

Regeneration

- Theological traditions
- Biblical data
- Important features
- Theological issues
- Practical issues

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Theological Traditions

- Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox
 - Baptismal regeneration.
 - Works automatically, unless you resist.
- Lutheran theology
 - Baptismal regeneration, but requires faith.
 - Infant faith, proxy faith (of the community)

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Theological Traditions

- Covenant Reformed theology
 - Precedes and gives rise to repentance and faith.
 - Infant baptism for children of the covenant.
 - Tension with doctrine of election.
- Anabaptist theology
 - Emphasized regeneration.
 - New birth issues in new life.
 - Believer baptism testifies to what has already happened internally.

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Theological Traditions

- Dirk Phillips (16th century Anabaptist):
 - “Regeneration is really the work of God in man, by which he is born again of God through faith in Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. For the heavenly Father begets or brings forth the new creature, but the Word of the heavenly Father is the seed from which the new creature is born (Jas. 1:18, 1 Pet. 1:23). The Holy Spirit renews, sanctifies, and keeps the new creature in the divine life (1 Jn. 3:9, Tit. 3:5).”

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Theological Traditions

- Pietism and evangelicalism
 - Pietists understood regeneration to be a particular subjective experience (assurance).
 - Carried on in Wesleyan revival.
 - Marks of new birth: faith, hope, love (Wesley).
 - Evangelicalism has viewed regeneration as synonymous with a decision for Christ or conversion.

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Theological Traditions

- Reformed and Arminian evangelicals today
 - Some Calvinists: regeneration precedes repentance and faith.
 - Other Calvinists, Arminians: regeneration is a work of God in response to repentance & faith.
 - “Faithful disciples will know that the *basis* of regeneration is Christ’s death and resurrection ...; the *means* of regeneration is the Word of God...; the *providential instrument* is the preacher or herald of God’s truth...; and the *agent* of regeneration is the Spirit of God” (Bruce Demarest).

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Biblical Data

- What is regeneration - why do we need it?
 - Demarest: “Regeneration is that work of the Spirit at conversion that renews the heart and life (the inner self), thus restoring the person’s intellectual, volitional, moral, emotional, and relational capacities to know, love, and serve God” (293).
 - From spiritually dead to spiritually alive
 - From moral corruption to inner renovation

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Biblical Data

- Regeneration = *palingenesia*.
 - Matt. 19:28; Titus 3:5.
 - Part of God’s plan to renew his creation.
 - From *gennaō* (be born) + *palin* (again).
 - Be born from above (John 3:3) or of the Spirit (John 3:5) or of Christ (1 John 2:29).
 - “A proselyte who has been converted is like a child who has just been born” (Rabbinic tractate).

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Biblical Data

- Related concepts:
 - Newness, new creation (Paul)
 - Being made alive, passing from death to life
 - New or circumcised heart

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Important Features

- Essential for salvation.
- Supernatural (from above), an act of God.
- Eschatological.
- Restoration of the image of God in us.
- We are God's children.
- Has an inseparable ethical dimension.

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Important Features

- Associated with resurrection of Christ, Holy Spirit, Word, faith, baptism.
 - Spirit is agent of regeneration.
 - Power of the resurrection and the word.
 - Those who believe become children of God.
 - Baptism: Titus 3:5; John 3:5(?); Mark 16:16(?); Romans 6

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Theological Issues

- Exactly what happens in regeneration?
 - New identity, motivations, will, heart, self.
 - Something in human nature changes.
- Relationship to conversion?
 - Conversion is commanded; regeneration is not.
 - Seems to follow upon repentance and faith.
- Relationship to indwelling of the Spirit?
 - Both happen as result of repentance and faith.
 - Receiving the Spirit isn't the only thing that happens in regeneration.

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Theological Issues

- How is regeneration related to baptism?
 - See Titus 3:5; John 3:5.
 - Much theology of regeneration was developed to justify infant baptism.

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Practical Issues

- What is at stake (practically) in our theology of regeneration?
- How much change should someone expect when he/she becomes a Christian?

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