ineffable satisfaction of recognising them as *God's children*.

In Baptism there are three parties contracting, we may so speak. *First*; God promises to be the God of the believing parent and his seed. *Secondly*; The parent accepts God as his own and his children's God, and pledges to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. *Thirdly*; The child is pledged to God, has God's vows upon him, and when he comes to the years of discretion is bound to acknowledge God's right to his service. God is faithful, and will infallibly fulfil *his* part of the Covenant: but the parent may annul it by neglecting to train his children properly; and the children may annul it by their own conduct when they come to the exercise of their moral powers. They may refuse to take God as their Father, Christ as their Saviour, the Holy Spirit as their Sanctifier. But how often does such a thing as this happen when parents do *their duty*? "*Train up a child,*" (says the Scripture) "*in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*" This is a rule, the exceptions to which are rare indeed.

The children of believers therefore are to be regarded and dealt with "as presumptively one with their parents in their relation to God, His kingdom and salvation; as having in their parents professed Christ, and by baptism put on the seal and badge of such profession; as being, according to *their capacities*, and in a manner suitable to their years, entitled to all the privileges, and bound to all the duties of Christians, of those to whom God is their God; who being baptized into Christ, have so far forth presumptively and in appearance put on Christ and therefore are expected to walk, after the manner of childhood, as befits the children of God and the followers of Christ. They are to be reckoned and dealt with as those who are visibly of the community of God's people, members of the visible Church." They have a right to be regarded as having God *their* God until they break their covenant with him and disown their birthright, making themselves aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.

Your child, therefore, should from infancy be trained to think, feel, and act as becomes one in covenant with Christ, and to regard himself as pledged to be Christ's. He is enlisted in Christ's army from infancy—has Christ's mark upon him—and must therefore be trained for Christ, and taught to be loyal and true in thought, word and deed. The children of the covenant have a *right* to this sort of training; their parents and the Church are under most solemn obligations so to train them.

Those who have the misfortune of being led away by the erroneous and pernicious prejudice against the baptism of infants, must regard their own children as outside the pale of the Church, as being in the same company with heathens and publicans, infidels and corners. They rob themselves (theoretically) of the delightful privilege of regarding their offspring as in the fold of the Redeemer to be trained as the "*lambs of His flocks*"—to be moulded by christian associations and by conscious union and sympathy with the people of God.

How many of the most illustrious members of the Church have thus been reared in the atmosphere of christianity from infancy—the Spirit of God moulding and forming them anew before they were even conscious of His operations. It is a great mistake to imagine that the genuineness of religious experience depends on our being able to give an account of the time and manner of its origin. All that is necessary is, not that we should be able to tell how or when the vision first opened, but "*whereas I was blind, now I see.*" Do you hate sin, love God, believe on Christ? If so, all the better if you can also add that you can recall no period of your life at which you did not love God!