

Gleanings.

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

No doctrine can be more radically opposed to the spirit and teaching of the New Testament than the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. The grand idea of the gospel (so far as the essential nature of religion is concerned) is, that God looks on the heart; that rites and ceremonies are no more essential to religion than clothing to the being of a man; that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, and that true circumcision is not of the flesh, but of the heart; that the righteousness which God requires must be something different from that of the Scribes and Pharisees; that a man's state before him does not depend on anything external, but on what is internal and spiritual; that neither grace nor salvation is to be attained by works, least of all by ceremonies. It is the burden of the gospel, that whosoever believes shall be saved, whether Jew or Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, baptized or unbaptized. There is nothing on earth which Paul would have more execrated than the doctrine, (unless perhaps the man who taught it,) that a true believer and worshipper of Christ would perish for the want of external baptism. This would be to contradict a hundred assertions of the word of God, and utterly pervert, transmute, and degrade the religion of the Bible. Luther felt this as deeply as any man, and therefore, no man was more vehement in his denunciations of the Romish doctrine, that the sacraments confer grace on unbelievers. He held that unless infants believe, baptism avails them nothing. The modern doctrine of baptismal grace was as abhorrent to Luther as to Calvin; because abhorrent to the spirit of the gospel. All experience shows the evil tendency of the doctrine in question. Who are the advocates of baptismal regeneration? Of course there are exceptions, many and great; but speaking in general terms, they are not the spiritual and evangelical class among Christians. The most zealous advocates of the doctrine are the irreligious, the worldly, the fashionable, and even the vicious. It is most vehemently defended by those who make religion a form; who carry out the theory, and ascribe sanctifying power to a bishop's hands, to relics, to holy water, to consecrated oil, to amulets and talismans; who fast on Friday, and rob or murder on Saturday; who believe in priestly absolution, and think they can sin with impunity so long as they keep within the pale of the Church, and have access to her cleansing manipulations. It is part of a great system; an element in the great apostacy from apostolic teaching to christianized Judaism. This doctrine of baptism is only a revival of the doctrine of the Pharisees concerning circumcision. It pains us to write thus, when we recollect that dear, glorious Luther retained this with other elements of Romanism. But Luther was a wonder. He had the stomach of an ostrich and could digest iron. There was nothing which his faith could not master. He believed that the words, "this is my body," teach the local presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist; therefore he believed that Christ's body fills all space. He believed that the Bible teaches that infants cannot be saved without baptism; therefore he believed that baptism regenerates them. But he believed that the Bible teaches that baptism is useless without faith; therefore he believed that infants exercise faith. He would just as readily have believed that they read and write, had he thought the Bible called him to do so. His great fault was being too confident that he understood the Bible. We are not to be unfaithful to the truth, or to shut our eyes to the dreadful effects of false doctrine, because many, at whose feet we are not worthy to sit, through misinterpreting Scripture, believed it.—*Biblical Repository and Princeton Review.*

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

A very disagreeable excitement has lately taken place among the Scottish Episcopalians. It is well known that the Scottish Prayer Book, especially the Communion Service, leans Rome-ward considerably more than the English; and the Right Rev. Dr. Forbes, Bishop of Brechin, has always been distinguished among his brethren