

The Church Guardian

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See page 14.

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CALENDAR FOR DECEMBER.

- Dec. 1st—1st Sunday in Advent
" 8th—2nd Sunday in Advent.
" 15th—3rd Sunday in Advent. (Notice of
St. Thomas and Ember Days.
Ember Coll. daily.
" 18th—
" 19th— } EMBER DAYS.
" 20th— }
" 20th—St. Thomas. A. & M.
" 22nd—4th Sunday in Advent. (Notice of
Christmas, St. Stephen, St. John,
and Holy Innocent Days).
" 25th—CHRISTMAS, Pr. Pss. M. 19, 45, 85.
E. 89, 110, 132. Athan. Creed.
Prop. Preface till Jan. 1st.
" 26th—St. Stephen. First Martyr.
" 27th—St. John. Ap. and Ev.
" 28th—Innocents' Day.

REGENERATION—BAPTISM.

(Rev. J. A. Bolles in Church Life)

Over and above all other considerations, the having of a standard edition of the Bible is an immense blessing for this reason alone, that the same words are retained with the same meaning from age to age; and thus the very forms and figures of truth are stamped with an indelible and unchangeable character. Indeed, so variable and changeable is human language, by the coining of new words and the perversion of old ones, that without some such fixed and permanent standards all the landmarks of truth would be obliterated, men could scarcely be made to understand each other, and we should be involved in an endless war of words. Indeed, such has been the character of many a polemical battle—a mere war of words—manifesting all the bitterness of the "odium theologum," destroying the peace of the Church, and yet both parties contending for the same thing, and only fighting because they had no common understanding of the language of the proposition in dispute. Of this fact we have a very remarkable illustration in what is called the doctrine of "Baptismal Regeneration." In course of time the meaning of that word "Regeneration" has entirely changed. Popularly

it is one thing; scripturally and theologically it is another; one thing in the language of the Bible, and quite another thing in our dictionaries and in our minds; one thing in the language of the Church, and quite another thing in the language of the world. Some identify it with repentance; some with faith; some with conversion; some with an inward change of the mind and affections known only to themselves; and when, therefore, we consider that there is such a vast disagreement at the very starting point, can we wonder that there should be debate, strife, contention, controversy? God forbid that I should fan the flame by anything I may say. Rather would I quench its raging fires. Hence the object of my first article, to explain, not what is the blessing of Regeneration, nor wherein it consists, but simply when it does and must take place; and we have established the fact by the express words of our Saviour to Nicodemus; by the general language of Holy Scripture; by the positive teaching of the Universal Church of God in all the ages; and by all the Reformers either of our own Church or upon the Continent, that the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is the divinely constituted means of its conveyance to the soul and, therefore, that is *then* and *then only* that we are or can be "born again of water and of the Spirit!" In all this I have maintained nothing more and nothing less than what is stated in the twenty-seventh Article of our Religion—that "Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, 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 the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God, by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed."

THE BLESSING OF REGENERATION.

Now, as briefly and plainly as possible, I will endeavor to explain what is really and truly the blessing of Regeneration. Possibly some light may be thrown upon the *new birth* by considering the old one. An infant child is born. No human tongue can adequately unfold the importance and the consequences of this event; and yet it is an event—to the infant child an unconscious event. By that event, life has been imparted, and the germ of all its unfathomable mysteries. Nay, more than life, for it has given birth to mind—an immortal mind—a mind which may be unfolded and expanded to weigh and measure the stars and to grasp the mysteries of the universe; or which, if neglected and uncultivated and perverted, may be recognized only in the stare of the idiot or in the raging of the maniac. Now, if such be generation, then we have reason to believe that Regeneration must be something like it—an event in God's mercy, not an exertion of our conscious powers of thought and action, and that it is an event in which and by which the essential germ of spiritual life is imparted to the soul, and not the production, all at once, of a full-grown Christian man; that the recipient of this germ of spiritual life is and must be as unconscious of it as the newborn babe; that this gift and the whole process by which it is imparted, are as invisible and viewless as the winds—as they are in the manner in which God imparts the common life of man; and that nothing is visible but that outward Rite and Sacrament which God, in infinite mercy, has established as "*the means by which we receive the same and a pledge to assure us thereof.*" But, nevertheless, this germ of spiritual life is absolutely essential to graft us into Christ the Second Adam and to make us His spiritual children, as now by our first birth we are the children of the First Adam; and hence, therefore, that without this Regeneration we can have no part in the glorious Kingdom of our risen and ascended Lord, just as if we had never been born into the world, we

could have no part in the duties and enjoyments of this present life.

Here, then, is unfolded the meaning of that strange word Regeneration. The common stream of humanity had been corrupted at the fountain, and no unaided efforts of man could sanctify and cleanse it; and hence the mighty mystery of *God Incarnate*, that taking our nature into union with Himself, He might sanctify and cleanse it, and make it altogether new in Christ Jesus. But how shall each individual man become a partaker of this new nature of Christ—this restored and repaired humanity, lost in Adam and regained in Christ? Manifestly, this must be the gift of God; and therefore Almighty God, in infinite mercy, has condescended to bestow it as a gift free and unmerited, and that each individual may know that he has it, not by any fancies of the mind or impulses of feeling, but by an outward and visible token and pledge, as immutable as truth, God has ordained the Sacrament of Holy Baptism as the means of its conveyance. And this is called Regeneration, because it restores us to the possession of blessings which by generation had been lost; and because it makes us what we were not before—"the members of Christ," of His Incarnation, "of His flesh and of His bones," as the Apostle says: "*We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones,*" as before by our first birth into the world we were members and only members of fallen Adam.

Such, then, is Regeneration; not as changed and perverted from its original meaning and generally employed to express almost any truth which any individual may consider of vital importance, but in its scriptural and theological sense, as implied by our Blessed Saviour, and applied to Holy Baptism, and as denoting that change which then takes place, so that instead of being out of Christ and having no covenant relation with Him he is now in *Him*, incorporated as a member of His family, His Church, His body; and by which the baptized person may go on *if he will*, cultivating more and more the virtues and the graces of the Christian life, abolishing the whole body of sin, and finally attaining to "the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus." You observe I say *if he will*; but the *will* may be wanting, and then all the blessings of the new birth may be lost. Just here it is that most persons make the mistake in relation to Baptismal Regeneration, especially those who are possessed with the Calvinistic idea of final perseverance. They imagine that a regenerate person must not only be "born again," but must be an everliving, an evergrowing and finally triumphant Christian, whether *he will* or no! A fatal mistake! For man's will is something peculiar—not those powers and properties which are the common portion of the race, but the principle of *individuality* itself—not strictly speaking, his nature, but his *personality*, surviving every change, and always in him the *awful power of choice*, and in that respect always free to act. And, therefore, the man, though actually grafted into Christ, may not abide in Him, nor grow up in Him, nor cherish His life, nor finally receive that Crown of life, which can only be bestowed upon those who continue His faithful soldiers and servants unto life's end.

EPISCOPACY.

It is indeed true that the New Testament nowhere prescribes that the Church's form of government shall be Episcopal. This, however, does not, as some think, necessarily reduce to indifference the question, "what form of government shall a church have?"

Let us briefly consider the matter. The New Testament unquestionably shows a ministry of three orders: 1. Apostles; 2. Presbyters; 3. Deacons. Is there evidence that this arrange-